—PREFACE—VOLUME 8—

It is laid upon my heart in this Preface to the Eighth volume of my sermons, to commune a little with the great host of readers who continually peruse these discourses. Unknown by face to most of you, my soul feels the bonds of brotherhood, and is filled with an earnest yearning for your welfare. Grace and peace be with you all. Amen.

Sick saints, what a delight I feel in ministering to you! Shut out from the sanctuary, and the sound of the Word, you find a solace in reading what others have crowded to hear. Accept my most tender sympathy in your affliction, while I breathe the prayer that He who suffers *in* you, may abide *with* you. The Great Captain of the host has called you to glorify Him on your beds; it may be you could never have done this in active service; what a mercy is it that a sick chamber affords you opportunities to honor Him! Your patience, holy resignation, and joyous faith make you invaluable teachers to those believers who visit you, and even your ungodly friends may be greatly blessed by your means. Little do you dream how well your words are remembered, and how powerful they will be even when you have fallen asleep in Jesus! From the green mound in the cemetery, your loving voice shall sound in their ears! Those very persons, who now seem so indifferent, may be the first to be converted by your testimony. Speak well of your Lord; you see Him often; let His name be always in your mouth. He makes *your* bed; let your bosom be a pillow for Him. Let your chamber be a sanctuary, your bed a pulpit, your living loving experience of divine grace the constant sermon! We cannot do without you in the Lord's battles. Your power for good is wonderful; forget not your advantageous position, but lift up the banner of your Lord on high! Let no persons retire from your bedside without being enriched by some affectionate admonition. In the night watches, when your eyes are held waking so that you cannot sleep, plead for the Church, the world, your minister, your friends, and do not omit the unworthy brother who now writes to you. What showers of mercies your intercessions may bring down! The golden keys of heaven are at your belt, open the treasury and bless us all! "As the sufferings of Christ abound in you, so may your consolation also abound by Christ."

My brothers in the ministry receive my affectionate salutations, and my best thanks for your kind endeavors to promote the circulation of these sermons. I count myself thrice happy to have so many readers among the leaders of our Israel; and if, like the lad in the evangelists, I may bring the barley loaves and small fishes which the Master may distribute to

you, that by you the thousands may be fed, we will all of us rejoice together. Brothers, I trust we long for souls, and are not to be satisfied unless we see them saved. We give out medicine daily, but this would be sorry work if we did not see men healed thereby! It is our duty to serve our Master even if no apparent success should crown our labors; but surely we are not faithful servants unless we long and pant after success. He is a brutal physician who, having administered the potion, is quite at ease whether the patient shall live or die. Let us hunger and thirst after conversions with a passionate longing which none but God Himself can satisfy! Let the terrors of hell quicken our zeal to save men from them; for, alas, brothers, they are dropping into them every hour. Let the preciousness of Christ impel us to great earnestness, for who can bear that He should be despised and rejected of men? Why must this pearl be trod under foot of swine forever? Oh, why must the matchless beauties of Immanuel forever be forgotten? Time and eternity both stand behind us in the pulpit and cry, "Work while it is called today; the night comes, when no man can work." Let us not spare our arrows, for death is shooting his shafts abroad. If men will not escape damning, it is certain that they cannot escape dying. Up then, each one of us to our work, and let nothing but the winning of souls content us! Forgive me if I use the language of Baxter on my own account, for when I see so many *comfortable* preachers at ease in Zion, I marvel the stones do not cry out against them! "I confess, for my part, I marvel at some ancient reverend men, that have lived twenty, thirty, or forty years with an unprofitable people, among whom they have scarcely been able to discern any fruits of their labors, how they can, with so much patience, continue among them! Were it my case, though I dare not leave the vineyard, nor quit my calling, yet I would suspect that it was God's will I should go somewhere else, and another come in my place, who might be better fit for them; and I would not be easily satisfied to spend my days in such a manner."

This year has brought in its seals to the Ministry at the Tabernacle in undiminished numbers, but, alas, how many are still unconverted! O for a harvest, a joyful harvest of souls!

To those brothers who publicly read these sermons in cottages and village preaching rooms, a word of hopeful encouragement; several cases of conviction and comfort have come under my notice this year through your good work in publicly reading my discourses. I pray you, persevere! No man needs despair of winning souls! In these days, the lack of talent is no bar to usefulness. If we cannot preach the sermon ourselves, if reading it to a few cottagers may be blessed by God the Holy Spirit, who would refuse to do it? Go on, dear friends, and may the Lord continue to

bless us in publishing the glad tidings of His divine grace! We serve a generous Master who thinks much of our littleness. O that we thought more of Him!

To all my brothers and sisters, thanks, and Christian love. Thanks for your assistance in spreading my "words for Jesus," and love, because we are one in Him. Let me entreat you to wrestle together with me in your prayers that the good news may be received by many prepared hearts. If all my readers would pray for the preacher, and for a blessing upon the sermons, as they travel throughout all lands, what a great result would follow! The Holy Spirit is able to make the Word as successful now as in the days of the Apostles. He can bring in by hundreds and thousands, as easily as by ones and twos! If we have the Spirit sealing our ministry with power, it will matter very little about our talent. Men may be poor and uneducated; their words may be broken and ungrammatical; there may be none of the polished periods of Hall or the glorious thunders of Chalmers; but if the might of the Spirit attends them, the humblest evangelists will be more successful than the most learned of divines or the most eloquent of preachers! It is extraordinary grace, not talent that wins the day! It is extraordinary spiritual power, not extraordinary mental power that we need! Mental power may fill a chapel; but spiritual power fills the Church. Mental power may gather a congregation; spiritual power will save souls! We need spiritual power! Oh, we know some before whom we shrink into nothing as to talent, but who have no spiritual power; and when they speak, they have not the Holy Spirit with them. But we know others—simple-hearted, worthy men, who speak their country dialect, and who stand up to preach, and whether it is in a barn, or the village green, the Spirit of God clothes every word with power! Hearts are broken, souls are saved, and sinners are born-again! O Spirit of the living God, we need *You!* You are the life, the soul, the source of Your people's success! Without You, we can do nothing! With You, we can do everything! Dear readers, we need above all things, the "power from on high."

During the past year, partly in consequence of better type, our circulation has largely increased. But why should it not at once be multiplied at least four times? Will each reader assist us? Have you not three friends who might be induced to take the sermons weekly or monthly? If they have been useful to you, make it your business to introduce them to others! Get three friends to become subscribers, and our desire is fulfilled. When Popery perverts its thousands; when Atheism climbs into high places; when Skepticism wears a miter; when heresy fills the tutor's chair; when lax theology is becoming the rule, and sound divinity the ex-

ception, it is time that all lovers of true doctrine should spread it with greater vigor!

A friend has scattered a large number of sermons in the colleges and towns of Ireland. Working with great discretion, he sowed the seed so rapidly in each place that before the foul bird, the Popish priest, could hasten to stop him, the work was done! Our friend's adventures in some of the Irish towns prove that religious liberty is a thing yet to be understood by that priest-ridden people! We shall, we are sure, hear of his sowing in years to come.

An Italian translation of the sermons is now under serious contemplation, and will probably be produced during the ensuing year. Everywhere—from China and India, Australia and Africa, the States and the Brazils, Germany and France, Florence and Rome, we have heard of good from the sermons. From ships of war, foreign military stations, mission establishments, and exploring parties, we have had words of gratitude and friendship. Therefore, do we thank God, and take courage. Unto the Lord our God be honor and praise for another year's support. In His name, we set up our banner and advance with confidence!

Apologies are again offered for all grammatical and typographical errors, the necessary result of hasty revision and printing. These are, however, much fewer and far less serious than in former years.

And now, brothers and sisters, farewell; cease not to pray for,
Yours ever truly,

Charles H. Spurgeon

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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 PSALM FOR THE NEW YEAR
NO. 427

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 5, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."
2 Peter 3:18.

BEHOLD, beloved, our perpetual dangers. Where can we go to escape from peril? Where shall we fly to avoid temptation? If we venture into business, worldliness is there. If we retire to our homes, trials are there. One would have imagined that in the green pastures of the Word of God there would have been perfect security for God's sheep. Surely no lion shall be there, and no ravenous beast shall go up from there! Alas, it is not so, for even while we are reading the Bible we are still exposed to peril. Not that the truth of God is dangerous, but that our corrupt hearts can find poison in the very flowers of Paradise! Mark what our apostle says of the writings of St. Paul, "Wherein are some things which are hard to be understood." And mark the danger to which we are exposed, lest we, being unlearned and unstable, should wrest even the Word of God itself to our own destruction. With the Bible before our eyes, we may still commit sin; pondering over the hallowed words of inspiration we may receive a deadly wound from "the error of the wicked." Even at the horns of the altar, we need that God should still cover us with the shadow of His wings. It is a very pleasing reflection that our gracious Father has provided a shield by which we may be sheltered from every evil, and in our text the evil of heterodoxy finds a suitable preventative. We are in danger, lest misinterpreting Scripture we should make God say what He does not; and lest by departing from the teaching of the Holy Spirit we should wrest the letter of the Word and lose its spirit, and from the letter draw a meaning which may be for our soul's ruin. How shall we escape this? Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit, has in the words before us, pointed out our safeguard! While we search the Scriptures and grow in acquaintance with them, see to it that we grow in divine grace; and while we desire to know the doctrine, long above all to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; and let our study of Scripture, and our growth in divine grace and in the knowledge of Christ, still be subservient to that higher objective, that we may live to bring glory both now and forever to Him who has loved us and bought us with His blood! Let our hearts say evermore, "Amen" to the doxology of praise, so shall we be kept from all pestilent errors, and we shall not fall "from our own steadfastness." It appears, then, that our text is adapted to be a heavenly remedy for certain diseases to which even students of Scripture are exposed; and I am

persuaded it may also serve as a most blessed directory to us through the whole of the coming year.

I might divide my text, this morning, as good old Adams does. He says there are here two trumpets. One is blown from heaven to earth—"Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." The other sounds from earth to heaven—"To Him be glory both now and forever." Or I might quote him again. He says here is first a point of *theology,* "Grow in grace"; secondly, a point of *doxology,* "To Him be glory both now and forever." We will take the text in the same natural divisions with other headings, and notice, first, that we have here a *divine injunction, with a special direction;* and secondly, *a grateful doxology, with a suggestive conclusion.*

I. To begin, then, at the beginning, we have here first of all, A DIVINE INJUNCTION WITH A SPECIAL DIRECTION—"Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

"Grow in grace." What is this? It must be in the outset implied that we have been quickened by divine grace; otherwise this text cannot apply to us at all! Dead things cannot grow. Only those who are alive unto God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, have in them any power or capability of growth. The great Quickener must first implant the seeds of life, then, afterwards, those seeds can germinate and grow. To you, therefore, who are dead in trespasses and sins, this text has no application! You cannot grow in divine grace, because as yet you are under the curse of the law, and the wrath of God abides on you. Tremble, repent, believe, and may God have mercy on you! But being alive from the dead, and quickened by the Spirit of God which is in you, beloved brothers and sisters, *you* who are born-again are bid to grow, for growth shall prove your life. A post planted in the earth grows not; but a tree rooted there, increases from a sapling to a forest king! Drop a pebble into the richest soil, and it will still be a pebble of the same size; put in there grain or a seed, and it will spring up and produce its stalk and its flower. You who are alive unto God, see to it that you grow in all the divine graces!

Grow in that root-grace, *faith.* Seek to believe the promises better than you have done. Go from that trembling faith which says, "Lord, I believe: help You my unbelief," upward to that which staggers not at the promise, but which, like Abraham, believes that He who has promised is able also to perform. Let your faith increase in extent, believing more truths of God; let it increase in firmness, getting a tighter grip of every truth; let it increase in constancy, not being feeble or wavering, nor always tossed about with every wind; let your faith daily increase in simplicity, resting more fully, and more entirely, and more completely upon the finished work of your Lord Jesus Christ. See to it that your *love* also grows. If you have loved with a spark, pray that the spark may become an all-consuming flame! If you have brought little to Christ, pray that you may bring your all; and may offer that all in such a fashion, that like Mary's broken alabaster box, the King, Himself, may be satisfied with the perfume. Ask that your love may become more extended—that you may have

love unto all the saints; more practical, that it may move your every thought, your every word and deed; more intense, that you may become as burning and shining lights whose flame is love to God and man. Pray that you may grow in *hope,* that "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints"—that you may be looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; that the hope not seen as yet may enable you with patience to wait for it. Pray that you may, by hope, enter into the joys of heaven while you are on earth. Pray that hope may give you immortality while you are yet mortal—may give you resurrection before you die—may give you to see God, while as yet the glass darkly parts you from Him. Ask that you may grow in *humility,* till you can say, "I am less than the least of all the saints." Ask that you may grow in *consecration* till you can cry, "For me to live is Christ; to die is gain!" Pray that you may grow in *contentment* till you can feel, "In whatever state I am, I have learned to be content." Pray to advance in likeness to the Lord Jesus, that your very enemies may take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus and have learned of Him! Finally, if there is any virtue, if there is any praise, if there is anything that is lovely, and of good repute, if there is anything that can increase your usefulness, that can add to your happiness, that can make you more serviceable to man, and more glorious towards God, pray to grow in it, for you have not yet attained, neither are you yet already perfect!

Following up an illustration furnished by the Holy Scriptures, let me remind you all, you faithful believers in Christ, that you are compared to *trees*—trees of the Lord's right hand planting. Seek to grow as the tree grows. Pray that this year you may grow *downward;* that you may know more of your own vileness, more of your own nothingness; and so be rooted in humility. Pray that your roots may penetrate below the mere topsoil of the truth of God, into the great rocks which underlie the uppermost stratum. Pray that you may get a good hold of the doctrines of eternal love, of immutable faithfulness, of complete satisfaction, of union to Christ, of the eternal purpose of God, which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was! These deep things of God will yield a rich and abundant sap, and your roots shall drink from the hidden fountains of "the depth which lies under." This will be a growth which will not add to your fame, which will not minister to your vanity—but it will be invaluable in the hour of storm, a growth the value of which no heart can conceive when the hurricane is tearing up the hypocrite, and hurling into the sea of destruction the "trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." As you root downward, seek to grow *upward*. Send out the top shoot of your love towards heaven. As the trees send out their spring shoots and their midsummer shoots; and as you see upon the top of the fir that new green child of spring, the fresh shoot which lifts its hand towards the sun, so pant to have more love and greater desires after God! Seek a nearer approach towards Him in prayer,

a sweeter spirit of adoption, a more intense and intimate fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. This mounting upwards will add to your beauty and to your delight. Then, pray to grow *on either side.* Stretch out your branches; let the shadow of your holy influence extend as far as God has given you opportunities. But see to it, also, that you grow in *fruitfulness,* for to increase the branch without adding to the fruit is to diminish the beauty of the tree. Labor this year, by God's grace, to bring forth more fruit unto Him than you have ever done!

Lord, give to this congregation more of the fruits of penitence for sin, of faith in the great sacrifice, of love to Jesus, of zeal for the conversion of souls! We would not be as the gleanings of the vintage when there is only here and there a cluster upon the uppermost branch, we would be as the valley of Eshcol, whose presses burst with new wine! This is to grow in divine grace—to root downward, to shoot upward, to extend your influences like far-reaching branches, and to bring forth fruit unto the Lord's glory.

But we will borrow another figure from Scripture. Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, we are not only compared to trees, but to *children*. Let us grow as babies do, nourished by unadulterated milk—steadily, slowly—but surely and certainly; little each day, but much in years. Oh, that we may grow as a child does in strength, till the little tottering limbs of our faith shall be firm muscular legs with which the young man may run without weariness, and feet upon which the strong man may walk without fainting! As yet, our wings are immature, and we can hardly leave the nest. Lord, bid our growth proceed till we can mount as with the wings of eagles towards Yourself, surmounting clouds and storms, and dwelling in the serene presence of the Most High! Let us grow in the development of all our powers. Let us ask that we may be no more little infants of a span long, but that many cubits may be added to our stature till we ripen to perfect men in Christ Jesus. And let us especially pray that we may grow as healthy children, uniformly. Brothers and sisters, it is an ill sign if a child's head enlarges, but not the rest of his body, or if its arm or foot should be swollen to an ill proportion. Beauty consists in the proportion of every part. A vigorous judgment should not be yoked with a cold heart, or clear eyes with a withered hand. A giant's head rides ill on a dwarf's shoulders. A virtue nourished at the expense of others is a fattened cannibal fed upon the flesh and blood of its murdered kinsmen; and it ill becomes a Christian to harbor such a monster. Let us pray that faith and love and every divine grace may be developed; that not one power of the man may be left unnurtured or ungrown, for only thus can we truly grow in divine grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

But do you inquire *why* we should thus grow in divine grace? Let us say, brothers and sisters, that if we do not advance in divine grace it is a sorrowful sign. It is a mark of *sickness!* It is an unhealthy child who grows not, a cankered tree that sends forth no fresh shoots. More—it may not only be a sign of unhealthiness but of *deformity*. If a man's

shoulders have come to a certain breadth, and his lower limbs refuse to lift him aloft, we call him a dwarf, and we look upon him with some degree of pity. He is ill-formed. O Lord, let us grow, for we would not be abortions, we would not be deformities. We would be children like unto God our Father—we would be comely ones, every one of us like the sons of a king! Not to grow may be, moreover, the sign of *death*. It may say to us, "Inasmuch as you grow not, you live not; inasmuch as you do not increase in faith, and love, and divine grace; and inasmuch as you do not ripen towards the harvest, fear and tremble lest you should only have a name to live and be destitute of life, lest you should be the painted counterfeit; a lovely flower picture drawn by the painter's skillful hand, but without reality, without the life-power which should make it bud and germinate, and blossom and bring forth fruit." Advance in divine grace, because not to progress foretells many evil things, and may result in that worst of all things, the lack of spiritual life! Grow in grace, because, beloved, to increase in grace is the only pathway to enduring nobility. Oh, do you not wish to stand with that noble host who have served their Master well, and have entered into their eternal rest? Who among you does not wish to have his name written with the missionaries of modern times—with Judson and with Carey, with Williams and with Moffat? Who among us is there who has no ambition to find his name written among those servants of God—Whitefield, Grimshaw, Newton, Romaine, Toplady and others who preached the Word with power?

Are there any of us who wish to go back to the vile dust from where we sprung, "unwept, unhonored, and unsung?" Then, let us be as we are; let us cease our march! Meanness lies at your door, be stunted and be ignoble. But, if we would be *princes* in God's Israel, if we would be mighty warriors for the cross of Christ, let us pray this prayer, "Lord, bid us grow in Your grace, that we may be faithful servants, and receive Your commendation at the last." But, my brothers and sisters, to grow is not only to be noble, it is to be happy! That man, who stops growing, refuses to be blessed. With most men in business, if they do not win, they lose. With the warrior, if he gains not in the battle, his enemy is getting an advantage. That wise man that gets no wiser grows more foolish. That Christian who does not know more of his Lord, and become more like He, knows less of his Lord, and becomes less like He! Our armor, if unused, will tarnish, and our arms, if not strengthened by effort will be weakened by indolence. Our *happiness* declines as our spirituality fades! To be happy, I say, we must go forward! Forward is the sunlight! Forward is victory! Forward is heaven! Forward is Christ! But here, to stand still is danger—no, it is death! O Lord, for our happiness' sake, bid us advance, and for our usefulness' sake let us ascend! Oh, if we as a congregation and as a church grew more in grace; if we were stronger in faith, mightier in prayer, more fervent in heart, more holy in life, who can tell how much we might effect our age? Men who walk but lightly, leave but faint steps; but men who tread with the tramp of Roman soldiers stamp their footprints on the sands of time, never to be erased! So let us live, that in our

day and in later days, the world may be the better, and Christ's Church the more prosperous for our having lived! For this reason, if for no other, let us grow in divine grace!

Oh, could I fire you with some hallowed ambition today, I would be but too happy! Could I snatch from some ancient altar a live coal such as that which fell upon the lips of Isaiah, I would say to you, Lo, this has touched your lips—go forth in the Spirit and power of God, even the Most High; and live as they lived who counted not their lives dear unto them that they might serve their Master and be found in Him! I point you to the spirits who have entered within the veil and who rest upon the couches of eternal glory, and I say, they won the victory by divine grace; and growth in divine grace was the means of their triumph. Emulate them! Press forward as they did, and through grace you shall inherit their rest and their triumph, and sit down with them forever!

But do you inquire *how* you shall grow in divine grace? The answer is simple. He who gave you grace must give you more of it! Where you first received your grace, there you must receive the increase of that divine grace. He who made the cattle and who created man was the same who afterwards said, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." So, He who has given you grace must speak with the fiat of His omnipotence in your heart and say to that grace, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the soul till its native emptiness shall be filled, and the natural wilderness shall rejoice and blossom like a rose." But at the same time, we would have you use the means; and those means are much prayer, a more diligent search of the sacred Scriptures, a more constant fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, greater activity in His cause, an earnest attendance upon the means of grace, a devout reception of all revealed truths of God, and so forth. If you do these things you shall never be stunted or dwarfed, for He who has given you life will thus enable you to fulfill the word which He spoke to you by His apostle, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

I have thus explained the divine exhortation; but to perceive it contains a *special injunction,* upon which we must pause a moment, "And in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

My beloved brethren in the Lord Jesus, we must see to it that we ripen in the knowledge of *Him*. Oh, that this year we may know more of Him in His divine nature, and in His human relationship to us in His finished work, in His death, in His resurrection, in His present glorious intercession, and in His future royal advent! To know more of Christ in His work is, I think, a blessed means of enabling us to work more for Christ.

We must study to know more of Christ also in His character—in that divine compound of every perfection, faith, zeal, and deference to His Father's will, courage, meekness, and love. He was the lion of the tribe of Judah, and yet the man upon whom the dove descended in the waters of baptism! Let us thirst to know Him of whom even His enemies said, "Never man spoke like this man," and His unrighteous judge said, "I find no fault in Him."

Above all, let us long to know Christ in His person. This year, endeavor to make a better acquaintance with the crucified one! Study His hands and His feet. Abide hard by the cross, and let the sponge, the vinegar and the nails, be subjects of your devout attention. This year seek to penetrate into His very heart, and to search those deep far-reaching caverns of His unknown love, that love which can never find a rival, and can never know a parallel. If you can add to this, knowledge of His sufferings, you will do well. Oh, if you can grow in the knowledge of fellowship—if you shall this year drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism—if you shall this year abide in Him, and He in you—blessed shall you be! This is the only growth in divine grace which is true growth; and all other growth which leads us not to increase in the knowledge of Christ is but the puffing up of the flesh, not the building up of the Spirit.

Grow in the knowledge of Christ, then, my brothers and sisters. And do you ask me *why?* Oh, if you have ever known Him, you will not ask that question! He who longs not to know more of Christ, knows nothing of Him yet! He who ever sipped this wine will thirst for more, for although Christ does satisfy, yet it is such a satisfaction, that we need to taste more, and more, and more, and more! Oh, if you know the love of Jesus, I am sure as the hart pants for the water brooks, so will you pant after Him! If you say you do not desire to know Him better, then I tell you, you love Him not, for love always cries, "Nearer, nearer, nearer." Absence from Christ is hell; but presence with Christ is heaven; and, as we get nearer to Him, our heaven becomes more heavenly, and we enjoy it more, and feel more that it is of God. Oh, may you, this year, come to the very well of Bethlehem, and not merely receive a vessel from it, as David did, at the risk of the lives of three mighty men; but may you come to the well and drink—drink from the well itself, from that bottomless spring of eternal love! Oh, this year may the secret of the Lord be with you, and may you be in the secret place of the Most High! My Master, should You permit me to ask You one thing as a special favor, it should be this, that I may "know Him and the power of His resurrection, being made conformable to His death!" Nearer to You, blessed Lord, nearer to You—this is all our cry shall be! The Lord grant that our cry may be heard, that we may grow in the knowledge of Christ!

We wish to know Christ this year as our *Lord*—Lord of every thought and every desire, of every word and every act! And as our *Savior,* too, our Savior from every indwelling sin, our Savior from every evil past, from every trial to come. All hail, Jesus! We salute You as Lord! Teach us to feel Your Kingship over us, and to feel it every hour. All hail, You crucified One! We acknowledge You as Savior; help us to rejoice in Your salvation, and to feel the plenitude of that salvation in all and every part of spirit, soul, and body, being wholly saved by You!

I have thus, brothers and sisters, sought to expound the point of theology; I lift up my heart in prayer for you all that you may grow in divine grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

II. In the second place, we have A GRATEFUL THANKSGIVING WITH A MOST SUGGESTIVE TERMINATION—"To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

The apostles, we must remark, very frequently suspended their writing in order to lift up their hearts in praise. Praise is never out of season, and it is no interruption to interrupt any engagement in order to laud and magnify our God. "To Him be glory." Brothers and sisters, do not let me preach now, but let me interpret your emotions. Let it be not so much my utterance, as your utterance by my lips. Let every heart joyously feel this doxology, To Him, the God who made the heavens and the earth, without whom was not anything made; to Him who in His infinite compassion became the surety of the covenant—to Him who became a baby of a span long—to Him who was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—to Him who on the bloody tree poured out His heart's life that He might redeem His people—to *Him* who said, "I thirst," and, "It is finished!"—to *Him* whose lifeless body slumbered in the grave—to Him be glory! To Him that burst the bonds of death—to Him who ascended on high, and led captivity captive—to Him who sits at the right hand of the Father, and who shall soon come to be our Judge—"To Him be glory." Yes, to Him, you atheists, who deny Him—to Him, you Socinians, who doubt His Deity—to Him, you kings, who vaunt your splendor, and will not have this man to reign over you—to Him, you people, who stand up against Him, and you rulers who take counsel against Him —to Him, the King whom God has set upon His holy hill of Zion—to Him be glory! To Him be glory as the Lord—King of kings and lords; "Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." And yet again, Hosanna in the highest—Hallelujah! King of kings, and Lord of lords! To Him be glory as *Lord!* To Him be glory as *Savior!* He alone has redeemed us unto God by His blood; He alone has "trod the winepress," and "comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength." "To Him be glory." Hear it, you angels—"To Him be glory." Clap your wings. Cry "Hallelujah, to Him be glory." Hear it you spirits of the just made perfect; sweep the strings of your celestial harps, and say, "Hallelujah, glory to Him who has redeemed us unto God by His own blood." *"To Him be glory."* Church of God respond! Let every pious heart say, *"To Him be glory."* Yes, unto Him be glory, you fiends of hell, as you tremble at His presence, and see the key of your prison swinging at His belt. Let heaven and earth and hell—let things that are, and were, and shall be, cry, "To Him be glory."

But the apostle adds, *"Now"*—"To Him be glory, *now."* O brothers and sisters, postpone not the day of His triumph! Put not off the hour of His coronation. *Now,* NOW—

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

Now, now; for now, today, He has raised us up together, and made us sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," now are our sins forgiven; now are we robed in His righteousness;

now are our feet upon a rock, and our goings are established. Who is there among you who would defer the time of your hosannas? "To Him be glory *now."* O cherubim above, "To Him be glory now," for you "continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts." Adore Him yet again, for, "To Him be glory now."

"And forever"; never shall we cease our praise. Time! You shall grow old and die. Eternity! Your unnumbered years shall speed their everlasting course. But forever, forever, forever, "To Him be glory." Is He not a "Priest forever, after the order of Melchisedek"? "To Him be glory!" Is He not king forever?—King of kings and Lord of lords, The everlasting Father? "To Him be glory *forever."* Never shall His praises cease. That which was bought with blood deserves to last while immortality endures. The glory of the cross must never be eclipsed; the luster of the grave and of the resurrection must never be dimmed. Oh, my beloved brothers and sisters, my spirit begins to feel the ardor of the immortals. I would anticipate the songs of heaven! My tongue had it but celestial liberty, would begin even now to join those thrice-melodious sonnets sung by flaming tongues above. O Jesus! You shall be praised forever! As long as immortal spirits live—as long as the Father's throne endures—forever, forever, forever, unto You shall be glory!

But now, there is a conclusion to this of the most suggestive kind, *"Amen."* Brothers and sisters, I want to work this amen out—not as a matter of doctrine, but as a matter of blessed transport. Come; give me your hearts again. "To Him be glory both now and forever, *Amen."* What does this Amen mean? Amen has four meanings in Scripture. By the way, the Puritan's interpretation—it is a very remarkable thing—that under the old law, there was no amen to the blessings; the only amen was to the curses! When they pronounced the curses, "All the people said Amen." Under the law there never was an amen to the blessing! Now, it is an equally remarkable, and more blessed thing, that under the gospel, there is no amen to the curses—the only amen is to the blessings! "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, Amen." "If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." No amen. There is no amen to the curse under the gospel. But *"All* the promises of God are *Yes and Amen*, in Christ Jesus." Now, the "Amen"—and here I am greatly indebted to good old Thomas Adams—means four things. First, it is *the desire of the heart*, "Behold, I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." We say amen at the end of the prayer, to signify, "Lord, let it be so"—it is our heart's desire. Now, brothers and sisters give me your hearts, then—for it is all a heart-matter here. "To Him be glory both now and forever, Amen." Is that your heart's desire? If not, you cannot say amen to it. Does your heart long, pant, thirst, groan, and cry out after Christ, so that you *can* say, every time you bend your knee, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, for Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever, Amen"? Can you say, "Amen, Lord, let Your kingdom come"? Brothers and sis-

ters, if you can say it in this sense, if it is your heart's desire that Christ's glory should be extended, and His kingdom should come, say "Amen," aloud this morning! Now join with me, for my heart glows with it. I can say it—and the Judge of all knows how my heart longs to see Jesus magnified. Join with me then, you who can do it honestly, while I repeat the doxology—"To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

[The congregation very heartily, aloud, said, "Amen!"]

So be it Lord. You hear Your Church as it cries, "Amen!" Verily, it is our heart's desire—

"Amen, with joy divine, let earth's
Unnumbered myriads cry!
Amen, with joy divine, let heaven's
Unnumbered choirs reply!"

But it signifies more than this; it means *the affirmation of our faith.* We only say amen to that which we really believe to be true. We add our affidavit, as it were, to God's promise, that we believe Him to be faithful and true. Have you any doubts but that Jesus Christ is glorious now and forever? Do you doubt His being glorified of angels, cherubim and seraphim, today? And do you not believe, my brothers and sisters, that they who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him, and that His enemies shall lick the dust? If you so believe, if you have faith today amid the world's obstinacy and the sinner's pride, amid abounding superstition and dominant evil, if you still have faith to believe that Christ shall be glorious forever and ever, then join with me and again say Amen! "To Him be glory both now and forever, Amen." [The congregation again said, "Amen!"]

Lord, You hear it, though it is a feebler cry than before, for there are more who can desire it than there are who believe it. Nevertheless, You abide faithful—

"This little seed from heaven
Shall soon become a tree;
This ever-blessed leaven
Diffused abroad must be—
Till God the Son shall come again,
It must go on. Amen! Amen!"

But there is yet a third meaning to this amen. It often expresses *the joy of the heart*. When of old they brought forth a Jewish king, the High Priest took a horn of oil and poured it on his head; then came forward a herald, and the moment he had sounded the trumpet, one with a loud voice said, "God save the king! God save the king!" and all the people said, "Amen!" And one shout went up to heaven, while with joy of heart they saluted the king in whom they hoped to see a prosperous ruler through whom God would bless them, and make them victorious. Now, what do you say? As you see King Jesus sitting upon Mount Zion with death and hell beneath His feet, as today you anticipate the glory of His Advent, as today you are expecting the time when you shall reign with Him forever and ever, does not your heart say, "Amen!"? I can remember, in a season of the greatest darkness of mind and weakness of body, there was one text which used to cheer me beyond all measure; there was nothing in the text about myself; it was no promise to *me,* but it was

something about *Him*. It was this—"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, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." Oh, it seemed so joyous that *He* was exalted! What did it matter what became of *me?* What did it matter what would become of all of us? King David is worth 10,000 of us! Let our names perish, but let His name last forever! Brothers and sisters, this morning I bring forth the King to you. I bring Him before the eyes of your faith today; I proclaim Him king, again, and do you, if you desire Him to be king, and if you rejoice in His reign, say "Amen!"? Here, here He stands in vision before your eyes. Crown Him! Crown Him! Lo, He is today crowned afresh! "To Him be glory both now and forever." Joyous hearts lift up your voices, and with one accord say "Amen!" [The congregation again said, "Amen!"] Amen, Lord, be You King in the midst of us all—

"Yes, amen, let all adore You,
High on Your exalted throne!
Savior, take Your power and glory;
Claim the kingdoms for Your own—
O come quickly! Hallelujah, Come, Lord, come!"

But, lastly and this is a very solemn point. Amen is sometimes used in Scripture as an amen of resolution. It means, "I, in the name of God, solemnly pledge myself that in His strength I will seek to make it so; to Him be glory both now and forever." Now, I shall not want you to say, "Amen" to this *aloud,* but I shall pause to let you say it silently in your own souls by-and-by. I walked last week through the long galleries which vanity has dedicated to all the glories of France. You pass through room after room where especially you see the triumphs of Napoleon in writhing bodies, and in the blood, and vapor, and smoke. Surely as you walk through the pages of Scripture, you walk through a much more marvelous picture gallery, in which you see the glories of Christ! This book contains the memorials of His honors. In another place in Paris, there stands a column made with the cannons taken by the Emperor in battle. It is certainly a mighty trophy. O Jesus! You have a better than this; a trophy made of forgiven souls; of eyes which wept but whose tears have been wiped away; of broken hearts that have been healed, and of saved souls that forever more rejoice! But what trophies Christ has to make Him glorious, both now and forever; trophies of living hearts that love Him; trophies of immortal spirits who find their heaven in gazing upon His beauties! What must the glories of Christ be forever when you and I, and all the ten thousand millions He has bought with His blood shall be in heaven! Oh, when we have been there many a thousand years, we shall feel as fresh a rapture as when we came there! And if our spirits should be sent on any errand from our Master, and we should have to leave His presence for a moment, oh, with what wings of a dove we will fly back to behold His face again! When we shall all surround that throne, what songs will I, the chief of sinners, saved by blood, give Him! What hymns will you give Him, you who have had your iniquities cleansed and are today saved? What praise will all those multitudes give Him who have all

been partakers of His grace? But this has more to do with "forever." Now, what do you say about our glorifying Him *now?* Oh, brothers and sisters make it your prayer this morning, "Lord, help me to glorify You. I am poor, help me to glorify You by contentment. I am sick, help me to give You honor by patience. I have talents, help me to extol You by spending them for You. I have time, Lord, help me to redeem it, that I may serve You! I have a heart to feel, Lord, let that heart feel no love but Yours, and glow with no flame, but affection for You. I have a head to think, Lord help me to think *of* You and *for* You! You have put me in this world for something, Lord, show me what that is, and help me to work out my life-purpose, for I do desire to say amen. I cannot do much; my amen is but a feeble one; but as the widow put in her two mites, which made a farthing, which was all her living, so, Lord, I put my time and eternity, too, into Your treasury! It is all yours, take it, and thus I say, 'Amen' to Peter's doxology."

And now, throughout this year will you go forth, my brothers and sisters, and say amen to this? I pray you do so. You who do not love Christ cannot say amen. Remember you are under the law. There is an amen to all the curses for you! There is none to the blessings while you are under the law. O poor sinner under the law, may this be the day when your slavery to the law shall come to an end! "How can it be?" you ask. By faith in Christ, I answer! "He who believes on Him is not condemned." Oh, that you may believe on Him, and then your joyful heart will say amen! Then will you say, "Loudest of all the saints in heaven, I will shout amen, when I see the royal crown brought forth, and Jesus is acknowledged Lord of all." May God grant that this year may be the best year this church has ever had! This year concludes eight years of my ministry among you, and seven years of Printed Sermons are now before the public. How much of blessedness God has caused to pass through our mind, and how much He has been pleased to acknowledge His Word, we cannot fully measure. But we know that He *has* been with us in deed and in truth! Now that we begin this year, may the Lord make it so that all the past shall seem to be as nothing compared with that which is to come! I bless you, my brothers and sisters, in the name of the Lord, and commencing this year, I beg again for renewed tokens of your affection by a renewal of your prayers. And on my part, I only trust that it may be mine through this year and as long as I live, to be giving my amen to that doxology—"To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

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A CURE FOR CARE
NO. 428

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 12, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."
1 Peter 5:7.

NO one precept contains the whole of a believer's duty; but usually in Scripture the precepts rise one above the other, like those stone steps by which the traveler in Egypt ascends to the pinnacle of the pyramid. You must first plant your feet firmly upon the preceding duty, before you shall be able fully to climb to the next command! Let me, then, call your attention to the precept which precedes my text—"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." You know, beloved, that there are some selfish, carnal cares which we must not cast upon God; it would be an insult to Him; it would be an act of infamy on our part if we should venture to ask for His assistance in them. Those are cares which would never molest us at all if we were obedient to the precept—"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God." This cuts off the head at once of many of those anxieties into which Christians sometimes fall. For instance, covetous cares—if I desire to get and grasp more than is absolutely necessary, that I may hastily grow rich, I cannot, on my knees, ask God to carry this care for me, because it is none of His sending! He has taught me to say, "Give us this day our daily bread," and He has given me a blessed example in Agur, that I may pray, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." But I cannot go on my knees before God, honestly, as a miser, and ask that He would enable me to add house to house, and field to field! That care I never ought to indulge, and I never would endure it if I attended to the precept, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God." There is, also, the care of ambition, when men desire to attain honors, eminence and fame; to stand foremost, to be exalted upon the pinnacle, to be looked up to by all, and to be almost adored by some! If we allow ambition to creep into our minds, we cannot go to God with it; it is a care which we dare not cast on God, for that were to empty the filth of our house upon the altar of God's sanctuary! But then, I say, it is a care which would never fret us, if our souls were lowly before the Lord.

There are those cares, too, which we make for ourselves—those anxieties which anticipate the future—those foolish fears which are only created in our brain, and which vex the head, and then fret the heart—we cannot ask God to take those upon Himself; cares which have no existence except in our own fancies, we can scarcely cast on God. But then, beloved, we would never have them if we "humbled ourselves under the mighty hand of God." Then, in such a state of subjection to the divine will, and of resignation to the eternal purpose, our soul would sit quietly

and be still, and our spirit would not agitate itself with frivolities which it has itself imagined, with fancies which have no origin but in our own imagination. Oh that you may have divine grace to obey the *preceding* command, and then I think, without any limitation, I may address you in the words of the text—"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." I repeat, sinful cares we cannot cast on God! But then, obeying the precept, "Humble yourselves," would uproot such vexations! He who is down, need fear no fall. He whose soul is even as a weaned child, will fret and cry no more.

In addressing you this morning from so rich a text as this, I would pray rather that the Holy Spirit may deliver you from anxiety, than attempt to deliver you from it myself, for I am not even able to obey this precept myself, much less shall I enable you to do it! Only when the Spirit of God is upon the preacher can *he* cast his cares upon his God, and he is convinced by experience, that only as the Holy Spirit shall enable you, will *you* be able to do the same. However, that our words may be the means of your comfort and of your strengthening, let us speak on this wise. First, for a few minutes, *let us expound this disease of care,* giving some description of it. Secondly, *let us manifest the blessed remedy of the text,* endeavoring, in God's name, to apply it. And lastly, *let us hold out the sweet inducement of the second part of the sentence,* in order that believers may be led to attempt the practicing of the precept, "He cares for you."

I. First, then, LET US ENDEAVOR TO DESCRIBE THE DISEASE OF CARE.

The care mentioned in the text, even though it is exercised upon legitimate objects, (and in this it differs from the cares of which I spoke just now, which were cares concerning wrong objects), care even when exercised upon legitimate objects if carried to excess, has in itself *the nature of sin.* This will be clear if you think for a moment that anything which is a transgression of God's command is sin, and if there were no other command; the one in our text being broken would involve us in iniquity. But it is a precept earnestly repeated by our Savior many times, it is one which the apostles have reiterated again and again, and one which cannot be neglected without involving transgression. Besides, the very essence of anxious care is the imagining that we are wiser than God, and the thrusting of ourselves into His place, to do for Him that which we dream He either cannot or will not do! We attempt to think of that which we fancy He will forget; or we labor to take upon ourselves that burden which He either is not able or willing to carry for us. Now, this impertinence, this presumption, what if I say, this *audacity*, has in it the very nature of sin, to attempt to know better than God, to snatch from His hands the helm by which He guides affairs, to attempt to correct His charts, to re-map His providence! This, indeed, is such impertinence, that as the guardian Scripture pushes back the intruder; it demands of him, "Are you also one of the King's counsel? What are you doing here? He took no counsel with you when He made the heavens and the earth, and balanced the clouds, and stretched out the skies like a tent to dwell

in, how dare you come here and offer advice to perfect wisdom, and aid to omnipotent strength?" There is in anxious care the very nature of sin!

But, further, these anxious cares very frequently lead to other sins, sometimes to *overt acts of transgression.* The tradesman, who is not able to leave his business with God, may be tempted to indulge in the tricks of the trade. No, he may not only be *tempted,* but he may be *prevailed* upon, to put out an unholy hand with which to help himself. The professional or literary man, if he has no firm trust in providence, may lend his skill to indirect and unlawful ends; and each man, if he has no other snare, will be tried with this—to forsake prayer, and to forget the promise, in order to trust to the wisdom of a friend, or to the natural wisdom of some mentor in whom he puts confidence. Now, this is forsaking the fountain to go to the broken cisterns, a crime which was laid against Israel of old, a wrath provoking iniquity. Even if it led to no other act, except this sin of preferring the counsel of man to the direction of God, excessive anxiety were to be reprobated and detested! But think, my brothers and sisters, of the many sins which our anxieties engender in our hearts! Our unbelief which makes us doubt our God, our lack of love which is proven by our distrust of love, our lack of hope which puts out our eyes so that we cannot see the clear shining after the rain. Think, my brothers and sisters, how we fret and mistrust, and thus vex the Spirit of God, and often cause Him to depart from us, so that our prayers are hindered, so that our example is marred, so that we give ourselves rather to *self*-seeking than to seeking God! All these things are sins, the grapes of Gomorrah which grow on the vines of our cares. These base-born cares are the plentiful mothers of transgressions. Distrust is the egg out of which many a mischief is hatched; we indulge in these cares and think surely we are doing no wrong, whereas the indulgence in them is in itself a crime, and is besides a tempter which guides us onward to the commission of other iniquities, for the man who is full of care, is ripe for any sin, but he who has cast his care on God stands securely, neither shall the evil one be able to touch him!

To proceed further in uncovering this disease; as it is in itself sin, and the mother of sin, we note again that *it brings misery.* Where sin is, sorrow shall soon follow. He, who would have his spirit bowed down even to the very earth, has only to fix his thoughts upon himself, and his circumstances, instead of looking to God, and His promises! Some of you are placed in a very happy position in life, but, my dear brothers and sisters you can make yourselves miserable if you please. Others of you are put in what the world considers unhappy circumstances, but if God enables you, you can be supremely blessed! Poverty does not necessarily involve sorrow, nor do riches in themselves bring peace or happiness. If any of you wish for misery you need not go out of your own house, there is no need to travel far for causes of discontent! You can be filled with plenty and be poor; you can dwell in the midst of peace and be disturbed; you can possess the richest prosperity and yet be afflicted. We, to a very great extent, make our own position. God ordains providence, and either divine grace makes us happy, or sin racks us with pain. God does not make our misery! The cause of our trouble lies at our own door, not at

His. Do you see that Christian there with the sparkling eyes, and the light footsteps, the man who is swift to run upon his Master's errands? That man has many troubles, but when he wakes in the morning, if he retains remembrance of them, he bows his knee and leaves them with his God! He goes home, and the day has had much of sorrow in it, but he shakes the weight from his own shoulder, and leaves his burden upon God. That man, with all his troubles, is more blessed than yonder professor, who has very little to vex him, except that he vexes himself, by making every little thing a ground for fretfulness, magnifying every small mischance into a strange calamity, and by losing all patience, when all things suit not his proud will and dainty taste! Oh brothers and sisters, it is an ill thing for Christians to be sad. Let them rejoice, "Rejoice in the Lord always," but they never can as long as they indulge in anxious cares!

Besides this, these anxious cares do not only lead us into sin, and destroy our peace of mind, but they also *weaken us for usefulness.* When one has left all his cares at home, how well he can work for his Master! But, when those cares tease us in the pulpit, it is hard preaching the gospel. When cares buzz in the ears, the music of divine grace is hard to hear. What would you say of your workman who should come to you in the morning with a heavy piece of family furniture upon his back? He calls himself your porter, he is about to carry your goods, and you see him going out of the door with your load, which is properly proportioned to his strength, but beside that he is carrying a heavy piece of his own upon his shoulders. You say to him, "My good man, what are you doing there?" "Oh sir, I am only loaded with household stuff." I think you would say, "Well but you are not fit to do my work which you are engaged to do. I do not employ you to carry your own load; I had you here to carry mine." "But sir," he says, "I am so weak, I cannot carry both." "Then leave yours alone," you say, "and carry mine." Or to use another simile; there was a great king who once employed a merchant in his service as an ambassador to foreign courts. Now the merchant, before he went away, said to the king, "My own business requires all my care, and though I am always willing to be your majesty's servant, yet if I attend to your business as I ought, I am sure my own will be ruined." "Well," said the king, "you take care of my business, and I will take care of yours. Use your best endeavors, and I will answer for it that you shall be nothing the loser for the zeal which you take from yourself to give to me." And so our God says to us, as His servants, "Do My work, and I will do yours. Serve Me and I will serve you." Like Peter—Peter is fishing, Christ needs a pulpit to preach in. He borrows Peter's boat, and preaches in it; well what about Peter's fishing? Oh, the Master will take care of that, for no sooner is the sermon done than He says, "Launch into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch." And Peter gets more in ten minutes through having lent his boat to his Master, than he might have done in ten weeks, if he had been fishing on his own account! Leave your cares with God, and care for Him—

"Make HIS service your delight,
Your needs shall be HIS care."

The subject would not be complete if I did not add that these little cares, of whose guilt, perhaps, we think so little, *do very great damage to our blessed and holy cause.* Your sad and miserable countenances hinder souls who are anxious, and they present a ready excuse for souls who are careless. "Look," they say, "look, that man is a Christian, the whole of the winters of a century have left their storm rifts on his forehead, and all the winds of ages seem to have ruffled his brow. He has no peace, no joy—who would be a Christian to be so miserable?" Thus, the careless man says he will not have hell here; he will leave that for hereafter. Even anxious spirits say, "It cannot be that this religion is true, for if it were really true, one would think it would be able to support its followers in the troubles of life. If God's Word is true, that God will sustain His people, then Christians would be sustained, and believers would be cheered and comforted. But I see that they are as much fretful as other men, as impatient as they are, and that So-and-So, who makes a profession, is quite as weak, quite as easily bowed before the storm, as yonder man who has no God in whom to trust, and no promises on which to lean!" Ah, let it not be said so, Christian, through you; open not the enemy's mouth to blaspheme! Let not the dragon find food through you, who are of the seed of the woman, but rather seek, casting your care on God, to disentangle yourself of all personal hindrances, that you may be avenged upon your Master's adversaries as a good soldier of Jesus Christ! I close the description of this matter by saying that in the most frightful manner, cares have brought many to the poisoned cup, the halter, and the knife, and hundreds to the madhouse. What makes the constant increase of our lunatic asylums? Why is it that in almost every country in England, new asylums have to be erected, wing after wing being added to these buildings in which the imbecile and the raving are confined? It is because we *will* carry what we have no business to carry—our own cares! And until there shall be a general keeping of the day of rest throughout England, and until there shall be a more general resting of our souls, and all we have upon God, we must expect to hear of increasing suicides and increasing lunacies! So long as the present system of competition in business shall continue—and there seems no hope that it will ever cease, for the signs of the times suggest that the battle will grow sterner every day—it will become a more stern duty with each of us to cast our care on God, unless we would see reason reel, and would be howling maniacs in our cells. Oh, for your own sake, and for your children's sake, for Christ's sake and for His Church's sake, I pray you spoil not the fair house which God has built! Cast not out the lovely tenant; leave not the temple of the Lord to be the prison of madness! Away with evil cares if you would still be a man.

II. I shall now want your attention to the second part of the subject, THE BLESSED REMEDY TO BE APPLIED.

Somebody must carry these cares. If I cannot do it myself, can I find any who will? My Father who is in heaven stands waiting to be my burden-bearer! With broad shoulders, with Omnipotence as His strength, He says "My child, roll your burden upon your God." Blessed privilege, dare I neglect it? Can I be wicked enough to reject it, and to bear my cares my-

self? Here is the blessed remedy, "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you."

Now, in order rather to apply this remedy, than to describe it, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, I will mention some of those fears, those cares, which are legitimate enough in their objectives, but, which can only be relieved by leaving them with God. One of the first and most natural cares with which we are vexed is *the care for daily bread.* "I would be content," says one, "with food and raiment. If I can but provide things honest in the sight of all men, and see my family cared for, I shall then be happy." "But" says one, "what shall I eat, what shall I drink, with what shall I be clothed? I am without a job, having, therefore, no opportunity to earn my livelihood; I am without substance, having, therefore, nothing to look upon by which I may be supported without labor. I am without friends or a patron who might give me his generous assistance. What shall I do?" You are a Christian, are you; you must use all diligence, that is your duty—but oh, if God shall help you, mingle no fretfulness with the diligence, no impatience with your suffering, and no distrust with your trials! No, remember what Jesus has said so sweetly to the point, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take you thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Why, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, take no thought, saying "What shall we eat?" Or, "What shall we drink?" Or, "With what shall we be clothed?" (For after all, these things do the Gentiles seek): for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Such a care as that, I say, is natural enough, and to bid a man shake it off when he is in actual need is cruelly absurd, unless you have a sure consolation to offer him. But you can say, "Cast your trial upon God." Use your most earnest endeavors, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God; if you cannot do one thing, do another! If you cannot earn your bread as a gentleman, earn it as a poor man! If you cannot earn it by the sweat of your brains, do it by the sweat of your brow! Do something for an honest living—sweep a crossing if you cannot do anything else. If a man will not work, neither let him eat; but having brought yourself to that, if still every door is shut, "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed."

Businessmen, who have not exactly to hunt for the necessities of life, are often tormented with the anxieties of large transactions and extended commerce. The failures of others, frequent bad debts, changes in the markets, monetary pressures, and sudden panics, cause a world of trouble! Through our fashion of credit in this age, it is very hard for a Christian to conduct business in the sober, substantial fashion which a tender conscience would prefer. "Owe no man anything"—if that could be inter-

woven into the system of trade, it would, I do not doubt, cure tens of thousands of ills, which now grow out of that credit system which seems to be unavoidable, but which, I am sure, involves many of the crimes which are committed, and very much of the care which racks business-men! Well, through the present high-pressure system of trade, there is naturally much care. If any man here can say that he can go into his office having many in his employ, and never at all have care, I should think he must be a *rarity* in the world! Surely, he might walk till he dropped with weariness, before he would meet with another of the same order! But, if there is a brother here who has a business so extensive that he does not sleep at night, one who lies there tossing on his bed, thinking about this servant who may have robbed him, or about that vessel that is out at sea, or about the low prices of a certain article which has gone down since he laid in a large stock, and all those little things which all of you know—then I say, "brother, wait a minute! What are you doing? What are you doing? Are you sure that in this you have used your best prudence and wisdom, and your best industry, and given it your best attention?" "Yes." Well then, what more have you to do? Suppose you like to weep all night, will that keep your ship from going on the Goodwin Sands? Suppose you could cry your eyes out, will that make a thief honest? Suppose you could fret yourself till you could not eat, would that raise the price of goods? One would think, if you were just to say, "Well, I have done all that is to be done, now I will leave it with God," that you might go about your business, and have the full use of your senses to attend to it! Whereas, now, you fritter away your senses, and then commit blunders, and so you multiply your troubles by that very fretfulness by which you hoped to remove them! There—let them alone! We say, "Leave well enough alone." But I say, "Leave ill alone," leave them *both* alone, and with both your hands, for you will need both hands to honor your Master—with the hand of prayer, "In everything by prayer and supplication, making known your wants unto God." And with the other hand, the hand of faith, trusting in God—lift your load right off your own shoulders, and let the whole crushing weight be left with your eternal God, for "He will sustain you, He will never suffer the righteous to be moved."

Another anxiety of a personal kind, which is very natural and indeed very proper, if it is not carried to excess, is the care of your *children*. Blessed be God for our children! We do not sympathize with those who look upon them as afflictions, for we believe them still to be a heritage of the Lord. But what anxieties they involve! How shall we bring them up? How shall they be provided for? Will they honor their parents, or will they bring disgrace upon the name they bear? A child may be the greatest curse his parents ever had, while he may be their choicest comfort. "All these," as an old Puritan said, "are doubtful blessings, and may be certain curses, yet, I will not have it that there is any doubt about their being blessings, as God sends them." A Christian parent must have care about his children, and all the more because he is a Christian, since he will not be satisfied with their getting on in business, he will never be content till his children walk in the truth of God. Mother, father, you have prayed for your children; you trust you have set them a holy exam-

ple; you labor day by day to teach them the truth as it is in Jesus; you have travailed in birth for their souls till Christ is formed in them. It is well. Now, let your souls quietly expect the blessing, leave your offspring with God; cast your sons and daughters upon their father's God! Let no impatience intrude if they are not converted in your time, and let no distrust distract your mind if they should seem to belie your hopes.

I met yesterday with a few verses which sound like the warbling of an American song writer. They exactly suit my subject, and in reading them in private, they have touched my heart. Excuse me, therefore, if though I never read a *sermon,* I will for once read a *part* of one—

"The Master has come over Jordan,"
Said Hannah, the mother, one day.
"He is healing the people who throng Him,
With a touch of His finger, they say.
And now I shall carry the children,
Little Rachel and Samuel and John
I shall carry the baby, Esther,
For the Lord to look upon."
The father looked at her kindly,
But he shook his head and smiled—
"Now, who but a doting mother
Would think of a thing so wild?
If the children were tortured by demons,
Or dying of fever it were well;
Or had they the taint of the leper,
Like many in Israel."
"No, do not hinder me, Nathan!
I feel such a burden of care
If I carry it to the Master,
Perhaps I shall leave it there.
If He lays His hand on the children,
My heart will be lighter, I know—
For a blessing forever and ever
Will follow them as they go."
So, over the hills of Judah,
Along by the vine-rows green,
With Esther asleep on her bosom,
And Rachel her brothers between;
Among the people who hung on His teaching,
Or waited His touch and His word,
Through the row of proud Pharisees listening,
She pressed to the feet of the Lord!
Now, why should you hinder the Master,
Said Peter, "With children like these?
See not how, from morning till evening,
He teaches and heals disease?"
Then Christ said, "Forbid not the children,
Permit them to come unto Me!"
And He took in His arms little Esther,
And Rachel He set on His knee.
And the heavy heart of the mother
Was lifted all earth-care above,
As He laid His hands on the brothers
And blessed them with most tender love;
As He said of the babes in His bosom,
"Of such are the kingdom of heaven";

And strength for all duty and trial
That hour to her spirit was given."

Thus do you, and thus inherit the blessing!

But, each Christian will, in his time, have personal troubles of a higher order, namely, *spiritual cares*. He is begotten again unto a lively hope, but he fears that his faith will yet die. He hopes he has some spark of spiritual joy, but there are dark and dreary nights which lower over him, and he fears that his lamp will die out in darkness. As yet, he has been victorious, but he trembles lest he should one day fall by the hand of the enemy. Beloved, I beseech you; cast this care upon God for He cares for you. "I am persuaded that He who has begun a good work in you will carry it on and perfect it unto the day of Christ." He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord who has mercy on you." "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." "No good thing will I withhold from them who walk uprightly." "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Why, one might keep you all this morning, and this afternoon, and evening too, repeating the precious promises of God, and we might close them all by saying—

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

Away, then, with dark suspicions and anxieties! Is it care about past sin? "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin." Is it present temptation? "There has no temptation happened to you but such as is common to men: but God who is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." Is it future peril? O, leave that with Him, for neither "things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." If you begin to think always of yourself, you will be miserable! Why, it is Christ who makes you what you are before the eyes of God. Look, then, to Jesus in order to find out what you are in God's esteem! Soul, I say again, look at Christ and not at yourself; never let anxieties about Sanctification destroy your confidence of Justification. What if you are a sinner! Christ *died* to save sinners! What if you are undeserving? "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Divine grace is free! The invitation is still open to you—rest the whole burden of your soul's salvation where it must rest. Do not be a Uzziah, lay no hasty hand upon the Ark of the Lord; above all, do not be an Uzziah, attempt not to offer sacrifices or usurp the priesthood, for Christ must stand for you, you cannot stand or do for yourself. Cast, then, your care on Him, for He cares for you!

I shall need your patient attention two or three minutes more, while trying to apply this remedy. I notice that there are many cares not of a personal, but rather of an *ecclesiastical* character, which often insinuate themselves, and plead for life, but, which must, nevertheless, be put

away. I am sorry to confess, that if I do not preach to anyone else this morning, I shall now be preaching to myself. There are cares about *how God's work is to be carried on.* I know a foolish young man who lies awake many nights thinking about that, and who sometimes by day makes himself foolishly sad, because with large purposes of heart, and with great designs in his soul, he sees not the way by which they are to be carried out, and has not yet attained the faith which—

"Laughs at impossibilities,
And says, 'It shall be done.'"

If any of you are suffering from the same sad disease, let me exhort you from the words of Peter, to cast the care about God's work *upon God.* He never sent us a warfare at our own charge; He never did require us to do *His* work; that He will attend to Himself. And we ought to feel that if God does not enable us to do as much as we would, it is a blessed thing to be enabled and permitted to do as much as we can! If we think there are few men to work, or little means with which to work, we must not be fretful about where the means, or the men shall come from! We may properly pray, "Lord, send laborers," and with equal propriety, we may ask, that He who has the silver and the gold, may give them for His own work. But after that, we must cast our care on God! Then, if we get over that, there will be another anxiety—one which frets me often enough—*the success of God's work!* Oh, when there are souls converted, how our heart leaps for joy! When the church keeps continually increasing, how glad we are! But, if there is even a little lull, we feel so sad; if we do not see God's arm always bare, we are ready to lie down and say, "Lord, let me die; I am no better than my fathers." When we are in a low state of body and heart, too, that weakening sickness of unbelief, like the woman's issue of blood, comes over us, and we feel that life is ebbing as success decreases. Now, this is a care we must cast on God! Preacher, your Great Employer sent you out to sow the seed, but if no grain of it should ever come up, if you sowed the seed as He told you, and where He told you, He will never lay the blame of a defective harvest to you. It is ours to *preach*—but to *convert souls* is God's! It is ours to *labor,* but the success depends alone on Him. "They who go through the valley of Baca make it a well"—that is *their* business, to dig wells—"the rain also fills the pools"—it is not their business to fill the wells; and the wells do not get full from the bottom as they do in our country, it is the *rain* that fills the pools! The blessing comes from on high; and if we have dug the wells, and we have prayed six times, and as yet the rain has not descended, go again seven times, and the rain shall yet descend, and the pools shall be filled to the brim! Do not, therefore, let us have cares about success!

And sometimes there is another care. It is the care, lest some little slip made by ourselves or others, should give cause to the enemy to blaspheme. There are devils besides those in hell, there are some on earth. And some of these are too glad to find an opportunity, if there is a word that is ever so fitly spoken, to wrest it out of its context, and make stock and capital for blasphemy out of it! It is an easy task and one which any fool can accomplish, and this world is full of fools who are glad to find dirt to eat, and then having eaten it themselves, to cram it down others

throats. One is sometimes afraid to walk for fear of breaking something in such a frail world as this; afraid to speak, lest we should say something which might open the enemy's mouth. A careful jealousy is very well if it leads to caution, but very ill if it leads to a worrisome, weak anxiety! What have you and I to do with what the enemy may do? If the Lord does not chain the devil, I am sure *we* cannot! And if He does not shut the mouths of liars, I do not know that we ought to wish He would, for if He lets them open their mouths, I have no doubt they are best open. Many a time, as Christ rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, the truth of God has ridden into the midst of Jerusalem in triumph on the back of its most despicable enemies. Beyond doubt, Christ has been lifted up even on the point of the spear, and the light of the gospel has beamed like a beacon from the stake where the martyr perished! Well, let us leave our enemies to do what they will, and only stand fast to the Lord and cast our care on Him.

And then, one is so afraid of being unfaithful at the last, lest the blood of souls should be on our garments. Oh, that thought has dashed me on my forehead to the floor many and many a time! This heavy burden crushes me into the most pitiable state, until the body sympathizes with the mind so fully, that if you could see me with the tears running from my eyes and the cold sweat starting from my head, you would say, "What a creature is that to go forth and preach?" The thought of having all of you to address, and that I must be faithful, or else your blood shall be required at my hands, is so awful a one, that in private I never dare to think of it, for it utterly unmans me! But oh, blessed be God, if He has enabled us to do all we can by His Spirit, we must leave it there! We know that He will not ask more of us than He has given to us, and if He has helped us so far, His shall be the glory. But if we have failed, even that, too, shall be washed away through His precious blood, and with all his weight of responsibility, the minister shall yet enter heaven, and find a place among the sanctified!

III. I close my last point with only a word, of THE SWEET INDUCEMENTS TO LEAVE YOUR BURDENS WITH HIM—"He cares for you."

Believe in a *universal* providence, the Lord cares for ants and angels, for worms and for worlds. He cares for cherubim and for sparrows, for seraphim and for insects. Cast your care on Him, He who calls the stars by their names, and leads them out by numbers, by their hosts. Why do you say, O Jacob, and think, O Israel, "My way is passed over from God, and He has utterly forgotten me?" Let His universal providence cheer you! Think next of His *particular* providence over all the saints. "Precious shall their blood be in His sight." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." "We know that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Let the fact that while He is the Savior of all men, He is especially the Savior of those who believe. Let that cheer and comfort you, that special providence which watches over the chosen, "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them who fear Him." And then, thirdly, let the thought of His special love *to you,* be the very essence of your comfort. "I will never leave *you*, nor forsake *you."* God says that as much to you, as

He said it to any saint of old. "Fear not, I am *your* shield and *your* exceedingly great reward." Oh, I wish, beloved, that the Holy Spirit would make you feel the promise as being spoken to *you!* Out of this vast assembly, forget the rest, and only think of yourself, for the promises are unto you, meant for you. Oh, grasp them! It is ill to get into a way of reading Scripture for the whole church, read it for yourselves, and specially hear the Master say to you this morning, "Let not *your* heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." Imagine that you hear Him say, "I have prayed for *you* that your faith fail not." Imagine you see Him walking on the waters of your trouble, for He is there, and He is saying, "Fear not, it is I; be not afraid." Oh, those sweet words of Christ! Lord, speak them to me! Speak them to Your poor sorrowing child yonder! Speak them to each one of us! Speak them to us, and let us hear Your voice, and say, "Jesus whispers consolation! I cannot refuse it; I will sit under His shadow with great delight!"

Sinners, ungodly persons here, you know not God! I send you away when I have said this one thing. What a blessed thing it is to be a Christian, to have someone who will take your cares for you! Why, you know you will have your cares whether you are Christians or not, you are sure to have troubles even in the world, but then you have no Christ to comfort you, no God to sustain you, no promise to cheer you! You have the darkness without the lamp; you have to die without the immortality to follow! Oh that you knew what a Christian is, and your mouths would be watering to know the Christian's privilege! I say to you, cast your sins upon Christ. Jesus Christ can take them. If you believe on Him there is proof that *He did* take them of old, did carry them, and suffered for them in His own person that you might go free! Oh may we each this morning, saint and sinner, come to the cross, and to the throne of grace, and say, "Lord, unload us of our burdens of guilt and care, and give us now to go on our way rejoicing," because God, all-sufficient, has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

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GRACE EXALTED—BOASTING EXCLUDED
NO. 429

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 19, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith."
Romans 3:27.

PRIDE is most obnoxious to God. As a sin, His holiness hates it; as a treason, His sovereignty detests it; as a rebellion, the whole of His attributes stand leagued to put it down. God has touched other sins with His finger, but against this vice He has made bare His arm! There have been, I know, terrible judgments against lust, but there have been 10 times as many against that swelling lust of the deceitful heart! Remember, the first transgression had in its essence, pride. The ambitious heart of Eve desired to be as God, knowing good and evil, and Adam imagined that he would be lifted up to divine rank if he dared to pluck and eat. The blasting of Paradise, the sterility of the world, the travail of human birth, the sweat of the brow, and the certainty of death may all be traced to this fruitful mother of mischief, *pride*. Remember Babel, and how God has scattered us and confounded our tongues. It was man's pride which led him to seek for an undivided monarchy, that so he might be great. The tower was to be the rallying point of all the tribes, and would have been the central throne of all human grandeur, but God has scattered us, that pride might not climb to so high a pitch. Pride, you have indeed suffered severe strokes from God! Against you has He furbished His sword, and prepared His weapons of war. The Lord, even the Lord of hosts has sworn it, and He will surely stain the pride of all human glory, and tread all boasting as straw is trod for the dunghill! Talk no more so exceedingly proud; let no arrogance come out of your mouth, for the bows of the mighty have been broken, and the haughtiness of man has been bowed down! Remember Pharaoh and the plagues which God brought on Egypt, and the wonders which He worked in the field of Zoan. Remember the Red Sea, and Rahab cut, and the dragon broken. Think of Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty architect of Babylon, driven out to eat grass like the oxen till his nails grew like birds' claws, and his hair like eagles' feathers. Remember Herod, eaten of worms, because he gave not God the glory; and Sennacherib, with the Lord's hook in his jaws, turned by the way, he came to the place where his sons became his slayers!

Time would fail to tell of the innumerable conquerors, and emperors, and mighty men of earth who have all perished beneath the blast of Your rebuke, O God, because they lifted up themselves, and said, "I am, and there is none beside me." You have turned wise men backward, and made their knowledge foolishness, and no flesh may glory in Your presence. Yes, when pride has sought to shelter itself in the hearts of God's

chosen people, still, the arrows of God have sought it out, and have drunk its blood! God still loves His servants, but pride even in *them*, He abhors. David may be a man after God's own heart, but if his pride shall lift him up to number the people, then he shall have a choice between three chastisements, and he shall be happy to choose the pestilence as being the least of the plagues. Or if Hezekiah shall show to the ambassadors of Babylon his riches, and his treasures, there shall come to him the rebuke—"What have they seen in your house?" And the threat—"Behold they shall take your sons to make them eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." Oh, brothers and sisters, forget not that God has uttered the most solemn words, as well as issued the most awful judgments, against pride! "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." "Him who has a high look and a proud heart will I not suffer." "Pride and arrogance do I hate." "The Lord will destroy the house of the proud." "The day of the Lord shall be upon everyone who is proud and lofty, and upon everyone who is lifted up, and he shall be brought low." "I am against you, O you most proud, says the Lord God of hosts." There are hundreds of terrible texts like these, but we cannot now recount them all. Now mark, to put an everlasting stigma upon human vanity, and to hurl once and for all, mire and filth upon all human glorying, God has ordained that the only way in which He will save men, shall be a way which utterly excludes the possibility of man's having a single word to say by way of vaunting! He has declared that the only foundation which He will ever lay shall be one by which man's strength shall be broken in pieces, and by which man's pride shall be humbled in the dust! To this subject, I ask your attention this morning. It is to enlarge and amplify the sentiment of the text that I seek. "Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith."

We shall notice first of all, *the rejected plan of law;* then we shall note *the excluded vice.* Having so done, we shall notice in the third place, *that the very fact that boasting is excluded, permits of the reception of the worst of sinners;* and we shall close by observing, *that the same system which excludes boasting includes humble and devout gratitude to God for His grace and mercy.*

I. First, then, THE REJECTED PLAN.

There are two ways by which man might have been forever blessed. The one was by works—"This do and you shall live; be obedient and receive the reward; keep the commandment and the blessing shall be yours, well earned and surely paid." The only other plan was—"Receive grace and blessedness as the free gift of God; stand as a guilty sinner having no merit, and as a rebellious sinner deserving the very reverse of goodness, but stand there, and receive all your good things, simply, wholly, and alone of the free love and sovereign mercy of God." Now, the Lord has not chosen the system of works. The word *law*, as used twice in the text, is employed, it is believed by many commentators, out of compliment to the Jews, who were so fond of the word, that their antagonism might not be awakened. But it means here, as elsewhere in Scripture, plan, system, method. There were two plans, two systems, two methods, two spirits—the plan of works and the plan of divine grace. God has once

and for all utterly refused the plan of merit and of works, and has chosen to bless men only and entirely through the plan, or method, or *law of faith*. Now, brothers and sisters, we have put the two before you, and we beg you to mark, that there is a distinction between the two, which must never be forgotten. Martin Luther says—"If you can rightly distinguish between works and grace, thank God for your skill, and consider yourself to be an able divine." This, indeed, is the bottom of theology, and he, who can understand this clearly, it seems to me, can never be very heretical! Orthodoxy must surely follow, and the right teaching of God must be understood, when we once and for all, are able to discriminate with accuracy between that which is of man—works, and that which is of God—faith, and divine grace received by faith.

Now, the plan of salvation by works is impossible for us. Even if God had ordained it to be the way by which men should labor to be saved, it is certain that none would have been saved by it, and therefore, all would have perished. For if you would be saved by works, remember O man, that the law requires of you *perfection*. One single flaw, *one* offense, and the law condemns you without mercy! It requires that you should keep it in every point and in every sense, and to its uttermost degree, for its demands are rigorous in the extreme. It knows nothing of freely forgiving because you cannot pay, but like a severe creditor, it takes you by your throat, and says, "Pay me all." And if you cannot pay even to the uttermost farthing, it shuts you up in the prison of condemnation, out of which you cannot escape! But, if it were possible for you to keep the law in its perfection outwardly, yet, remember, that you would be required to keep it in your *heart* as well as in your external life! One single motion of the heart from the right, one reception of even the shadow of a passing temptation, so as to become a partaker of sin, would ruin you! "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with your entire mind, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself." Fail here, and oh, who among us can be such a hypocrite as to think he has not failed 10,000 times? Fail here—and though your life were virtuous, though your exterior were such as even criticism itself must commend, yet you still perish because you have not kept the law, and yielded its full demands!

Remember, too, that it is clear you can never be saved by the law, because if up to this moment, your heart and life have been altogether without offense, yet it is required that it should be so even to your dying day! And, do you hope that as temptations come upon you thick as your moments, as your trials invade you numerous as the swarms which once thronged from the gates of Thebes, you will be able to stand against all these? Will there not be found some weak spot in your harness; will there not be some moment in which you may be tripped up—some instant when either the eyes may wander after lust, or the heart set on vanity? Can you say you would *never* stretch out your hand to touch that which is not good? Oh, man, remember, we are not sure that even this life would end that probation, for as long as you should live, and be God's creature, duty would still be due, and the law still your insatiable creditor! Forever would your happiness tremble in the scales! Even in heaven

itself, the law would follow you; even there, as your righteousness would be your *own,* it would never be finished! And even from yonder shining battlements you might fall, and amid those harps, wearing that white robe, *if you were to be saved by your own works,* there might be a possibility of perishing! The obedience of a creature can never be finished! The duty of a servant of the law is never over! As long as you were the creature of God, your Creator would have demands upon you! How much better to be accepted in the beloved, and to wear His finished righteousness as our glory and security! Now, in the face of all this, will any of you prefer to be saved by your works? Or, rather, will you prefer to be *damned* by your works? For that will certainly be the issue, let you hope what you may!

Now, I suppose, that in this congregation, we have but very few—there may be some—who would indulge a hope of being saved by the law in itself; but there is a delusion abroad that perhaps God will modify the law, or that at least, He will accept a sincere obedience, even if it is imperfect; that He will say, "Well, this man has done what he could, and, therefore, I will take what he has given as though it were perfect." Now, remember, against this the Apostle Paul declares peremptorily, "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified," so that, that is answered at once! But, more than this, God's law cannot change; it can never be content to take less from you than it demands. What said Christ? "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." And again, He expressly said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfill." The law's demands were met and fulfilled for believers by Christ; but, as far as those demands are concerned to those who are under it, they are as great, as heavy, and as rigorous, as ever they were! Unless His law could be changed, and that is impossible, God cannot accept anything but a *perfect obedience!* And, if you are hoping to be saved by your sincere endeavors to do your best, your hopes are rotten things, and delusions, falsehoods, and you will perish wrapped up in the shrouds of your pride! "Yes," some say, "but could it not be partly by grace and partly by works?" No! The apostle says that boasting is excluded, and excluded by the law of faith; but if we let in the law of works in any degree, we cannot shut out boasting, for to that degree, you give man an opportunity to congratulate himself as having saved himself! Let me say broadly—to hope to be saved by works is a delusion! To hope to be saved by a method in which divine grace and works are co-acting, is not merely a delusion, but an *absurd* delusion! It is contrary to the very nature of things that divine grace and merit should ever mingle and co-work. Our apostle has declared times without number, that if it is of grace, it is not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it *is* of works, then it is *not* of grace, otherwise work is no more work. It must be either one or the other! These two cannot be married, for God forbids it! He will have it all grace or all works, all of Christ or all of man; but for Christ to be a makeweight, for Christ to supplement your narrow robes by patching on a piece of His own, for Christ to tread a part of the winepress, and for you to tread the rest; oh, this can never be! God will never be yoked with the

creature! You might link an angel with a worm, and bid them fly together, but God with the creature—the precious blood of Jesus with the foul ditch-water of our human merits? Never! Never! Our paste gems, our varnished falsehoods, our righteousnesses which are but filthy rags, put with the real, true, precious, everlasting, divine things of Christ? Never! Unless heaven should blend in alliance with hell, and holiness hold dalliance with impurity, it must be one or the other, either man's merit, absolutely and alone, or unmixed, unmerited favor from the Lord!

Now, I suppose, if I were to labor ever so arduously to hunt out this evil spirit from the sons of men, I should miss it still, for it hides in so many shapes, and therefore let me say, that in no shape, in no sense, in no single case, and in no degree whatever, are we saved by our works or by the law! I say in no sense, because men make such shifts to save alive their own righteousness. I will show you one man who says, "Well, I don't expect to be saved by my honesty. I don't expect to be saved by my generosity, nor by my morality. But then, I have been baptized; I receive the Lord's Supper; I have been confirmed; I go to church, or I have a sitting in a meeting house; I am, as touching the ceremonies, blameless." Well, friend, in that sense you cannot be saved by works, for all these things have no use whatever upon the matter of salvation, if you have not *faith!* If you are saved, God's ordinances will be blessed things to you. But if you are not a believer, you have no right to them! And with regard to Baptism and the Supper, every time you touch them, you increase your guilt! Whether it is Baptism or the Lord's Supper, you have no right to either, unless you are already saved! They are both ordinances for believers, and for believers, only. These ordinances are blessed means of divine grace to living, quickened, *saved souls;* but to unsaved souls, to souls dead in trespasses and sins, these outward ordinances can have no use for good, but may increase their sin, because they touch unworthily the holy things of God! Oh, repose not in these! Oh, dream not that a priestly hand, and sacred drops, or a God-ordained baptism in the pool, can in any way redeem you from sin, or land you in heaven—for by this way salvation is impossible! But if I drive the lover of self-righteousness out of this haunt, he runs to another. You will find others who suppose that at least *their feelings,* which are only their works in another shape, may help to save them! There are thousands who think, "If I could weep so much, and groan so deeply, and experience so much humiliation, and a certain quantity of repentance, and so much of the terrors of the law, and of the thunders of conscience, *then* I might come before God." souls, souls, this is work-mongering in its most damnable shape, for it has deluded far more than that bolder sort of work-trusting, which says, "I will rely upon what I *do."* If you rely upon what you *feel*, you shall as certainly perish as if you trust to what you *do!* Repentance is a work of the Holy Spirit, and to be convicted of sin by God the Holy Spirit is a holy privilege, but, to think that these other things, in any way, win salvation, is to run clean counter to all the teachings of the Word, for salvation is of the free grace of God, alone! There are some, moreover, who believe that if their feelings cannot do it, still *their knowledge can!* They have a very sound creed; they have struck out this doctrine and that; they believe in

justification by faith, and their sound creed is to them a confidence; they think that because they hold the theory of justification by faith, therefore they shall be saved. And oh, how they plume their feathers! How they set up their peacock tail because they happen to be orthodox! With what awful pride do they exult over their fellow professors, because they hold *the truth* and all the rest of the church, they think, is deluded with a lie!

Now this is nothing but salvation by works, only they are works performed by the *head* instead of by the hands. Oh, sirs, I will tell you—if you rest in creeds, if you hope to be saved because you can put your hand to the thirty-nine articles of an Episcopalian prayer book, or to the solemn league and covenant of the Presbyterian, or to the confession of faith of the Calvinist—if you fancy that because you happen to receive the truth of God in the head you shall be saved, you know not the truth of God but still cling to Satan's lie—that salvation is of *man,* and not of God! I know that self-righteousness was born in our bones and that it will come out in our flesh, and even that man in whom its reigning power is kept down, will still feel it sometimes rising up. When he has preached a sermon and has got on pretty well, the devil will come up the pulpit stairs and say, "Well done!" When he has prayed in public, and has had unusual fluency, he will have to be careful lest there should be a whisper behind—"What a good and gifted man you are!" Yes, and even in his hallowed moments, when he is on the top of the mountain with his Lord, he will have to watch, even there, lest self-congratulation should suggest—"Oh, man, greatly-beloved, there must surely be something in you, or else God would not have done thus unto you!" brethren, when you are thinking of your sanctification, if you are tempted to look away from Christ—away with it! And, if when you are repenting of sin, you cannot still have one eye on Christ, remember it will be a repentance that will need to be repented of, for there is nothing in ourselves that can be offered to God! There is a stench and putridity in everything that is done of the creature, and we can never come before God except through Christ Jesus, who is made of God unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. I have thus tried to denounce the plan which God has rejected.

II. I shall now, in the second head, SHOW THAT BOASTING IS EXCLUDED, for in a blessed sense God has accepted the second plan, namely, the way of salvation by *faith* through divine grace.

The first man that entered heaven entered heaven by faith. "By faith Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain." Over the tombs of all the goodly who were accepted of God, you may read the epitaph—"These all died in faith." By faith they received the promise; and among all yonder bright and shining throng, there is not one who does not confess, "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The plan, then, which God has chosen, is one of divine grace, alone. I will try and picture that plan before our mind's eye. We will imagine Boasting to be exceedingly desirous to enter into the kingdom of heaven. He marches to the door and knocks. The porter looks out and demands, "Who stands there?" "I am Boasting," he says, "and I claim to have the highest seat! I claim that I should cry aloud and say, glory be

unto man, for though he has fallen, he has lifted himself up, and worked out his own redemption." And the angel says, "But have you not heard that the salvation of souls is not of man, nor by man, but that God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion? Get out of here, Boasting, for the highest seat can never be yours, when God, in direct opposition to human merit, has rejected the Pharisee, and chosen the publican and the harlot, that they may enter into the kingdom of heaven." So Boasting says, "Let me take my place, then, if not in the highest seat, yet somewhere amid the glittering throng; for instance, let me take my place in the seat of *election*. Let it be said and taught, that albeit God did choose His people, yet it was because of their works which He foresaw, and their faith which He foreknew, and that, therefore, foreseeing and foreknowing, He did choose them because of an excellence which His prescient eyes discovered in them. Let me take my seat here." But the porter says, "No, you cannot take your place there, for election is according to the eternal purpose of God, which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was. This election is not of works, but of grace, and the reason for God's choice of man is in Himself, and not in man. And as for those virtues which you say God did foreknow, God is the Author of all of them if they exist, and that which is an effect cannot be a first cause! God foreordained these men to faith and to good works, and their faith and good works could not have been the cause of their foreordination!" Then straight from heaven's gate the trumpet sounded—("For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him who calls—it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.")

Then Boasting found that as works had no place in election, so there was no room for him to take his seat there, and he thought about where next he could be. So after a while, Boasting says to the porter, "If I cannot mount the chair of election, I will be content to sit in the place of conversion, for surely, it is man who repents and believes." The porter did not deny the truth of that, and then this evil Boasting said, "If one man believes and not another, surely, that must be the act of the man's will, and his will being free and unbiased, it must be very much to that man's credit that he believes and repents, and is therefore saved, for others, having like opportunities with himself, and no doubt having the same grace, reject the preferred mercy and perish, while this man accepts it, and therefore let me at least take my seat there." But the angel said in anger, "Take your seat there? Why, that would be to take the highest place of all, for this is the hinge and turning-point, and if you leave that with man, then you give him the brightest jewel in the crown! Does the Ethiopian change his skin and the leopard his spots? Is it not God who works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure? Of His own will He begat us with the Word of truth, and it is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of birth. Oh, Boasting, your free will is a lie! It is not man that chooses God, but God that chooses man. What did Christ say—"You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." And what did He say to the ungodly multitude, "You will not come unto Me that you might

have life." In which He gave the death-blow to all ideas of free will, when He declared that man *will not* come to Him that he might have life! And then, He said again, in another place, as if that were not enough, "No man can come unto Me except the Father which has sent Me draw him." So Boasting, though he was glad not to admit it, was shut out, and could not take his place in heaven upon the stool of conversion! And while he stood there but little abashed, for bashfulness he knows not, he heard a song floating over the battlements of heaven from all the multitude who were there, in accents like these, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name, O Lord, be the praise"—

"It was the same love that spread the feast
That gently forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin!"

"But then," said Boasting, "if I may not have so high a place, let me at least sit on the lowly stool of perseverance, and let it at least be said that while God saved the man, and is therefore to have the glory, still the man was faithful to grace received; he did not turn back unto perdition, but watched and was very careful, and kept himself in the love of God, and therefore there is considerable credit due to him; for while many drew back and perished, and he might have done the same, he struggled against sin, and thus, by his using his grace, he safely kept himself. Let me sit, then, on the chair of perseverance." But the angel replied, "No, no, what have you to do with it? I know it is written, 'keep yourselves in the love of God,' but the same apostle forbids all fleshly trust in human effort by that blessed doxology—'Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.' That which is a command in one Scripture is a covenant promise in another, where it is written, 'I will put My fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from Me.'" Oh, brothers and sisters, well do you and I know, that our standing does not depend upon ourselves! If that Arminian doctrine, that our perseverance rests somewhere in our own hands, were true, then damnation must be the lot of us all! I cannot keep myself a minute, much less year after year—

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

But what says the Scripture?—"I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone pluck them out of My hand; My Father who gave them Me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." And what says the apostle—"I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." I have not time to quote all the innumerable passages, but it is absolutely certain that if there is one doctrine in Scripture more clearly revealed than another, it is the doctrine of the

perseverance of the saints by the power of the Holy Spirit! The man who doubts that precious truth of God, has quite as much reason to doubt the Trinity, to doubt the divinity of Christ, or the fact of the atonement, for nothing can be more clear in the plain, common sense meaning of the words than this, that they who are in Christ have, even today, eternal life and shall never perish! Now, since this perseverance is not dependent upon our works, but like all the rest of salvation, is a flowing outward from the bottomless love of God, boasting is manifestly excluded! But once again, and lastly, Boasting sometimes asks to be admitted a little into glorification. I fear sometimes that a doctrine which is popular in the church, about degrees of glory, is not altogether unassociated with that old self-righteousness of ours which is very loath to die. "One star differs from another star in glory" is a great truth—but this the stars may do without differing in degrees. One star may shine with one radiance, and another with another; indeed, astronomers tell us that there are many varieties of color among stars of the same magnitude! One man may differ from another, without supposing a difference in rank, honor, or degree. For my part, I do not see anything about *degrees* in glory in Scripture, and I do not believe in the doctrine; at least if there are degrees; mark this, they cannot be according to *works,* but must be of divine grace alone! I cannot consider that because one Christian has been more devoted to Christ than another, therefore, there will be an eternal difference, for this is to introduce works. This is to bring in again the old Hagar marriage, and to bring back the child of the bondwoman, whereof God has said, "The son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with My son, even with Isaac." Oh, brothers and sisters, I think we can serve God from some other motive than that base one of trying to be greater than our brethren in heaven! If I should get to heaven at all, I do not care who is greater than I am, for if anyone shall have more happiness in heaven than I shall, then I shall have more happiness, too; for the sympathy between one soul and another will there be so intense and so great, that all the heavens of the righteous will be my heaven, and therefore, what you have, I shall have, because we shall all be one in fellowship far more perfectly than on earth. The private member will there be swallowed up in the common body.

Surely, brothers and sisters, if any of you can have brighter places in heaven, and more happiness and more joy than I, I will be glad to know it. The prospect does not excite any envy in my soul now, or if it did *now,* it certainly would not *then,* for I should feel, that the more *you* had, the more *I* should have! Perfect communion in all good things is not compatible with the private enrichment of one above another. Even on earth, the saints had all things common when they were in a heavenly state, and I am persuaded they will have all things common in glory. I do not believe in gentlemen in heaven, and the poor Christians behind the door; I believe that our union with each other will be so great, that distinctions will be utterly lost, and that we shall all have such a joint communion, and interest, and fellowship, that there will be no such thing as private possessions, private ranks, and private honors—for we shall there, to the fullest extent, be one in Christ! I do believe that Boasting is shut out

there, but I think that if there were these degrees in glory, I mean if they are dependent on works done on earth, Boasting would at least get his tail in; if it did not insinuate its whole body, it would at least get some of its unhallowed members over the wall, whereas, the text says it is excluded. Let me enlarge this one word, and then proceed. It does not say, "Boasting, you are to be allowed to come in and sit down on the floor." No, shut the door and do not let him in at all. "But let me in," he says, "and I will be quiet." No, shut him out altogether! "But at least let me put my foot in." No, exclude him; shut him out altogether. "But at least let me sometimes go in and out." No, shut him out altogether. Exclude him; bolt the door; put double padlocks on it. Say once and for all, "Boasting, get you gone; you are hurled down and broken in pieces, and if you can refit yourself, and come once more to the gate to ask admittance, you shall be driven away with shame." It is *excluded;* it cannot be let in, in any sense, in any term, nor in any degree! As Calvin says, "Not a particle of boasting can be admitted, because not a particle of work is admitted into the covenant of grace." It is of divine grace from top to bottom, from Alpha to Omega; it is not of man, nor by man, not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy, and therefore, boasting is excluded by the law of faith.

III. And now, thirdly and very briefly. Beloved in Christ Jesus, what a precious truth of God I have now to hold up to the eyes of poor lost sinners, who today are aware that they have no merits of their own! Soul, THE VERY GATE WHICH SHUTS OUT BOASTING, SHUTS IN HOPE AND JOY FOR YOU!

Let me state this truth of God broadly, that the ignorant may catch it. You say today, "Sir, I never attend the house of God, and up to this time I have been a thief and a drunkard." Well, you stand today on the same level as the most moral sinner, and the most honest unbeliever, in the matter of salvation! They are lost, since they believe not, and so are you. If the most honest is saved, it will not be by their *honesty,* but by the free grace of God! And if the most evil would be saved, it must be by the same plan. There is one gate to heaven for the most chaste, and the most debauched. When we come to God, the best of us can bring nothing, and the worst of us can bring no less. I know when I state it thus, some will say, "Then what is the good of morality?" I will tell you. Two men have fallen overboard. One man has a dirty face, and the other a clean one. There is a rope thrown over from the stern of the vessel, and only that rope will save the sinking men—whether their faces are fair or foul! Is not this the truth? Do I therefore underrate cleanliness? Certainly not; but it will not save a drowning man; nor will morality save a dying man. The clean man may sink with all his cleanliness and the dirty man may be drawn up with all his filth, if the rope does but get its hold of him! Or take this case. Here we have two persons, each with a deadly cancer. One of them is rich and clothed in purple, the other is poor and wrapped about with a few rags. And I say to them—"You are both on a par now, here comes the Physician Himself—Jesus, the King of disease; His touch can heal you both; there is no difference between you whatever!" Do I therefore say that the one man's robes are not better than the other's

rags? Of course they are better in some respects, but they have nothing to do with the matter of curing disease! So morality is a neat cover for foul venom, but it does not alter the fact that the heart is vile and the man, himself, under condemnation. Suppose I were an army surgeon, and there had been a battle. There is one man there—he is a captain and a brave man; he led his rank into the thick of the battle, and he is bleeding out his life from a terrible gash. By his side there lies a man of the rank and file, and a great coward too, wounded in the same way. I come up to both of them, and I say, "You are both in the same condition; you have both the same sort of wound, and I can heal you both." But if either of you should say, "Get away from me; I'll have nothing to do with you," your wound will be your death! If the captain should say, "I do not need you; I am a captain, go and see to that poor dog yonder," would his courage and rank save his life? No, they are good things, but not saving things! So is it with good works, men can be damned with them as well as without them if they make them their trust! Oh, what a gospel is this to preach in our theatres; to tell those hedge-birds, those who are full of all manner of loathsomeness, that there is the same way of salvation open to them as to a peer of the realm, or a bishop on the bench! That there is no difference between us in the way of mercy, that we are all condemned! That there may be degrees as to our guilt, but that the fact of our condemnation is quite as certain to the best as to the worst! "Oh" you say, "this is a leveling doctrine!" Ah, bless God if you are leveled! "Oh," you say, "but this cuts at everything that is good in man!" Ah, thank God if it kills everything in which man glories, for that which man thinks to be good is often an abomination in the sight of God! And oh, if all of us together, moral or immoral, chaste or debauched, honest or unholy, can come with the rope about our neck and with the weeds of penitence upon our loins, and say, "Great God, forgive us; we are all guilty, give us grace; we do not deserve it; bestow upon us Your favor; we have no right to it, but give it to us because Jesus died." Oh, He will never cast out one that way, for that is the way of salvation!

And if we can put our hand this morning—no matter though it were black last night with lust, or red up to the elbow with murder—yet, if we can put our hand on Jesus' head, and believe on Him—the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin! Where is boasting now? You who have done so much for humanity—you cannot boast, for you have nothing to boast of! You fine gentlemen and noble ladies, what do you say of this? O be wise, and join in the prayer, "But You, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!" And may the Lord then pronounce over us His sentence, "You are clean; go and sin no more. Your iniquities are all forgiven you."

IV. I close by just observing, that THE SAME PLAN WHICH SHUTS OUT BOASTING LEADS US TO A GRACIOUS GRATITUDE TO CHRIST.

We are sometimes asked by people, "Do you think that such a thing is necessary to salvation?" Or, perhaps the question is put in another way, "How long do you think a man must be godly in order to be saved?" I reply, dear friend, you do not understand us, for we hold that these things do not save in any sense. "Why, then," they say, "are you baptized?" Or,

"Why do you walk in holiness?" Well, not *to save* myself but *because I am saved!* When I know that every sin of mine is forgiven, that I cannot be lost, that Christ has sworn to bring me to the place where He is; then I say, Lord what is there that I can do for You? Tell me. Can I burn for You? Blessed would be the stake if I might kiss it! If You have done so much for me, what can I do for You? Is there an ordinance that involves self-denial? Is there a duty which will compel me to self-sacrifice? So much the better—

"Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my lost!
By former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His cross!"

This is the way to do good works; and good works are impossible until we come here. Anything that you do by which *to save yourself* is a selfish act, and therefore cannot be good. Only that which is done for God's glory is good in a Scriptural sense. *A man must be saved before he can do a good work*. But when saved, having nothing to get and nothing to lose; standing now in Christ, blessed and accepted—he begins to serve God out of pure gratitude and love! Then virtue is possible, and he may climb to its highest steeps, and stand safely there without fear of the boasting which would cast him down! He will feel, even then, that his standing is not in what *he has done,* nor in what *he is,* nor in what *he hopes to be,* but in what *Christ did,* and in the, "It is finished," which made his eternal salvation secure!

O for divine grace that we may live to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the beloved, bringing forth the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God! Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things; to Him be glory forever! Amen.

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TWO ADVENTS OF CHRIST
NO. 430

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 22, 1861,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them who look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Hebrews 9:27, 28.

WE must begin by noticing the parallel which the apostle here draws. The words "as" and "so" suggest a comparison between two truths of God, the correspondence of which he designed to set forth; the one a fact generally allowed, the other a fact he was anxious to teach. Now, you will note that he says, "It is appointed unto men *once* to die," and only once. This is a truism. The rule is universal; the exceptions are inconsiderable. One or two persons may have died twice; as, for instance, Lazarus and those others who were raised from the dead by Christ. These, we cannot doubt, after living for a little while, returned again to the tomb, but for the most part, speaking of the race, "It is appointed unto men once to die." The greatest affairs of life can only be performed once. We are once born naturally; we are once born spiritually; there are not two natural births, neither are there two spiritual births. We live on earth but once; we die but once; we shall be judged but once. We shall receive the final sentence but once, and then we shall once be received into the joy of our Lord forever, or once be driven from His Presence never to return! Now, a part of the apostle's parallel lies here. As men die but once, so Christ has died but once. As the law required but one death, so Jesus Christ, having offered that one death as the ransom for His people, achieved His task. "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die"—was the *penalty*. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures"—was the *payment*. "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin." That is the first *fact*. "But now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." This is the second *fact*. But you

have not got the full weight of the comparison yet. After man's spirit has been once on earth, has lived its time, and the body has died, the soul is to revisit this earth again, for "after this the judgment." Every man will have two advents—the Advent which he now enjoys or which he now misuses upon earth; and the Advent which lies beyond the present course of probation. After he has descended to the tomb, he shall come here again; his bones shall come together, bone to his bone; the flesh shall come upon the skeleton, and the spirit shall return, either *from the heaven* where it rejoices, or *from the hell* where it howls, to inhabit the body once again, and to stand upon the earth! We must all come here again. Somewhere upon this earth we shall stand! Even though we should be unable to recognize any likeness between that, and the place in which we lived, and unable to recognize any likeness between us, and what we were! Regardless, here we must return to receive our appointed doom. Now, so is it with Christ. He has once died, and He is to come a second time. A second time is His body to be on earth! After death, the judgment! Only when we speak of Christ, He shall come, not to be judged, but to be the Judge. After death comes the reward with us; after death the reward with Him. After our death, comes our resurrection; that has already passed upon Christ. As a resurrection shall come to saint and sinner, the final audit and pronunciation of the sentence; so Christ shall come to the final gathering together of His elect, and the final overthrow of all His enemies, to the final crowning of His head, when He shall have put all things under His feet, and reign forever and ever!

Having thus, I think, brought out the parallel of the text; I will leave it for you to think over. As it is appointed unto men to die once, and after this the judgment, so it was appointed unto Christ to die but once. That is achieved. The sequel is now pointed out. To those who look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation. We will spend our time tonight, and God grant that we may spend it profitably, by observing, first, *the likeness between the two advents of Christ;* secondly, *the dissimilarity between them,* which is a far more extensive subject, and then we shall make a few remarks *concerning our personal interest in both advents.*

I. The text asserts very plainly that as we are here twice—once in a life of probation, and a second time in the day of judgment; so Christ shall be here twice—once in His life of suffering, and then again in His hour of

triumph, THE TWO COMINGS OF CHRIST HAVE SOME DEGREE OF LIKENESS.

First, they are like each other in the fact *that they are both of them personal comings.* Christ came the first time, not as a spirit, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as He had. He was one who could be pressed to a woman's bosom; one who could be borne in a father's arms. He was one who could afterwards, walk in His own person to the temple; one that could bear our sins in His own body on the tree. We have done, once and for all, with the foolish ideas of certain of the early heretics that Christ's appearance upon earth was but a phantom! We know that He was really, personally, and physically here on earth. But, it is not quite as clear to some persons that He is to come really, personally, and literally, the second time. I know there are some who are laboring to get rid of the fact of a personal reign, but as I take it, the coming and the reign are so connected, that we must have a spiritual coming if we are to have a spiritual reign. Now, we believe and hold that Christ shall come a second time, suddenly, to raise His saints at the first resurrection. This shall be the commencement of the grand judgment, and they shall reign with Him afterwards. The rest of the dead live not till after the thousand years are finished. Then shall they rise from their tombs at the sounding of the trumpet, and their judgment shall come, and they shall receive the deeds which they have done in their bodies. Now, we believe that the Christ who shall sit on the throne of His father David, and whose feet shall stand upon Mount Olivet, is as much a personal Christ, as the Christ who came to Bethlehem, and wept in the manger. We believe that the very Christ whose body did hang upon the tree, shall sit upon the throne; that the very hands that felt the nails, shall grasp the scepter; that the very feet that were fastened to the cross, shall tread upon the necks of His foes. We look for the personal Advent, the personal reign, the personal session and court of Christ!

Nor less, shall the advents be like each other in the fact *that they shall both be according to promise.* The promise of the first coming of Christ was that which made glad the early believers. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, he saw it and was glad." The epitaph inscribed upon the slab which covers the sepulcher of the early saints, has written upon it, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off." And today, we believe that Christ is to come

according to promise. We think we have abundant evidence in the Words that were uttered by the lips of inspired prophets and seers, and more especially, from the enraptured pen of John in Patmos. Do they not testify that Christ shall surely come? We now, like Abraham of old, do see His day; our eyes catch the coming splendor; our soul is overwhelmed with the approaching glory! Did the Jew look for Messiah, the Prince? So do we! Did he expect Him to reign? So do we! In fact, the very Prince, for whom Israel now looks in all her hardness of heart, is He whom we expect! They doubt Messiah's first Advent, and they look for Him to come as the fairest among ten thousand, the Prince of the Kings of the earth. Hail, Israel! In this your Gentile sister is agreed! She looks for Him to come in the same form and fashion. And when His coming shall have removed the scales from the blind eyes of Israel's tribes, then the fullness of the Gentiles shall, with Abraham's seed, praise and magnify the Lamb once slain, who comes the second time as the Lion of the tribe of Judah! In both cases we think the Advent of Christ fully promised.

But, we must remark in the next place, that the second advent of Christ will be like the first *in its being unexpected by the mass of people*. When He came before, there were only a few looking for Him. Simeon and Anna, and some humble souls of the sort, knew that He was about to come. The others knew that the patriarchs and prophets of their nation had foretold His birth; but the vanity of their thoughts, and the conduct of their lives were at such entire variance with the creed to which they were trained, they cared nothing for Him. The Magi might come from the distant East, and the shepherds from the adjacent plains, but how little sensation did they make in the streets of busy Jerusalem, in the halls of kings, or in the homes of business? The kingdom of God came not with observation. In such an hour as they thought not, the Son of Man came! And now, though we have the Words of Scripture to assure us that He will come quickly, and that His reward is with Him and His work before Him, yet how few expect Him! The coming of some foreign Prince, the approach of some great event, is looked for and anticipated from the hour that the purpose is promulgated among the people. But Your coming, Jesus, Your glorious Advent—where are they who strain their eyes to catch the first beams of the sun rising? There are a few of Your followers who wait for Your appearing. We meet with a few men who walk as those who know that time is short, and that the Master may come at cockcrowing,

or at midnight, or at the day watch. We know a few beloved disciples who, with longing hearts, beguile the weary hours, while they prepare songs to greet You, O Immanuel!—

"Strangers on earth, we wait for Thee;
O leave the Father's throne,
Come with a shout of victory, Lord,
And claim us as Your own!
No resting place we seek on earth,
No loveliness we see,
Our eye is on the royal throne,
Prepared for us and Thee."

Lord, increase the number of those who look for You, and desire, and pray, and wait, and watch through the dreary hours of the night for the morning which Your coming shall usher in!

Yet, mark, when He shall come, there will be this to say about it, that *He will come to bless those who do wait for Him just as He did at the first.* Blessed were the eyes that saw Him! Blessed were the hearts that loved Him! Blessed were the ears that heard Him! Blessed were the lips that kissed Him! Blessed were the hands that broke the tributary alabaster box upon His glorious head! And blessed shall they be who are counted worthy of the resurrection and of the kingdom which He has prepared! Blessed are they who, having been born of the Spirit, can see the kingdom of God; but, doubly blessed are they who, having been born of water as well as of the Spirit, shall *enter into* the kingdom of God! For unto all, this is not given. There are some who will not yet see the kingdom, and others who cannot enter, because they will not obey the ordinances which make them Christ's disciples. Thrice blessed shall they be who, with loins girt about, being obedient servants, and having done His will, shall hear Him say, "Come you blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." He comes to bless His people!

But then, there is this further likeness, and with the mention of it, I close this first point—He comes, not only to bless His people, but *to be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense to them who believe not upon Him.* When He came the first time, He was like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap. As the refiner's fire burns up the dross, so did He consume the Pharisees and Sadducees—and as the fuller's soap cleanses away the filth, so did He unto that generation when He condemned it, even as Jonah the prophet did unto the men of Nineveh and thereby, condemned

the men of Jerusalem because they repented not. Thus too, when He shall come the second time, while He shall bless His people, His fan will be in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and they who know Him not, and love Him not, shall be driven away like the chaff into unquenchable fire! Long not for Christ's coming if you love Him not, for the day of the Lord will be unto you darkness, and not light! Ask not for the world's end; say not, "Come quickly," for His coming will be your destruction; His advent will be the coming of your eternal horror! God grant us divine grace to love the Savior, and put our trust in Him; then, but not till then, we may say, "Come quickly, come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

II. Now we shall turn to the second part of our subject, THE UNLIKENESS BETWEEN THE TWO ADVENTS.

In the prophecy of *His coming* the first and the second time, there was disparity as well as correspondence. It is true in both cases, He will come attended by angels, and the song shall be, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men." It is true in both cases, shepherds who keep watch over their flocks, even by night, shall be among the first to hail Him with their sleepless eyes—blessed shepherds who watch Christ's folds, and therefore, shall see the Great Shepherd when He comes. Still, how different, I say, will be His coming. At first He came as an infant of a span long; now He shall come—

"In rainbow wreath and clouds of storm,"

The glorious one! Then He entered into a manger, now He shall ascend His throne! Then He sat upon a woman's knees, and did hang upon a woman's breast. Now earth shall be at His feet, and the whole universe shall hang upon His everlasting shoulders! Then He appeared the infant, now the infinite! Then He was born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, now He comes to glory as the lightning from one end of heaven to the other! A stable received Him then; now the high arches of earth and heaven shall be too little for Him. Horned oxen were then His companions, but now, the chariots of God which are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, shall be at His right hand. Then in poverty, His parents were too glad to receive the offerings of gold and frankincense and myrrh; but now, in splendor, King of kings, and Lord of lords, all nations shall bow before Him, and kings and princes shall pay homage at His feet! Still, He shall need nothing at their hands, for He will be able to say, "If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the cattle are Mine upon a thousand hills." "You have put all things under His feet; all sheep and

oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field." "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."

Nor will there merely be a difference in His coming; there will be a most distinct and apparent difference *in His person*. He will be the same, so that we shall be able to recognize Him as the Man of Nazareth, but O, how changed! Where now the carpenter's smock? Royalty has now assumed its purple! Where now the toil-worn feet that needed to be washed after their long journeys of mercy? They are sandaled with light; they "are like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace." Where now the cry, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head"? Heaven is His throne; earth is His footstool! I think in the night visions, I behold the day dawning. And to the Son of Man there is given "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him." Ah, who would think to recognize in the weary man and full of woes, the King eternal, immortal, invisible? Who would think that the humble man, despised and rejected, was the seed corn out of which there should grow that full corn in the ear, Christ all-glorious, before whom the angels veil their faces and cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth"? He is the same, but yet, how changed! You who despised Him, will you despise Him now? Imagine the judgment day has come, and let this vast audience represent the gathering of the last dreadful morning. Now you who despised His cross, come forward and insult His throne! Now you who said He was a mere man, come near and resist Him, while He proves Himself to be your Creator! Now, you who said, "We will not have this *man* to reign over us," say it now if you dare; repeat now, if you dare, your bold presumptuous defiance! What? Are you silent? Do you turn your backs and flee? Verily, verily, so was it said of you of old. They who hate Him shall flee before Him. His enemies shall lick the dust. They shall cry to the rocks to cover them, and to the hills to hide them from His face. How changed, I say, will He be in the appearance of His person!

But, the difference will be more apparent *in the treatment which He will then receive*. Alas, my Lord, Your reception on earth the first time was not such as would tempt You here again. "All they who see Me laugh Me to scorn; they thrust out the lip; they say, He trusted in God that He would deliver Him, let Him deliver Him if He delights in Him; I am become a reproach; the song of the drunkard, a byword and a proverb."

"When we shall see Him, there is no beauty in Him that we should desire Him." This was the world's opinion of God's Anointed! So they did salute Jehovah's Christ when He came the first time. Blind world, open your eyes while the thunderclaps of judgment make you start up in terror and amazement, and look about you. This is the man in whom you could see no beauty—dare you say the same of Him now? His eyes are like flames of fire; and out of His mouth goes a two-edged sword; His head and His hair are white like wool, as white as snow, and His feet like much fine gold. How glorious now! How different now the world's opinion of Him! Bad men weep and wail because of Him. Good men cry, "All hail! All hail! All hail!" They clap their hands, and bow their heads, and leap for joy. Around Him an innumerable company of angels wait; cherubim and seraphim with glowing wheels attend at His feet, and ever unto Him they continually, continually, continually cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts." Let us suppose again that the judgment day has come, and let us challenge the world to treat the Savior as it did before. Now, then, crowds, come and drag Him down, to hurl Him from the hill, headlong! Step forward, you Pharisees, and tempt Him, and try to entangle Him in His words! Herodians, have you no penny now, that you may ask Him a difficult question to entrap Him? What? Sadducees, have you no riddles left? Aha! Aha! Laugh at the Scribes, and at the wise men; see how the wise Man of Nazareth has confounded them all! See how the sufferer has put to nothing the persecutors! Come Judas, arch-traitor, sell Him for 30 pieces of silver! Come and give Him another kiss, and play the traitor over again! Pilate, come forward and wash your hands in innocence and say, "I am clear of the blood of this just person!" See to it, you fathers of the Sanhedrin, wake from your long slumbers, and say again, if you dare, "This man blasphemes." Smite Him on the cheek you soldiers; buffet Him again you praetorians. Set Him once more in the chair and spit in His face. Weave your crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put the reed into His right hand. What? Have you not an old cloak to cast about His shoulders again? What? Have you no songs, no vulgar jests, and is there not a man among you who dares, now, to pluck his hair? No, look at them, how they flee! Their loins are loosed; the shields of the mighty have been cast to the winds. Their courage has failed them; the brave Romans have turned cowards, and the haughty bulls of Bashan have hastened away from their pastures! And now, you Jews cry, "Away

with Him!" Now let His blood be on you and on your children! Now come forward, you vulgar crew, and mock Him as you did upon the cross. Point to His wounds; jeer at His nakedness; mock His thirst; revile His prayer; stand and thrust out your tongues, and insult His agonies if you dare! You did it once! It is the same person; do it again! But, no; they throw themselves upon their faces, and there goes up from the assembled mass a wail such as earth never heard before, not even in the day when Mizraim's children felt the angel's sword, and weeping worse than it was ever known in Bochim, hotter tears than Rachel shed when she would not be comforted for her children. Weep on, it is too late for your sorrow now. Oh, if there had been the tear of penitence before, there had not been the weeping of remorse, now! Oh, if there had been the glancing of the eye of faith, there had not been the blasting, and the scorching of your eyes with horrors that shall utterly consume you! Christ comes, I say, to be treated very differently from the treatment He received before.

The difference appears once more in this; *He will come again for a very different purpose.* He came the first time with, "I delight to do Your will O God." He comes a second time to claim the reward, and to divide the spoil with the strong. He came the first time with a sin-offering; that offering having been once made, there is no more sacrifice for sin! He comes the second time to administer righteousness. He was righteous at His first coming, but it was the righteousness of allegiance. He shall be righteous at His second coming with the righteousness of supremacy. He came to endure the penalty; He comes to procure the reward. He came to serve; He comes to rule. He came to open wide the door of divine grace; He comes to shut the door. He comes not to redeem, but to judge; not to save, but to pronounce the sentence; not to weep while He invites, but to smile while He rewards; not to tremble in heart while He proclaims grace, but to make others tremble while He proclaims their doom! Oh Jesus, how great the difference between Your first and Your second Advent!

III. I must now spend the few minutes that remain in ASKING A FEW QUESTIONS.

What has this to do with us? It has something to do with every one of us, from the oldest baldhead here, down to that rosy child who is listening with eyes of wonder, to the thought that Christ shall come, and every eye shall see Him. There are many spectacles which only a few among the children of men can see, but every eye shall see *Him*. Many of us may

be gone from this earth before the next great display shall be seen in London, but every eye shall see Him! There may be some grand sights which you feel no interest in; you would not see them if you might, but you shall see Him! You would not go to a place of worship to hear Him, but you shall see Him! Perhaps you went up to the house of God sometimes, and when there, vowed you would never go again. Ah, but you will be there then, without a question as to your choice! And you will have to remain till the close, too, till He pronounces either the benediction or the malediction upon your heads! For every eye shall see Him! There is not one of us who will be absent on the day of Christ's appearing. We have all, then, an interest in it. Alas, it is a sorrowful thought that many will see Him to weep and to wail! Will you be among that number? No, do not look around to your neighbor—will *you* be among that number? Alas for you! You will, if you never weep for sin on earth! If you do not weep for sin on earth, you shall weep for it there. And, mark, if you do not fly to Christ, and trust in Him *now,* you shall be obliged to fly *from* Him, and be accursed of Him *then*. "If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha"—accursed with a curse! Paul said that. In the name of the Church, by its most loving and tender apostle, the soul is cursed that loves not Christ!

Heaven on that day shall solemnly ratify the curse with an "Amen." And the day of judgment brings its thunders to roll in dreadful chorus the sound, "Amen; let him be accursed if he loves not Christ." But, there will be some there who, when Christ shall come, shall greatly rejoice to see Him. Will you be among *that* number? Will there be a crown for you? Will you share in that magnificent triumph? Will you make one of that royal court which shall delight to "see the King in His beauty" in "the land that is very far off"? Sister, will you be among the daughters of Jerusalem, who shall go forth to meet King Solomon with the crown his mother crowned Him in the day of His espousal? Brother, will you be among those who shall go forth to meet the King when He comes with, "Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord"? "I hope so," says one. I hope so too, but, are you sure? "Well, I hope so." Do not be content with having a hope, unless you know it is a good hope through divine grace! What do you say tonight—have you been born-again? Have you passed from death to life? Are you a new creature in Christ Jesus? Has the Spirit of God had dealings with you? Have you

been led to see the fallacy of all human trust? Have you been led to see that no good works of yours can ever fit you to reign with Christ? Have you been led to discard your righteousness as filthy rags? Soul, can you say tonight—

"My faith does lay her hands
On that dear head of Yours.
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin"?

Humbly, feebly, but still earnestly, can you say, "Christ is my all; He is all I desire on earth; He is all I need for heaven"? If so, long for His appearing, for you shall see Him, and shall be glorified in Him! But, beware if you cannot say that! We are getting near to the end of the year. This is the last time I shall have the pleasure of addressing you this year. Oh, that God may bring in more in the last week of the year than in all the weeks that have gone by! It is possible! Nothing is too hard for God. It will certainly be so if God shall stir up your hearts, brothers and sisters, to pray for it. Are there not young men here who are not yet the followers of the Lamb? Oh, that tonight, even tonight, the Spirit of God may say in your heart, "Turn you! Turn you! Why will you die?" And oh, may you be made so uneasy, that tonight you will not be able to give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you have put your trust in Christ, and He is yours! Tomorrow, probably, you will hear the guns betokening the time when the ashes of the Prince are put into their resting place. May every gun be a sermon to you, and as you hear them booming, let this be its message—

"Come to judgment,
Come to judgment, come away."

And may you be able to answer as you hear it, "Yes, blessed be God, I am not afraid to come to judgment, for—

Bold shall I stand in that great day!
For who anything to my charge shall lay?
While through Your blood, absolved I am,
From sin's tremendous curse and shame?"

Remember, salvation is by Christ; not of works, nor of the will of man, nor of blood, nor birth; and this is the message which Christ bids us deliver, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Oh, may you be led to call on His name by prayer and humble faith, and you shall be saved! "Whoever believes on Him is not condemned." Oh, may you believe on Him tonight if you have never done so before. Touch the hem of

His garment, you with the bloody issue. Say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" You with the blind eyes, say, "Lord save me, or I perish!" You who are ready to sink, cry out to Jesus! And the ready ears of Jesus, and the ready hands of the Savior shall now hear and bless if the heart is ready, and if the soul is asking mercy. May God grant you the richest blessings of His grace for Christ Jesus' sake! Amen.

Perhaps it would be improper in the pulpit, to wish you "the compliments of the season," but I do wish you the blessing of God at all seasons, in season and out of season, and that is my blessing upon you tonight, that you may have the blessing of God living, and His blessing dying; His blessing in His advent and His blessing at the judgment. The Lord bless you more and more! May He give you a blessed Christmas, and the happiest of New Years; and to Him shall be all the praise and the honor! Amen.

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A SECRET AND YET NO SECRET
NO. 431

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 26, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters and streams from Lebanon."
Song of Solomon 4:12, 15.

OBSERVE the sweet titles with which Christ, the husband, addresses His Church the bride. *"My sister,"* one near to Me by ties of nature; My next of kin, born of the same mother, partaker of the same sympathies. *My spouse,* nearest and dearest, united to Me by the most tender bands of love; My sweet companion, part of My own self. *My sister,* by My Incarnation, which makes Me bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh. *My spouse,* by heavenly betrothal in which I have espoused you unto Myself in righteousness. *My sister,* whom I knew of old and over whom I watched from her earliest infancy; *My spouse,* taken from among the daughters, embraced by arms of love, and betrothed unto Me forever. See, my brothers and sisters, how true is it that our royal kinsman is not ashamed of us, for He dwells with manifest delight upon this twofold relationship! Be not, O beloved, slow to return the hallowed flame of His love. We have the word "My" twice in our version; as if Christ dwelt with rapture on His possession of His Church. "His delights were with the sons of men," because those sons of men were His. He, the Shepherd, sought the sheep, because they were *His* sheep. He lit the candle, and swept the house, because it was *His* money that was lost. He has gone about "to seek and to save that which was lost," because that which was lost was *His* long before it was lost to itself or lost to Him. The Church is the exclusive portion of her Lord; none else may claim a partnership, or pretend to share her love. Jesus, Your Church delights to have it so! Let every believing soul drink solace out of these wells. Soul, Christ is near to you in ties of relationship! Christ is dear to you in bonds of marriage union, and you are dear to Him. Behold, He grasps both of your hands with both His own, saying, *"My* sister, *My* spouse." Mark the two sacred holdfasts, by which your Lord gets such a double hold of you that He neither can nor will ever let you go! Do you say in your heart this morning, "My brother, my husband?" Seek to be near to Him in nature—to be like your brother, a son of God; and to be near to Him in fellowship—to have near and dear communion with your husband that you may know Him and have fellowship with Him, being conformable unto His death.

Leaving this porch of cedar, let us enter the palace. Observe the contrast which the two verses present to us. I think that the Spirit of God intends that the verses should be understood as we intend to use them this morning, but, even if we should be mistaken, as to the precise interpretation of the passage in its context, we shall not err in enlisting so beautiful a string of metaphors in the service of the truth of God! You know, beloved, there are two works of the Holy Spirit within us. The first

is when He puts into us the living waters; the next is when He enables us to pour forth streams of the same living waters in our daily life. Our blessed Lord expressed what we mean, when on that great day of the feast, He cried, saying, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spoke He of the Spirit, which they who believe on Him should receive." The Spirit of God first implants in us the new nature. This is His work—to regenerate us, to put into us the new principle, the life of God in Christ. Then next, He gives us power to send forth that life in gracious emanations of holiness of life, of devoutness of communion with God, of likeness to Christ, of conformity to His image. The streams are as much of the Holy Spirit, as the fountain itself. He digs the well, and He afterwards, with heavenly rain, fills the pools. He first of all, makes the stream in the desert to flow from the flinty rock, and afterwards, out of His infinite supplies, He feeds the stream and bids it follow us all our days!

I was pleased to find a quotation the other day, from one of the early fathers, which contains in it views I have frequently expressed to you—"The true believer is composed of body, soul, and the Holy Spirit." After the greatest research, eminent mental philosophers have given up all idea of a third principle which they can discover in man, as man. They can find nothing but the body and the soul. But, rest assured, that as there is a certain something in the vegetable which we call vegetable life, as there is a sensitive substance which makes animal life, as there is a mysterious subsistence developed as mental life, so there is some real, substantial, divine principle, forming *spiritual life*. The believer has three principles, the body, the soul, and the indwelling Spirit, which is none other than the Holy Spirit of God, which abides in the faithful continually! Just such a relationship as the soul bears to the body, does the spirit bear to the soul; for as the body without the soul is dead, so the soul without the Spirit is dead in trespasses and sins; as the body without the soul is naturally dead, so the soul without the Spirit is spiritually dead. And, contrary to the general teaching of modern theologians, we insist upon it, that the Spirit of God not only renovates the faculties which were there already, but does actually implant a new principle—that He does not merely set to rights a machinery which had before gone awry, but implants a *new life* which could not have been there! It is not a waking up of dormant faculties—it is the infusion of a supernatural Spirit to which the natural heart is an utter stranger. Now, we think the first verse, to a great extent, sets forth the secret and mysterious work of the Holy Spirit in the creation of the new man in the soul. Into this secret no eye of man can look. The inner life in the Christian may well be compared to an enclosed garden—to a spring shut up—to a fountain sealed. But, the second verse sets forth the manifest effects of divine grace, for no sooner is that life given, than it begins to show itself. No sooner is the mystery of righteousness in the heart, than, like the mystery of iniquity, it "does already work." It cannot lie still; it cannot be idle; it must not rest; but, as God is always active, so this God-like principle is active, too. Thus, you have a picture of the outer life, proceeding from the inner: "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." The first is what the Christian is before God; the next is what the Chris-

tian will become before men. The first is the blessedness which he receives in himself; the next is the blessedness which he diffuses to others.

We will begin, then, where God the Holy Spirit begins with us, when He enters the recesses of the heart, and breathes the secret life.

I. With regard to the first text; you will clearly perceive that in each of the three metaphors you have very plainly the idea of *secrecy*. There is a garden. A garden is a place where trees have been planted by a skillful hand; where they are nurtured and tended with care, and fruit is expected by its owner. Such is the Church; such is each renewed soul. But, it is a garden *enclosed,* and so enclosed, that one cannot see over its walls—so shut out from the world's wilderness, that the passerby must not enter it—so protected from all intrusion, that it is a guarded Paradise—as secret as was that inner place, the Holy of Holies—within the tabernacle of old. The Church—and mark, when I say the *Church*, the same is true of each individual *Christian*—is set forth, next, as a *spring*. "A spring"—the mother of sweet draughts of refreshing water, reaching down into some impenetrable caverns, and bubbling up with perennial supplies from the great deeps. Not a mere cistern, which *contains* only, but a fresh spring, which through an inward principle within, begets, continues, overflows. But then, it is a spring *shut up*—just as there were springs in the East, over which an edifice was built, so that none could reach the springs, except those who knew the secret entrance. So is the heart of a believer when it is renewed by divine grace; there is a mysterious life within which no human skill can touch. And then, it is said to be a *fountain;* but it is a *sealed* fountain. The outward stones may be discovered, but the door is sealed, so that no man can get into the hidden springs; they are altogether hidden and hidden, too, by a royal will and decree, of which the seal is the emblem. I say the idea is very much that of secrecy. Now, such is the inner life of the Christian. It is a secret which no other man knows, no, which the very man who is the possessor of it cannot tell to his neighbor! "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes or where it goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." There are mysteries in nature so profound that we only label them with some hard name and leave them, and all the knowledge that we have about them is that they are beyond the reach of man; but what are they? What are those mysterious impulses which link distant worlds with one another? What is the real essence of that power which flashes along the electric wire? What is the very substance of that awful force which tears apart the oak, or splits the spire? We do not know. These are mysteries; but even if we could enter these caverns of knowledge, if we could penetrate the secret chamber of nature, if we could climb the lofty tree of knowledge, till we found the nest where the adolescent principles of nature, as yet unfledged, are lying, yet even then, we could not find out where that hidden life is!

It is a something—as certainly a something as the natural life of man. It is a reality—not a dream, not a delusion—it is as real (though far more divine) as that "vital spark" which we say is "of heavenly flame." But, though real, it is not in itself perceptible by human senses. It is so hidden from the eyes of men who have it not, that they do not believe in its existence! "Oh," they say, "there is no difference between a Christian and another man. There may sometimes be a little difference in his outward acts, but as to his being the possessor of another life, the idea is prepos-

terous!" As to the regenerate, being men of a distinct race of beings, as much above man naturally, as man is above the brute beasts, that carnal men would scorn to acknowledge. They cannot make this out. How can they? It is a spring shut up; it is a fountain sealed. No, and the Christian himself, though he feels the throbbing of the great life-force within, though he feels the perpetual bubbling up of the ever-living fountain, yet he does not know what it is! It is a mystery to him. He knows it came there once upon a time; perhaps he knows the instrumentality by which it came; but what it was, he cannot tell. "One thing I know, whereas I was blind now I see; whereas I once loved sin I now hate it; whereas I had no thoughts after God and Christ, now my heart is wholly set upon divine things." This he can say. But how it came about, he does not know! Only God did it—did it in some mysterious way, by an agency which it is utterly impossible for him to detect. There are even times, when the Christian himself finds this well so shut up, that he cannot see it himself, and he is led to doubt about it. "Oh," he says, "I question whether the life of God is in me at all." I know some have scoffed at the idea of a Christian's being alive, and at the same time doubting his spiritual existence; but, however great a paradox it may seem, it is, nevertheless, a mournful truth in our experience! That spring, I say, is sometimes shut up even to ourselves, and that fountain is so fast sealed, that although it is as really there as when we could drink of it, and the garden is as truly there as when we refreshed ourselves among its spicy beds, yet, we cannot find any solace in it! There have been times, when if we could have the world for it, we could not discover a spark of love in our hearts towards God—no, not a grain of faith! Yet, He could see our love when our blind eyes could not, and He could honor our faith, even when we feared we had none. There have been moments when, if heaven and hell depended on our possession of full assurance, we certainly must have been lost, for not only had we no full assurance, but we had scarcely any faith. Children of light do walk in darkness—there are times when they see not their signs, when for three days neither sun nor moon appears. There are periods when their only cry is, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" There is little wonder about this, when we see how secret, how impalpable, how indiscernible by eye, or touch, or human intellect, is the Spirit of God within us. It is little wonder, that sometimes flesh and blood should fail to know whether the life of God is in us at all. "A garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."

A second thought is written upon the surface of the text. Here you see not only secrecy but *separation*. That also runs through the three figures. It is a garden, but it is a garden enclosed—altogether shut out from the surrounding heaths and commons, enclosed with briars and hedged with thorns, which are impassable by the wild beasts. There is a gate through which the great husbandman himself can come; but, there is also a gate, which shuts out all those, who would only rob the keeper of the vineyard, of his rightful fruit. There is separation in the spring, also. It is not the common spring, of which every passerby may drink; it is one so kept and preserved distinct from men, that no lips may touch, no eyes may even see its secret. It is a something which the stranger doesn't interfere with; it is a life which the world cannot give and cannot take away. All through, you see, there is separateness, distinctness. If it is ranged with springs, still it is a spring especially shut up. If it is put with fountains,

still it is a fountain bearing a particular mark—a king's royal seal, so that all can perceive that this is not a general fountain, but a fountain that has a proprietor, and stands especially alone by itself. So is it with the spiritual life. It is a separate thing. The chosen of God, we know, were separated in the eternal decree. Their names were written in a different book from the rest of men; the Book of Life records their names, and none but theirs! They were separated by God in the day of redemption, when Christ redeemed them from among men, out of every kindred and nation and tribe. They are separated, day by day, by divine providence, for the fiery pillar gives light to them, while it is darkness to the Egyptians. But their separation, as far as they can most clearly see it, must be a separation caused by the possession of the life which others have not. I fear there are some professed Christians who have never realized this. They are a garden. One could hardly speak ill of their character, their carriage is excellent, their deportment amiable; their good works commend them before men, but still, they are not separate from sinners; in vital essential distinction they have little manifest share. Their speech may be half of Canaan, but the other half is of Ashdod. They may bring unto God thank-offerings, but there is a niche in their house for Baal, too! They have not yet heard the cry, "Come you out of here, My people, that you be not partakers of her plagues." Not yet has the mandate of the prophet rung in their ears, "Depart you, depart you, go you out from here, be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." They are a garden, but they are not a garden walled round.

Oh, how many we have in this day of this kind! They can come to the Church, they can go to the world; they can talk as God's people talk, and they can murmur as the rebellious murmur; they understand well the gift of prayer, but they understand little of the secret of the inner life of devotion! Brothers and sisters, if you and I have ever received that third, that noble, that divine principle, the life of God, into our souls, it will be utterly impossible for us to feel at home with the men of the world! No, we shall say, "Outside the camp" must be my place, bearing His reproach. Sometimes, indeed, we shall not feel at home with the professing Church, we shall be compelled to even come out of her, if we would follow the Lord fully. Yes, and there are sacred seasons when we shall be so enclosed, that we shall not be at ease in any society, however select, for our souls will pine for sweet solitude, secret communion, hidden embraces! We shall be compelled to walk alone with Christ. The garden will be shut up even from other gardens, distinct even from other places where Christ walks. Oh, there will be periods with your soul, if it is renewed, when you *must* be alone, when the face of man will disturb you, and when only the face of Jesus can be company to you! I would not give a farthing for that man's spiritual life who can live altogether with others; if you do not sometimes feel that you must be a garden enclosed, that you must enter into your closet, and shut the door; if you do not feel seasons when the society of your dearest friend is an impediment, and when the face of your sweetest relation would be but a cloud between you and Christ, I cannot understand you! Be you, O children of Christ, as chaste virgins, kept alone for Christ! Gad you not abroad, O my heart, but stay at home with Jesus, your lover, your Lord, your all! Shut up your gates, O my heart, to all company but His! O my sweet well-spring of delights, be shut up to every lip but His, and O you fountain of the issues of my

heart, be you sealed only for Him, that He may come and drink, and drink again, and take sweet solace in you—your soul being His, and His alone!

In the third place, it is worthy of a more distinct remark, that you have in the text the idea of *sacredness*. The garden enclosed is walled up that it may be sacred to its owner; the spring shut up is preserved for the use of some special person; and the fountain sealed more eminently still bears the mark of being sacred to some distinguished personage. Travelers have said that they have discovered gardens of Solomon, which were of old enclosed, where the king privately walked, and they have also found wells of most deliciously cold water, which has been dexterously covered, so that no person unacquainted with the stone in the wall, which might revolve, or might be removed, could have found the entrance to the spring. At the foot of some lofty range of mountains, a reservoir receives the cooling streams which flow from melted snows, this reservoir was carefully guarded, and shut out from all common entrance, in order that the king, alone, might enter there, and might refresh himself during the scorching heat. Now, such is the Christian's heart. It is a spring kept for Christ. Oh, I would that it were always so! Oh, how often do we pollute the Lord's altar! How frequently, my soul, do you let in intruders? Alas, how common it is for us to be feasting other friends, and shutting the door against *Him!* How often do we keep Him waiting in the street, while we are entertaining some barbarian who is passing by, who offers us his kiss, but is meanwhile stabbing us with his right hand? Christian brothers and sisters, I appeal to your experience! Have you not to mourn frequently that you are not so much for Christ as you could wish to be? Though you recognize the truth of the text, "You are not your own, but are bought with a price," do you feel its force as you ought to do, in the actions which you perform for Christ? Are they all wholly for Him? Could you take for your motto, "All for Jesus"? Could you feel that, whether you buy or sell, whether you read or pray, whether you go out in the world, or come back to your home, that Jesus, only, is the one object on whom your heart is set, and for whom your life is spent? Blessed are they, those virgin souls, who wherever the Lamb does lead, from His footsteps never depart! Thrice happy are they who wear the white robe, unsoiled by contact with the world! Thrice blessed are they who can say, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His lips, for His love is better than wine!" Every Christian should feel that he is God's man—that he has God's stamp on him—and he should be able to say with Paul, "From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

But, I think there is another idea prominent, and it is that of *security*—security to the inner life. "A garden enclosed." The wild boar out of the woods shall not break in there, neither shall the little foxes spoil the vines. "A fountain shut up." The bulls of Bashan shall not muddy her streams with their furious feet; neither shall the wild beast of Lebanon come there to drink. "A fountain sealed." No putrid streams shall foul *her* springs; her water shall be kept clear and living; her fountains shall never be filled up with stones. Oh, how sure and safe is the inner life of the believer! Satan does not know where it is, for "our life is hid with Christ." The world cannot touch it; it seeks to overthrow it with troubles, and trials, and persecutions, but we are covered with the eternal wings, and are safe from fear of evil! How can earthly trials reach the Spirit? As well

might a man try to strike a soul with a stone, as to destroy the Spirit with afflictions! Surely, in the floods of great waters, they shall not come near unto Him; He has placed us in the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High! In His pavilion has He hidden us, and in a high rock has He secured us. As a castle preserves the besieged, and as the ramparts keep those who find refuge behind them, even so, munitions of stupendous rock your dwelling place shall be. "Who is he that shall harm you," when God is your protector? "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that rises against you in judgment shall You condemn." No temptation shall be able to destroy the purity of the life within! No crushing weights of doubts shall be able to take away the vital principle from that new source of strength. If all the powers of earth and hell could combine, and in their uttermost fury assault the Spirit in its weakest hour, that immortal principle must still exist—it would boldly defy them all, and triumph over every one of them; for He who gave it, pledged His life for its preservation. The Spirit in the Christian is a spark of the Godhead, and till the Godhead dies, the Christian's inner life can never expire. We are immortal, even though we are mortal! Within this outward crust that perishes, there is a soul which endures, and within that soul which endures there is a something which might outlast even the soul itself—a part of the being of God, the indwelling Holy One of Israel, who is Himself most surely divine! "God dwells in us, and we in Him." We are one with Christ, even as Christ is one with the Father, and therefore as imperishable through Christ's life as Christ Himself! Truly may we rejoice in the fact that "Because He lives we shall live also."

Once more only. I think in looking at the text you receive the thought of *unity*. You notice, it is but one garden—"A garden enclosed." *"A* garden." It is but *one* spring, and that is shut up. It is but *one* fountain. So the inner life of the Christian is but one. There is the old life which still survives—that old death, rather, the body of sin and death, struggling against the law of life which God has put into His members, but this has no kinship with the divine life. It is alone, and knows no relationship with earth. There is but one life for all Christians; either we have it, or we are dead. There are degrees of operation, but it is the same God. There are differences of administration, but it is the same Spirit who quickens. We may not, all of us, have "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." I wish we had. I would that the two baptisms would cease, and that once again the Church would recognize and practice the baptism of believers. But we do have one Spirit, otherwise we are not Christians! I may dissent myself as much as I please from another man who is in Christ—I cannot do that, however, without sin; but dissociate myself as I may, I must be one with him, for the life that is in him is in me. The same life which quickens me, if I am in Christ, dwells also in him. When I hear strict communion talked of, it reminds me of a little finger which was washed very clean and therefore thought the rest of the body too filthy to have fellowship with it. So it took a piece of red tape, and bound it tightly round itself, that the life-blood might not flow from itself into the rest of the body. What do you think, brothers and sisters? Why, as long as that little finger was itself alive, the pulsations and the motions of the blood went from it to all the rest of the body, and that little piece of red tape was but a ridiculous sham; it did not affect anything; it had no influence; it only enabled the little finger boastfully to glory, and perhaps to earn for

itself the sad distinction—"These are they that separate themselves." But the blood flowed on unimpeded, and the nerves and sinews still felt the common life-throb! They forgot, when they denied fellowship in the outward act of eating bread, and drinking wine, that the essential spirit of communion was far too spiritual to be thus restrained—it had overleaped their boundary and was gone! The only way in which a Christian can leave off communing with all other Christians, is by leaving off being a Christian. Thus can the finger leave off communing with the rest of the body—by rotting away, and no way else, as long as it is alive. Communion is the life-blood of the soul. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit that quickens the body of the Church, and that Holy Spirit will go into every member. You may try to check Him by church decrees, or to stop Him by your trust-deeds, and your ordinances, that such-and-such a church shall never be loosed from the bands of ancestral bigotry, but by God's grace, the Church's life will beat freely through all the members of the Church's fellowship, and communion *will* go to all who are in Christ! There is but one garden, but one spring, but one sealed fountain; and if you have it in your heart, and I have it in mine, there is a relationship between you and me that is as near as if you and I had the same soul, for you and I have the same Spirit! If you could imagine two bodies quickened by the very same mind, what a close connection would that be! But here are hundreds of bodies, hundreds of souls, quickened by the same Spirit. Brothers and sisters, not only ought we to love one another, but the love of Christ compels us so that we cannot resist the impulse; we do, indeed, love each other in Christ Jesus!

II. I shall now need your attention, while with brevity, I try to open the second text, which presents a decided contrast, because it deals not so much with the inner life, as with the active life which goes abroad into all the deeds of the Christian in the world, and is the natural outgoing of the life within.

First, notice that in contradistinction to our first thought of secrecy, you have in the text *manifestation*. "A fountain of gardens." Everybody can see a fountain which runs streaming through many gardens, making deserts fertile. "A well of living waters." Whatever the traveler does not see, when he is riding along on a thirsty day, he is sure to see the fountain; if there is one anywhere, he is certain to observe it! "And streams from Lebanon." So that any passerby in the valley, looking up the side of the mountain, will see by the clusters of trees which skirt the stream where the stream is; or, if it is a smaller brook, just as sometimes in Cumberland and Westmoreland, on a rainy day you see the mountain suddenly marked with streaks of silver all down its brown sides, where the brooks are rippling, so the Christian becomes like the streams leaping down Lebanon's steep sides, clearly perceived even from a distance, manifest to the most casual observer. Now, brothers and sisters, this is what you and I ought to be. No man ought to court publicity for his virtue or notoriety for his zeal; But, at the same time, it is a sin to be always seeking to hide that which God has bestowed upon us for the good of others. A Christian is not to be a city in a valley—he is to be "a city set upon a hill." He is not to be a candle put under a bushel, but a candle in a candlestick, giving light to all. Retirement may be lovely in the eyes of some, and the hiding of oneself is doubtless a blessed thing, but the hiding of *Christ* in us can never be justified! The keeping back of the truth of

God which is precious to us, is a sin against our kind, and an offense against God. Those of you, who are of a nervous temperament, and of retired habits of life, must take care that you do not too much indulge your natural propensity, lest you should be useless to the Church. Seek in the name of Him, who was not ashamed of you, to do some little violence to your feelings, and tell others what Christ has told you. Keep not the secret—it is too precious—it too much concerns the vital interests of man! Speak, if you can, not with trumpet tongue, yet speak with a still small voice! If the pulpit must not be your tribune, if the press may not carry on its wings your words, yet say, as Peter and John did, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto you." And speak, too, as you can—gently to ones, if not loudly to twenties; quietly to twos, if not publicly to scores! By Sychar's well talk to the Samaritan woman, if you cannot on the mountain preach the sermon; in the house, if not in the temple; in the field, if not upon the Exchange; in the midst of your own household, if you cannot in the midst of the great family of man. At any rate, hide not your talent; wrap it not up. "It is but one," you say. So much the more reason why you should make the greater use of that one! Conceal it not; bring it out; trade with it; and so you shall multiply the talent, and you shall bring in good interest to your Lord and Master. The inner life is secret; mind that you have this inner mystery; but out of the secret emanates the manifest; the darkness becomes the mother of light; from the dark mines comes the blazing coal. Oh, see to it that from all that is hidden, and secret, and mysterious, there comes out the plain and the manifest, that men may see the holiness, truthfulness, and zeal of God in your life!

But clearly enough, again, we have in the second text, in opposition to the separation of the first, *diffusiveness*. The garden was enclosed before; now it is "A fountain of gardens." The well was shut up, now it is a well of living waters; before we had the fountain sealed; now we have streams dashing down the sides of Lebanon. So a Christian is to be separate in his inner life; but in the outer manifestations of that inner life, he is to mingle for good among his fellow men. It was usual in Romish countries for women who wished to be especially holy, to make recluses of themselves. In the Church of St. Roche, in Paris, there was a small building erected on the side of the church. The only opening was a little grating, through which the necessities of life were passed. Within this narrow cell, there lived for 80 years, and died, I think, at the age of ninety-six, a woman doubtless devout, but certainly superstitious! There she passed her life. The only sound she heard was the tramp of the worshippers upon the church pavement, and the chant of the daily service! But she lived there, thinking she was serving God by being separate from men! That is not the separation of the New Testament. We are to be separate from *sinners*, as Christ was, and whoever went among sinners more than He did? We are to be healthy, and by that health, separate from the leper. We are to be clean, and by that cleanness, separate from the filthy. But we are to *go among them!* We are to *visit!* We are to distribute ourselves what Christ has given to us. If we keep ourselves altogether apart, we shall be useless to our fellow men! We shall be like stagnant pools—we shall grow putrid by degrees. We must let the streams flow abroad; we must seek to give to others what Christ has given to us. Now, some of you who keep yourselves separate in that sense, may I beg you to see if there is no mis-

sion of mercy for you? Go out among them as physicians in the midst of the sick, as torchbearers in the midst of darkness! Go out as loosers of the bonds among the captives; as openers of prison doors among those who are bound, and He who has given you the true principle within, which is and must be shut up, will bless the outgoings of your zeal, both in the morning and in the evening, and cause that, watering others, your own soul shall be watered, too!

Briefly we are obliged to speak on each of these points; but notice, thirdly, that in opposition to the sacredness of the first text, we have in the second verse an unlimited *freeness,* especially in that last expression—"streams from Lebanon." What can be freer than the brook, which leaps along the mountainside? There the bird wets its wings; there the red deer comes to drink; and even that wild beast of Lebanon, of which we read in the Book of the Kings, comes there, and without let or hindrance, slakes its thirst. What can be freer than the rivulet singing with liquid notes flowing down the glen? It belongs to no one; it is free to all. Whoever passes by, whether peer or peasant, may stoop there, and refresh himself from the mountain stream. So is it with you, Christian! Carry about with you a piety which you do not wish to keep for yourself. A light loses none of its own luster when others are lit by its flame! Remember, you shall earn riches by giving riches, and in this sense, giving away shall be an increase of your wealth! I know some who are in an ill sense, like fountains shut up. They love the doctrine of election, but there is one doctrine they love better and that is, the doctrine of exclusion. They love to think they are shut in, but they feel quite as much delight that others are shut out. Their conversation is always flavored with the thought of shutting others out. They are told, that in such-and-such a Church, there has been a large increase. Well, they hope they are genuine; by which they mean, that they do not believe they are. A young believer begins to tell them something of his joys. Well, they don't like to be too fast in pronouncing an opinion; by which they mean, they would not like one more to get in than should, and they are half afraid that perhaps, some may overstep the bounds of election, and get saved who should not be! Well, brothers and sisters, I love the doctrine of election, I love to think that the garden is enclosed, but I love in my own life to exemplify the equally precious truth of God of the freeness of the gospel! So that if I speak to any, it shall not be to *discourage* them, but to *encourage* them—not to say, "Get out of here"; but, "Come, and welcome!" "Depart, you cursed," is nothing to do with me; *my* business is to say, "Come, you blessed." I would rather go to the door and say, "Come in, you blessed of the Lord; why do you stand outside?" than slam it in a sinner's face with, "What have you to do here?" No, we must be shut up in the inner life; but let every wall be broken down as to the outer life. We must be hidden springs within, but let us be sweetly flowing rivulets without, giving drink to every passerby.

And not to detain you long, you will notice that, while we had in the other text the idea of security, in connection with that, we have here, in this text, the idea of *approach.* The garden was shut up—that was to keep it. There are no walls here, so that all may come to it. The streams were shut up before. Here it is an open well. The fountain was sealed in the first verse; here it is a flowing stream. All this is to teach us this—the way God keeps His people in security is not by shutting out their ene-

mies from attacking them, but while laying them open to temptation and attack, He yet sustains them! It is not much to preserve oneself behind a wall which cannot be scaled, but to stand where arrows are flying thick as hail, where lances are being pushed with fury, where the sword-cuts are falling on every part, to stand, I say, invulnerable, invincible, immortal; this is to wear a divine life which cannot be conquered by human power! Such is the Christian. We *are* to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," but indeed, we often are tempted, notwithstanding our prayer. God will put us where we will be tempted—put us where we will be tried, because if we are not tried, there is no honor to Him; and if we are not tempted, then where is the glory to the divine grace that delivers us out of temptations? The Lord does not put His plants into a hothouse, as some gardeners do. No, He sets them out in the open air, and if the frost is coming, He says, "Ah, but no frost can kill them, and they will be all the sturdier in the summer, for the cold in the winter." He does not shelter them, either from the heat of the sun, or from the cold of night, for in this world we must have tribulation, and we must have much of it, too, for it is through much tribulation we inherit the kingdom of God. But what God does to His people is this. He keeps them *in* tribulation, preserves them in temptation, and brings them joyfully out of all their trials. So, Christian, you may rejoice in your security! But, you must not think that you are not to be attacked; you are a stream from Lebanon, to be dashed down many a cascade, to be broken over many a rough rock, to be stopped up with many a huge stone, to be impeded by many a fallen tree; but you are to dash forward with the irresistible force of God, sweeping everything away, till you find at last, the place where shall be your perfect rest!

And last of all, in opposition to the unity of which I spoke, we have in our second text great *diversity*. You have "A fountain," not of a garden but "of gardens." You have a well, but it is a well of living waters; you have not a stream but streams—streams from Lebanon. So a Christian is to do good in all sorts of ways, and his fruits are to be of many kinds; he is to be like the trees of Paradise, which bear 12 manner of fruits. The Christian is to have all sorts of divine graces. "Whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good repute," he is to have all these. It is an old proverb that a man may have too many irons in the fire; but it depends upon what fire it is; for if it is God's fire, put all the irons in it! A man may attempt too much, they say—but not for Christ! If you should attempt great things, and have great faith, you shall succeed in all that you attempt! There seems to be a fear among some Christians, either of doing too much themselves, or letting other people do too much. And I know some to whom that text might *almost* be applied, "They have the key of the kingdom of heaven but they neither enter themselves, and they who would, they hinder." Not content to refuse the burden for themselves, they will not even touch it with one of their little fingers; but they discourage others from carrying the burden, too! Well, we are not afraid as these are. Blessed be God, if there is a trench to be filled up, let us struggle about who shall lead the way! If there is a rampart to be climbed, if there is no other man to throw the irons over with the scaling-ladder, let your minister attempt the deed, and lead the van, for he is well assured that there are many here who would jostle with him and say, "Let me go first! Let me serve my Master! Let me live or let

me die, if I may but glorify Him." What? Bring forth for Christ a little shriveled cluster? Climb to the topmost bough—to a cluster which the very birds of heaven will not deign to touch, because it is too little even for their appetites? No! Rather let us have every bough weighed down with clusters, like those of Eshcol, which will take two ordinary men to carry, but which we can bear in rich profusion, because the life of the Spirit of God is in us! We are a race of little doers, of little givers, of little thinkers, of little believers. O God, raise us up again giants in these days! Give us again the consecrated men who shall stand upon the sword like the old Roman and say, "For God I devote myself; to Christ I give body, soul and spirit, and if I am offered up upon the sacrifice of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." Oh, if the fountain, the secret fountain, were better seen to, I think there would be more of these outward streams! And if the sealed well were better guarded, we would see more of these rapid streams from Lebanon, which would make glad the people of God, and the world at large!

And now, how many of you have the secret spring within you? If your soul is not renewed by divine grace you cannot do good. "Except a man is born-again, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God." No man enters fully into discipleship with Christ till the water, as well as the Spirit has been reverently received—"Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit you cannot *enter* the kingdom of heaven." But these two things being done, being born of water and of the Spirit, go forth to show to others the mystery, the *fellowship* of the mystery—to make all men know that God has appeared unto us in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their iniquities. Preach of Christ when you know Christ, but not till then! Let the streams flow out where you have the inner fountain, but not till then! Sad reflection! There are some of you who have it not. Oh, if you have it not, you perish! You cannot get it of yourselves. He alone can give it. You are in His hands to give it to you. Oh, may your longings end in groaning today, and may you groan to God, "Lord! Renew me, Lord; cause me to be born-again!" And those groans will be proofs that He has begun the good work, and those longings shall be evidence that there is a well in you, though it is a well shut up—a well shut up even from yourself. God grant that you may seek and find through Jesus Christ; and to Him be glory, forever and ever. Amen.

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A VOICE FROM THE HARTLEY COLLIERY
NO. 432

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 30, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"If a man dies, shall he live again?"
Job 14:14.

ONCE more the Lord has spoken. Once again the voice of providence has proclaimed, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of grass." O sword of the Lord, when will you rest and be quiet? Why these repeated warnings? Why does the Lord so frequently and so terribly sound an alarm? Is it not because our drowsy spirits will not awaken to the realities of death? We fondly persuade ourselves that we are immortal, that though a thousand may fall at our side, and 10,000 at our right hand, yet death shall not come near unto us! We flatter ourselves that if we must die, yet the evil day is far away. If we are sixty, we presumptuously reckon upon another 20 years of life; and the man of eighty, tottering upon his staff, remembering that some few have survived to the close of a century, sees no reason why *he* should not do the same! If man cannot kill death, he tries at least to bury him alive; and since death will intrude himself in man's path, we endeavor to shut our eyes to the ghastly object. God in providence is continually filling our path with tombs. With kings and princes, there is too much forgetfulness of the world to come; God has, therefore, spoken to *them*. They were but few in number; one death might be sufficient in their case. That one death of a beloved and illustrious prince will leave its mark on courts and palaces. As for the workers, they also wish to put far from them the thought of the coffin and the shroud—God has spoken to *them*, also. There were many; one death would not be sufficient; it was absolutely necessary that there should be many victims, or we would have disregarded the warning. Two hundred witnesses cry to us from the pit's mouth, a solemn fellowship of preachers all using the same text, "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" If God had not thus spoken by the destruction of many, we would have said, "Ah, it is a common occurrence; there are frequently such accidents as these!" The rod would have failed in its effect had it smitten less severely. The awful calamity at the Hartley Colliery has at least had this effect that men are talking of death in all our streets. Oh, Father of Your people, send forth Your Holy Spirit in richer abundance, that by this solemn chastisement, higher ends may be

answered than merely attracting our thoughts to our latter end! Oh, may hearts be broken, may eyes be made to weep for sin, may follies be renounced, may Christ be accepted, and may spiritual life be given, as the result of temporal death, to the many that now sleep in their untimely graves in Earsdon Churchyard!

This text is appropriate to the occasion, but God alone knows how applicable the discourse may be to some here present; yes, to young hearts, little dreaming that there is but a step between them and death; to aged persons, who as yet have not set their house in order, but who must do it, for they shall die and not live. We will take the question of the text, and answer it upon Scriptural grounds. "If a man dies, shall he live again?" NO!—YES!

I. We answer the question first with a "No." He shall not live again *here;* he shall not again mingle with his friends, and repeat the life which death has brought to a close. This is true of him with regard to himself, and equally true with regard to his neighbors. Shall he live again for himself? No. Shall he live again for his household? No.

1. Dwell for a moment on the first thought. "If a man dies, shall he live again?" *Shall he live for himself*. No. If he has lived and died a sinner, that sinful life of his shall never be repeated. Sinner, you may empty the cups of drunkenness in this world throughout a long life, but you shall never have another season to spend in intoxication! You who have broken through all the bounds of morality, you may live in this life debauched, depraved and devilish, but death shall put an end to your career of lust! Let the cup be sweet; it is the last time you shall ever drink it. If there are any pleasures in sin, you shall never taste them again. The sweets shall be over once and for all, and at the bottom you shall find the bitter dregs which shall be gall forever. Once you shall insult high heaven, but not twice! Once shall you have space to blaspheme; once shall you have time proudly to array yourself in self-righteousness; once shall you have power to despise the Christ who is the Savior of men, but *not twice!* The long-suffering of God shall wait for you through your life of provocations; but you shall not be born again into this world; you shall not a second time, defile its air with blasphemies, nor blot its beauties with impiety. You shall not live again to forget the God who has daily loaded you with mercies. You have your daily bread now; the clothes that are on your back shelter you from the cold; you go to your house, and you have comforts and mercies there, but like the swine which feed beneath the oak, forgetful of the green limb which yields the acorn, or like the brute which is content to eat the grass, but never thanks the sun or the cloud which nourished the pasture, so you live in this world, forgetful of the God who made you, in whom you live and move, and have your being! In this life you are unthankful, but you shall have no further opportunity for this ingratitude. All your candles shall go out in eternal dark-

ness. There shall be no more dainty meals for you, no more joyous holidays, and no more quiet slumbers. Every mercy shall be taken from you. That which makes life desirable, shall be removed if you die impenitent, till you shall hate your existence, and count it your highest blessing, if you could cease to be. You shall not live again, I say, to treat your God worse than the ox treats its owner. The ass knows his master's crib, but you know not, though you shall know, for this is the last season in which you shall play the brute!

My dear hearers, many of you have something more than the common mercies of God; you have His Word, Sabbath after Sabbath, preached in your ears! I may say truthfully concerning you who attend this house of prayer, that, you hear one who, when he fails for lack of power, fails not for lack of will to do you good! I have not shunned to warn you, and to preach in all simplicity, the whole counsel of God, as far as I have been taught by the Holy Spirit. If you die, you shall not live again to stifle the voice of your conscience, and to quench the Spirit of God! You shall have no more Sabbaths to blaspheme when this life is over! There shall be no church bells for you, after your knell is tolled. No affectionate voice shall beseech you in Christ's place to be reconciled to God; no warning hand shall point you to the cross; no loving lips shall cry, "This is the way! Walk in it." You have your last warnings *now,* sinners! If you reject them, you shall have no more. You hear in this life your last invitations; despise them and the door shall be shut in your face forever. Christ is lifted up before your eyes, look to Him now and live! Refuse Him, and there remains no more sacrifice for sin, and no other life in which you may lay hold of Him—

Fixed is their everlasting state,
Could man repent, it is then too late;
Justice has closed mercy's door,
And God's long-suffering is no more!

Here you may have a mother to weep for you; a wife to pray for you; friends who will counsel you; the blessings of a Christian country, an open Bible, and a house of prayer, but, it is your last time. Now or never; now or never! Lost in time; lost in eternity; saved now, saved forever! Sinner, it is your last turn. Will you choose to be damned? Then damned you are without hope! If God saves you now, then saved you are beyond fear of perishing. But it is your last, your only opportunity. Where the tree falls, there it must lie forever—

"Return, O wanderer to your home,
It is madness to delay!
There are no pardons in the tomb,
And brief is mercy's day. Return! Return!"

Solemnly let us say it, awful as it appears; it is well that the sinner should not live again in this world. "Oh," you will say, when you are dying, "if I could but live again, I would not sin as I once did." When you

are in the pit of hell, perhaps your pride will lead you to imagine, that if you could come back to earth again, you would be another man. Ah, but you would not be so! Unless you had a new heart, and a right spirit, if you could live again, you would live as you did before! Keep the fountain unchanged and the same streams will flow. Let the cause remain, and the same effects will follow. If the lost spirits could escape from hell, they would sin as they did before; if they could again listen to the gospel, they would again reject it, for he that is filthy, will be filthy still! The flames of hell shall work no change in *character;* for they have no sanctifying influence; they punish, but they do not cleanse. Sinners, it is well that you will not live again, for if you did, you would but increase your condemnation! There would be two lives of sin, of rejection of Christ, of unbelief, and, if it were possible, hell would then be no less tolerable for you than it shall be now! Oh, my poor dying hearers, by the corpses in the dark smothering gas of Hartley Pit, I pray you be awakened, for *your* death hour is hastening on, and you have but today in which to find a Savior—

"Sinner beware—the axe of death,
Is raised and aimed at thee—
While your Maker spares your breath,
Beware, O barren tree."

Every time you hear your clock tick, let it say to you, *"Now or never,* NOW OR NEVER, NOW OR NEVER!"

In the case of the child of God, it is the same, as far as he himself is concerned, when he dies he shall not live again. No more shall he bitterly repent of sin; no more lament the plague of his own heart, and tremble under a sense of deserved wrath! No more shall the godly pitman suffer for righteousness' sake, despising the sneer of his comrades. The battle is once fought; it is not to be repeated. If God has safely guided the ship across the sea, and brought it to its desired haven, it casts anchor forever, and goes not out a second time into the storm. Like those earnest Methodist miners, we have one life of usefulness, of service, of affliction, of temptation! We have only one life in which to glorify God on earth, in blessing our fellow men; one life in which faith may be tried, and love made perfect; one life in which we may prove the faithfulness of God in providence; and one life in which we may see Christ triumphant over sin in our mortal bodies, but we shall not return to the scene of conflict.

Brothers and sisters, is it not a mercy for you and for me, if we are in Christ, that our furnace is not to be re-lit? Oh, beloved, it would be unkind for us to wish back the dead! Ah, when we think of those brothers, those men of God, who in the pit held prayer meeting when they knew that the fatal gas would soon take away their lives; though we look at their weeping widows, and their sorrowing children, it were wrong to wish them back again! What would any of us who fear God think, if we were once in heaven? Would not the very suggestion of *return,* though it

was to the most faithful spouse, and best-beloved children, be a cruelty? What? Bring back again to battle, the victor who wears the crown? Drag back to the storm, and the tempest, the mariner who has gained the shore? What? Bring me back again to pain and sorrow, to temptation, and to sin? No! Blessed be You, O God, that all the wishes of friends shall not accomplish this, for we shall be—

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

This world is not so lovely as to tempt us away from heaven! Here we are strangers and foreigners; here we have no abiding city; but we seek one to come. There is one wilderness, but we bless God there are not two. There is one Jordan to be crossed, but there is not another. There is one season when we must walk by faith, and not by sight, and be fed with manna from heaven; but blessed be God, there is not another, for after that comes the Canaan—the rest which remains for the people of God! What man among you, immersed in the cares of business, would desire two lives? Who, that is tired today with the world's noise, and vexed with its temptations; who, that has come from a bed of sickness; who, that is conscious of sin, would wish to leave the haven when once it is reached? As well might a galley-slave long to return to his oar, or a captive to his dungeon! No, blessed be God, the souls which have ascended from the coal mine to glory are not to leave their starry spheres, but rest in Christ forever!

2. But now, we pass to the other thought under this first head. "If a man dies, shall he live again?" *Shall he live for others?* No. The sinner shall not live to do damage to others. If there were any fathers who perished in the pit who had neglected the training of their children, they cannot live again to educate them for Christ. If there were any there (we hope there were not, and there is a hopeful sign, for I am told that there was not a single pub within a mile of the village), but, if there were there, any who by their ill example taught others to sin, they shall never do it again. If there were any there who led others astray by bold speeches against God, they have done, once and for all, their life's mischiefs. And so with each of us tonight; do I speak to one here who is living a useless life; a tree planted in rich soil, but bearing no fruit; a creature made by God, but rendering Him no service? Do I not speak to some such tonight? I know I do! You cannot be charged with outward vice, or with positive irregularity of conduct, but still, it may be said of you, "I was hungry and you gave Me no meat; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; naked and you clothed Me not; sick and in prison and you visited Me not." You have not done it unto one of the least of these, His brethren, and you have not done it unto Christ! It is not necessary to do anything in order to be lost. The way to hell is very simple; it is only a little matter of neglect. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salva-

tion?" Well, sinner, this is the last life of negligence that you shall ever spend; the very last season when you shall turn upon your heels and say, "Ha! Ha! There is nothing in it!" The last time in which you shall put off the messenger by saying, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for you." The neglect of our own souls is a most solemn mischief to others. When others see that we neglect, they take courage and neglect, too—

"One sickly sheep infests the flock,
And poisons all the rest!"

But, there are others whose example is bad. What sorrow it is, to notice men who carry the infection of sin about them wherever they go. In some of our villages, and especially in our towns, we have men who are reeking dunghills of corruption! To put them by the side of a youth for an hour, would be almost as dangerous as to make that youth walk through Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace! Men who, as Saul breathed out threats, breathe out lasciviousness. Ah, do I speak to such a wretch? It is your last rebellion—your last revolt. You shall never do this again. Never again, shall you lead others down to hell, and drag them to the pit with you! Remember that. And there are some who, not only by example, but by overt teaching, drive others astray. We have still, in this enlightened Christian land, wretches who boast the name of "infidel lecturer"—whose business it is to pervert men's minds by hard speeches against the majesty of heaven! Let them labor hard if they mean to subvert Jehovah's throne, for they have little time left to do it! Well may the enemies of the Lord of Hosts be desperately in earnest, for they have an awful work to do, and if they consider the puny strength with which they go forth to battle against the Judge of all the earth, and the brevity of the time that can be given to the struggle, well may they work and toil! This is their only time; their sure damnation draws near. Hushed shall be their high words; cold shall be their hot and furious hearts. God shall crush them in His anger, and destroy them in His hot displeasure! If a man dies, he shall not live again to scatter hemlock seed, and sow sin in furrows. I do not know what your life is, my friend. You have stepped in here tonight; it is not often you are in a place of worship, but listen, now. You know that to your family you are sometimes a terror, and always an evil example. Ah, you are a co-worker with Satan now, but God shall put you where you shall do no more hurt to that fair child of yours; where you shall not teach your boy to drink; where you shall not instill into your daughter's mind unholy thoughts. The time shall come, masters, when you shall be taken away from those men who imitate you in your evil ways! The time shall be over with you, working-man yonder, you shall not much longer jeer at the righteous, and sneer at the godly. You will find it hard work to laugh at the saints when you get into hell! You will find when God comes to deal with you, and your life is over, that it will

be utterly impossible for you, then, to call them fools, for you will be thinking yourself the greatest fool that ever was, that you did not, like they, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness! Well, jeer and joke, and point the finger, and slander, and persecute as you may; it is the last time, and you shall never have another opportunity to mock the saints! O remember, it were better for you that a millstone were about your neck, and that you were cast into the depths of the sea, than that you should thus offend Christ's little ones.

Well, I think we may say it is a great mercy that the sinner shall not live again in this sense. What? Bring him back again—that old drunkard of the village pub—restore him to life? No, no! Good men breathed more freely when he was gone. What? Bring back that vile old blasphemer who used to curse God? No, no! He vexed the righteous long enough; let him abide in his place. What? Bring back that lewd, lascivious wretch to seduce others, and lead them astray? What? Bring back that thief to train others to his evil deeds? Bring back that self-righteous man who was always speaking against the gospel, and striving to prejudice other men's minds against gospel light? No, no! With all our love of one man, the love of many is stronger, still, and we could not wish for the temporary and seeming good of one, to permit him to go raging among others. Natural benevolence might suggest even the loosing of a lion as a creature, but a greater benevolence says, "No, let him be chained, or he will tear others to pieces." We might not wish to crush even a serpent. Let it live, it has its own sphere, and its own enjoyment. But if the serpent creeps among men, where it can bite and infuse its poison into human veins, let it die. Without compunction we say it—"It would be better that one man should die for the nation that the whole nation perishes not." If a man dies, then, as far as others are concerned, he shall not live again to curse his kind.

And now, we remind you that it is the same with the saint, "If a man dies, shall he live again?" No. This is our season to pray for our fellow men, and it is a season which shall never return. Mother, you shall never come back to pray for your daughters and your sons again! Ministers, this is your time to preach. We shall never have an opportunity of being God's ambassadors anymore! Oh, when I sometimes think of this, I am ashamed that I can preach with dry eyes, and that sobs do not choke my utterance! I think if I were lying upon my dying bed, I might often say, "O Lord, would that I could preach again, and once more warn poor souls." I think Baxter says he never came out of his pulpit without sighing, because he had played his part so ill, and yet, who preached more earnestly than he? And so, at times when we have felt the weight of souls, yet in looking back, we have thought we did not feel it as we should. And when we have stood by the corpse of one of our own hearers, we have had the reflection, "Would that I could have talked more personally, and spoken

more earnestly to this man!" I often feel that if God should ever permit me to say I am clear of the blood of you all, it is about as much as I can ever hope to have, for that must be heaven to a man, to feel that God has delivered him out of his ministry—it is such an awful thing to be responsible before God for the souls of men. "If the watchman warns them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." And so, remember, it is with each one of you. Now is your time to rescue the fallen, to teach the ignorant, to carry the lambs in your bosom, or to restore the wandering; now is your season for liberality to the Church, for care of the poor, for consecration to Christ's service, and for devotion to His cause. If there could be sorrow among the spirits, that are crowding around the throne of Christ, I think it would be this that they had not labored more abundantly, and were not more instant in season and out of season in doing good. If those godly pitmen over whom we mourn tonight had not done their utmost while they were here, the deficiency could never be made up. Let me commend to you the example of some of those who were in the pit, praying and exhorting their fellow men just as they were all in the last article of death. They were Primitive Methodists. Let their names clothe Primitive Methodism with eternal honor! I conceive that in employing poor unlettered men to preach, the plan of the Primitive Methodists is the New Testament, and a Scriptural policy. Such methods of usefulness we have endeavored to pursue, and hope to do so yet more fully. The Primitive Methodists think that a man may preach who never went to college; that a man may preach to his fellow miners even though he cannot speak grammatically; and hence they do not excite their ministers to labor after literary attainments, but after the *souls* of men! And the local preachers are chosen solely and wholly for their power to speak from the heart, and to make their fellow men feel. We would have done more for London if we had not been so squeamish. Real Primitive Methodism we have seen in London, in the person of Mr. Richard Weaver; and if you would put a score of the ministers who have preached in the theatres altogether, they would not have made one such a man as Richard Weaver, for real effect upon the masses! And yet, what teaching had he, and what wisdom? None, but that he feels the power of God in his own soul, and speaks out of his heart, roughly and rudely, but still mightily to others! We need all our churches to feel that they must not say, "Who is John So-and-So? He is only a cobbler; he must not preach. What is Tom So-and-So? He is only a carpenter; why should he preach?" Ah, these are the men who shook the world! These are the men whom God used to destroy old Rome! With all our getting, while we seek to get education in the ministry, we must take care that we do not despise those things that are not, which God shall make mightier than the things that are—and those base things which God has chosen to

stain the pride of human glorying, and to bring into contempt all the excellent of the earth!

I know that I address some working men here. Working men, oh, that you knew Christ in your own hearts as they did in the Hartley pit! You see they had no preacher down there. Do not get the notion that you need a minister in order to come to Christ! Priestcraft is a thing we hate, and as you hate it, too, we are quite one in that opinion. I preach the Word, but what am I more than you? If you can preach to edification, I pray you do so! Your poor brothers in the pit, though not set apart to that work, were yet as true priests unto the living God, and ministers for Christ, as any of us. So you, too! Hasten to work while it is called today; gird up your loins and run the heavenly race, for the sun is setting never to rise again upon this land!

II. "If a man dies shall he live again?" Yes, yes, that he shall! He does not die like a dog; he shall live again; not here, but in another and a better or a more terrible land. The soul, we know, never dies, but when it leaves the clay it mounts to sing with angels or descends to howl with fiends! The body itself shall live again. The corpses in the pit were some of them, swollen with foul air; some of them could scarcely be recognized, but as the seed corn has not lost its vitality, shriveled though it is, neither have those bodies. They are now sown, and they shall spring up, either to bear the image of condemnation, or of immortality and life! Scattered to the winds of heaven, devoured of beasts, mixed with other substances and other bodies, yet every atom of the human body has been tracked by the eye of omniscience and shall be gathered to its proper place by the hand of omnipotence! The Lord knows every particle of the bodies of them who are His. All men, whether they are righteous or wicked, shall certainly live again in the body, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." This much comes to all men through Christ, that all men have a resurrection. But more than that, they shall all live again in the eternal state; either forever glorified with God in Christ, blessed with the holy angels, forever shut in from all danger and alarm; or in that place appointed for banished spirits who have shut themselves out from God, and now find that God has shut them out from Him. They shall live again, in weal or woe, in bliss or bane, in heaven or in hell! Now, you who are unconverted, think of this, I pray you, for a moment. You shall live again—let no one tempt you to believe the contrary. Whatever they shall say, and however speciously they may put it, mark this word—you shall not rot in the tomb forever; there shall not be an end of you when *they* shall say, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes." You shall live again! And listen, sinner; let me hold you by the hand a moment; *your sins shall live again*. They are not dead. You have forgotten them, but God has not! You have covered them over with the thick darkness of forgetfulness, but they are in His book, and the day

shall come when all the sins that you have done shall be read before the universe and published in the light of day! What do you say to this, sinner? The sins of your youth, your secret sins—oh, man, let that thought pierce through you like a point of steel, and cut you to the very quick—your sins shall live again! *And your conscience shall live.* It is not often alive now. It is quiet, almost as quiet as the dead in the grave. But it shall soon awaken; the trumpet of the archangel shall break its long sleep; depend on that! The terrors of hell shall make you lift up your eyes which have so long been heavy with slumber. You have had an awakened conscience, but then, you are still in the land of hope, you will find, however, that an awakened conscience, when there is no Christ to flee to, is an awful thing! Remorse of conscience has brought many a man to the knife and to the noose. Ah, careless sinner, you dare not, tonight, sit up an hour alone and think over the past and the future. You know you dare not! But there will be no avoiding conscience hereafter, it speaks now—but it will thunder then! It whispers now, and you may shut your ears, but its thunderclaps then shall so startle you that you cannot refuse to listen!

Oh, transgressor, your conscience shall live again, and shall be your perpetual tormentor! Remember that *your victims shall live again.* Am I addressing any who have enticed companions into sin, and conducted friends to destruction? Your dupes shall meet you in another world and charge their ruin upon you. That young lad, whom you led astray from the path of virtue, shall point to you in hell and say, "He was my tempter." That woman—let us cover up that deed—bright eyes shall sparkle upon you through the black darkness like the eyes of serpents, and you shall hear the hissing voice, "You brought me here," and you shall feel another hell in the hell of that other soul! Oh, God, save us! Let the sins of our youth be covered! Oh, save us! Let the blood of Jesus be sprinkled on our conscience, for there are none of us who dare meet our conscience alone! Shelter us, Rock of Ages! Deliver us from blood-guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation! Sinner, remember your God shall live. You think Him nothing now; you shall see Him then. Your business now stops the way; the smoke of time dims your vision; the rough blasts of death shall blow all this away, and you shall see clearly revealed to yourself the frowning visage of an angry God! A God in arms, sinner, a God in arms, and no scabbard for His sword; a God in arms, and no shelter for your soul; a God in arms and even rocks refusing to cover you; a God in arms, and the hollow depths of earth denying you a refuge! Fly, soul, while it is yet time—fly, the cleft in the rock is open now. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned." Fly, sinner, to the open arms of Jesus! Fly, for He casts out none who come to Him!

And then, lastly, as this is true of the sinner, so it is true of the saint. He shall live again. If in this life only we had hope, we were of all men the most miserable! If we knew that we must die and not live forever, our brightest joys would be quenched; and in proportion to the joy we lost, would be the sorrow which followed. We shall live again! Godly wife, your Christian husband, though he perished by the fatal "damp," shall live again, and you shall sit with him before the eternal throne. He finished his life with prayer amid his friends; he shall begin anew with praise amid the cherubim. Widow, bereaved of your many children, you have lost them all; not lost, we hope, but gone before. Oh, there shall be joy when every link that was snapped shall be re-fitted; when again the circle shall be completed, and all losses restored—

"Far, far removed from fear and pain,
Dear brethren we shall meet again."

That sweet hymn of the children is a blessed one after all—

"We shall meet to part no more."

Death, you cannot rob us, you cannot tear away a limb from Jesus' body! You cannot take away a single stone from the spiritual temple. You do but transplant the flower, O death! You do not kill it. You do but uproot it from the land of frost to flourish in the summer's clime; you do but take it from the place where it can only bud, to the place where it shall be full blown! Blessed be God for death, sweet friend of regenerated man! Blessed be God for the grave, safe wardrobe for these poor dusty garments till we put them on afresh, glowing with angelic glory! Thrice blessed be God for resurrection, for immortality, and for the joy that shall be revealed in us. Brothers and sisters, my soul anticipates that day; let yours do the same. One gentle sigh and we fall asleep; perhaps we die as easily as those did in the colliery; we sleep into heaven, and wake up in Christ's likeness. When we have slept our last on earth, and open our eyes in heaven, oh, what a surprise! No aching arms, no darkness of the mine, no gases, no labor and no sweat, no sin, no stain there! Brothers and sisters, is not that verse near the fact which says—

"We'll sing with rapture and surprise,
His loving-kindness in the skies"?

Shall we not be surprised to find ourselves in heaven? What a new place for the poor sinner; from the coal mine to celestial spheres; from black and dusty toil, to bright and heavenly bliss. Above ground once and for all, yes and above the skies, too! Oh, long-expected day, begin! When shall it come? Hasten it, Lord!—

"Come, death and some celestial hand,
To bear our souls away!"

I have thus tried to bring forward the text. Oh that the Lord, in whose name I desire to speak, may bless it to some among you! I have now to ask you kindly, to think of those who are suffering through this terrible calamity. More than 400 widows and orphans are left bereaved and pen-

niless, for the working man has little spare cash to provide for such contingencies. As a congregation we can do but little to alleviate so great a sorrow; let us, however, bear our part with others. I have no doubt, the wealthier ones among you, have already contributed in your different connections, either through the Lord Mayor, or Mark Lane, or the Coal Market, or the Stock Exchange, or in some other way—but there are many of you who have not done so, and those who have, may like an opportunity of doing so again. Let us do what we can tonight, that we may show our gratitude to God for having spared our lives; and as we drop our money into the box, let us offer a prayer that this solemn affliction may be blessed to all in the land, and that so Christ may be glorified.

The Preacher desires to bear testimony to the hearty sympathy which led his audience, on a cold wet evening to assemble in considerable numbers, and which opened their hearts to subscribe 120 pounds for the bereaved. May the Lord bind up the bleeding hearts!

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LIFE IN EARNEST
NO. 433

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 2, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He did it with all his heart and prospered."
2 Chronicles 31:21.

THIS is no unusual occurrence; in fact, it seems to be the general rule of the moral universe, that those men prosper who do their work with all their hearts, while those are almost certain to fail, who go to their labor leaving half their hearts behind them. Look around you in business. Who are the young men who rise in the establishment? Not your men who sleep behind the counter, who are glad to avoid a customer. Employers soon discover those who throw energy into their work, and they like a young man who has "push" in him; he is sure to be promoted, and in time will become a trader on his own account. Who are the merchants who succeed in this busy time of competition? Your lazy sluggards? No. Your men, who are diligent in business, do what they do with both their hands, breast the current with all their strength, scorning to be carried down the stream to the waterfall of bankruptcy. Who are your men who rise to eminence? Men do not go to bed and wake up in the morning to find themselves famous, at least not until they have encountered many stern labors; for God does not at this day give harvests to idle men except harvests of thistles, nor is He pleased to send wealth to the man who will not dig in the field to find its hidden treasure. It is universally confessed that if a man would prosper, he must be diligent in business; for at this day, beyond every preceding age it is true, "In the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread."

The same thing is true if we leave mercantile pursuits, and survey any other of the walks of life. If a man would make discoveries in science, he does not hit upon them by accident; but, being in the way, science meets with him. If a man would become eminent as a physician, he must walk the hospitals. If he would attain position at the bar, he must give days and nights to the folios of law. There is no hope for a man in these times, in anything, unless he proceeds to it with all his heart! It is the same in religion as it is in other things. I would not have you treat religion as though it were a business, but I would have you put as much force, and power, and energy, and heartiness, and earnestness into religion as ever you do into business, and, I might add, that it deserves far more! How is it that false religions have spread? What made Mohammedanism once so mighty in the earth? It was because Mohamed himself, when he preached, was as sincerely deluded as any of his followers—when he was pelted in the streets, he still persevered, and when assassins dogged his footsteps, he counted not his life dear unto him that he might proclaim what *he* thought to be a revelation from heaven. As for his followers, they were not sleepy professors; they drew their scimitars from their scab-

bards, and swore that they would not rest till they had brought men by edge of steel to the faith of their prophet! On they dashed, till their religion, like a mighty rising ocean, swept all before it, nor could its rising wave be driven back till it was met by an equal enthusiasm to withstand its progress! Look again on Roman Catholic missions. How was it that Romanists did what we have never done, and what I fear we never shall do till we have changed our men? How was it that Francis Xavier carried his faith into India, preached in Burma, obtained great influence in China, and even entered into the recesses of Japan, till everywhere you might see a Catholic convent or nunnery, and a crucifix lifted up, with devotees bowing before it? Because Xavier's spirit was full of fire! He seemed to be a flash of lightning, flaming from one end of heaven to the other.

Now mark, as it has been with false religions, so must it be with the true. Under God, the Holy Spirit, our only hope for the increase of the church and for the conversion of the world, lies in the development of energy within us, in the bringing out of earnestness in Christian souls. Oh, it was not scholarship that converted the heathen world at first, for on the slabs in the catacombs we have decisive evidence that the first Christians could scarcely spell their own names! It was not the pomp of learning, the pride of philosophy, or the power of eloquence which made the early confessors so mighty; it was their singular earnestness. The Church was all on fire! She was like a volcano; she might not be high and lofty as some of the surrounding hills, but they had summits clothed with frost, while she sent forth earnest truths of God like streams of lava, which burned their way, and covered all the lands! Christians in those days were Christians, indeed! They believed what they professed; they knew what they spoke; they testified what they had seen; and they spoke with an unconquerable, untamable energy, which smote even the iron power of Rome, and dashed it into splinters! So must it be today, and indeed, so is it. Look around you; who are the most useful men in the Christian Church today? The men who do what they undertake for God with all their hearts! Where is the preacher whom God blesses to the conversion of hundreds in a year? Is he a sleepy, prosaic soul? Does he confine himself within narrow limits? Does he speak sleepy words to a slumbering congregation? We know it is not so, but where God is pleased to give the congregation; it is, whatever it may not be, a proof that there has been earnestness in the preacher! Who are the most successful Sunday school teachers? The most learned? Every superintendent will tell you it is not so; the most talented; the wealthiest? No; they are the most *zealous;* the men whose hearts are on fire; those are the men who honor Christ. Who among you today is doing the most for your Master's kingdom? I will tell you. Lend me a spiritual thermometer by which I may try the heat of your heart, and I will tell you the amount of your success. If your hearts are cold towards God, I am sure you are doing nothing, though you may pretend to do much. But if you can say, "Lord, our soul is all on flame with an agony of desire to do good to the souls of men," then you are doing good, and God is blessing you as He did Hezekiah, who did it with all his heart and prospered!

I feel that very many Christians are not Christians with all their hearts. I feel that perhaps some of you have only given Jesus Christ a dull, cobwebby corner of your hearts, instead of bidding Him sit at the head of the table, and reign upon the throne. And fearing that we are all in danger of getting into a Laodicean lukewarm state, I wish to stir you up this morning, and if I may only stir *myself* up, I shall be thrice happy to go home and think that at least one has gotten some good from the service, for the preacher needs to be kept alive quite as much as the hearers, for there is a danger that even the Lord's servant may lack the live coal upon his lips, and then he will be useless to his hearers.

This morning we shall notice *the effects of whole-heartedness upon the Christian;* I shall then *endeavor to stir you up with many arguments to be earnest in your work of faith and labor of love;* and when I have so done, I shall *address those to whom religion has as yet been a trifling matter.* And God grant that they may be ready to seek the Lord with all their hearts, for then He will surely be found of them!

I. First, then, let us notice THE SPHERE WHICH CHRISTIAN EARNESTNESS OCCUPIES IN THE DIVINE LIFE. Mark, I speak now only to those who are really and savingly converted to God, for if *we* are not first right with God, zeal for God is but a pretense!

One of the first things, that thorough earnestness will do for a Christian is to make him *think* very earnestly for his Lord and Master. In the diary of Jonathan Edwards, we find the following account of his feelings towards the Lord's work, "I had great longing for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world; my secret prayer used to be in great part taken up in praying for it. If I heard the least hint of anything that had happened in any part of the world which appeared to me, in some respect or other, to have favorable aspect on the interest of Christ's kingdom, my soul eagerly caught at it, and it would much animate and refresh me. I used to be earnest to read public news letters, mainly for that end, to see if I could not find some news favorable to the interest of religion in the world." Now, when we are full of zeal for God, it is the same with us. Our thoughts are continually set upon divine things; go where we may, we regard our place not as a sphere for business, but as a sphere for usefulness. We make that our very first thought. Why, beloved, if we are really in earnest for God, we shall begin to think of Christ's work in the world as soon as ever we wake! And when we rest at night, it will still be with the Lord before us, and with His glory written in our hearts. I am afraid some of you think but very little of Him, and of His cause in the world. How often when our missionary heralds are issued, nobody cares to read them. The annual report of what God is doing in foreign nations is generally the driest and dullest affair that ever comes in our way—not so much dry in itself, but because we of this generation have not been tutored and schooled to think of the advance of the gospel, and the progress of Christ's cause. Let once this flaming torch of zeal kindle your souls, and you will have Christ's cause upon your hearts at all times!

But when a man has thus had his soul quickened, to consider the cause of Christ, the next thing he will do is to *plan* and to *purpose* for it. What fine purposes some men have at eccentric seasons! After they have

listened to some earnest address they go home thinking—"Well, I must do something." And they half resolve they will, but, lacking the wholeheartedness of Hezekiah, the purpose never comes to a definite shape; it still resides in the clouds. As some men build castles in the air, so others build churches there! They educate preachers in the air, they support Christ's ministers in the sky, they send out fresh missionaries in the clouds. All their plans are very beautiful, and all practical schemes are poor affairs compared with their magnificent projects, but then it is all an unsubstantial *dream*—a pleasing picture, a dissolving view, and it soon melts into something which for them is more practical—the world and the affairs thereof! Give him earnestness, and every time he makes a purpose, it *is* a purpose; every stroke of the great motive-power within his soul tells, and sets a wheel in motion; he cannot let the blood circulate through him without its carrying life in every drop! But some men have dead blood in their veins, it is going round, going to the heart, and issuing from it, but there is no life in a drop of it. They can talk, and they can sometimes make a resolve, but it never comes to a definite purpose; they never set their teeth and plant their feet down, and say, "God helping me, I will do something. God being with me, I will not live in this world for nothing. I will not be as an oyster which lies in the mud, and opens its shell according as the tide brings round the meal-time! It shall not be said that I live merely to eat and drink, and to accumulate wealth; but, O Christ Jesus, by everything that is true, if You will help me, I will serve You while I live, and, if it must be, will be prepared to die for Your cause!" Only earnest men get so far as to select their purpose and adhere to it. Dear friends, choose your gun, but mind you, stand to it till every round of ammunition is exhausted!

But we have known persons in a great spasm—in a sort of apoplectic fit of pious enthusiasm, make a huge resolve, but they come to their cooler senses long before it is carried out. The blood has run to the head very powerfully, there has even been too much blood; they have rolled over in the spasm of fanaticism; it has never come to a practical effect. Now, when a man's heart is right with God, what he has resolved to do, he will do. I can speak for one, when I say I know a man who, when he feels that God has given him a work to do, when he has once resolved it shall be done, would move heaven and earth but what he would accomplish it. And, he would sooner break his heart or destroy his health, than he would fail in it; for he feels that if it is God's work, it must be done. Man's work may stop, but God's work cannot; and when any get in his way, or seem to thwart his purpose, that man feels his zeal so boiling over, that for God's sake he forgets everything else; and even dear friendships snap when it appears as if Christ's cause were imperiled! I know this that when a man gets thoroughly alive for God, he cannot put up with those lazy sluggards, who will neither work nor permit others to labor. When once a believer gets his spirit wholly up to the work, it is now for God and Christ, follow who may; but as for you, who are faint-hearted, go to your homes lest you make the man of God's heart to faint! Stand away, lest the chilling influence of your icy souls should do something to abate our fervor! I think a Christian is never worth much till, having been brought up to the point of resolve, he will achieve the heav-

en-born purpose, come what may, and is ready to crash and smash everything earthly and worldly, so that he may accomplish his life-work in the name of the eternal God who called him to it!

This earnestness of purpose will show itself in *perseverance*. The man fell the first time; "Never mind," he says, "it is God's work; we will try again." He breaks down again—but he falls to rise! There he sees the summit of the mountain glittering in the sunlight; and though he has a burden on his back, he vows, "I will climb there." He has fallen down that crag, and he lies there black with bruises, groaning, and moaning. The first thing he does when he wipes his eyes of the dust is to look up and say, "I will mount there yet." He climbs again—but an antagonist shoves him down! He has not time to stop and examine who it is, and resent the insult, he recommences the ascent. Now and then he runs; when he cannot run, he walks; and when he cannot walk, he creeps. And when it seems impossible to go on hands and knees, he is content to pull himself up by his hands alone, oftentimes even grasping a briar, and sending a thorn into his flesh, but still saying, "It is God's place, and He has bid me climb, and in His divine strength I will do it. I cannot rest; I cannot be quiet till the deed is done." Perseverance is the sure effect of this wholeheartedness for God!

Mark carefully, that this heart being thus on fire will show its zeal in an entire dependence upon God, and in intensely fervent prayer for God's help, and for God's blessing. Surely a man cannot know himself, who, when he has a high and noble purpose attempts it apart from God, for he is well persuaded, that if it is God's work, it must be done in God's strength, and as he must have that strength, he goes before God as if he meant to have it, and could take no denial! One of the old Puritans says, "When we pray to God without fervency we do, as it were, ask Him to deny us, but when we can go with fervency, then we must prevail." Oh, those prayers which one has sometimes heard when the man of God seemed like a Samson to get hold of the two pillars of heaven, bowing himself with all his strength to pull down the mercy, and to destroy his sins, knocks at heaven's gate as for dear life—the knock of a starving beggar who cannot afford to be unheard! Oh, that is prevailing prayer, when we can get a grip of the angel and wrestle with Him. I saw in one of the churches in Paris a picture by an eminent artist representing Jacob wrestling with the angel. I had not exactly conceived it so literally as the artist had, for he has sketched the patriarch with his foot between the angel's feet, trying to throw Him down, and wrestling just as wrestlers might do in the ring. There ought to be a practical purpose about our prayer, and as intense an earnestness to win the blessing from the angel as there is on the part of the wrestler to hurl his foe upon his back. We shall never get true and lasting revival in the church till we have men who in the supplications do their work with all their hearts, and thus prosper!

My dear friends, I shall not enlarge further to show you the proper sphere of earnestness—the fact is that it enters into every part of the spiritual man—earnestness quickens his pulse, increases the circulation of his blood, it makes the man in all respects in a healthy state; these holy stimulants make the soul stronger than the giant when he is re-

freshed with new wine. If you would ask me what fire has to do with the Christian sacrifice, I would answer it has everything to do with it. You may present a sacrifice in the dark, but you cannot consume a sacrifice without flame. You may do with very little light, but you must have fire to burn the whole victim, or else the sacrifice is no offering at all. Oh for more of this fire! Jesus! Master! Baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire! Fill our souls with fervor! Restore unto us the indomitable energy of our ancestors. Give us back the northern iron and steel, to which their resolute natures may be likened; deliver us from these willow days in which men bend before every blast—make us strong men to run the race of righteousness, and mighty men made mighty through Your Spirit, with earnestness to serve You among the sons of men!

II. I shall need your earnest attention while I labor TO STIR YOU UP BY CERTAIN ARGUMENTS WHICH MAY PROVOKE YOU TO THIS EARNESTNESS.

Either our religion is the grossest impostor that was ever palmed upon mankind, or else it is one which deserves the whole life and force and strength of every man who has been blessed by it. I would today, if I were not sure that God's Word is true, and that the precious doctrines of grace are the very revelation of heaven, renounce them boldly. Oh, I could not, I hope—I speak before God—hold the religion of Christ, and yet be sleepy about it! It does seem to me that if religion is worth anything, it is worth everything; and that for man to keep his godliness as some great farmers do their little off-hand farms, which they merely farm for pleasure, while their very life and substance is spent in another place, seems to me to be the height of wickedness, and the topmost ridge of absurdity! Either I would never seek God and His righteousness at all, or I would seek them *first*. It seems to me to be an insane attack upon everything like wisdom, to put the worst things first, and the best things last—to put the world on our heads and heaven under our feet—to make Christ second best and to make Mammon chief and lord in our affections. Surely this will never do.

But, Christian brothers and sisters, that I may have your hearts warmed this morning, may the Spirit of God take these things and lay them like hot coals to your souls. Remember, my brothers and sisters, what solemn things you and I have to deal with. We have to deal with the souls of men, immortal, infinitely precious; we have to deal under God with the eternal interests of heaven and hell; we have dealings with the sinner's sin, and long to see it washed away with the precious blood of Christ! We have dealings with man's natural death in sin, and long that men may be regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Now, if the soul is what Scripture tells us it is—if there is a heaven and a hell—if Christ has made atonement for sin, these are things that cannot be trifled with! As well dance upon the altar of God, or dabble a harlot's garments in the blood of the Paschal Lamb, as trifle and be half-hearted when we have to deal with such awful things as these!

Consider *the greatness of the work we have to deal with*. Have any of you a glimpse of an idea of this one city of London? Three millions! Three millions! As many as the Scottish nation, with some 60,000 added to the number every year—more added than we add accommodation in places

of worship to receive them, so that if our churches grow, still not in the same ratio as the population. It is said that we have more than half a million inhabitants in this city who are heathens—as positively heathens as though they lived under the sway of the king of Dahomey, or dwelt in the very center of Tartary—without God and without Christ, never listening to the gospel, never entering a place of worship from the beginning of the year to the end of it. This is the work for which we must gird up our loins. Oh, dear brothers, we cannot afford to be half-hearted here! If there is some happy city somewhere in the world, where all men hear the Word of God, and where the most are converted, even there coldness is inexcusable! But here, here in this awful city with so much to do, asleep?! Oh, God, forgive us that we are not more awake! Think how few there are to do the work. There are, perhaps, many so called laborers, men who wear the robes of priesthood, but who know not Christ in the power of His gospel! How few there are of the faithful among men who are ready to spend and be spent! When I look at the great harvest—enlarge your thoughts for a moment, the field is the world—when I see corn field after corn field, a thousand million immortal souls; and in some countries one missionary to two millions, and in others, not even one to ten millions immortal souls—one may wipe the sweat from his brow in the hot and sultry day, but only the cold-hearted will stop to rest, for there is so much to do! "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few." And shall those laborers sleep? O Lord, we beseech You, have pity upon us, and help us never to sleep again, but to be in earnest for poor souls!

Think, I pray you, how earnest Satan is. If *we* slumber, *he* never does; if we are idle, certainly he never is. As Hugh Latimer said, the devil is the busiest prelate in the land; he traverses his diocese; he is always visiting his flock; he is instant in season and out of season to destroy! See the activity of the infidel and the Romanist; of those who hold false doctrines, how zealously do they compass sea and land to make one proselyte! What are we doing? I say, brothers, what are we doing? Call it nothing, and you have not called it by too small a name; they are alive, and we are half dead; they are boiling in fervent heat, and we are neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm.

And, oh, I pray you, my hearers, think, and let this move you—think of the responsibilities which lie upon us as a church. I speak not egotistically, to glorify either myself personally or myself in you. But there has never been a congregation—certainly never a dissenting congregation—which has been more favored than we have been! What has God worked! What dew from heaven has rested upon the Word! What multitudes have been added to the church! What manner of people ought we to be! Indeed, brothers and sisters, I do not need to censure, for your obligations are felt, and the Holy Spirit is helping you to fulfill them. There are men and women in the midst of this Church of whom I dare speak in any and in every company, and say that apostolic days scarcely produced men and women superior to them! I have the felicity and the honor to see some in this Church who are patterns of everything that is good, and they not only spend their time for Christ, but who beyond what I ever expected to see of mortal men, give labor, substance, and talent to Christ and His cause. Those I always look upon with joy as being the honorable

product of the truth of God fully, fairly, and faithfully preached. But there are many others of whom this could not be said. Oh, we were speaking lies in hypocrisy if we said of all of you, that you were doing what you could do, or half what you can do! Yes, and in some cases a hundredth part of what you will wish you had done when you come to lie upon your beds! God has been pleased to give a congregation, and to give to that congregation a ministry upon which the Spirit has rested, as is manifested in the many—the *very many* conversions which *daily* take place in our midst! The Christian world has looked upon us and said, "How God has favored that Church!" And if *we* sleep, what base ungrateful wretches shall we be? If God has brought us to the kingdom for such a time as this, and we prove unworthy, deliverance will come from some other quarter to this land, but we shall have to write Ichabod upon these walls, for the glory of God will depart! God will leave us to our own devices. We have had opportunities of doing good that have been seldom offered to any body of Christians, and if we do not avail ourselves of them, the most withering curse that ever came upon a Christian community, must most certainly fall upon us! Oh, may God help us to be found faithful to our charge!

Do you need anything else to stir you up? Behold before you today the stream of death washing away myriads of souls—behold, I say, before you this morning, the dying souls of men. Listen! Their moans are going up to heaven now, the groans which they utter in their last agonies, are accusing you before the Most High. "None cared for my soul," is the cry of many. "Great God, I lived in a Christian land, but none cared for my soul! I lived in a court or in an alley, and Christian people passed the entrance of that alley to go to chapel, but they never thought about me! I lived next door to a Christian man, but he never prayed for me. I lived in a top room of the very house where there lived a man of God, but he never thought of *me!"* Oh, hear those last cries, I say, as the Spirit for the last time reflects upon the cold church which cared not for her children! Hear the accusation of the angel as he cries, "The sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the sucking child cleaves to the roof of his mouth for thirst; the young children ask for bread, and no man breaks it unto them." Hear, I beseech you, and let it startle you into earnestness—hear the shrieks of the damned spirits for a moment. Another soul has gone to hell, and while we speak, another, and another, and another! Listen to the solemn fall, the moving of the black waters as they close around the sinking spirit. As roll the masses of water down Niagara's steep, so roll the waves of souls into Perdition!

And you, you are the men whom God has sent to be the saviors of the world—will you waste the moments and neglect your charge? Black night has settled upon the nations and you, you only, are the men who carry the flaming torch into the thick darkness—followers of Christ, disciples of Jesus; you are to be the deliverers of those who sit in the valley of the shadow of death bound in affliction and iron, and will you sit still, will you fold your arms, will you give to the world and self, that which belongs to Christ? Let my tears influence you! But what are these if shrieks

of doomed souls cannot awaken us? What hearts of stone we must have, not to feel while the terrors of hell are around us! What granite heart must we have received, if we believe that men are being lost, and yet never care for them! Oh, sits there a Christian anywhere around me, above, or beneath, who cares not for man's soul? I pray God to send into his ears one piercing shriek from Tophet, and let that abide in his memory, and ring in his soul until he says, "I *must* do something to win sinners to Christ."

But once more, and if I fail here, I break down altogether. I conjure myself and you to serve God with all our hearts, because of that love which we have received of Jesus. Look, there He hangs—my eyes behold Him. His head is crowned with thorns; His feet are pierced with nails; His hands are dripping with blood. Jesus, Master! You are dying for me! That precious heart's blood of Yours is flowing for my redemption, and for my cleansing. At Your feet I fall and kiss You; O lover of my soul, I cannot but love You, You have won my heart! The love of Christ constrains me! And do You, Lord, bleed for sinners, for rebels, for enemies, for those who would not have You to reign over them, and shall I not adore You? Yes, but when I rise from my knees, shall I go forth into the world and forget You? Thorn-crowned head, shall I forget You? Pierced hands and feet, shall I forget You? Mangled body, shall I forget You? Slaughtered Emmanuel, shall I forget You? God forbid!—

"Sooner than not my Savior love,
Oh, may I cease to be!"

Beloved, what do you say? Will you look into His face and never weep for souls? Will you look upon His wounds and your heart never be wounded for poor dying men? Will you live unto yourselves and die unto yourselves? Sirs, the infidel is not far wrong when he tells us that our religion is hypocrisy, if we can be half-hearted over it! Go, go you enemy of the Church, tell it in Gath; publish it in the streets of Ascalon, till we become a hissing and a reproach if you shall find us living, as though the truth of God were a lie, and as though the doctrines revealed of God were but a delusion and an impostor! Wake up, Church of God, why are you given to slumber? O for a voice like thunder! How would I make you wake up! But what am I, more than half asleep myself? As I read the life of such men as Alleine of Taunton, and Baxter of Kidderminster, Grimshaw of Haworth, and Whitefield of Everywhere, I blush at my cold heart! Especially when perusing the life of our apostle Paul, I blush a thousand times to think how idly I have lived! Sinners, these were men—the tears streamed down their cheeks when they thought of sinners lost forever; their words froze not like icicles upon their lips, they spoke, and every word was power. Oh how they pleaded! How Paul could say, "Night and day with tears," (hear how he puts it), "as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's place, be you reconciled to God." *He* surely could not accuse himself that he had not poured out his soul for men. No, these men *lived*. We dare not say we live. Oh, the long-suffering, and the tender mercy of God, that He has had compassion on such a church as that of the present day, and that He continues to have mercy upon us, when we are so dull and sluggish in the service of Christ.

Even while I am preaching thus, I feel sorry that we should have need of such a sermon. When the Spartans went to battle, every Spartan marched with songs, willing to fight; but when the Persians went to the conflict, you could hear as the regiments came on the crack of whips, as the officers drove their soldiers to the fight! You need not wonder that a few Spartans were more than a match for thousands of Persians, that, in fact, they were like lions in the midst of sheep. So let it be with the church, never needing to be flogged to action, but full of an irrepressible life which longs for conflict against everything which is contrary to God! Then we should be like lions in the midst of herds of our enemies, and nothing, through God, will be able to stand against us. Play no longer, men! Cease your piping and dancing in the market places! Come; lift up your hands from those childish toys! Come away men; come away from the dormitories where you sleep so luxuriously, and from the playgrounds where you sport so merrily! Get to something that is worth doing, to something that is high, and noble, and heavenly, befitting your birth. You say, "What is this you are calling play?" Why your work, your business, your cares, unless they are sanctified to God! I tell you, sirs, that in the light of eternity, all things except serving God, are mere child's-play, mere theatricals, mere masquerading. They are but the mummeries of a carnival, the jests of a comedy, the laughter of a pantomime. It is only serving God that is doing immortal work; it is only living for Christ that is living at all!

III. And now, I must draw to a conclusion—may God give me fresh grace while I undertake the solemn work OF DEALING WITH CARELESS AND UNCONVERTED SOULS.

When Mr. Whitefield was preaching in the parish church of Haworth, he said when he came to the point of self-examination, "I was about to address the ungodly, but I suppose, that after the faithful ministry to which you have listened in this church, there is very little need for me to say anything about this." Mr. Grimshaw thereupon rose and said, "Brother Whitefield, don't flatter them, I fear that half of them are going to hell with their eyes open." And I must say this morning, blessing God for all the conversions that have taken place here, yet for God's sake we dare not flatter you! There are many of you still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity, as far from God as ever you were. Though we have wept over you, and preached to you again, and again, yet your hard hearts will not break. Up to now, you have been proof that *we* can do nothing, and unless the Spirit of God shall come upon you, we fear that you will remain the same; but now in God's name let us talk to you.

And so, my hearers, you think that the things of God are not worth serious thought, at least not yet; if they are not altogether trifling things, they are of such secondary importance that any time will do. The scraggy end of your life will suffice, you think, for them. Now let me remind you who may be sporting with these things, that this is inconsistent with reason and sense! You will find dying to be very earnest work. It will be no amusement to be smitten by the hand of death, to go to your deathbed with your physician's voice in your ear, "Nothing can be done for you, you may linger for a little while, but you must die." When the death struggle comes on, when death gets you, when the grim monster shakes

you till you feel every bone rattle, when they wipe the death sweat of the last conflict from your brow, when the darkness steals over your eyes, when your extremities chill with death, when the voice is choked, when the death rattle is in your throat, oh, sirs, you will not laugh, then! You will not say these things are fancies! You will have no hard words in those last moments against those who warned you. Men laughed at Noah when he built his ark upon dry land, but when they were climbing to the mountaintops to escape the inundating waves, they had no material for jest and satire. Then their tears, and cries, and groans proved that they felt the truth of Noah's preaching of righteousness! It will be so with you; mark, whoever shall be the witness of it; you will find death no child's play. And then comes the judgment. The heavens are on fire, the earth is shaking; the Judge is sitting, and the books are opened. Will you laugh then when you hear your name proclaimed with the addition, "Come to judgment, come away," when the eyes of the Judge shall be fixed upon you, and He shall turn to that page which records your deeds, and shall solemnly read them while men and angels hear—sinner! Sinner! It is enough to drive the laughter out of you this morning, if you would but hear even the distant echo of the awful voice which shall pronounce the sentence, "Depart you cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." After the judgment, what comes then, sinner? Then comes wrath without end! God will deal with you. His bare arm shall smite you. Beware, lest He tear you to pieces, and there be none to deliver you! In eternity, mercy's gates are shut—God's long-suffering is then over. Justice commences its awful work. Soul, you will have no merry jests in hell; you will find no laughter there at God's mysteries. Oh, you may go on trifling now, my hearers, but *then* you will not! You may say a little more sleep, and a little more slumber today—but there will be none of it then. Oh, how you will look back upon the misspent past and wish, but wish in vain, that you had never been created, sooner than that you should have lived to lose your only hope of salvation, your only time in which you might find salvation! O God, my God, I beseech You plead with men, for we are weak; plead with them, and make them feel that death, nor judgment, nor hell are things to be trifled with!

Will you remember, you who are the butterflies of the day, the insects who flit from flower to flower, remember that Christ did not trifle when He came into the world to save souls. His was no life spent in the polished refinements of gaiety; His was a stern, awful life; His was a zeal that ate Him up. When He sweat great drops of blood, it was no light burden He had to carry upon those blessed shoulders, and when He poured out His heart, it was no weak effort He was making for the salvation of His people. Ah, sinner! Ah, sinner! Was Christ in earnest and are *you* foolish? Was Christ in earnest, I say, and do *you* despise, do *you* forget, do *you* neglect this great salvation? I may add, the ministers whom God sends are in earnest. I can say at this moment, I do feel a longing for the conversion of my hearers, such as I cannot describe. I would count it a high privilege if I might sleep in death this morning, if that death could redeem your souls from hell. But why is it that we can feel? Oh, that we felt more—why is it that we can weep when you do not? What is your soul to us, compared with what it must be to you? If we warn you, and

you perish, your blood will not be required at our hand; it is only if we are cold and indifferent, that we shall be held responsible. But when we have poured out our heart unto you, when we have stretched out our arms, and like a loving mother with a child, have sought to bring you to the arms of Jesus, we have done all that we can do—we must leave the rest with God. But how is it, why is it, that *you* can trifle? It is your *own* salvation, not mine; it is your own eternal state; it is *you* who will lie forever in the pit of hell, or joyously climb to heaven; it is you, sinner, you, not your neighbor, not the person that is sitting next to you, but *you,* standing there in the crowd, or you yonder—each of you personally! Oh, why should *we* be earnest and *you* be dull? God forgive you this sin, and forbid you to trifle any longer!

But lastly, you will find God to be in earnest when He comes to punish you. When He lets loose His terrors on you, you shall find it no sport; when the arrow which is today fitted to the string shall fly, you shall find it to be no baby's toy; when the sword which has been long in furbishing, and which is bathed in heaven, shall begin to cut, you may say to it, "Oh, sword, when will you rest, when will you be quiet?" But it will know no rest, for it will be awfully and solemnly in earnest with you, punishing you for your sins. Would now that one could awake you! Would that every heart here felt the need of whole-heartedness towards God! But you will not mind it—you will go away, and I shall be unto you as one who plays a tune upon a goodly instrument, and it will all be forgotten. There was a tear just now—perhaps rather a tear of sympathy excited by earnestness, than a tear from your own hearts, for your own case, but you will go away and forget it all, and you will come again and forget it again! And we shall go on praying with you, and preaching to you, but you will forget it; and one day it will be said, "So-and-So is dead, he died without a hope." And though it will be some consolation, yet what a sad one for the minister to be able to say, "Well, as in the sight of God, I did all I could, I did warn, teach, exhort, and plead with him." Oh, how much better if God shall bless the Word to you, and we shall hear you tell that He took you up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set your feet upon a rock, and established your goings! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Faith in Christ is the great way of salvation. Trust Jesus, trust Him with all your heart, and you are saved this morning, and your sins are gone! And when you are saved yourself, I pray you forget not what I have tried to instill this morning—that if we serve God with all our hearts we shall prosper in His ways; and that we cannot expect to see His blessing upon anything that we do, unless we do it as unto the Lord, and not unto men.

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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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THREEFOLD SANCTIFICATION
NO. 434

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 9, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Sanctified by God the Father." Jude 1:1.

"Sanctified in Christ Jesus." 1 Corinthians 1:2.

"Through sanctification of the Spirit." 1 Peter 1:2.

MARK, beloved, the union of the three divine persons in all their gracious acts! We believe that there is one God, and although we rejoice to recognize the Trinity, yet it is ever most distinctly a Trinity *in Unity*. our watchword is still—"Hear O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD." How unwisely do those young believers talk, who make preferences in the persons of the Trinity—who think of Christ as if He were the embodiment of everything that is lovely and gracious, while the Father they regard as severely just, but destitute of kindness; and how foolish are those who magnify the decree of the Father, or the atonement of the Son, so as to depreciate the work of the Spirit. In deeds of divine grace none of the persons of the Trinity act apart from the rest. They are as united in their deeds as in their essence! In their love towards the chosen they are one, and in the actions which flow from that great central source they are still undivided. Especially I would have you notice this in the case of sanctification. While we may, without the slightest mistake, speak of sanctification as the work of the Spirit, yet, we must take heed that we do not view it as if the Father and the Son had no part in it! It is correct to speak of sanctification as the work of the Father, of the Spirit, and of the Son. Still does Jehovah say, "Let *Us* make man in our own image, after our likeness," and thus we are *"His* workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them."

My brothers and sisters, I beg you to notice and carefully consider, the value which God sets upon real holiness, since the three persons are represented as co-working to produce a Church without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Those men, who despise holiness of heart, are in direct conflict with God. Holiness is the architectural plan upon which God builds up His living temple. We read in Scripture of the "beauties of holiness." Nothing is beautiful before God but that which is holy. All the glory of Lucifer, that son of the morning, could not screen him from divine abhorrence when he had defiled himself by sin. "Holy, holy, holy"—the continual cry of cherubim—is the loftiest song that a creature can offer, and the noblest that the Divine Being can accept! See then, He counts holiness to be His choice treasure. It is as the seal upon His heart, and as the signet upon His right hand. He could as soon cease to be, as cease to be holy, and sooner renounce the sovereignty of the world, than toler-

ate anything in His presence contrary to purity, righteousness, and holiness. I pray you, you who profess to be followers of Christ, set a high value upon purity of life and godliness of conversation. Value the blood of Christ as the foundation of your hope, but, never speak disparagingly of the work of the Spirit, which is your meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light; yes, rather, prize it; prize it so heartily, that you dread the very appearance of evil! Prize it so, that in your most ordinary actions, you may be, "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, showing forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

My design was to have entered at large upon the doctrine of sanctification this morning. I intended to use the word "sanctification" in the mode in which it is understood among theologians; for you must know that the term "sanctification" has a far narrower meaning in bodies of divinity, than it has in Scripture. But, in studying the subject, I found myself lost in its ever-widening extent, so that I concluded, to attempt less in the hope of efficiently doing more. On some future occasion we will enter at length into the Spirit's work, but now, I only call attention to the fact, that sanctification is treated in Scripture in various ways. I think we may do some service in illuminating the understanding of believers, if we shall this morning, draw their attention, not to the theological, but to the Scriptural uses of the term "sanctification," and show, that in God's holy Word, it has a much wider meaning than is accorded to it by systematic divines. It has been well said that the Book of God, like the works of God, is not systematically arranged. How different is the freedom of nature from the orderly precision of the scientific museum! If you visit the British Museum, you see all the animals there placed in cases according to their respective orders. You go into God's world and find dog and sheep, horse and cow, lion and vulture, elephant and ostrich roaming abroad as if no zoologist had ever ventured to arrange them in classes. The various rocks are not laid in order as the geologist draws them in his books, nor are the stars marked off according to their magnitudes. The order of nature is variety. Science does but arrange and classify, so as to assist the memory. So systematic divines, when they come to deal with God's Word, find Scriptural truths put, not in order for the classroom, but for common life. The systematic divine is as useful as the analytical chemist, or the anatomist, but still the Bible is not arranged as a body of divinity. It is a handbook to heaven; it is a guide to eternity, meant for the man at the plow, as much as for the scholar at his table. It is a primer for babes, as well as a classic for sages. It is the humble, ignorant man's book, and though there are depths in it, in which the elephant may swim, yet there are shallows where the lamb may wade. We bless God that He has not given us a body of divinity in which we might lose ourselves, but that He has given us His own Word, put into the very best practical form for our daily use and edification!

It is a recognized truth of God among us, that the Old Testament very often helps us to understand the New, while the New also expounds the Old. With God's Word self-interpretation is the best. "Diamond cut diamond" is a rule with a goldsmith; so must it be with a Scriptural student. They, who would know God's Word best, must study it in its own light.

I. Now, in the Old Testament we find the word "sanctify" very frequently, indeed, and it is used there in three senses. Let me call your attention to the *first* one. The word "sanctify" in the Old Testament frequently has the meaning of *setting apart*. It means the taking of something which was common before, which might legitimately have been put to ordinary uses, and setting it apart for God's service, alone. It was then called sanctified or holy. Take, for instance, the passage in the 13th chapter of Exodus at the 2nd verse, "Sanctify unto Me all the first-born." On account of the destruction of the first-born of Egypt, God claimed the first-born of men, and the first-born of cattle to be His. The tribe of Levi was set apart to be the representatives of the first-born, to stand before the Lord to minister day and night in His tabernacle, and in His temple, hence, those who were thus set apart to be priests and Levites were said to be *sanctified*. There is an earlier use of the term in the 2nd chapter of Genesis, at the 3rd verse. It is said, "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." It had been an ordinary portion of time before, but He set it apart for His own service, that on the seventh day, man should do no work for himself, but rest and serve his Maker. So in Leviticus 27:14, you read, "And when a man shall sanctify his house to be holy unto the Lord," etc., which was meant as a direction to devout Jews who set apart a house or field to be God's; intending that either the produce of the field or the occupation of the house should be wholly given either to God's priests or Levites, or in some other way set apart to holy uses. Now, nothing was done to the house; there were no ceremonies; we do not read that it was cleansed or washed or sprinkled with blood; but the mere fact, that it was set apart for God, was considered to be sanctification. So in the most notable of instances in the Book of Exodus 29:44, we read that God said, "I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar," by which plainly enough was meant, that He would set it apart to be His house, the special place of His abode, where between the wings of the cherubim the bright light of the Shekinah might shine forth, the glorious evidence that the Lord God dwelt in the midst of His people. To the same effect are such as the following. The sanctification of the altar, instruments and vessels, in Numbers 7:1, the setting apart of Eleazer the son of Abinadab, to keep the ark of the Lord while it was at Kirjathjearim, 1 Samuel 7:1, and the establishment of cities of refuge in Joshua 20:7, where in the original we find that the word rendered "appointed" is the same which elsewhere is translated "sanctified." It plainly appears from the Old Testament that the word "sanctify" sometimes has the meaning simply and only of setting apart for holy uses. This explains a text in John 10:36 "Say you of Him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, 'You blaspheme,' because I said I am the Son of God?" Jesus Christ there speaks of Himself as "sanctified" by His Father.

Now, He was not purged from sin, for He had none. Immaculately conceived, gloriously preserved from all touch or stain of evil, He needed no sanctifying work of the Spirit within Him to purge Him from dross or corruption! All that is here intended is that He was *set apart*. So in that notable and well known passage in John 17:19, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth," by

which, again, He meant only that He gave Himself up especially to God's service, to be occupied only with His Father's business. He could say, "It is My meat and drink to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work." Brothers and sisters, you understand, now, the text in Jude, "Sanctified by God the Father." Surely it means that God the Father has especially set apart His people or *sanctified* them. Not that God the Father works operatively in the believer's heart, although Paul tells us it is God who works in us to will and to do—that belongs immediately and effectively to the Holy Spirit—but, He in the decree of election, separated unto Himself a people who were to be sanctified to Himself forever and ever. He, by the gift of His Son for them, redeemed them from among men that they might be holy; and He, by continually sending forth the Spirit, fulfils His divine Purpose that they should be a separate people sanctified from all the rest of mankind. In this sense every Christian is perfectly sanctified already. We may speak of believers as those who are sanctified by God the Father, that is to say, they are *set apart*. They were set apart before they were created, they were legally set apart by the purchase of Christ, and they are manifestly and visibly set apart by the effectual calling of the Spirit of divine grace. They are, I say, in this sense, at all periods sanctified; and speaking of the work as it concerns God the Father, they are completely sanctified unto the Lord forever.

Is not this doctrine clear enough to you all? Leave the doctrine a moment, and let us look at it practically. Brothers and sisters, have we ever realized this truth of God as we ought to do? When a vessel, cup, altar, or instrument was set apart for divine worship, it was never used for common purposes again! No man but the priest might drink out of the golden cup; the altar might not be trifled with; God's brazen laver was not for ordinary washing; even the tongs upon the altar and the snuffers for the lamps were never to be profaned for any common purpose whatever. What a suggestive and solemn fact is this! If you and I are sanctified by God the Father, we ought never to be used for any purpose but for God! "What?" you say, "Not for us?" My brothers and sisters, not for ourselves! You are not your own; you are bought with a price. "But must we not work and earn our own bread?" Verily, you must, but still not with that as your objective. You must still be "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Remember, if you are servants, you are to serve not with eye service as men-pleasers, but serving the Lord. If any man shall say, "I have an occupation in which I cannot serve the Lord," leave it, you have no right in it! But I think there is no calling in which man can be found, certainly no lawful calling, in which he may not be able to say, "Whether I eat or drink, or whatever I do, I do all to the glory of God." The Christian is no more a common man than was the altar a common place. It is as great a sacrilege for the believer to live unto himself, or to live unto the world, as you and I could have profaned the most holy place, used the holy fire for our own kitchen, or the censer for common perfume, or the candlestick for our own chamber. These things were God's, none might venture to appropriate them, and we are God's and must be used only for Him. Oh, Christians, would that you could know this! You are Christ's, God's; servants of God through Jesus Christ! You are not to do your own works; you are not to live for your own objectives.

You are to say at all times, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus." You are practically to take this for your motto, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." I fear nine out of ten professing Christians have never recognized this fact. They think if they were to devote a *part* of their substance, that would do, or a *part* of their time will suffice. Oh, Christ did not buy a *part* of you! Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ did not purchase a part of you! He bought *all* of you, body, soul and spirit, and He must have you, the whole person. Oh, if you are to be partly saved by Him, and partly by yourselves, then live to yourselves! But if God has wholly set you apart to be vessels of mercy fitted for His use, do not rob the Lord; treat not as common cups those things which are as the bowls of the altar!

There is another practical thought here. It was a crime which brought destruction upon Babylon when Belshazzar in his drunken frolic cried, "Bring forth the cups of the Lord, the goodly spoil of the temple at Jerusalem." They brought the golden candlestick and there it stood flaming high in the midst of the marble hall. The despot, surrounded by his wives and his concubines, filled high the bowl with the foaming draught, and bidding them pass round the cups of Jehovah, the heathen, the worshippers of idols, drank confusion to the God of heaven and earth. In that moment, just as the sacred vessel touched the sacrilegious lips, a hand was seen mysteriously writing out his doom—"You are weighed in the balances and found wanting." This was the crime which filled up the ephah of his sin! Now was the measure of his iniquity fully accomplished. He had used for lascivious and drunken purposes, vessels which belonged to Jehovah, the God of the whole earth. Oh, take heed; take heed, you who profess to be sanctified by the blood of the covenant, that you reckon it not to be an unholy thing! See to it that you make not your bodies, which you profess to be set apart to God's service, slaves of sin, or your members servants of iniquity unto iniquity, lest, O professors, you should hear in that hour the voice of the recording angel as he cries, "You are weighed in the balances and found wanting!" Be you clean, you that bear the vessels of the Lord; and you beloved who hope that you are Christ's, and have a humble faith in Him this morning, see that you walk circumspectly, that by no means you prostitute to the service of sin, that which was set apart in the eternal covenant of grace to be God's alone! If you and I are tempted to sin, we must reply, "No! Let another man do that, but I cannot; I am God's; I am set apart for Him; 'how shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?'" Let dedication enforce sanctification. Think of the dignity to which God has called you—Jehovah's vessels, set apart for the Master's use! Far from you, far from you be everything which would make you impure! When Antiochus Epiphanes offered a sow on the altar of the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem, his awful death might have been easily foretold. Oh, how many there are who make a high profession, who have offered unclean flesh upon the altars of God! So many have made religion a stalking-horse to their own reward, and espoused the faith to gain esteem and applause among men! What says the Lord concerning such? "Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense says the Lord" (Heb 10:30). Their god was their belly; they gloried in their shame; they minded earthly things—and they die justly

accursed. Spots are they in your solemn feasts; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever! But, you beloved, be not carried away with the error of the wicked, but keep yourselves unspotted from the world.

II. Secondly, in the Old Testament, the word "sanctify" is now and then used in another sense, one which I do not perceive to be hinted at in our Biblical Cyclopedias, but which is needed to make the subject complete. The word "sanctify" is used, not only to signify that the thing is set apart for holy uses, but *that it is to be regarded, treated, and declared as a holy thing*. To give you an instance, there is a passage in Isaiah 8:13, which is to the point, when it is said—"Sanctify the Lord of Hosts, Himself." You clearly perceive that the Lord does not need to be set apart for holy uses; and the Lord of Hosts needs not to be purified, for He is Holiness itself! It means *adore* and *reverence* the Lord; with fear and trembling approach His throne; regard Him as the holy one of Israel. But let me give you other instances. When Nadab and Abihu, as recorded in the 10th of Leviticus, offered sacrifice to God and put strange fire on the altar, the fire of the Lord went forth and consumed them. And this was the reason given—"I will be sanctified in them who come near Me." The Lord did not mean that He would be set apart, nor that He would be made holy by purification, but, that He would be treated and regarded as a most Holy Being, with whom such liberties were not to be taken! And again in Numbers 20:12, on that unfortunate occasion when Moses lost his temper and smote the rock twice, saying, "Hear now, you rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" The Lord said that he should *see* the promised land but should *never enter* it; the reason being, "Because you believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel," by which He meant that Moses had not acted as to honor God's name among the people. A yet more familiar instance occurs in what is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer." "Our Father which are in heaven, sanctified be Your name." The word "hallowed" is simply an English variation; the Greek is "*sanctified* be Your name." Now, we know that God's name does not need purifying, or setting apart—so that the sense here can only be, "Let Your name be reverenced and adored throughout the whole earth, and let men regard it as being a sacred and holy thing."

My beloved brothers and sisters, have we not some light here concerning our second text—"Sanctified in Christ Jesus." If the word "sanctified" may mean "regarded as holy and treated as such," can you not see how in Christ Jesus the saints are regarded by God as being holy and treated as such? Mark, we do not lay that down as being the *only* meaning of the text, for we shall have to show that another sense may be attached to it. There are certain brethren who have enlarged upon our being sanctified in Christ, and have almost forgotten the work of the Spirit. Now, if they only speak of our being sanctified in Christ, in the sense of being treated as holy, in fact as being *justified,* we have no quarrel with them; but if they deny the work of the Spirit, they are guilty of deadly error. I have sometimes heard the term used, "Imputed sanctification," which is sheer absurdity! You cannot even use the term, "Imputed Justification." "Imputed righteousness" is correct enough, and implies a glorious doctrine; but *justification* is not imputed, it is actually conferred! We are justified

through the imputed righteousness of Christ, but as to *sanctification* being imputed, no one who understands the use of language can so speak! The term is inaccurate and unscriptural. I know it is said that the Lord Jesus is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; but this sanctification is not by *imputation,* nor does the text say so. Why, you might as readily prove imputed *wisdom,* or imputed *redemption* by this text, as force it to teach imputed sanctification! It is a fact, that for the sake of what Jesus Christ did, God's people, though in themselves but *partially* sanctified as being yet subject to sin, are for Christ's sake treated and regarded as if they were perfectly holy. But this, according to theological definitions, is rather justification than sanctification; it must, however, be admitted that the Scripture sometimes uses the word "sanctification" in such a manner as to make it tantamount to justification. This, however, we can clearly see, that God's people have access with boldness to the Lord, because they are regarded through Christ as though they were perfectly holy. Oh, brethren, think of this for a moment! A holy God cannot have dealings with unholy men. A holy God—and is not Christ Jesus God?—cannot have communion with unholiness, and yet you and I are unholy! How, then, does Christ receive us to His bosom? How does His Father walk with us and find Himself agreed? Because He views us, not in ourselves, but in our great federal Head, the Second Adam, He looks at us—

"Not as we were in Adam's fall,
When sin and ruin covered all;
But as we'll stand another day,
Fairer than sun's meridian ray."

He looks on the deeds of Christ as ours—on His perfect obedience and sinless life as ours, and thus we may sing in the language of Hart—

"With Your spotless garments on,
Holy as the Holy One."

We may boldly enter into that which is within the veil, where no unholy thing may come, yet where we may venture because God views us as holy in Christ Jesus. This is a great and precious doctrine; but still, since the use of the term "sanctification " in any other sense than that in which it is commonly employed as meaning the work of the Spirit, tends to foster confused notions, and really does I fear lead some to despise the work of the Spirit of God, I think it is better, in ordinary conversation between Christians, to speak of sanctification without confounding it with what is quite a distinct act, namely, justification through the imputed righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Yet, if we hear a brother so talk, we must not be too severe upon him, as though he assuredly erred from the faith, for in Scripture, the terms "sanctification" and "justification" are frequently used interchangeably, and Christ's righteousness made the subject matter of both works of divine grace.

III. We now come to the usual sense in which the word "sanctification" is employed. It means *to actually purify or make holy;* not merely to set apart nor to account holy, but to make *really* and *actually* so in nature! You have the word in this sense in many places in the Old Testament. You will find it in Exodus 19:10-12. On the third day God was about to proclaim on the top of Sinai His holy law, and the mandate went forth, "Sanctify the people today and tomorrow," which sanctification consisted

in certain outward deeds by which their bodies and clothes were put into a clean state and their souls were brought into a reverential state of awe. In the Third of Joshua you find when the children of Israel were about to pass the Jordan, it was said, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." They were to prepare themselves to be beholders of a scene so august, when Jordan was driven back and the river was utterly dried up before the feet of the priests of God! There was in this case an actual purification. Men in the old times were sprinkled with blood, and thus sanctified from defilement and considered to be pure in the sight of God. Now, this is the sense in which we view our third text, "Sanctification through the Spirit," and this, I repeat, is the general sense in which we understand it in common conversation among Christians.

Sanctification begins in regeneration. The Spirit of God infuses into man the new principle called the spirit, which is a third and higher nature, so that the believing man becomes body, soul, *and spirit*. And in this he is distinct and distinguished from all other men of the race of Adam. This work, which begins in Regeneration, is carried on in two ways—by vivification and by mortification; that is, by giving life to that which is good, and by sending death to that which is evil in the man; mortification, whereby the lusts of the flesh are subdued and kept under, and vivification, by which the life which God has put within us, is made to be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. This is carried on every day in what we call perseverance, by which the Christian is preserved and continued in a gracious state, and is made to abound in good works unto the praise and glory of God. And it culminates, or comes to perfection, in "glory," when the soul, being thoroughly purged, is caught up to dwell with holy beings at the right hand of the Majesty on High. Now, this work, though we commonly speak of it as being the work of the Spirit, is quite as much the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as of the Spirit. In looking for texts on the subject, I have been struck with the fact that where I found one verse speaking of it as the Spirit's work, I found another in which it was treated as the work of Jesus Christ. I can well understand that my second text, "Sanctified in Christ Jesus," has as great a fullness of meaning as the third, "Sanctification through the Spirit." Lend me your attention. I fear that not many of you will be interested, except those of you who have a share in this precious work. Others may think the subject too dry for them. Oh that they may yet know how precious to believers is the purifying work of sanctification!

Sanctification is a work *in* us, not a work *for* us. It is a work in us, and there are two agents—one is the Worker who works this sanctification effectually—that is the Spirit—and the other, the Agent, the efficacious means by which the Spirit works this sanctification is—Jesus Christ and His most precious blood! Suppose, to put it as plainly as we can, there is a garment which needs to be washed. Here is a person to wash it, and there is a bath in which it is to be washed. The person is the Holy Spirit, but the bath is the precious blood of Christ. It is strictly correct to speak of the person cleansing, as being the *sanctifier*—it is quite as accurate to speak of that which is in the bath, and which makes it clean as being the sanctifier, too. Now, the Spirit of God sanctifies us. He works it effectively. But He sanctifies us through the blood of Christ, through the water

which flowed with the blood from Christ's side. To repeat my illustration—here is a garment which is black; a fuller, in order to make it white, uses niter and soap, both the fuller and the soap are cleansers; so both the Holy Spirit and the atonement of Christ are sanctifiers! I think that will be plain enough. Let us enlarge upon the doctrine. The Spirit of God is the great worker by whom we are cleansed. I shall not, this morning, quote the texts. Most of you have the "Baptist Confession of Faith," published by Passmore and Alabaster, and the "Catechism," which are generally distributed among the families of our Church. They will furnish you with abundance of texts on that subject, for this is a doctrine which is generally received among us—that it is the Spirit of God who creates in us a new heart and a right spirit, according to the tenor of the covenant—"A new heart will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them." "I will put My Spirit within them, and they shall walk in My ways." He renews and changes the nature—turns the bias of the will—makes us seek after that which is good and right, so that every good thing in us may be described as "the fruit of the Spirit," and all our virtues and all our graces are efficiently worked in us by the Spirit of the living God. Never forget this, I pray you, brothers and sisters; never, never! Oh, it will be an ill day for any church when the members begin to think lightly of the work of the Holy Spirit within us! We delight to magnify the work of Christ *for* us, but we must not depreciate the work of the blessed Spirit *in* us.

In the days of my venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, who was in the opinion even of ultra-Calvinists, sound to the core, this pernicious evil broke out in our Church. There were some who believed in what was called, "Imputed Sanctification," and denied the work of the blessed Spirit. I was reading last night in our old Church-book, a note written there in the doctor's own handwriting, as the deliberate opinion of this Church—"Agreed: That to deny the internal sanctification of the Spirit, as a principle of divine grace and holiness worked in the heart, or as consisting of divine grace communicated to and implanted in the soul, which, though but a begun work, and as yet incomplete, is an abiding work of grace, and will abide, notwithstanding all corruptions, temptations, and snares, and be performed by the Author of it until the day of Christ, when it will be the saints' meetness for eternal glory—*is a grievous error, which highly reflects dishonor on the blessed Spirit, and His operations of grace on the heart; is subversive of true religion and powerful godliness, and renders persons unfit for church communion.* Therefore, it is further agreed, that such persons who appear to have embraced this error be not admitted to the communion of this church; and should any such who are members of it appear to have received it, and continued in it, that they be forthwith excluded from it." Two members then present declaring themselves to be of the opinion condemned in the above resolution, and also a third person who was absent but who was well known to have been under this awful delusion, were consequently excluded that evening. No, more, a person of another church who held the opinion thus condemned, was forbidden to commune at the table, and his pastor at Kettering was written to upon the subject, warning him not to allow so great an errorist to remain in fellowship. The doctor thought the error to be so deadly that he

used the pruning knife at once! He did not stop till it spread, but he cut off the very twigs! And this is one of the benefits of church discipline when we are enabled to carry it out under God—that it nips error in the very bud—and thus those who as yet are not infected are kept from it by the blessed providence of God through the instrumentality of the Church! We have always held, and still hold and teach that the work of the Spirit in us, whereby we are conformed unto Christ's image, is as absolutely necessary for our salvation, as is the work of Jesus Christ, by which He cleanses us from our sins.

Pause here one moment, and let me not distract your minds while I say, that while the Spirit of God is said in Scripture to be the author of sanctification, yet there is a visible agent which must not be forgotten. "Sanctify them," said Christ, through Your *truth*. Your Word is truth." Young men of the Bible class, look up the passages of Scripture which prove that the instrument of our sanctification is the Word of God. You will find that there are very many. It is the Word of God which sanctifies the soul! The Spirit of God brings to our minds the commands and precepts, and doctrines of the truths of God, and applies them with power. These are heard in the ear, and being received in the heart, they work in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure. How important, then, that the truths of God should be preached! How necessary that you never tolerate a ministry which leaves out the great doctrines or the great precepts of the gospel! The truth of God is the sanctifier, and if we do not hear the truth, depend upon it, we shall not grow in sanctification. We only progress in sound living as we progress in sound understanding. "Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my paths." Do not say of such-and-such an error, "Oh, it is a mere matter of opinion." If it is a mere matter of opinion today, it will be a matter of *practice* tomorrow! No man has an error of judgment, without sooner or later having an error in practice. As every grain of truth is a grain of diamond dust, prize it all! Hold fast the truths of God which you have received, and which you have been taught. "Hold fast the form of sound words," and in this day when articles are ridiculed, when creeds are despised—hold fast to that which you have received that you may be found "faithful among the faithless," for by so holding the truth of God shall you be sanctified by the Spirit of God. The agent, then, is the Spirit of God working through the truth.

But now let me bring you back to my old figure. In another sense we are sanctified through Christ Jesus, because it is His blood and the water which flowed from His side in which the Spirit washes our heart from the defilement and propensity of sin. It is said of our Lord—"Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing." Remember again, "Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." "He who sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." I say again, there are hundreds of texts of this kind. "You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." "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." In that memorable passage where Paul, struggling with corruption, exclaims, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—the answer is not concerning the Holy Spirit; but he says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Space forbids the multiplication of texts; but there are many passages to the effect that our sanctification is the work of Jesus Christ. He is our sanctifier, for He filled the sacred laver of regeneration in which we are washed, filled it with His blood and with the water which flowed from His side, and in this, by the Holy Spirit, we are washed. There is no being sanctified by the law; the Spirit does not use legal precepts to sanctify us—there is no purification by mere dictates of morality, the Spirit of God does not use them. No, just as when Marah's waters were bitter, Moses, to make them sweet, commanded them to take a tree and cast it into the waters, and they were sweet, so the Spirit of God, finding our natures bitter, takes the tree of Calvary, casts it into the stream, and everything is made pure. He finds us lepers, and to make us clean He dips the hyssop of faith in the precious blood, and sprinkles it upon us and we are clean. There is a mysterious efficacy in the blood of Christ not merely to make satisfaction for sin, but to work the death of sin. The blood appears before God, and He is well-pleased. It falls on us—lusts wither, and old corruptions feel the death stroke! Dagon falls before the ark, and although the stump is left, and corruptions still remain, yet Christ shall put an end to all our inbred sins, and through Him we shall mount to heaven perfect even as our Father, which is in heaven, is perfect!

Just as the Spirit only works through the truth, so the blood of Christ only works through *faith*. Young men of the Catechumen and Bible classes, again I say, turn to your Bibles at your leisure, and look up the many passages which speak of faith as sanctifying the soul, and purifying the mind. Our faith lays hold on the precious atonement of Christ. It sees Jesus suffering on the tree and it says—"I vow revenge against the sins which nailed Him there." And thus His precious blood works in us a detestation of all sin, and the Spirit through the truth of God, working by faith, applies the precious blood of sprinkling, and we are made clean and are accepted in the beloved. I am afraid that I have confused and darkened counsel with words; but yet, I think, I may have suggested some trains of thought, which will lead you to see that holy Scripture teaches us a sanctification, not narrow and concise, so as to be written down with a short definition as in our creed books—but wide, large and expansive! A work in which we are sanctified by God the Father, sanctified in Christ, and yet have our sanctification through the Spirit of God. Oh, my dear hearers strive after practical holiness! You who love Christ, do not let any say of you—"There is a Christian, but he is worse than other men." It is not our eloquence, our learning, our fame, or our wealth that can ever commend Christ to the world; it is the holy living of Christians! I was speaking, the other day, to a brother minister about this Bicentenary movement, which I fear will be an immense injury to Christ's Church. I feared lest it should be made an opportunity for strife among the brethren; error must be corrected, but love must not be wounded. He remarked, and I thought it was so truthful, that the only way by which Dissent flourished of old was, by the then superior holiness of its minis-

ters, so that while the Church clergyman was hunting, the Dissenting minister was visiting the sick, and said he, "This is the way in which we shall lose power, if our ministers become political and worldly, it will be all over with us." I have never shunned rebuking, when I thought it necessary, but I hate contention. The only allowable strife is to labor that can be the most holy, the most earnest, the most zealous—who can do the most for the poor and the ignorant—and who can lift Christ's cross the highest! That is the way to lift up the members of any one particular denomination—by the members of that body being more devout, more sanctified, more spiritual-minded than others. All mere party fights will only create strife, animosities, and bickering—and are not of the Spirit of God! But to live unto God and to be devoted to Him—this is the strength of the Church; this will give us the victory, God helping us, and unto His name shall be all the praise!

As for persons here who are not converted and are unregenerate, I cannot address you about sanctification. I have opened a door this morning, but you cannot enter. Only remember, that if you cannot enter into this, you cannot enter into heaven, for—

"Those holy gates forever bar
Pollution, sin and shame.
None shall obtain admission there,
But followers of the Lamb."

May it be yours, by God's grace, to come humbly and confess your sins, and ask and find forgiveness, and then, but not till then, there is hope that you may be sanctified in the Spirit of your mind. The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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OBTAINING PROMISES
NO. 435

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 16, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Who through faith obtained promises."
Hebrews 11:33.

THE promises of God are to the believer an inexhaustible mine of wealth. Happy is it for him if he knows how to search out their secret veins, and enrich himself with their hidden treasures. They are to him an armory containing all manner of offensive and defensive weapons. Blessed is he who has learned to enter into the sacred arsenal, to put on the breastplate and the helmet, and to lay his hand to the spear and to the sword. They are to the believer a surgery in which he will find all manner of restoratives and blessed elixirs; he shall find in them an ointment for every wound, a cordial for every faintness, and a remedy for every disease. Blessed is he who is well skilled in heavenly pharmacy and knows how to lay hold on the healing virtues of the promises of God! The promises are to the Christian a storehouse of food. They are as the granaries which Joseph built in Egypt, or as the golden pot wherein the fresh manna was preserved. Blessed is he who can take the five barley loaves and fishes of promise and break them till his 5,000 necessities shall all be supplied, and he is able to gather up baskets full of fragments. The promises are the Christian's Magna Charta of liberty. They are the title deeds of his heavenly estate! Happy is he who knows how to read them well and call them all his own. Yes, they are the jewel room in which the Christian's crown-treasures are preserved—the regalia, secretly his today, but which he shall openly wear in paradise! He is already a king who has the silver key with which to unlock the strong room; he may even now grasp the scepter, wear the crown, and put upon his shoulders the imperial mantle! O how unutterably rich are the promises of our faithful, covenant-keeping God! If we had here the tongue of the mightiest of human orators, and if that tongue could be touched with a live coal from off the altar, yet still it could not utter a tenth of the praises of the exceedingly great and precious promises of God! No, they who have entered into rest, and have had their tongues attuned to the lofty and rapturous eloquence of cherubim and seraphim, even *they* can never tell the height and depth, the length and breadth of the unsearchable riches of Christ which are stored up in the treasure house of God—the promises of the covenant of His divine grace! See, then, my brothers and sisters, how necessary it is that you and I should know the heavenly art of by faith "obtaining promises."

Furthermore, all things under the covenant of grace are by promise. The law had blessings for works. What shall I say? It had only curses for transgressors, since the blessings were never obtained by any who were under the law! But the covenant of grace says not, "Do this and live," but

it says, "I will," and "you shall." It says not, "He that does these things shall live by them," but, "At such-and-such a time will I visit you and you shall be blessed." Mention anything you will which is contained in the covenant, and I will show it is by promise! Do we speak of adoption? "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise, these are counted for the seed." Do you speak of inheritance? Then, "God gave it to Abraham by promise," we are the "heirs of promise." "And this is the promise that He has promised us, even eternal life." The covenants are described by Paul as being, the "covenants of promise." Even the gospel, itself, is in the First chapter of the Romans, at the second verse, spoken of as "The gospel of God, which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures." life eternal is described as the "promise of eternal life." We, brothers and sisters, look for the "*promise* of His coming," and after that we, "according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness." If we should begin at the beginning and run on till we come to the close of the catalog of divine blessings which are bestowed upon us through grace, we might say of them all, "These are *promised* covenant mercies." How necessary then—in what a tenfold degree is it absolutely necessary that you and I should know how to obtain the promises and see them fulfilled; for if not—failing to obtain the promises, we have lost all things and are of all men the most miserable!

I would try this morning to explain the text, understanding it in two senses. First, some reader might think it means *obtaining the promises in themselves*. Perhaps, a more thoughtful reader would perceive that it may be better understood as *obtaining the fulfillment of the promises*. The phrase means certainly both, but we think that the mind of the Spirit is most fully expressed by the second sense.

I. It is certain that holy men of old and good men now, do BY FAITH OBTAIN PROMISES.

Let us give you an instance—the memorable case of Abraham. Abraham is bid by God to offer up his son Isaac. He was already an heir of the promises, but not as yet had they been revealed to him in their utmost length and breadth. Obedient to the divine command, Abraham prepares to offer up his son Isaac, his only son, on whom his hope of posterity depended, counting that God was able either of stones to raise up children, or to raise up Isaac again from the dead. He unsheathes the knife to slay his son. He is prevented from the consummation of the deed. God accepts his sacrifice and rewards it with a promise. If you will at your leisure read in Genesis 22, commencing at the 15th verse, and proceeding onwards, you will see it was then that God conferred on Abraham that great charter wherein it was written, "In blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice." Now, it was his act of faith which, not meritoriously, but of divine grace, obtained that noble promise! Brothers and sisters, if you would obtain a promise, your faith must do exploits. When you have made some sacrifice for God, and have been

willing in the ties of human reason to do God's will as God bids you, you shall then stand on a vantage ground from which you may reach another and a higher promise than as yet you have ever been able to grasp in the hands of your faith! It is true the promise is not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith; but to him, who like Abraham staggers not at the promise through unbelief, it shall surely be given to be "heir of the world." To him who has shall be given, and he shall have abundantly. The Spirit of God shall whisper into your soul some promise which shall come home with as much power to you as though an angel from heaven had spoken it to you, and you shall, through one act of faith, obtain the promise which before was beyond your reach!

Another notable instance is given us in the case of David, where it was not so much faith, as an act consequent upon faith, which brought him the promise, namely, a noble wish to serve God by building a house for Him. David had been storing up much gold and silver that he might build a house for God, for he said, "Behold I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord remains under curtains." He was not permitted to build the house, but as a reward for his desire to do this for his God, Nathan was sent, and then it was that the covenant was made with David, in which he rejoiced even when expiring, because it was "ordered in all things and sure." Then, Nathan said to him, "And it shall come to pass, when your days are expired that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will raise up your seed after you, which shall be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build Me an house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before you: but I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever: and his throne shall be established forever more." Now, brothers and sisters, if you and I would obtain the promise, if we would have them spoken home to us with a force as great as if they consisted of novel words for the first time uttered by some seraphic lips, we must resolve to do some great thing for God! And He who expects the grace-composed wishes of His children, will in return lead them into some inner chamber of new delights which they had not known before! To quote yet another instance; Joshua was about to invade the land of Canaan, and therefore, before his arduous enterprise, the Lord gave him a new promise. His faith led him to the brink of Jordan, the borders of the promise land, and then and there, he by faith obtained a blessed promise, which we will read for our comfort, remembering that venturing in the path of duty upon great enterprises, we may expect, like he, to win new promises. "There shall not any man be able to stand before you all the days of your life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shall you divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded you: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then

you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of good courage. Be not afraid, neither be you dismayed: for the Lord your God is with you where ever you go." One more instance may not be amiss. God sometimes gives His people fresh promises by faith just before a trial is about to come upon them. It was so with Elijah. God said to him, "Go to the brook Cherith, behold I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." This was at the beginning of the famine. There he abode, and God fulfilled the promise, for by faith Elijah had obtained it. Acting upon faith, still dependent upon God, he abides at Cherith, and as the result of this faith, God gives him a fresh promise, "Arise, get you to Zarephath: I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain you." The faith which received the first promise obtained the honor of a second! So with you and with me; if we have had a little promise, and up till now have realized it, if we have lived upon it, and made it the stay and support of our souls, surely God will give us another and a greater one, and so, from promise to promise, speeding our way, we shall find the promises to be rungs of the ladder which Jacob saw—the top whereof shall reach to heaven! Doubt and be distrustful about the promise that you have, and you cannot expect God to increase His revelation to your soul. Be afraid, stagger through unbelief at that which was laid to your heart yesterday, and you shall not have a new one tomorrow. Oh, that we had power to act as Samson did, who, having the promise of God that he should smite the Philistines with the jaw-bone of an ass, laid them heaps on heaps, never reckoning the odds, but having God with him in child-like simple faith, he dashed upon his foes and overcame them! We should go from strength to strength, receiving grace upon grace if we had faith to mount from promise to promise!

But I hear someone ask, "Is there such a thing as receiving promises now? They are in the Bible, and we can read them, but can they ever come to us as if they were our own?" Oh, yes, dear friends, and that is the best way in which God's people get at the sweetness of them! I believe in God the Holy Spirit. I believe in His immediate operations in the soul of man. This is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, and would, therefore, be strange if He did not speak in us, now, as much as in the age of types and shadows! I am not a disciple of the Quakers, although I believe I am a descendant of one of their early martyrs, but in some matters I heartily agree with them, as, for instance, in their testimony to the special and direct monitions, directions, and illuminations of the Holy Spirit. Surely, I know that God the Holy Spirit has dealings with His people today, as much as ever He had with the prophets of old. There are times when He takes an old text out of the Word and re-writes it upon their souls, so that it is as really a revelation fresh from heaven, as though it had never been written in that book before! Bilney, that blessed martyr of Jesus Christ, was much wounded in conscience, by reason of the great sin which, through the weakness of the flesh, he had committed, by subscribing to Popish errors; at that time he could get no comfort of soul because of his deep and continual sense of sin. The Spirit of God took this text and made it a balm for all his wounds, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save

sinners, of whom I am chief." Bilney kept that; believing it to be as much his own as if it had never been uttered by Paul, and he went to the stake and burned right bravely for Christ, in the strength of the promise so opportunely given to him! Beza says that once, when he had been long in great sorrow and deep distress, this text came with power to him—"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." Mr. Calamy gives us an instance of a young woman who died triumphantly, being sustained by that well-known word of our divine Lord, "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." That man of God, Watts Wilkinson, spoke of that promise, "What I do, you know not now, but you shall know hereafter," as being often a very sweet consolation to him in mysterious dispensations of Providence! It is not for me to speak at any length of what texts have been my own. But there have been turning points in my history in which I have had promises from God which have been *to me* as marked and as distinctly from heaven as if they had been spoken by seer or prophet who met me in the way! Never shall I forget one instance which accounts for my being here at this very hour: when I had resolved to enter college, walking across Midsummer Common just outside of Cambridge, revolving in my mind the joys of scholarship, and the hope of being something in the world, that text came to my heart, "Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not." "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." All was given up; everything was renounced, the finest prospects seemed to melt into thin air, merely on the strength of that text, believing that God, even our God, would most certainly fulfill to me His promise if I could keep His precept! Now, if I had told that to another, he might have laughed, but to me it was as solemnly the Word of God as if the heavens had opened, and I had seen them written out in lightning flashes, or heard the thunders of God roll through the sky! I suppose some of you have known the same.

One other instance I cannot fail to narrate. When the cholera was here last time, I wended my way from house to house among the sick and dying. I was one day sad at heart, and thought surely my own time was come, for I had seen many deaths and had been at many graves. Walking down the Dover Road, I saw in a window, upon a paper fastened to the glass with four wafers, this verse—"Because you have made the Lord, even the Most High, your habitation, there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling." I stopped, attracted by the paper in the window, and read it; and this verse, I am certain, was as much a revelation to my own heart, and I as much obtained that promise as though an angel had brought it with swift wings from on high! Your experience, brother and sister Christians, will furnish similar instances. We may be sneered at as fanatics by those who do not understand spiritual impressions from the Holy Spirit, but we know, and we speak only of what we have tasted and handled of the good Word of God, that there is such a thing as still obtaining the promise afresh from heaven—money

from the mint of God like new coin all unworn. Faith, and faith, alone, can know the secret of obtaining promises!

Thus, I have tried to explain the first meaning of the text.

II. As for the second meaning, it is somewhat more practical. By faith, these men obtained not merely the giving of the promise, but THE FULFILLMENT OF IT.

Now, I shall need your earnest attention, and I hope also your memories will be at work while I try to give some practical regulations for obtaining the fulfillment of the promise. Some persons, however, who have bad memories, may think they will get no good. I remember what an old preacher once did when visited by one of his members who said he feared he gained no good, for his memory was bad. In the opinion of all who saw his holy and heavenly walk, he was one of the most profitable of hearers! Two dirty glasses were produced, and into one of them the minister poured water, and after rinsing a while, he poured it out again, and setting it down by the side of the other, he said, "Has not the water had effect even though none remains?" So let us hope that you may get good even should your memory retain but very little.

God's promises may be divided into two classes. Some of them are unconditional. They are promises of divine grace, and of these, faith does not obtain the fulfillment, but God fulfills them according to His own sovereign will and pleasure according to the purpose of His grace. I mean promises such as those which relate to the calling of the elect at God's time, their being brought out from death to life; their quickening, their conviction, and regeneration. Now, man being, before divine grace, utterly dead, powerless, and lifeless, it is clear that no faith on his part obtains these promises, nor even helps to obtain them; but God, when the predestinated hour is come, says, "It is a time of love," and beholding the infant cast out and in its blood, He says unto it, "Live!" I ought to add, indeed, that even those promises which might be called conditional are only conditional in a certain sense; for whereas they are conditional in one passage of Scripture, you find them unconditional in another! They are conditional only in the order of our attainment and enjoyment of them, but in the plan, purpose, and decree of God, they are all based on unconditional oaths and declarations of eternal love. God says, "I will" and "they shall," and here the promises all rest.

With regard to many of the promises which have some sort of description appended to them, we must by faith answer the description, or we cannot claim the blessing. Most of them have this condition—"For these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." There are three ways of "obtaining the promise." Many of them only need the outstretched hand to grasp them; you may go with believing faith at once and take the promise, "Ask and you shall receive." There are many of the promises so readily attainable, that if you are in Christ, you may, this morning, see them fulfilled by simply believing them. Believe them to be true, and you shall have what they promise you! Some of God's promises are like checks, you present them at the counter and the cash is given; you have but to take the promise stamped by God's own hand, signed and sealed, believe it to be God's, and you shall have the mercy right now. This is true of a very large number of the promises. Of some others

I must give a second direction. You must not simply believe them, but exercise persistent prayer about them. "Knock and it shall be opened." These promises are not to be had for the mere believing. Of some kind of devils it was said, "This kind goes not out but with prayer and fasting." Of some sort of promises it may be said, "This kind is not fulfilled but by prayer and persistence." You must knock, and if the gate opens not, you must knock again, and continue to do so until God shall give you the favor. You are certain to have the blessing if you know how to wrestle with the angel, and declare that you will not let Him go unless He shall bestow it upon you! A third kind of these promises are not even to be fulfilled by prayer or by faith alone; you must obtain them by earnest seeking after them. "Seek and you shall find." Where God has appended to the promise a something that is to be done, diligently do it, and you shall obtain the blessing. I hold in my hand a book which is very precious to me. It is my treasure house, next to the Bible the most valuable indeed, because it is all Scripture—*Clarke's Scripture Promises*. When I have a trial or trouble, since the promises are here all put under different heads, I can turn at once and find just the promise I need! There are many of these sparkling jewels which cannot be won by prayer, nor be obtained by an act of faith alone. For instance such as these—"Those things which you have both learned and received, and heard and seen in Me, do. And the God of peace shall be with you." Now, that promise requires something to be *done* by the Christian, and then, the God of peace shall be with him. "Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." If we refuse to obey God's commandments, our faith will be a dead faith, and our prayers will be presumption. We must obey the Lord's will, and then we shall have the blessing! "Whatever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." "If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love." "Who is among you who fears the Lord, who obeys the voice of His servant, who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." But here, you see, with regard to promises of this kind—and they are very numerous, indeed—the *act* of faith must be matured into the *work* of faith! It is not the bare act of faith that gets some promises, not the utterance of faith in prayer; but with these there must be the *work*, and the *fruit*, and the *patience* of faith, or otherwise the clusters hang too high for our reach.

Those three rules contain the essence of what I have to say. But to guide beginners in the divine life a little more fully, let us give a few other regulations.

1. Child of God, babe in divine grace, would you like to obtain the promises? Take this advice first—*meditate much upon them*. There are promises which are like grapes in the winepress; if you will tread them, the juice will flow. Many a time a believer, when he is like Isaac walking in the fields, meditating in the cool of the day upon a promise, unexpectedly meets his Rebekah, the blessing which had tarried long all of a sudden comes home! He sought retirement to meditate upon a promise, and lo, "being in the way God met with him." Thinking over the hallowed words will often be the means of fulfilling them. "I was in the spirit on the

Lord's day," says John, "and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet." Just so. It was his being in the Spirit, his meditating upon spiritual things that made him ready to behold the King in His beauty, and to hear what the Spirit says unto the churches! Especially, young Christian, meditate much upon those promises which relate personally to Christ. While you are thinking them over, the faith which you are seeking will insensibly come to you. That word which says, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin"—think that over, chew and digest it—and in the very act of meditation, faith will be born in your soul! Many a man who has thirsted for the promise while he has been considering the divine record, has found the favor which it ensured, gently distilling into his soul, and he has rejoiced that ever he was led to lay the promise near his heart. I think it was Martin Luther who said that some passages of Scripture are like trees which bear fruit, but the fruit does not easily drop. You must get hold of the tree, he says, shake it, and shake it again, and again! And sometimes you will need to exhaust all your strength, but at the last shake, down drops the luscious fruit! So do you with the promise; shake it to and fro by meditation and the apples of gold will fall. Let the promise, like the problem of the philosopher, be revolved in your soul, and at last, your spirit shall leap for very joy while you say, "I have found it! I have found it, the very thing that my soul has sought after!"

2. Secondly, young people in Christ Jesus, do not only meditate upon the promise, but *seek in your soul to realize it as being the very Word of God*. Say to your soul, "If I were dealing with a man's promise, I would look most carefully at the man who had covenanted with me. If I had a bond or note of hand I would estimate most carefully the credibility, the respectability, and solvency of the man whose name was endorsed thereon. So with the promise of God; my eyes must not be so much fixed upon the greatness of the *mercy*—that may stagger me; as upon the greatness of the *promiser*—that will cheer me! My soul, it is God, even your God, God who cannot lie, who speaks to you. This Word of His which you are now considering is as true as His own existence! He is a God unchangeable, and therefore, this promise has not been revoked. He has not altered the thing which has gone out of His mouth, nor called back one single consolatory sentence! Nor does He lack any power. It is the God who made the heavens and the earth who has spoken to me, and said, "Thus and thus will I do." Nor will He, nor *can* He, fail in wisdom as to the time when He will bestow the favors, for He knows when best to give, and when better to withhold. Therefore, seeing that it is the Word of a God so true, so immutable, so powerful, so wise, I will and must, by His grace, believe the promise! See, my brothers and sisters, you have already arrived at the faith which obtains the promise! I think we ought to be ashamed of ourselves, every one of us, that we dare to doubt God. Thinking this over the other day a horror of great darkness fell upon my soul, while I mourned that I ever could have been guilty of the infamous blasphemy of doubting God. To doubt an honest man is to cast a slur upon him; but to doubt God who cannot lie, to doubt God who by an oath has sworn—what? Is this to make God a liar, or even a perjurer? Our soul shrinks back from infamy so accursed. Did ever fiend in hell commit a

more detestable iniquity than that of doubting the veracity of a God of perfection and truth? Come, soul, there is the promise; there it stands before you. You say, "I dare not believe it." But I say, "How dare you doubt it? From where did you get your arrogance? How can you speak so exceedingly proud as thus to think of God, and say of Him, that He has promised what He cannot, or what He will not perform? Lay much to heart, then, young Christian, the fact that the promise is the very Word of God, and surely you will not find it hard to believe, and so to obtain the promise!

3. Then, in the third place, *be sure that you do, in the power of the Spirit of God, what the precept annexed to the promise asks of you.* Follow the example of Moses. Moses knew that there was a promise given to the people of Israel, that they should be the world's blessing. But in order to obtain it, it was necessary that Moses should practice self-denial. What did he do? He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, counting it better to suffer the reproach of Christ than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. If the promise commands you to deny yourself, you can not obtain it without doing so. Do it and you have obtained it. Or, suppose that the promise requires at your hand *courage*—don't be afraid. David felt he had a promise from God that He would keep him. He knew that in his past experience God had been faithful. "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." He advanced to the conflict, and the Lord was his deliverer. Go forth with your sling and your stone, for you will never obtain the promise if you are afraid to face your gigantic foe! Or does the promise require *obedience* at your hand? Be obedient. Remember how Rahab, the harlot, hung the scarlet line out from her window, because that was the test of her faith. So you do the same. Whatever Christ has said unto you, do it. Neglect no command, however trivial it may seem! What if it is *non-essential?* What have you to do with that? Do what your Master tells you, asking no questions, for he is an evil servant who questions his Lord's commands! Doubtless, you too, like the Ethiopian eunuch, shall go on your way rejoicing when you have been obedient. Or is the promise made to those who bear a good report of the land? Remember who Caleb and Joshua were, the only two who obtained the promise out of all the host that came out of Egypt, because they alone, "faithful among the faithless found," honored God and would not dare to distrust Him! So you do the same—honor God. Let a scoffing world hear your unvarying testimony that your God is good and true; let not your wretched face whisper to men that you have a hard Master; let not your groaning and your murmuring make young men suspect that God is tyrannical to His own children, and that they have no joys, no comforts, no delights. Be not as the hypocrites are, of a sad countenance; bow not your head like a bulrush, afflict not your soul, for this is not the service which God demands of you. Better the palm branch than the willow, fairer the wedding garment than the mourner's weeds. He whom we serve is no Egyptian taskmaster, His yoke is easy, His service pleasure, His reward unspeakable. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." Be not cast down and troubled, as though the child of God had a cruel parent, and a miserable home; but lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near, and to the

timbrel and the harp, march on to the promised inheritance of the people of God. So shall you by joy of heart, not bringing up an evil report of the land, inherit the promise!

4. But, fourthly, another rule. Some of the promises you will not inherit even so, unless you shall *imitate the men who by faith and patience inherit the promise*. Good old Spurstow says some of the promises are like the almond tree, they blossom hastily in the very earliest spring; but he says there are some that are like the mulberry tree, they are very slow in putting forth their leaves. Then, what is a man to do if he has a mulberry tree promise that will not put forth its leaves? Why, he is to wait till it does! If the vision tarries, wait for it till it comes—it will not tarry, the appointed time shall surely bring it. But some men, because God hears not their prayers today, turn like silly children and cannot think that their Father is true. Oh, be men and add to your faith, *patience!* Wait for His coming as the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, knowing that there is a time for every purpose under heaven. And while it is always your time to sow, wait till God appoints the time to reap. It is yours now to *pray*—He shall give you your time to dance when you shall rejoice because the promise has been fulfilled!

5. In the next place, take care if you would get the promise, that you *select one that is suitable to your own case.* Being much troubled in heart upon one occasion, there was one promise which came home to me. It was this—"His soul shall dwell at ease," and in the strength of that promise my soul learned to dwell at ease in the midst of multiplied reviling and misrepresentation and persecutions. You may find a choice word which will meet your condition that will just suit you. Have you had five troubles, six, and seven? What do you say to this—"He shall deliver you in six troubles, yes, in seven there shall no evil touch you." Have you two troubles at once, both of them enough to overwhelm you? You have it here, "When you go through the fires you shall not be burned." That is one trouble warded off. "When you go through rivers they shall not overflow you." Here is another trouble subdued! There are two at once, fire and water—one to burn and the other to drown. "I will be with you," He says, and that word meets both. Is it sickness—"I will make all your bed in your sickness." Is it failure in business, crops, harvest and the like? "At destruction and famine you shall laugh." Or is it death? "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Get hold of that promise which is suitable to your case! You ask, is there one? Why, do you need a list of blessings? You have them here in the catalog of promises—promises of peace, honor, success, plenty; promises of preservation from trouble, support under it, deliverance out of it; promises in sickness, child-bearing, old age, famine, need, war, slander, reproach; promises to the stranger, the exile, the poor, the helpless, the fatherless, the widow, the prisoner, the captive, the dying; promises of Justification, pardon of sin, adoption, union and communion with the church, access to God; promises of wisdom, knowledge, divine teaching; promises beyond mention! Promises of every grace and of every blessing—we cannot pause to mention them all! The fiery sword at the gate of the garden turned every way to keep men out of Paradise. Oh, blessed be God, this

sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, turns every way to keep our enemies from breaking our peace! There are very few medicines which will heal all things; in fact, none. But we may say there is a promise in the Scripture for every disease; no matter what it may be there is one meant expressly for that case; and if there should be a person who is the only man in the world who ever had a certain trouble, still he will find a promise exactly to fit his case, for this Inspired book is a universal medicine! Here, O sick souls are all kinds of remedies, and it is not possible that human need should be wider than the divine supply! Still, brothers and sisters get the one promise that suits you, and that one will be more useful to you than all the rest. Ahab had a great garden; he put Naboth's into it. He had large vineyards, and corn fields, and orchards, and subject-kings and tributaries, but Ahab suffered famine. There was a poor woman; she had nothing, only a little vessel that was all. No fields, no orchards, no granaries. That one little vessel, however, was inexhaustible, and she lacked nothing! Ah, blessed be God! There are times with the child of God when everything else is gone; he has only one little vessel—one promise left, but that an inexhaustible one! And he and his house shall live upon it, he shall go in the strength of it all the days that the famine shall last! It is not having many promises; it is appropriating one, and pleading it before God, that shall make us mighty!

6. Again, young believer, would you obtain the promise? Then *be careful that you are thankful for promises you have already obtained.* We must thank God for the mercies we have, or else we shall not have others. In the early days, when the Puritans settled in New England, they were always having fast days. They had a fast day because their bread was getting short; another fast day because the Red Indians invaded them; another fast day because a ship had not arrived that they expected; and they had so many fast days that they began to get exceedingly weak. At length, one very wise brother said, "Don't you think it would be as well, now and then, to vary the thing, and to have a feast day occasionally? Would it not be quite as acceptable to God, if instead of mourning over mercies we need, we were to thank Him for mercies enjoyed?" So they instituted what is called the thanksgiving day, which became a perpetual ordinance afterwards—the thanksgiving for mercies received. Brothers and sisters, there is reason and wisdom in such a course. How dare you go and ask for anything else till you have been thankful for what you have? What do you do with poor people who depend upon you? You gave the man some relief yesterday, and he walked away with an ungrateful face, shrugging shoulders, as much as to say, "That's all?" Sometimes, when you have given charity to a very greedy person, have you not seen him stand and look at it? What has been your rule when he comes next time? You have sent him away empty, and very properly is he punished. But how is it the Lord does not treat you the same? You ask Him for a mercy and you get it. And then, you either look at it as though it were not worth having, or else you enjoy it for a time, and then forget you have ever had it—and never think of thanking Him! And then, you knock at His door again, and expect that He will wait upon your lusts when you will not wait upon His throne with thanksgiving! Oh, let us be thankful for the blessings we have, and *then* we shall attain divine grace to win

the promise we have not! There is a young man up there who had a little light yesterday; he had been in the darkness before; thank God for the first gleam, young man, and you shall have the full daylight soon! There is a young woman there who has been bowed down with a great weight of sin, but her conscience is somewhat at peace. She hopes she has a little faith in the Lord; oh, bless God for that little faith, and you shall find it grows! But if you will not thank Him, it may be for many a day you shall walk in darkness, and see no light till you shall come to value God's mercies at their proper rate.

7. And lastly, not to keep you longer, if you would have your faith stirred up, *look at the examples of all who in olden times, and in our own time, by faith, have obtained the promise.* Sinner, look at the many now in heaven who had no more to trust to than you have—the naked promise of God! God says to them as He does to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." They trusted Christ, and they are saved! Do you the same, and you shall find Him true—

"I ask them from where their victory came.
They with united breath,
Ascribe their conquests to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death."

And you saints of God! Look to your noble ancestors. What a pedigree is yours! Through what a host of martyrs, confessors, prophets and apostles has our blood descended! And all these bear their testimony that not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised! Among them all there is no exception; not one of them will impugn the veracity of God. They tried Him on the rack, in the gloomy dungeon, and at the stake. They tried Him in the Roman amphitheatre, when their bones were cracking between the jaws of lions. They tried Him in Nero's garden, when the pitch smeared on them was flaming up, an awful sacrifice to God. They tried Him when then they lay in moldy dungeons rotting, or burning with fever. They tried Him in the tracks of the wild goats, when they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented. They tried Him in the bitterness of life, and in the agonies of death, and they all say to you—"Trust in the Lord; believe in Him, and so shall He bring it to pass, and you shall attain the promise. Falter not, hesitate not—waver not, but with the unstaggering faith of Abraham, say, 'He who has promised is able also to perform,' and you shall see it with your eyes, and you shall eat thereof. You shall have His presence and blessing in this world, and in the world to come, life everlasting." God help us so to do for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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A SERMON FOR SPRING
NO. 436

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 23, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My beloved spoke and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."
Song of Solomon 2:10-13.

THE things which are seen are types of the things which are not seen. The works of creation are pictures to the children of God of the secret mysteries of divine grace. God's truths are the apples of gold, and the visible creatures are the baskets of silver. The very seasons of the year find their parallel in the little world of man within. We have our winter—dreary howling winter—when the north wind of the law rushes forth against us, when every hope is nipped, when all the seeds of joy lie buried beneath the dark clods of despair, when our soul is fast fettered like a river bound with ice, without waves of joy, or flowings of thanksgiving. Thanks be unto God, the soft south wind breathes upon our soul, and at once the waters of desire are set free, the spring of love comes on, flowers of hope appear in our hearts, the trees of faith put forth their young shoots, the tone of the singing of birds comes in our hearts, and we have joy and peace in believing through the Lord Jesus Christ! That happy springtide is followed in the believer by a rich summer when his graces, like fragrant flowers, are in full bloom, loading the air with perfume; and fruits of the Spirit, like citrons and pomegranates, swell into their full proportion in the genial warmth of the Sun of Righteousness. Then comes the believer's autumn, when his fruits grow ripe, and his fields are ready for the harvest; the time has come when his Lord shall gather together His "pleasant fruits," and store them in heaven; the feast of ingathering is at hand—the time when the year shall begin anew, an unchanging year, like the years of the right hand of the Most High in heaven. Now, beloved, each particular season has its duty. The farmer finds that there is a time to plow, a time to sow, a time to reap; there is a season for vintage, and a period for the pruning of the vine; there is a month for the planting of herbs, and for the ingathering of seeds. To everything there is a time and a purpose, and every season has its special labor. It seems, from the text, that whenever it is springtide in our hearts, then Christ's voice may be heard saying, "Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away." Whenever we have been delivered from a dreary winter of

temptation or affliction, or tribulation—whenever the fair spring of hope comes upon us, and our joys begin to multiply, then we should hear the Master bidding us seek after something higher and better, and we should go forth in His strength to love Him more, and serve Him more diligently than ever before! This I take to be the truth of God taught in the text, and it shall be the subject of this morning's discourse. And to any with whom the time of the singing of birds is come, in whom the flowers appear—to any such, I hope the Master may speak till their souls shall say, *"My* beloved spoke and said unto *me,* rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away." I shall use the general principle in illustration of four or five different cases.

I. First, with regard to THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH OF CHRIST.

In looking upon her history, with only half an eye, you can plainly perceive that she has had her ebbs and flows. Often it seemed as if her tide retired—ungodliness, heresy, error prevailed—but she has had her flood tide, when once again the glorious waves have rolled in, covering with their triumphant righteousness, the sands of ignorance and evil! The history of Christ's Church is a varied year of many seasons. She has had her high and noble processions of victory; she has had her sorrowful congregations of mourners during times of disaster and apparent defeat. Commencing with the life of Christ, what a smiling spring it was for the world, when the Holy Spirit was poured out in *Pentecost*. Then might the saints sing with sweet accord—

"The Jewish wintry state is gone,
The mists are fled, the spring comes on!
The sacred turtle dove we hear,
Proclaim the new, the joyful year.
The immortal vine of heavenly root,
Blossoms and buds, and gives her fruit;
Lo, we are come to taste the wine,
Our souls rejoice and bless the vine!"

The winter was over and past—that long season in which the Jewish state lay dead, when the frosts of Phariseeism had bound up all spiritual life. The rain was over and gone, the black clouds of wrath had emptied themselves upon the Savior's head; thunder and tempest and storm, all dark and terrible things were gone forever. The flowers appeared on the earth; three thousand in one day blossomed forth, baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! Fair promises, created for beauty and delight, sprang up and with their blessed fulfillment, clothed the earth in a royal garment of many colors. The time of the singing birds was come, for they praised God day and night, eating their bread with joy and singleness of heart. The voice of the turtle was heard, for the Spirit—that hallowed dove from heaven—descended with tongues of fire upon the apostles, and the gospel was preached in every land! Then had earth one of her joyous Sabbaths; the fig tree put forth her green figs; in every land there were some converts; the dwellers in Mesopotamia, Medes, Parthians, Elamites—some of all—were converted to God, and the tender grapes of newborn piety and zeal gave forth a sweet smell before God. Then it was, that

Christ spoke in words which made the heart of His Church burn like coals of juniper—

"My Fellow friend, My Beautiful,
Arise, and come away."

The bride arose, charmed by the heavenly voice of her spouse, she put on her beautiful garments and for some hundred years or more, she did come away; she came away from her narrowness of spirit, and she preached to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ—she came away from her attachment to the State, and she dared to confess that Christ's kingdom was not of this world. She came away from her earthly hopes and comforts, for, "They counted not their lives dear unto them that they might win Christ and be found in Him." She came away from all ease and rest of body, for they labored more and more abundantly, making herself sacrifices for Christ! Her apostles landed on every shore; her confessors were found among people of every tongue; her martyrs kindled a light in the midst of lands afflicted with the midnight of heathen darkness! No place trod by foot of man was left unvisited by the heralds of God, the heroic sons of the Church. "Go forth into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," was ringing in their ears like a clarion sounding the war charge, and they obeyed it like soldiers who had been men of war from their youth! Those were brave days of old, when with a word, the saints of God could overcome a thousand foes—that word the faithful promise of a gracious God. Alas, alas, that season passed away! The Church grew dull and sleepy; she left her Lord; she turned aside, she leaned upon an arm of flesh, courting the endowments of earthly kingdoms. Then there came a long and dreary winter, the dark ages of the world, the darker ages of the Church! At last the time of love returned, when God again visited His people, and raised up for them, new apostles, new martyrs, new confessors. Switzerland, France, Germany, Bohemia, the Low Countries, England and Scotland, had all their men of God who spoke with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. The time of Luther and Calvin, and Melancthon, and of Knox was come—heaven's sunny days when once again the frost should give way to approaching summer! Then it was that men could say once again, "The winter is passed, priest-craft has lost its power, the rain is over and gone; false doctrines shall no more be as tempests to the Church; the flowers appear on the earth—little Churches; plants of God's right hand planting, are springing up everywhere!"

The time of the singing of birds was come; Luther's hymns were sung by plowmen in every field; the Psalms translated were scattered among all people—carried on the wings of angels, and the Church sang aloud unto God, her strength, and entered into His courts with the voice of thanksgiving, in such sort as she had not hoped for during her long and weary winter's night. In every cottage and under every roof, from the peasant's hut to the prince's palace, the singing of birds was come! Then peace came to the people and joy in the Lord, for the voice of the turtle was heard delighting hill and valley, grove and field, with the love-notes

of gospel grace. Then fruits of righteousness were brought forth, the Church was "an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits," camphor with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices. And a sweet savor of faith and love went up to heaven, and God rejoiced therein. Then the Master sweetly cried—

"Rise up, My love, My fair one; come away,
Soar on the wings of your victorious faith
Above the realms of darkness and sin!"

But she did not hear the voice, or she heard it but partially. Satan and his wiles prevailed; the little foxes spoiled the vines and devoured the tender grapes. Corruption, like a strong man armed, held the spouse, and she came not forth at her beloved's call! In England she would not come away; she hugged the arm of flesh; she laid hold upon the protection of the State; she would not venture upon the bare promise of her Lord. O that she had left dignities, and endowments, and laws to worldly corporations—and had rested on her Husband's love alone! Alas for our divisions at this time, what are they but the bitter result of the departure of our fathers from the chastity of simple dependence such as Jesus loves? In other lands she confined herself too much within her own limits, sent forth few missionaries, labored not for the conversion of the outcasts of Israel; she would not come away, and so the Reformation never took place. It commenced, but it ceased, and the Churches, many of them, remain to this day half reformed, in a transition state, somewhere between truth and error, like the Lutheran Church and the Established Church of England at the present day—too good to be rejected, too evil to be wholly received, having such a savor of godliness, that they are Christ's, but having such a mixture of Popery, that their garments are not clean! Oh, would to God that the Church could *then* have heard her Master's voice, "Rise up My love, My fair one, and come away."

And now, brothers and sisters, in these days we have had another season of refreshing! God has been pleased to pour out His Spirit upon men again. Perhaps the late revivals have almost rivaled Pentecost—certainly in the number of souls ingathered they may bear rigid comparison with that feast of first fruits. I suppose that in the north of Ireland, in Wales, in America, and in many parts of our own country, there have been worked more conversions than took place at the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's people are alive and in earnest, and all our agencies are quickened with new energy! The time of the singing of birds is come, though there are some harsh, croaking ravens still left. The flowers appear on the earth, though much unmelted snow still covers the pastures. Thank God, the winter is over and passed to a great extent, though there are some pulpits and churches as frost-bound as ever. We thank God that the rain is over and gone, though there are still some who laugh at the people of God, and would destroy all true doctrine. We live in happier days than those which have passed. We may speak of these times as the good old times wherein time is older than it ever was, and, I think, better

than it has been for many a day. And what now? Why, Jesus says, "Rise up My love, My fair one, and come away." To each denomination of His Church He sends this message, "Come away." He seems to speak to Episcopacy and say, "Come away; cut out of the liturgy that which is not according to My mind, leave the State, be free." He speaks to the Calvinist, and says, "Come away—be no more dead and cold as you have been; let not your sons hold the truth of God in unrighteousness." He speaks to each denomination according to its need, but to the same import, "Rise up and come away; leave deadness and coldness and wrong-doing and hardness and harshness, and bitterness of spirit. Leave idleness and slothfulness and lukewarmness; rise up and come away. Come away to preach the gospel among the heathen; come away to reform the masses of this wicked city; come away from your little heartedness, from your coldness of spirit. Come away—the land is before you; go up and possess it." Come away, your Master waits to aid you—strike! He will strike with you. Build! He will be the great master builder! Plow—He Himself shall break the clods! Arise and thresh the mountains, for He shall make you a sharp threshing instrument having teeth, and the mountains shall be beaten small, until the wind shall scatter them like chaff, and you shall rejoice in the Lord. Rise up, people of God, in this season of revival, and come away! "Why do you sleep? Arise and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

II. I think the text has a very SPECIAL VOICE TO US AS A CHURCH. We must use the Scripture widely, but yet, personally. While we know its reference to the universal Church, we must not forget its special application to ourselves. We, too, have had a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The day was with this Church, in the olden times, when we were diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow; we could not meet more than 20 in a place, and sometimes not more than five, without fine and persecution. Then the Church had its elders, who could meet the few in private houses—and cheer their hearts, bidding them abide in patience, waiting till better times might come. Then God sent them a pastor after his own heart, Benjamin Rider, who fed them with knowledge and understanding, and gathered together the scattered sheep during the times of peace. Then there followed him a man worthy to be pastor of this Church—one who had sat in the stocks at Aylesbury, had seen his books burned by the common hangman before his face, and who counted not even his life dear unto him that he might win Christ. That man was Benjamin Keach, the opener of the parables, and expositor of metaphors. On old Horselydown, then a great common, a large house was built where he preached the Word of God, and his hearers were very many! The flowers then appeared on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds was come to this Church. He passed away and slept with his fathers, and was followed by Dr. Gill, the laborious commentator; and for some time, during his sound and solid ministry, it was a good and profitable season, and the Church was multiplied and built up. But again, even under his ministry, the ranks were

thinned, and the host grew small. There was doctrine in perfection, but more power from on High was needed. After a space of 50 years or more of Dr. Gill's ministry, God sent Dr. Rippon, and once more the flowers appeared upon the earth, and the Church multiplied exceedingly, bringing forth fruit unto God! And out of her there went many preachers who testified of the truth of God that was in Jesus, and were the parents of Churches which still flourish. Then the good old man, full of years and of good works, was carried to his Home—and there came others who taught the Church, and ingathered many souls, but, they were not to the full extent, successors of the men who went before them, for they tarried but a little season. They did much good, but were not such builders as those were who had gone before.

Then came a time of utter deadness; the officers mourned; there was strife and division; they looked upon empty pews where once there had been full congregations; they looked about them to find one who might fill the place and bring together the scattered multitude, but they looked, and looked in vain, and despondency and despair fell upon some hearts with regard to this Church; but the Lord had mercy on them, and in a very short space, through His providence and grace, the winter was passed, and the rain was over and gone. The time of singing of birds was come again; there were multitudes to sing God's praises. The voice of the turtle was heard in our land. All was peace and unity, and affection and love. Then came the first ripe fruits. Many were added to the Church. Then the vines gave forth a sweet smell. Converts came, till we have often said, "Who are these who fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows?" Often has this Church asked the question, "Who has begotten me these?" And now these eight years, by God's grace, we have had a season, not of spasmodic revival, but of constant progress. We have had a glad period of abundant increase, in which there has been as many converts as we could receive. Every officer of the Church has had his hands full in seeing inquirers, and we have only had time to stop, now and then, and take a breath, and say, "What has God worked?" The time came when we erected this house, because no other place was large enough for us, and still God continues with us, till our Church meetings are not sufficient for the reception of converts! And we know not, how large a proportion of this assembly are believers in Christ, because time fails to hear the cases of conversion. Well, what ought we to do? I hear the Master saying, "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away." I hear Jesus speaking to this Church, and saying, "Where much is given, there much shall be required." Serve not the Lord as other Churches, but yet more abundantly. As He has given you showers of love, so give Him your fertile fields. Let us rejoice with thanksgiving! Let this Church feel that she ought to be more dedicated to Christ than others; that her members should be more holy, loving, living nearer to God; that they should be more devoted, filled with more zeal, more fervency, doing more for Christ, praying more for sinners, laboring more for the conversion of the world! And let us be asking ourselves what can we do, as a Church, that shall be more than we

have ever thought of doing—inasmuch as He feeds us with the bread of heaven, multiplies our numbers, keeps us in perfect concord, and makes us a happy people? Let us be a peculiar people, zealous for good works, showing forth His glory among the sons of men. It is a solemn responsibility to rest on any man's mind, to be the pastor of such a Church as this, numbering very nearly 2,000 in Church fellowship. I suppose such a Baptist Church has never existed before. If we are found to be cowards in this day of battle, woe unto us! If we are unfaithful to our charge and trust, woe unto us! If we sleep when we might do so much, surely will the Master say, "I will take the candlestick out of its place, and quench their light in darkness. Laodicea is neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, I will spew her out of My mouth." And there shall come a dark day for us, with Ichabod on the forefront of our house of prayer, and darkness in our souls, and bitterness and remorse in our spirits, because we served not Christ while we might! I will cry aloud to you and spare not to admonish and encourage you, my brothers and sisters, in the conflict for truth. Men, brethren and fathers; young men, maidens and mothers in Israel, shall any of us draw back *now?* O Lord, after You have so richly blessed us, shall we be ungrateful and become indifferent towards Your good cause and work? Who knows but You, O God, have brought us to the kingdom for such a time as this? Oh, we beseech You, send down Your holy fire on every heart, and the tongue of flame on every head, that everyone of us may be missionaries for Christ, earnest teachers of the truth as it is in Jesus! I leave these thoughts with you. You can feel them better than I can express them. And I can better feel their might than I can make you feel it. O God, teach us what our responsibility is, and give us divine grace that we may discharge our duty in Your sight!

III. WHEN THE TIME OF THE BRIDAL OF THE SOUL HAS ARRIVED TO EACH CONVICTED SINNER, THEN ALSO THERE ARE SPECIAL DUTIES.

Can you not remember, dearly beloved, that day of days, that best and brightest of hours, when first you saw the Lord, lost your burden, received the roll of promise, rejoiced in full salvation, and went on your way in peace? My soul can never forget that day! Dying, all but dead, diseased, pained, chained, scourged, bound in fetters of iron, in darkness and the shadow of death, Jesus appeared unto me. My eyes looked to Him; the disease was healed, the pains removed, chains were snapped, prison doors were opened, darkness gave place to light! What delight filled my soul—what mirth, what ecstasy, what sound of music and dancing, what soaring towards heaven, what height and depths of ineffable delight! Scarcely, since then, have we known joys which surpassed the rapture of that first hour. Oh, do you not remember it, dear brothers and sisters? And was it not a spring time to you? The winter was passed. It had been so long, so dreary—those months of unanswered prayer, those nights of weeping, those days of watching. The rain was over and gone; the mutterings of Sinai's thunders were hushed; the flashings of its lightning were no more perceived; God was beheld as reconciled unto

you; the law threatened no vengeance; justice demanded no punishment. Then the flowers appeared in our hearts; hope, love, peace, patience, sprung up from the sod; the snowdrop of pure holiness, the crocus of golden faith, the daffodil lily of love, all decked the garden of the soul. The time of the singing birds was come, all that is within us magnified the holy name of our forgiving God. Our soul's exclamation was—

"I will praise You every day,
Now Your anger's turned away!
Comfortable thoughts arise,
From the bleeding sacrifice.
Jesus is become at length,
My salvation and my strength!
And His praises shall prolong,
While I live my pleasant song!"

Every meal seemed now to be a sacrament; our clothes were vestments; the common utensils of our trade were "holiness to the Lord." We went out abroad into the world to see tokens for good everywhere! We went forth with joy, and were led forth with praise; the mountains and the hills broke forth before us into singing, and all the trees of the fields did clap their hands. It was, indeed, a happy, a bright, and a glorious season! Do I speak to some who are passing through that spring-tide now? Young convert, young believer, in the dawn of your piety, Jesus says, "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away." He asks you to come out from the world and make a profession of your faith in Him *now*—do not put it off! It is the best time to profess your faith while you are young, while as yet to you the days come not, nor the days draw near, when you shall say, "I have no pleasure in them." Make haste and delay not to keep His commandments; arise and be baptized! Come out from among the world, be separate and touch not the unclean thing; follow Christ in this perverse generation, that you may hear Him say at the last, "Of you I am not ashamed, for you were not ashamed of Me in the day when I was despised and rejected of men." In this, your early time, dedicate yourselves to God. If you do not draw up a form and subscribe it with your hand, yet draw it up in your heart and subscribe it with your soul—"Lord, I am wholly Yours—all I am and all I have, I would devote to You. You have bought me with Your blood. Lord, take me into Your service—You have put away all Your wrath and given my spirit rest. Let me spend myself and be spent—in life and in death let me be consecrated to You." Make no reserves. Come altogether away from selfishness—from anything which would divide your chaste and pure love to Christ, your soul's husband. Rise up and come away. In this, the beginning of your spiritual life, the young dawn of marvelous light, come away from your old habits; avoid the very appearance of evil; come away from old friendships which may tempt you back to the flesh pots of Egypt. Leave all these things! Come away to higher flights of spirituality than your fathers as yet have known. Come away to private communion. Be much alone in prayer. Come away—be diligent in the study of God's Word. Come away, shut the doors of your chamber, and talk with your Lord Jesus, and have close

and intimate dealing with Him. I know I speak to some young babes in divine grace, beginners in our Israel. Oh, take care that you begin aright, by coming right away from the world, by being strictly obedient to every divine command, by making your dedication perfect, complete, unreserved, sincere, spotless!—

"While from your newly-sprouted vines
Whose grapes are young and tender, choice and rich,
The flavor comes forth—beloved one, rise!
Rise from this visible engrossing scene,
And with affections linked to things above,
Where Christ, your treasure is, be soaring still!"

IV. But, in the next place, our text deserves to be used in another light. It may be that you and I have had winters of dark trouble, succeeded by soft *springs of deliverance*.

We will not enlarge much on our sorrows, but some of us have been to the gates of death, and, as we thought then, into the very jaws of hell. We have had our Gethesmanes, when our souls have been exceedingly sorrowful—nothing could comfort us, we were like the fool who abhorred all manner of meat; nothing came with any consolation to our aching hearts. At last the Comforter came to us, and all our troubles were dissipated. A new season came, the time of the singing of birds was once more in our hearts! We did not chatter any more like the swallow or the crane, but we began to sing as the nightingale, even with the thorn in our breast; we learned to mount to heaven as the lark, singing all the way. The great temporal affliction which had crushed us was suddenly removed, and the strong temptation of Satan was taken from us. The deep depression of spirit which had threatened to drive us to insanity was all of a sudden lifted, and we became elastic in heart, and once again as David, danced before the Ark, singing songs of deliverance! I address some who this morning are looking back to such seasons. You have just reached the realm of sunlight, and you can look back upon long leagues of shadow and cloud through which you have had to march; the valley of the shadow of death you have just traversed—you can well remember the horrible pit and the miry clay—and listen, we can still hear the rushing as of the wings and feet of crowded miseries! We can still remember the terrible shadow of confusion, but we have come through it—through it all, by God's grace—the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, and we can rejoice now in covenant faithfulness, and renewed loving-kindness. Now we have our assurance back again! And Christ is near us, and we have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Well, then, what are we to do? Why, the Master says to us, "Rise up, and come away." Now is the time when we should mount up to be nearer to Him! Now that the day dawns, and the shadows flee away, let us seek our beloved amid the beds of spices, and by the lilies where He feeds! I would we had more in the Church—more in this Church—like Madame Guyon, who loved the Lord as that woman did who had much forgiven, or like Mrs. Rowe, who in England was what Madame Guyon was in France; or like Dr. Hawker, or like Samuel Rutherford, who could pant, and long,

and sigh for nearer fellowship with Christ. If there is ever a season when we ought to follow hard after the Lord, and not be content until we have embraced Him, it is when we have come up from the wilderness, leaning upon our beloved. Then should the chaste virgins sing with joyous heart concerning Him to whom they are espoused—

"What is this vain, this visionary scene
Of mortal things to me? My thoughts aspire
Beyond the narrow bounds of rolling spheres.
The world is crucified and dead to me,
And I am dead to all its empty shows.
But, oh, for YOU unbounded wishes warm
My panting soul, and call forth all her powers!
Whatever can raise desire or give delight,
Or with full joy replenish every wish,
Is found in You, You infinite abyss of ecstasy and life!"

Each believer should be thirsting for God, for the living God, and longing to put his lips to the Wellhead of eternal life—to follow the Savior and say, "Oh, that You were as my Brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother, when I should find You without, I would kiss you; yes, I should not be despised. I would lead You, and bring You into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause You to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate. His left hand should be under my head, and His right hand should embrace me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up, nor awaken my love, until He pleases. Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised you up under the apple tree: there your mother brought you forth. There she brought you forth that bore you." Oh, that the believer would never be content with having drops and sips of love, but long for the full feast! O my soul thirsts to drink deep of that cup which never can be drained, and to eat of all the dainties of that table which boundless love has furnished. I am persuaded, that you and I are content to live on pence when we might live on pounds; that we eat dry crusts, when we might taste the ambrosial meat of angels; that we are content to wear rags, when we might put on kings' robes; that we go out with tears upon our faces, when we might anoint them with fresh oil! I am convinced that many a believer lives in the cottage of doubt, when he might live in the mansion of faith. We are poor starving things, when we might be fed; we are weak, when we might be mighty, feeble when we might be as the giants before God, and all because we will not hear the Master say, "Rise up My love, My fair one, and come away." Now, brothers and sisters, is the time with you after your season of trouble, to renew your dedication vow to God. Now, beloved, you should rise up from worldliness, and come away—from sloth, from the love of this world, from unbelief. What enchants you to make you sit still where you are? What delights you to make you as you now are? Come away! There is a higher life! There are better things to live for and better ways of seeking them. Aspire! Let your high ambition be unsatisfied with what you have already learned and know; not as though you had already attained, either were already per-

fect; this one thing do—press forward to the things that are before! Rise, soul, greatly beloved, and enter into your Master's rest. I cannot get my words this morning as I would have them. But if these lips had language, I would seek by every motive of gratitude for the mercies you are enjoying, by every sensation of thankfulness which your heart can experience for divine grace received, to make you now say, "Jesus, I give myself up to You this day, to be filled with Your love; and I renounce all other desires but the desire to be used in Your service, that I may glorify You." Then, I think there may go out of this place this morning many young men, and old men, too, many youths and maidens, determined to be doing something for Christ! I well remember preaching a sermon one Sunday morning which stirred up some brethren to the midnight meeting movement, and much good was done, by God's grace! What if some new thought should pass through some newly quickened spirit, and you should think of some fresh invention for glorifying Christ at this good hour? Is there no Mary here who has an unbroken alabaster box at home? Will she not today break it over the Master's head? Is there no Zaccheus here who will today receive Christ into his house, compelled by divine love? Oh, by the darkness that has gone, and by the brightness that has come, live lovingly towards Christ! Oh, by the fears that have been hushed, by the pains that have been removed, by the joy you now experience, and by the delights which He has promised you, I beseech you, cling to Him and seek to serve Him! Go into the world to bring in His lost sheep, to look after His hidden ones, to restore to Him that lost piece of money for which He has lit the candle, and desires you to sweep the house! O Christian brothers and sisters, it is an angel's work I have attempted now, and mortal lips fail; but I beg you, if there is any heart of mercy, if there is any consolation in Christ Jesus, "If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God." Lay not up your treasure upon earth where thieves break through and steal; but lay up your treasure in heaven—for where your treasure is, there shall your heart be also.

If you love my Master, serve Him—if you do not, if you owe Him nothing, oh, if you owe Him nothing, and have had no favor from Him, then I beg you to seek mercy! But if you have found it; if you know it—oh, for His love's sake *love Him!* This dying world needs Your help, my Lord; this wicked sinful world needs Your aid. Christian, up and be doing! The battle is raging furiously! Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! Guards, up and at them! Do you sleep, sirs? Sleep when now the shots are flying thick as hail, and the enemy is rallying for the last charge in the world's mighty Armageddon? Up, for the defiant standard of hell waves proudly in the breeze! Do you say you are feeble? *Jesus* is your strength! Do you say you are few? It is not by many, nor by few that God works! Do you say, "I am obscure?" God needs not the notoriety and fame of men! Up, men, women, and children in Christ! Up! Be no more at ease in Zion, but serve God while it is called today, for the war needs eve-

ry hand, and the conflict calls for every heart, and night comes when no man can fight or work!

V. And now, last of all, the time is coming to us all, when we shall die upon our beds. Oh, long-expected day, hurry and come! The best thing a Christian can do is to die and be with Christ which is far better! Well, when we shall lie upon our deathbeds, panting out our life, we shall remember that then the winter is past *forever*. No more of this world's trials and troubles. "The rain is over and gone." No more stormy doubts, no more dark days of affliction. "The flowers appear on the earth." Christ is giving to the dying saints some of the foretastes of heaven! The angels are throwing over the walls some of the flowers of Paradise. We have come to the land Beulah, we sit down in beds of spices, and can almost see the Celestial City on the hilltops, on the other side of the narrow stream of death. "The time of the singing of the birds is come," angelic songs are heard in the sick chamber. The heart sings, too, and midnight melodies cheer the quiet entrance of the grave. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for You are with me." Those are sweet birds which sing in the groves by the side of the river Jordan! Now it is that "The voice of the turtle is heard in our land." Calm, peaceful and quiet, the soul rests in the consciousness that there is no condemnation to him who is in Christ Jesus. Now does "The fig tree put forth her green figs." The first fruits of heaven are plucked and eaten while we are on earth! Now do the very vines of heaven give forth a smell that can be perceived by love. Look forward to your death, you who are believers in Christ, with great joy! Expect it as your spring tide of life, the time when your real summer shall come, and your winter shall be over forever—

"One distant glimpse my eager passion fires!
Jesus! To You my longing soul aspires!
When shall I hear Your voice divinely say,
Rise up My love, My fair one, and come away?
Come meet your Savior bright and glorious
Over sin and death and hell victorious."

May God grant that the people who fear His name may be stirred up this morning, if not by my words, yet by the Words of my text, and by the influences of God's Spirit. And may you who have never had sweet seasons from the presence of God, seek Christ and He will be found of you, and by His grace may we all meet in the land where winters of sin and sorrow shall be all unknown! Amen.

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A SIGHT OF SELF
NO. 437

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 2, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none who calls upon Your name, who stirs up himself to take hold of You: for You have hid Your face from us, and have consumed us because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and we all are the work of Your hand."
Isaiah 64:6, 7, 8.

IT is easy to commit sin, but hard to confess it. Man will transgress without a tempter; but even when urged by the most earnest pleader, he will not acknowledge his guilt. If we could but bring men into such a state of heart that they felt themselves to be guilty, there would be hope for them; but this is one of the most hopeless signs concerning our race, that it is so hardened and so perverse, that even when sin stares it in the face, it still pleads innocence, and proudly lifts up its head and challenges the accuser! Transgressors always seek to escape from the painful and humiliating duty of acknowledging their offenses. Some seek to hide it both from themselves and others, silencing their own consciences, and throwing dust in the eyes of their companions; like Achan, digging in the earth to hide the Babylonian garment and the wedge of gold, they forget that their sins will surely find them out. As the foolish ostrich, when pursued by the hunters, buries its head in the sand, and when it cannot see its enemy, thinks it has escaped; so these men take the fact that they are undiscovered by men, and are at peace with themselves, as a good omen, whereas it is a sad sign of hardness and blindness of heart. Many pursue yet another course, and make excuses for their offenses. They did do wrong, it is true, but then there is much to be said in extenuation; like Aaron, they urge the clamors of the people, or they will have it that even providence, itself, *compelled* them to sin! "I cast gold into the fire, and there came out this calf," as if sin were an accident, and not a willful wickedness; as if disobedience to God were a sort of necessity of nature, and not a direct rebellion of the will against the Majesty of heaven! Others, too, will blame their sin on their fellows—a trick which they learned from our first parents, for Adam, in the Garden, said—"The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." Or they may have learned it from our mother, Eve, for even she understood this stratagem—"The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." So they will have it that they were dragged into sin by force; that they were overly persuaded or craftily enticed, so that they ought not to be considered as accomplices in the crime—that they are, in fact, only the instruments of

others' sins, and could hardly resist, so that others must take the whole of the guilt, and they themselves should go free.

Some, who have attained to a higher pitch of brazen impudence, will actually deny altogether that they have sinned! They will come before God's servant as Ananias did before Peter, and say, "Yes, for so much," while yet they are holding a lie in their right hand. We have some who will stoutly say, "We have not sinned," and who think themselves insulted if in plain terms you accuse them of having violated the law of God. There are some also, and those not a few, who endeavor to color their sins, and to cloak them with a profession of godliness, by attending to the ceremonies of religion with ostentatious carefulness. Like the Pharisees of old, they devour widows' houses, but they make long prayers. They hate Christ in their hearts, but they tithe mint and anise, and cumin. They violate the precepts of the law, but they bind them on their foreheads, wear long fringes on their garments, and write texts of Scripture on the doorposts of their houses. These serve at the altar of the devil, in the garb of God's priests, and offer unclean flesh upon the high places, in pretended honor of the God of Israel! We know that all these classes abound everywhere, for a man will do anything to hide sin from himself; and he will give skin for skin, yes, all that he has, that he may be self-justified, that he may have something to answer when he stands before the Most High, that he may find food for his pride, and a coverlet for the infamous arrogance of his heart! He will dig, and labor, and strive, give his goods to the poor, and his body to be burned, that he may win a righteousness of his own. Beloved, if you and I have ever been partakers of the grace of God, we have been brought to the distasteful duty of confession of sin, for it is not possible that we have been pardoned if we have refused to acknowledge our guilt! We cannot be partakers of the life of God in the soul if we can still say, "Lord, I am righteous, and of myself I can plead exemption from Your curse." A clear sense of our lost estate is absolutely necessary to make us even seek for pardon. As the man who thinks himself in good health will never send for a physician; as the man who is sufficiently warm will not avail himself of an extra garment which is offered to him; as the man who is not hungry will not accept an invitation to a feast of charity, so we find that none will come to Christ but those who feel that they must come, and that outside of Him they are utterly lost, ruined and undone! Moreover, as none will seek His mercy till they know their need, so we may rest assured that none would value that mercy, even if it were given to them, before the spiritual poverty had become manifest. What is medicine to the healthy man? Send it to his door, and what thanks will you receive? You have been guilty of impertinence. Why offer charity to the man who is rich and increased in goods? Will he receive your dole? Will he not turn up his nose, and tell you to look for the beggar in the street, but not to mistake him for one who needs your alms? Even, I say, should God give salvation to those who feel no need of it, they would not value the priceless benefit! This diamond of God would be to them but a piece of valueless broken glass; this gem from heaven but as a pebble from the brook—

"What comfort can a Savior bring
To those who never felt their woe?
A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Spirit has made him so."

It is certain that God will never give pardon to those who do not confess their need of it, for it is not consistent with the sovereignty and dignity of God that He should present pardon to the man who will not first honor God's law by pleading that he is guilty. If a man shall still say, "I have not broken the law," is God unmerciful if He refuses to forgive him? Will you harden your brow like iron, and your heart as adamant, and will you accuse God of lack of love, if He says, "I will send no mercy to that man, neither shall he find pardon at My hands, 'but to this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembles at My Word'"? Is it any wonder, I ask you, that He should pass by the proud and the self-righteous and leave them unblest? By their own profession, they do not want His mercy; they declare they do not need to be forgiven. Then, perish! Perish, for you righteously deserve it! Go down to the hell which you have chosen by your pride, and reap the fruits of your own willfulness, but impugn not the tenderness of God, if He adheres to this inviolable rule, that if we will not confess our sins, we shall perish in our guilt—

"For Christ as soon would abdicate His own,
As stoop from heaven to sell the proud a throne."

This morning, it is my intention, as God shall help me, *to describe that view which every gracious soul is sure to have of himself*. Then, secondly, *to warn you of certain dangers to which those are enclosed who only know their need, but who have not yet found Christ*. And I hope to close with *the pleas*—some of which are in the text, some to be found elsewhere—*which every soul that is conscious of guilt may urge before the throne of mercy*.

I. First, then, I HAVE TO DESCRIBE THE VIEW WHICH EVERY TRULY GRACIOUS SOUL WILL TAKE OF HIMSELF, and as I describe it, I hope there are some here who will say, "That is what I think of myself, that is my condition before God." Though you might think yours to be a hopeless case, yet, I pray you, rest assured that it is not so if you can join in the confession through which I am now about briefly to pass. I feel persuaded that it is the Spirit of God which has brought you to a deep sense of your lost estate, and has thus begun a good work in your soul!

1. *Every gracious soul who is truly enlightened by the Spirit has a clear sense of the root of all his guilt*. He knows the plague of his own heart, and cries with the text, "We are all as an unclean thing." He discovers that not merely his outward acts, but that his very person is essentially sinful in the sight of God. He was once willing to confess that the streams were black, but now he perceives to his horror that the fountain itself is defiled! You could have made him previously confess that the fruits of his branches were bitter, but now he perceives that the root is corrupt, the tree is evil, the very sap is poisonous. He is brought to feel that sinfulness lies in the very marrow of his bones, and is inherent in his blood; that he himself—as well as his thoughts and his acts—he him-

self is "as an unclean thing." The metaphor that is here used is hardly understood by us, because it is drawn from the Levitical and ceremonial use of the word "unclean." Under the Jewish law, you knew that when a person was unclean he could not go up to the house of the Lord. He could offer no sacrifice; God could accept nothing at his hands; he was an outcast and an alien as long as he remained unclean. If he sat upon a bed, it must be washed with water; if he touched a vessel of earth it must be broken, for it was unclean; if he ate any food, the whole of that food was unclean, and no clean person might venture to touch it. When this uncleanness was connected with disease, as in the case of leprosy, the man became loathsome—so utterly loathsome to himself that it must have been a horror to have lived! And so loathsome to his fellow creatures that his only appropriate spot was solitude, where alone, far from any water brook of which human lips might drink, alone so that the air might not be contaminated with his disease, alone, he lived and cried, "Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!" Every gracious soul knows itself to be, by nature, as an unclean thing. He feels that of himself he cannot worship God acceptably; that he cannot stand within the veil on his own merits; that he can bring no sacrifice which God can accept; that he is the means of injury to others; that his ill example leads others astray; and that, in fact, he is not fit to stand in the congregation of the righteous, nor to be numbered with God's chosen, for he is, in himself, polluted and polluting! When a sense of his horrible depravity and degradation is heavy upon him, and before he has found Christ, that man will slink into the house of God like a felon and hide; or, if he sits down with God's people, it is with the idea that he is out of place like a filthy beggar in a palace, or a loathsome reptile in a hallowed temple! Often he feels when a Christian speaks to him, as if he were not fit to give an answer; he feels himself to be in person, utterly unfit to live! Ah, well do I remember the period when I first discovered this truth of God! And how did I wish, as John Bunyan did, that I had been anything but a man—a toad, or a serpent, sooner than have been a man, a creature who had offended its own Maker, a creature in itself so prone to go astray, so sure to sin if left alone. In *Grace Abounding,* Bunyan says, "My original and inward pollution, that, *that* was my plague and affliction; that, I say, at a dreadful rate, always putting forth itself within me; that I had the guilt of, to amazement; by reason of that, I was more loathsome in my own eyes than was a toad; and I thought I was so in God's eyes, too. Sin and corruption," I said, "would as naturally bubble out of my heart, as water would bubble out of a fountain! I thought that everyone had a better heart than I had; I could have changed hearts with anybody; I thought none but the devil, himself, could equal me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind! I fell, therefore, at the sight of my own vileness, deeply into despair; for I concluded that this condition that I was in could not stand with a state of grace."

Oh, then there was no talk of human dignity! There are still some few of your fine preachers who will have it that there is a deal of dignity in human nature—that man is a noble creature. Alas, brothers and sisters,

he that talks about the dignity of nature, and the nobility of fallen man, does not know himself! So far from being fit for the pulpit, he ought to begin to learn his catechism! He cannot speak of a state of grace, for he has not yet learned aright his own state by nature! He must be a blind leader of the blind who can talk like this; he does not know the first work of the Spirit in his own soul, or else he would feel that we are just the reverse of anything that is noble or good, for "We are all as an unclean thing." The whole man is vile and desperately evil, there is not one sound spot left within or without. The sin is white on our very forehead, but its core lies deep within; the heart is deceitful; the passions are corrupt; the understanding is eaten through and through with a deadly leprosy; and in us, that is, in our own flesh, there dwells no good thing!—

"Lord, when Your Spirit deigns to show
The badness of our hearts,
Astonished at the amazing view,
The soul with horror starts!
The dungeon opening, foul as hell,
Its loathsome stench emits;
And, brooding in each secret cell,
Some hideous monster sits!
Swarms of ill thoughts their bane diffuse,
Proud, envious, false, unclean;
And every ransacked corner shows
Some unsuspected sin."

2. But in the second place, the spiritually enlightened man—and we insist upon it that none else are spiritually enlightened—*the spiritually enlightened man then perceives that all his actions are evil.* "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Our *righteousnesses!* It does not say our *un*righteousnesses! Brothers and sisters, if our righteousnesses are so bad, what must our *un*righteousnesses be? Our "righteousnesses," that is, our prayers, our tears, our good deeds, those things whereof we once gloried, when we are really taught of God, we perceive that these are filthy rags! The expression, "filthy rags," in the Hebrew, is one which we could not with propriety explain in the present assembly. As the confession must be made privately and alone before God, so the full meaning of the comparison is not meant for human ears; suffice it to say, that rags which have bound up a foul, putrid, running sore, are understood by some commentators, and our righteousnesses are comparable to such rags as these. Oh, tell me not that we exaggerate when we describe the fall of man! O sirs! Say not that we love to depreciate our race, and that we slander that noble creature, man! All those things which you call exaggerations fall below the mark—even below the mark of sirs, there is sin in our prayers; they need to be prayed over again! There is filth in the very tears that we shed in penitence; there is sin in our very *holiness!* There is unbelief in our faith; there is hatred in our very love; there is the slime of the serpent upon the fairest flower of our garden. I know time was, in looking back upon my past life—and it had been moral and without exception to the eyes of others—yet, I loathed myself that ever I should have lived such an unworthy life; and indeed, at the present, I can do but little otherwise, for "in me (that is in my flesh) dwells no good

thing." I am sure when the soul is convicted of sin it will look upon self-righteousness as the most detestable lie that ever was forged by hell! And it will regard all self-confidence as the most frightful delusion and deception into which the soul can fall. Trust in our doings, brothers and sisters?—we have no doings to trust! If our best works are bad, and so bad that they are as filthy rags, what must our bad works be? Oh, I would have some of you remember your bad works this morning that you may repent of them! You remember how the apostle speaks of "fornicators, adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards," and he says, "Such were some of you; but you are washed, but you are sanctified"? There is no wisdom in daintily handling men's sins! There are vices in London as much as in Corinth, and we have in our churches those who once indulged in them! And in this congregation, this morning, we may have some who still live in them! O God, show them their sin! Let them feel their guilt before You; and let us all, as we shall do, if Your spirit is in our hearts, confess that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags!

3. In the next place, the enlightened heart into which the candle of the Lord has shone *is led to see the failure and futility of all its resolutions to be better*. "We all do fade as a leaf." Some of you have been lately awakened, you have felt yourselves to be lost souls; and what have you been doing? Why, you have promised to be better, and you have tried to be; you have mended in various ways, or, rather, you have proposed to yourselves to amend. Perhaps you made up your mind that you would never go out to your labor again without prayer—that you would never lose your temper—that when tempted to indulge your passions you would restrain them—that those things which had been your besetting sins should now be given up. What progress have you made with your resolutions? Are you not today like the man who resolved and *re*-resolved but remained the same? Truly, in our own strength, we all do fade as a leaf! We look fair and green in the morning when we rise from our beds, fresh with midnight vows and repenting, but before night, we are as faded and withered as the dry leaf withered with autumn blasts. We went forth, saying, "Today, I shall stand; this time, I shall not fall—now I am safe—I have made up my mind; I am resolved—I know there is a something in me which can improve, I can be better if I like; I will reform; I will stand up and make myself a Christian!" But what became of it all? Down it went, and "like the baseless fabric of a vision, left not a wreck behind." You returned "like a dog to his vomit, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." How many slips men make before they learn to put themselves into God's arms to be carried by Him! It seems as if we must try 50 times before we will learn that simple truth of God—"Without Me you can do nothing." We run about over the treacherous beach looking for a spot of sand just a little harder than the last; and we compliment ourselves that we have hit upon a much more solid site for our new and noble house! "Ah, that was a mistake last time—that was a poor bit of sand to build on—this time it is all right. See how hard it is! The tide does not come here often—see it does not yield; it is like a bowling green,

smooth and hard. I will build here." The timbers are laid, the goodly stones are squared and the house rises.

But, listen! What is that? The breakers are coming up; the tide certainly does reach this very spot! It is a full spring tide that is now marching up the shore and lo, the materials are engulfed in the all-devouring deep; our tower has tottered and great is its fall! What will disappointed man do now, sirs? Why, he will look for another bit of sand, and so he will go on unless the grace of God prevents him! But when divine grace comes, he will give up all the sand at once, and begin to build upon the rock, and upon the rock, alone. I would have you reform as much as you can; but do not mix your reformation with religion, for you need regeneration, and reformation will not suffice. No touching up of the old house will suffice! Down with it, down with it, for the very foundation is rotten! It is not mending your clothes; it is throwing them away, and wearing the new robes of righteousness that will fit you for the feasts of glory! We want no Gibeon "old shoes and clouted." You must have shoes of iron and brass, for those are the only ones that can carry you to heaven. You may use your brush, and your niter, and your soap; but if you would enter heaven, you must go to God and ask Him to make the Ethiopian anew, for none of these things can make him white before God! "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags—we all do fade as a leaf." Our best professions, hopes, resolutions, and pretensions—all of them fade like shadows, dreams, and fancies of the brain!

4. But the truly awakened soul knows a fourth thing, namely, that *he is not in himself able to stand against the invasions of temptation*, for the text has put it—"Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." There is a dry leaf hanging alone on that tree; all its companions have long ago fallen and are gone. Dry leaf, you will not long hold your place, for you depend for your connection with the tree upon a very slender thread. Listen, the north wind howls! Now shall all the trees be clear. Where is the withered leaf now? Hurried away to join the rotting heap upon the ground! So, when men find that their vows wither, they will still hang to their hopes and to their morals; but some strong temptation comes unexpectedly upon them just at the moment when their mind is susceptible of its power, and where are they? The devil catches their tinder dry, and then strikes the spark! He knows how to time his temptations; he does not assail his victims when they are ready to resist him, but waylays them in the dark corner of some cutthroat lane, and smites the unguarded passenger with a deadly blow! The thief never lets you know when he intends to break in, for, "If the good man of the house had known in what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and would not have allowed his house to be broken into." The temptation comes like a howling north wind at an unexpected moment, and where is your man now? Unable to resist, carried away by the very vice which he thought he had renounced. "Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Every Christian here knows that the grace of God is stronger than all the winds of temptation, but he knows, also, that apart from that, he can no more resist sin than the chaff from the hand of the winnower can

stand against the blast of a hurricane! He feels that if he is put into the furnace, he can abide the fire through divine grace, but that apart from grace, he is as a thread before the flame or like wax before the fire. The well-instructed believer is very much afraid of himself; he dares not go into temptation, for he feels that a man who carries a bomb within him ought to mind that he keeps away from the sparks, and that he who has a powder keg in his heart ought not to play with fire. He knows that in himself, apart from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, he would as certainly go back to his old sins, and fall again into his past lusts, as do those who crucify the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame! Ah, my hearer, if you do not know this, I am afraid you do not know yourself, and if you do not know yourself, you do not know Christ! We must go through the stripping room before we can enter into the robing room. Pull that bracelet from the man's wrist! Off with that crown! Strip him of the purple robe! Away with those sandals! Tear up that cloak! Leave him naked. He is never fit to be clothed till he is naked! Let his foul skin be seen, for he cannot be washed till he can see his filth! Now, set his feet upon the rock, but first of all, pull his feet from the sand, for as long as they have any foothold anywhere else, they cannot stand upon the rock of ages safely and securely! I hope that very many of you do know that your iniquities, like the wind, will carry you away—unless you have the grace of God!

5. Those souls upon whom God's sunlight has once shone are also painfully aware of their own *natural weakness and slothfulness in prayer*. What does the text say? "There is none who calls upon Your name, that stirs up himself to take hold of You." In my carnal state, I used to hear a minister whose preaching was, as far as I could make out, "Do this and do that, and do the other, and you will be saved." According to his theory, to pray was a very easy thing. To make yourself a new heart was a thing of a few instants, and could be done at almost any time. I was really convinced that I could turn to Christ when I pleased, and therefore, I could put it off to the last part of my life when it might be conveniently done upon a sick bed. But when the Lord gave my soul its first shakings in conviction, I soon knew better! I went to pray; I did pray, God knows, but it seemed to me that I did not. What? *I* approach the throne of God? Such a wretch as *I* lay hold on the promise? *I* venture to hope that God could look on me? It seemed impossible. A tear, a groan, and sometimes not so much as that, and that was all. An, "Ah!" A, "Would that." A, "But"—the lips could not utter more! It was prayer, but it did not seem so then. Oh, how difficult is prevailing prayer to a poor God-provoking sinner! Where was the power to lay hold on God's strength or wrestle with the angel? Certainly not in me, for I was weak as water, and sometimes hard as the nether millstone! Every believer feels at times a fearful inability in prayer; he goes to the throne of grace, and groans, and comes forth from his closet no more refreshed than a man who rises from his bed after having tossed to and fro all night. He knows what it is to pray, but he cannot perform the duty. He knows there is a power in prayer, but he cannot get the power. The chariot wheels are knocked off, and he drags

heavily along where once his soul was like the chariot of Aminadab! Well, I think we do not know ourselves unless we have been led to see that God must draw near to us, or else we cannot draw near to Him, and unless we have been led to loathe ourselves, because of this indifference in prayer, we have not yet discovered what we are. Oh, to think that we cannot pray! This is not an inability for which we deserve to be comforted, but a damnable inability! This is one of the greatest sins we have, that we cannot approach our Maker. It is an awful and terrible thing that we should have become so wicked and so vile, that we cannot even ask for mercy, and cry for it aright! This is no excuse, but an aggravation of our guilt. Have you felt this, my hearer? Oh, if you have not, I fear you have to begin again, and learn the first elements of faith!

6. Lastly on this point, that soul which has once perceived itself in the black colors of its iniquity, has discovered that through sin it has lost all the favor and the love of God which might have come if it had been without sin, for so says the text, "For You have hid Your face from us, and have consumed us because of our iniquities." It is no thing to play with—that hiding of God's face. When the Prophet says, "You have consumed us," it is a dreadful word. Do you see that burning fiery furnace? The soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar are about to cast three bound men into it that they may be consumed, and the fire is exceedingly hot, so that it may consume them quickly! To the apprehension of an awakened sinner, that is his fate; he feels that he must be cast into hell and be utterly consumed. No, more, with some, though not with all to the same degree, the man is consumed; some of us feel as if our locks were crisp even now with that awful burning through which we passed when we were first convicted of sin! Bunyan seems to have enjoyed the full light of God's countenance all the more because of his distinct recollection of the solemn period of conviction through which he passed. If you read Hart's hymns, you will be struck with their singular clearness concerning Christ and full Justification; that certainty and assurance results very much from the fact that Hart retained to his dying day, the remembrance of his experience when he was under the whip of the law. You will remember that when he is trying to describe his own feelings, he fails to do so, and he adds—

"Oh, what a dismal state was this!
What horrors shook my feeble frame!
But, brethren, surely you can guess,
For you, perhaps, have felt the same."

Now, I do not think that all who know the Lord suffer this consumption to the same extent; but there must be in your heart, if you are saved at all; there must be heard a voice putting down every hope but Christ's, casting down every thought but that which looks to Him! You must have seen the death warrant condemning your excuses, your false trusts, your proud boastings and glorying to a humiliating execution, or surely you know not the Lord. And if you have not thus known and felt that God is angry with the wicked every day, and that you, in yourself, are the object of His wrath, I fear you have not yet been quickened of the Spirit! But I know there are many such here; multitudes who have passed through

this, and who take this view of themselves today, and others who are now suffering under it. May the Lord bring us all to Christ and to His finished work!

II. I come now to the second part of my subject, which I shall dismiss with two or three words only. My dear friends, as I have been speaking, I have seen you lean forward to catch every word, for you have said, "Ah, that is me," and "He speaks of me," and "That is me; he reads my heart in the description." Well, now, there is a danger I must warn you of and that is—DO NOT BE CONTENT WITH THE MERE KNOWLEDGE THAT IT IS SO. You must not merely know that you are lost, but you must feel it. Do not be content with simply feeling that it is so, but *mourn before God* that it is so, and *hate yourself* that it is so! Do not look upon it as being a misfortune, but as being your own willful sin, and look upon yourselves, therefore, as being guilty sinners, already condemned, not only for all this, but condemned because you believe not on Christ, for that, after all, is the crowning condemnation! And when you really feel your sinfulness, and mourn it, do not stop there; never give yourself any rest till you know that you are delivered from it, for it is one thing to say—"Ah, I do sin," but it is quite another thing to say—"He has saved me from my sin." It is one thing to have a repentance which makes you leave the sin you loved before, and another thing to talk about repentance. Ah, I have sometimes seen a child of God when he has sinned, and I have seen his broken-hearted actions, and heard his piteous confessions, and I can say that my heart goes out toward the man in whom there are tears of repentance of the right kind. It is one of the fairest sights that is seen under heaven when a believer who has gone wrong is willing to say, "I have sinned," and when he no more proudly sets himself up against his God but humbles himself like a little child. Such a man as that shall be exalted! But I have seen, and it is a fearful sight to see, I have seen one who can sin and repent, and sin and repent. Oh, that dry-eyed repentance is a damnable repentance! Take heed of it, brothers and sisters. I have known a man who professed to have been converted years and years ago, who, ever since that pretended conversion, has lived in a known sin, and yet he thinks *he* is a child of God because, after he has fallen into the sin, he has a little season of darkness arising from his conscience, but he quiets that conscience after a time, and presumptuously says, "I will not give up my hope." Oh, that is an awful thing! God deliver you from dry-eyed repentance, for it is not repentance! God save you from that! I pray you, my dear hearers, while I describe these things, do not be saying, "There is my comfort, because I *feel* it." That is not comfort! There is no ground for comfort there! It would be just as if when the doctor walked through the hospital and stopped before a bed and said, "A man who has a fever, or a man who has a cancer, feels so and so, and so and so." And the patient should say, "Why that is just what I feel." Is there any comfort in that? The only comfort is that he knows he has a fever. "A man who has the typhus, and must die unless a miracle is worked, feels so and so." "That is how I feel." Is there any comfort in that? No, only the comfort to know that you will die! There is no comfort to be had from a

sense of our depravity; the comfort is to be had in getting that which is to cure the depravity. The comfort is not to be found in the disease. We are not to go raking the stinking puddle of our own lusts to find sweet waters. What? Scrape the foul dunghill of our own corruptions to find something that is to give us hope? God forbid! It is in the remedy, not in the disease; it is in Christ, and not in our sense or guilt that we are to find peace. I pray you, my dear hearers, never be satisfied till you find Christ who saves His people from their sins—

"O, beware of fondly thinking
God accepts you for your tears!
Are the shipwrecked saved by sinking?
Can the ruined rise by fears?"

III. And now, lastly, though our second head deserves a sermon, THE TEXT SEEMS TO SUGGEST SOME PLEAS. We will use them very briefly, but passionately.

Poor troubled soul, have you been able to go with me in the confession, and can you say, "Lord, I would be made whole; I would be saved from all my sins; I desire to be made holy and to be accepted in Christ"? Then, there are many pleas you can use. I am afraid you cannot use the first one mentioned in the text—"You are my Father!" I am half afraid you have not faith enough for that, but oh, if you have, what a prevailing plea it is! "My Father, I have sinned, but I am Your son, though not worthy to be so called; my Father, by a father's love forgive, forgive Your erring one; by the heart of Your compassion have mercy upon me!" You who have backslidden can plead this, for you know your adoption. You feel the "Abba Father" on your lips now. Plead it! Would you, being evil, refuse to forgive your child? Would you not take him up in your arms and say, "My child, I cannot bear to see you weep; your tears make my heart bleed"? Would you not give him a kiss and say, "Go and sin no more"? But if that should be too hard for you, take the next plea. Say, "Lord, I am the clay and You the potter; I am helpless like the clay which cannot fashion itself; I am worthless, Lord, like the clay that is of no value; I am filthy, Lord, like clay I am only worthy to be trod under foot, but You are the potter, and potters can make fine things even of clay, vessels of honor out of dishonorable earth. Here I am, Lord; I put myself into Your hands. I am nothing; make me what You would have me to be. Come, Lord, and make me, mold me, and fashion me. I confess I have no power; I acknowledge that I have no merit. O God, have mercy upon me; I will be the clay, You be the potter! Make me to be Your workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." Will not that plea suffice? Soul, use it and try its prevalence!

But listen, sinner. There is a sweeter plea than any in the verse before us, for this is an Old Testament text; I must take you to the New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the plea that never fails! It is this, "Lord, it is written that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; if there was never a sinner in the world but one, I am that sinner. If You write it in capital letters, I will wear it on my brow, for 'I am the chief of sinners,' I am a sinner not only generally but particularly, for I have broken this law, and that law, and I have gone astray always. But

Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost, and You have said, 'This is a faithful saying'—it is, Lord, and therefore I believe it. And You have added—'It is worthy of all acceptation,' therefore, good Lord, I accept it. I believe that Jesus came to save sinners. I trust myself in His hands to save me." It is done, it is done! You are saved, you are saved! Your sins are gone! Your unrighteousnesses are forgiven! You are accepted in the beloved! What makes this plan so hard? Brothers and sisters, it is hard because it is so easy! If it were a hard way of salvation, man would like it; but because it is so easy we cannot bear it. We are so proud, that to be saved on charity; to come to Christ and trust Him to save us; to have done with saving ourselves, and to let Him do it all—oh, this is so humbling! It will just suit you, then, poor soul, for you have said in the words of my text, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Come before God and say, "Lord, by His agony and bloody sweat, by His cross and passion, by His precious death and burial, have mercy upon me," and He will answer you when you make mention of the blood, and He will say—"Your sins which are many are forgiven you." Oh, there is hope yet, lost soul; there is hope yet! To the very gates of hell let my voice ring this morning—lost soul, there is hope yet. If you have passed those gates, there is no hope; but this side of the gates of hell, there is hope for you! Not in yourself, but in Jesus is your help found! Look to Him; He dies; one look will save you! Look to Him; He lives; He pleads before the Father's throne. Faith in the living Savior will make you a living soul. May God in His mercy empty you of self, and then, faith is easy, but until you are brought there, faith is impossible. May you be brought to know that you are utterly lost, and then, when I pronounce the words of Christ—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved"—you will joyfully obey the divine commandment and you will find in Christ all that your needy spirit wants! I ask the prayers of the church very earnestly that God may bless the testimony of this morning to the fetching in of many. "Brothers and sisters, pray for us." Do not cease your prayers. Oh, that we may have an ingathering to the church again as we have had so many times, and unto *Him*, even to *Him* shall be the honor forever! Amen.

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GOD OR SELF—WHICH?
NO. 438

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 9, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"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? And when you did eat, and when you did drink, did not you eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves."
Zechariah 7:5, 6.

AFTER the Jewish people had been thoroughly cured of their idolatrous tendencies by their 70 years of captivity, they fell into another evil; they became superstitiously regardful of ceremonies, but they lost the life and spirit of devotion, and neglected the weightier matters of the law. Phariseeism, in the spirit of it, had commenced, in the time of Zechariah. Great attention was paid to the formalities and externals of worship, but the vitality of godliness was unknown. The mint, the anise, the cumin of religion—these were all strictly tithed; but truth, mercy, charity, justice, were trod under foot. They multiplied ceremonies to themselves, apart from God's Word. They had fasts which Moses never commanded, and feasts of which the tabernacle in the wilderness knew nothing. They had ordained for themselves a certain fast for the burning of the temple by the Chaldees, and a question which seemed to them very important had arisen, as to whether this fast should be observed now that the temple was rebuilt. The Jews in Persia sent an honorable deputation to Jerusalem upon this important matter. They received no direct answer, for it was nothing to the Lord their God whether they fasted or not, since He had not commanded it, and could not accept their will-worship at their hands. Learn this, then, with regard to all religious ceremonies whatever! If they are not expressly commanded of God, it is a small matter how men keep them; in fact, it would be vastly better if they left them alone. Some time ago in convocation, the very wonderful question was discussed, as to whether a child's father and mother might be its godfather and godmother. Is there not a prior question? Does the Lord ordain such offices in His Word? And, yet again, has He anywhere commanded infants to be sprinkled? What does it matter how the deed is done if the Lord has not ordained it in Holy Scripture? To the law and to the testimony; if you find it not there, though you keep every decree of your church, you have not done it unto God, for He has not required it at your hands! "In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." I would that all our churches were willing to search for the foundation of all their ceremonies in Scripture! This is the way to promote true Christian unity; not to hide our views, but to speak plainly; not to settle down upon our old rituals, but to examine them and see

whether they are of God or not, for let us be sure of this, that if we do anything which is not according to God's Word, in whatever spirit we may do it, or however well we may perform it, it is not a service that God can accept of us. However, though these deputies obtained no answer upon that point, since it was not material whether they did fast or not, yet they had some information upon a much more vital matter. They were informed by the questions asked of them, that all religion must have God for its objective, or else it was nothing before Him. The question was solemnly asked of them, and upon its answer all depended—"When you fasted did you fast *unto Me?* Or when you feasted on your solemn feast days, did you not eat to yourselves and drink to yourselves?"

I shall try, this morning, to work out this great Scriptural truth, first showing, that *in our religious worship, our doing it unto God is the main thing*. Secondly, that *in the world our service to God must be done for His own sake, or else it is nothing*. And, thirdly, we shall use our text as a *test of our condition before God,* asking ourselves solemnly whether we have lived unto God, or whether we have been all this while living to ourselves, eating to ourselves, and drinking to ourselves.

I. First of all, then, WITH REGARD TO OUR RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

You know, brothers and sisters, there are various modes in which the Christian Church attempts to worship God; and we are not about, this morning, to discuss the acceptableness of these different methods—whether it shall be by book or extemporary; whether it shall be with sound of music or with the joyous voices of men and women; whether the ceremony shall be pompous or simple; whether it shall be under the consecrated dome, or in an ordinary chamber. These are matters of secondary importance, for they concern only the carcass, while we have now to deal with the soul of worship! We are apt to fall into a mistake, and value the services of Sunday for something which God does not regard. For instance, in the singing of God's praises, it is well to have melody that we may sing with our understanding as well as with our spirit; but after all, if any man shall be satisfied because his voice has been in tune and time, in singing the words of the Psalm, and if he shall think, that therefore, he has praised God, alas, how mistaken he is! Or in the prayer, if we shall think that certain fluency, an apparent reverence and propriety of expression, are the only necessary things, and if we forget that we are worshipping God, alas, what is our prayer? We might as well have been dumb! And if in preaching our hearers shall regard merely the orthodoxy of the doctrine, or the eloquence, or the fitness of the style, alas, they have not worshipped God, because in all this they forget the questions—"Have you heard as unto God? Have you sung as unto God? Did you pray as unto God?" For if not, though the sermon is orthodox and eloquent, though the singing is as the voice of many waters, though the prayer goes up to heaven, and seems to be unexceptionable in expression, yet the worship is only vain and worthless, lacking holiness *unto the Lord,* since it is not done as unto God, and is not really an offering unto Him!

Take that as the guide, this morning, and I think I may speak home to your consciences. How many, who frequent the house of prayer, worship God *carelessly?* They sing, but with no more heart than if they were sing-

ing some common ditty in their own houses! The prayer is offered, and often that is the dullest part of the service, and their eyes are gazing about here and there; or if the eyes of the head are shut, the eyes of their hearts are open enough, looking not, however, to God, but to vanity! And when the sermon is delivered, they care but little for its precious message, or if they lend some attention, yet what a weariness it is! You see in some congregations nodding heads, and eyes that are given to slumber. They think there is nothing particular in hearing the gospel; they listen to the entreaty of God's ambassador as to a thrice told tale, but that is all. Were it an oration upon politics, they might be a great deal more enthusiastic than they are, and if it were anything which touched their personal estates, they would be forward to catch every word, but as it is only about their souls, only about eternity, only about God, it does not mean much! Now, think—do you really think that your thus coming up to God's house is acceptable in His sight? If you come thus, you have not come to *Him.* You have not come to worship *Him;* how can He take this at your hands? What would you think if a courtier, who should pretend to be doing honor to his monarch, should be nodding before the throne, sleeping in the audience chamber? What would you think if some person should have the audience of a king, and while the petition is yet in his hands, should be gazing about with a vacant stare, or turning his back upon the throne? Surely this were insult, instead of homage, and well might the gates of the palace be barred forever against the wretch whose conduct should be thus infamous! Let us take care that we are not satisfied with merely sitting in our pews, and maintaining an apparently decorous behavior in God's house, for—

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

A larger number of our attendants miss the mark in another way. They are not altogether careless, but still, their worship is not done as unto God, for they are content with the service itself. Provided they have sung—have somewhat joined in the prayer—and to some degree enjoyed the service, they are content, although no dew from heaven rests upon their hearts. They look merely to man, and no further, and if the minister should be in a low frame of mind—and what mortal can help that at times?—these persons, never having learned to seek God in His sanctuary, say that it was no means of divine grace to their souls! The pitcher was empty, and as they had not learned to draw directly from the well, they went home thirsty. They looked to the man, and never thought of his Master; it is no marvel that the opportunity has been a lost one to them. Blessed are they who come up to God's house to use the means, but not to rest in them; desiring to find the God of the means in the means! Oh, how glorious it is when the song carries me up to heaven's courts! How blessed when the prayer is offered, if my soul can breathe its desire into the ear of Christ and have fellowship with Him. Oh, it is blessed to be in God's house when the Lord Himself is in our midst! What if the preacher should miscarry?—yet, if all the while I am lifting up my heart to God, desiring that His truth should be blessed to me, I shall profit under him. He may be clownish, but he will not be so to me! His

expressions may be out of order, but they will reach my heart; and even if *his* heart should not be affected, yet mine will be, if I am having dealings with God, and not with man. Oh, how many of you come here to hear the man, to gratify your curiosity, to regale your ears, to find matter for conversation, but not to behold the beauty of the Lord, nor to inquire in His temple! Well, we are glad to see you anyhow, for we hope that being in the way God will meet with you, but I would have you savingly converted, and then you will come here to hear God's Word, to talk to God, to speak to God! Is it not true, that some of you do not use the day of rest and the house of prayer for their real purpose, which is that man may meet with God? There was a man who professed great love to his friend, and therefore, he would spend a day in his company. He rapped at the door, and the servant said the master was not at home. "It does not matter," he said, "I will wait inside and take my ease; I shall do quite as well though the master is not at home if you will bring me abundance to eat and drink." So he entered, and took a chair and made himself very comfortable, and feasted to his heart's content; and he went home boasting that he had enjoyed the visit. Then his companions asked him—"Was the master there?" "Oh no, he was not there." "But I thought you went to see *him?"* He had pretended a great desire to have converse with his friend, but evidently he was lying, for if he had gone to see the master, and the master had not been at home, he would have said,—"Well, I will call another day, but I have missed my errand this time." So there are some who go up to the house of God; they think they go there to worship *the Lord;* they have no enjoyment of His presence, they have no communion with His Son, they have no indwelling of His Spirit, but they enjoy the day for all that, which shows they did not go to worship God at all! When we put the question to them—"Did you at all fast unto the Lord" their answer must be—"No, verily, we only sought self; we did not seek the Master's presence."

But, there are others, and these are not a few, who think they worship God acceptably when they merely do so as *a matter of custom*. It is a lamentable fact that in many of the suburban parts of this great city, where new villas are rising up, thousands of the people never attend any place of worship; I will not say because, being in the country, they are withdrawn from the wholesome *re*straints of society, but because, at any rate, they do not feel its *con*straints. They can spend the morning in bed, or the afternoon in the garden, too glad that they are not under the sorrowful burden of going to a place of worship! But, with some of you, it is the reverse. You are in such a position that you would hardly be counted respectable if you did not frequent a church or chapel—and so, you go. The Sunday morning very properly sees you arrayed in your best garments, and you enter the house of God with the multitude; but if you go there only as a matter of custom, do not think that God accepts your worship, for you rather obey your neighbors than your God! Have you ever heard of the traveler, who, when he was in Protestant England, was accounted a devout follower of the Reformers? Sometime, when his course of journey led him to Rome, and as often as there was the "mass," he might be observed among the crowd, bowing as they bowed, a thor-

ough Papist! Soon he made a journey to Mecca that he might see the world, and there, among the Muslims, he was as reverent as any; quite willing to receive the dogma of the false prophet! Some who heard of it said, "What is this? How can you act so?" And he said, "Oh, when I am in Rome, I do as Rome does, and when I am at London, I do as London does, and when I am at Mecca I do as Mecca may do; it is all the same to me." And straightway all who knew him despised him. We have some such in England. They happen to live near Christian people, and they do the same as they do. Oh, my dear hearers, I fear many of you would have been idolaters if that had been the custom of this country, and if so, what is the value of your worship?

No doubt, also, there is a small sprinkling of people attending all places of worship who come as a *matter of profit,* which is detestable. We have heard of some country towns—I do not think it takes place much in London, for it does not pay—where people ask, "Which is the most respectable congregation in this town? We must take a seat there." Now, what are they doing when they pretend to be worshipping God? Why, sirs, if that is the reason why they go to a certain place of worship, they are following their trade on the Lord's day—and as far as the sin of it goes, they might as well have their shop open as shut, for they carry their shops on their backs to the place of worship! We suspect that some come among us for this reason. Christ had such followers. There were loaves and fishes to be given away, and therefore they fell into raptures—"What a sweet preacher! What a profitable ministry! We are so fed under Him." And they flocked in multitudes to listen to Him that they might afterwards eat and be filled! I remember one case of this kind that came under my own knowledge. Preaching about in the country, I had often noticed in a certain county, a man in a smock frock who was a regular follower. He seemed to be amazingly attentive to the service, and thinking that he looked an extremely poor man, I one day gave him five shillings. When I preached 20 miles off he was there again, and I gave him some more help fancying that he was a tried child of God. When I was preaching in another place in the same county, he was there again! The thought suddenly struck me whether that man did not find something more attractive in the palms of my hands than in the words of my lips, so I gave him no more. The next time I saw him he put himself in my way, but I avoided him. And then, at last being again in the same county, he came up and asked me to give him something. "No," I said, "you will not have anything now; I see what you have come for; you have only come pretending to delight in the Word, and to be so profited by it, whereas it is profit you get out of me, not profit from the gospel." These people—there are such in all congregations—ought, at least, to be well aware that their pretended worship of God is detestable in His sight! If you have had meat in your hands, and a dog has followed you, you might feel pleased that the dog had taken a great affection to your person, but as soon as the meat was gone, when he turned his tail, you discovered that it was affection for the meat, and not for you! Such are some who come to God's house. They have affection for what is given by the charity of the saints, but they have no love to the saints or to the saints' Master. The sooner

such people mend their ways, the better. This cupboard love, this love of God for what they get out of Him, is despicable to honest men, and it must be an abomination in the sight of the Most High!

Once more upon this point; beyond a doubt, some public worship is offered by those who attend our sanctuaries, *in the idea that they are getting merit by it*. Well, sir, and so you prayed because you thought to atone for sin by it? You sang to help yourself to heaven? You heard a sermon to help yourself to be accepted before God? You have done it to yourself, and the Lord's voice to you is—"Did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me? Did you not eat unto yourselves, and drink unto yourselves?" All religious worship done with a view that we may thereby be meritoriously saved, is really only a service rendered unto our own interests, and not unto God! How can we expect the Eternal One to accept as an offering to Himself, what is really an offering to our own selfishness? "But is not a man to do anything to save himself?" you ask. No, I answer—NO! NO! NO! He is to let Christ save him! By faith, he is to put himself in Christ's hands, that Christ may save him; then after that he may do as much as ever he can out of gratitude to his Savior. Why, sirs, when your servile works are done to gain righteousness, do you think you win the approbation of heaven? What? Build a palace for God out of the mud of your own selfishness? Think that God can be bribed to bless you by deeds which you have done with self as a motive? God hates that which a man does with the idea that he can win the Lord's love! You must come to God as undeserving of anything at His hands; take His love and His mercy freely, and then go and do good works, and pray, and sing, and preach if you can, but never with a view of getting good to yourselves—but only that you may glorify Him, and at last may enter into His rest. I say, and with this I leave the point, that, that worship, and that worship only, which is for God and not for self in any sense, God accepts. And whether it is with a view to temporal profit, or from mere custom, or with a view to merit, that we attend to spiritual ordinances, rites, ceremonies, or what not, we have done nothing that God can receive, and we might as well have left the whole undone!

II. But now, I shall turn to a wider circle for a moment or two. BY THIS WE MAY TEST ALL THE OTHER RELIGIOUS ACTS OF MEN.

Many a brave deed has been done with the sound of which the world has rung for years which nevertheless has never been received by the Most High. Some have served God out of ostentation that they might show what great things they could do. Remember Jehu, when he said, "Come; see my zeal for the Lord God of Hosts." Jehu has many imitators. "Lend me your pen, sir." "Yes." "I hereby write my name for 5,000 pounds at the head of the list. Is not that an acceptable offering to God? There are very few in England that will give as much as I have—report it in all the newspapers. Shouldn't the world know that there still exists one generous man?" Is not that splendid gift accepted? No, brothers and sisters, certainly not, because it was given for his own praise, and for his own glory, and not for the glory of God! So, if it is our earnestness in preaching the gospel, if we are only earnest in order that people may think us earnest—if we are only zealous that men may say of us, "That man does

more than the rest; what a zealous, earnest man he is"—we have offered nothing to God; we have been sacrificing at our own shrines, and offering incense before our own image! A certain king had a minstrel, and he bade him play before him. It was a day of high feasting; the cups were flowing, and many great guests were assembled. The minstrel laid his fingers among the strings of his harp and woke them all to the sweetest melody, but the hymn was to the glory of him! It was a celebration of the exploits of song which the bard had himself performed. He had excelled high Howell's harp, and emulated great Llewellyn's writings. In high-sounding strains he sang of himself and all his glories. When the feast was over the harpist said to the monarch, "Oh King, give me my reward; let the minstrel be paid." And the king said, "You have sung unto yourself; pay yourself; your own praises were your theme; be yourself the paymaster!" He cried, "Did I not sing sweetly? O, King, give me the gold!" But the king replied, "So much the worse for your pride that you should lavish such sweetness upon yourself." brothers and sisters, even if a man should grow gray-headed in the performance of good works, yet when at the last, if it is known that he has done it all to himself, his Lord will say, "You have done well enough in the eyes of man, but so much the worse, because you did it only to yourself, that your own praises might be sung, and that your own name might be extolled." That is a singular text in Hosea—"Israel is an empty vine; he brings forth fruit unto himself." There was fruit, only it was brought forth to him, which before God is emptiness. Take care of ostentation. Be ready to serve God when none can see you! Prefer not to let your right hand know what your left hand does. Shun the very thought of getting a market for your own honor. Go behind the wall and serve your Master, sooner than sound the trumpet before you in the streets!

When Mr. Morrison, the Missionary to China, needed an assistant, Mr. Milne, afterwards the celebrated Dr. Milne, offered himself. As soon as the examiners had talked with him, they saw that his heart was right enough, but he had a clownish look and a dullness of expression. When the youth was gone out of the room, one of the examiners said, "He is scarcely a proper person to send, we need a man of greater intellect." At last they agreed that they had better send him as a servant, the servant of the mission, to do the work of the household, clean Dr. Morrison's boots, and such like things, I suppose. So, Dr. Phillip was requested to communicate this to him, and he told him that the committee did not feel he was qualified to go as a Missionary, would he mind going as a servant? The youth's eye sparkled and he said, "It is too much honor for me even if I am but a hewer of wood, and a drawer of water for the Lord my God." And thus he went forth, and afterwards, as you know, became one of the most useful of missionaries! How many a man would have said, "Gentlemen, I did not come for that; this is treating me with a lack of respect. Surely you do not know who I am, or else you would not suppose for a moment that I would be willing to be a mere drudge and menial servant!" They know not the Lord who only desire His service for the honor which it brings, but they have their hearts right before Him who want no honor for themselves, but only desire that *His* name may be ex-

tolled above the hills, that *He* may be made famous in the earth. What would you say of a workman whom you should employ to build a house for you, and who, when the house was done, should prepare a piece of stone with his own name upon it, to be put right in the front, so that everybody might say that he had built it? Why, you would say, "No, sir, it is mine to choose the inscription; it is my house, not yours." Did you ever hear of a pen that after a book had been written, required its own name placed at the bottom? It was enough for the real author to be known; what did it matter whether it was a gold pen, or a steel pen, or a quill pen that wrote it? So you and I are only God's pens! He uses us and why ought we to care to be known? No, let the real author be known, for "We are *His* workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." There was the difference between John Wesley and George Whitefield. Mr. George Whitefield had all the popularity of Mr. Wesley, and all the opportunity that John had to make a denomination, but he said, "No; I do not condemn my brother John, but I could not do what he does; let my name perish; let only Christ's name last forever." The day will come when the man who was willing that his name should perish rather than it should supplant the brighter name of Christ, will shine all the brighter for this self-denial! Let us mind that we have no sinister ends, no selfish objects in view, but let it be God alone, Christ alone, and His glory alone, or else we may ask ourselves the question afresh—"Did you at all fast *unto Me,* even *to Me?* And when you did eat, and when you did drink, did not you eat *for yourselves* and drink *for yourselves?"*

Again, upon this point; how many of our religious actions, our attempts to propagate the gospel of Christ have been very greatly promoted by strife and rivalry? Sometimes the strife has occurred in a single congregation, and a new chapel has been built because some few disrespectful words were spoken and a slight disagreement ripened and rotted into a quarrel. The general public has thought, "Well, the persons who contributed to that new place must certainly have done some service to God." But, it may be, that it was really service to the devil, for they only built it that they might gratify their own resentments, and say to those whom they left, "See how well we can do without you." How often have different Christians strived to increase their congregations or their denominations out of a spirit of jealous rivalry? The Wesleyans were awake, therefore the Baptists must be; Or the Church of England had a school and therefore the Dissenters must; how many have run in the race that they might keep up with, or exceed their rivals? Now, concerning religious rivalry and religious strife, whatever others may have said of it, we only say, "These things are not of God." The Lord may say of all that we have ever done out of mere denominational pride, out of jealousy, and to make our own names great in the earth—"Did you at all fast *unto Me,* even *to Me?* When you did eat and when you did drink, did you not do it unto yourselves?" I would to God we were all contending earnestly for the faith, and provoking one another to love and to good works, but, to do good for the mere sake of doing more than some person whom I look upon as my rival, is not serving God; it is indulging my weaker passions under the pretense of honoring the Lord! Oh, brothers and sisters, I have

had to ask myself this question, scores of times, "Have I done it unto God?" I have gone groaning from this platform because I could not preach as I wished, but this has been my comfort, "Well, I did desire to glorify Christ; I did desire to free my conscience of the blood of men; I did want to tell men the whole truth of God whether they liked it or not." But sometimes, when I have got on better, and the words have flowed fluently, and the sentences have had a little polish about them (they have not much at any time), I have thought, "Well, I went on pretty well this morning." But just then my conscience has smote me—"You made the people pleased, but did you glorify your Master? Did you lay the axe at the foot of the tree? Did you come down on their consciences? Did you strive to drive the nail right into their hearts? You might have done better with rougher words than with those garnished utterances." I have no uneasiness about rough sentences, but I have when I have not been earnest in my Master's cause!

Oh, I think it must be so with you, sometimes. You Sunday school teachers are you sure that you teach for Jesus Christ? May it not be possible that you teach for custom, or that you do it because you like the association of your fellow teachers? You tract distributors are you sure that when you distribute the tracts it is with an idea of winning souls to Christ? Is it not because your conscience tells you you ought to be doing something? And you who go out preaching, are you sure that you preach only for Christ's glory? Does it not sometimes happen that you are tempted to glorify yourselves, and try to be fine and great when you ought to be simple, and plain, and earnest with the souls of men? Oh, when I think of some who spend all the week writing out their sermons, and touching up every line and every sentence, I fear there must be something of self there! And when I hear some preachers with such splendid diction, with words so nicely picked, I cannot help thinking that there must be a sacrificing to the genius of oratory, or to the beauty of eloquence, rather than to the Master's cause! I say of everything that is done for self—down with it! Down with it! Let Dagon fall! Break these images, every one of them; smite them like the proud Philistine or the boastful Babylonian king. What have we to do with idolatrous self-worship? O Lord, deliver us from it!

I shall not detain you longer upon this point when I have said another word. Though this is a Protestant land, it is beyond all questions that there are some Popish enough to perform great religious acts by way of merit! What a goodly row of almshouses was erected by that miserly old grinder of the poor as an atonement for his hoarding propensities! What a splendid donation to that hospital! A very proper thing, indeed, but the person who left it never gave a farthing to a beggar in his life! And he would not have given it now, only he could not take it with him, and so, he has left it as atonement for sin! Sometimes persons think that the doing of some outrageous religious act will take them to heaven; frequenting church prayers twice a day, fasting during Lent, decorating the altar with needlework, putting stained glass in the window, giving a new organ or such like. At the suggestion of their priest they do many such things, and thus they go on working like blind asses at a mill, from morning to

night, and make as much real progress. Do I address any such persons here? I do not find fault with you for what you do, but I do find fault with you for why you are doing it! If you dream that you are saving yourselves, remember that your acts are selfish acts, and that there is nothing good in them. They may be good things in themselves, but as they are done not unto God, but evidently with a view to your own welfare, they are done to yourselves, and He will not, therefore, accept them. Let there be never such splendid deeds of alms-giving, never such marvelous mortifications of the flesh, never such devout attendance at daily prayer—they avail nothing before God—when they proceed from a self-righteous heart. Away with them! Away with them all! They are dross and dung before the Most High, if you bring them to Him with a view of purchasing salvation. No, you must have done with these, and trust in Jesus only. When a man can say, "I am saved. Christ is mine"—then he can serve God acceptably, and his deeds shall be received through Christ Jesus.

III. Now, for our last point. It seems to me, that our text may be a TEST OF OUR SPIRITUAL STATE.

Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, may I solemnly ask you now, to put your souls into the scales for a few minutes by way of self-examination. What can you and I say with regard to our lives since we have known the Lord? Have we lived unto Christ? Dare we take the Apostle Paul's motto—"For me to live is Christ, to die is gain"? Oh, beloved, it is not what we have done, so much as with what objective we have done it; for every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart. Have we in our hearts longed to serve *Him?* "Oh," I hear one say, "it was little I could do, sir; I was poor; I could not give Him gold; I was uneducated, I could not give Him words." Ah, my brother, it is possible that what you have been able to do may be more acceptable than what some others have done, if you can say, "I did not desire my own honor. I was content to be humble, to be obscure, to be unknown, and to be forgotten, if I might but lift *Him* up and praise *Him* in my little sphere, and make *Him* glorious among men." I fear, beloved brothers and sisters, that some of us do but little for Christ, even outwardly, and I blush to confess, that in that little which we do, there is so much that is spoiled by our looking after self. Have we not sometimes prayed at the prayer meeting with the view of being thought gifted? Have we not joined a church that we might be a little better thought of? May we not have labored more abundantly that there might be the whisper about—"So-and-So is a flourishing Christian, a useful man"? Do we not compliment ourselves thus—"Well, people think very highly of me; they say such-and-such, and it must be all right"? Are we not smuggling over the frontier some of the merchandise of pride? It has been lately remarked, and not before it was necessary, that this is an age in which the word pride means what it never meant before. You hear gentlemen on the platform say, "I am proud." You hear the minister, himself, when speaking of something that has been done for him, "I am proud." The words, "I am proud," do not mean any hurt now, because we have forgotten that pride in any shape and in every shape is detestable in the eyes of God! We even talk of a decent pride. I saw a good young woman the other day—I dare

say she is here this morning—and she told me she could not come now on a Sunday, because her clothes were getting so bad, "And," she said, "I thought it was decent pride to stop coming." And I said, "No, my sister, no pride is decent." I saw her last Sunday standing down there, and I have no doubt she enjoyed what was said as well in her cotton dress as she would have done if she could have worn her silk one. All pride is indecent! A few Sundays ago, when we had the mourning for Prince Albert, some people could not go to church because the dressmakers had been so busy, that they could not get their black things ready, and it was called *decent pride* which kept them at home, but I say again, it was indecent pride—indecent pride such as the Lord God of Hosts abhors! We must have done with these prides, but yet, I do fear that pride has so mixed with all we have done, and so stained our best acts, that we have reason to cry out this morning, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; Lord have mercy upon us, for Jesus' sake!"

There is another arrow in my quiver and it must be shot. Alas, alas! I address some this morning who never did anything for God in their lives; to whom it would make no difference if there were no God at all, except that they would be rather glad than otherwise. A man; a man, mark that, made in the image of his Maker, and yet, he has never said a good word for his Creator! The breath in his nostrils this morning is the gift of God; the comforts of his home are gifts from the liberality of the God who has made him, and yet, he has never done anything for that God in his life! Touch him upon the point of what he has done for man, and he may have done much—let men applaud him. If a great general has won battles for men, let men honor him. If a philanthropist has done much for men, let men be grateful. If you have spent your time for your families, let your families thank you. But, there are some here who have done nothing for God. "Hear, O heavens and give ear O Earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; the ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but they know not, neither do they consider." A man would not keep even a dog which never looked to him with thankfulness; never frisked about his feet with joy at his liberality; and yet, here are men more brutish than their own dogs—fed by God and never thankful to Him, they have never done anything for Him in all their lives! I know there are many here who, if their consciences sleep not, must stand convicted! Again I repeat it, we will not touch you upon the point of what you have done for man, but let me remind you, that man did not make you, that it is not your deeds for others that can save you, it is not your nation that can save your soul; it is God! It is God, and yet, you have forgotten Him, and He is not in all your thoughts. You can go to bed without a prayer to Him; you can rise in the morning without a hymn of thankfulness! A God forgotten in His own world; a God unknown by His own creatures; a God—and such a God! So good, so gracious, so tender, so loving—a God who has given His own Son to die, and yet, by His own creature so lightly deemed, that he gives Him not a word or thought! Well, soul; well, sinner, what a mercy it is that God has not forgotten you. If He had forgotten to give you your bread, where had you been? If He had forgotten to let the sun shine on you—if

He had forgotten to let the fields yield their harvests—if He had forgotten to keep back the fever—if He had forgotten you when you were lying last year upon a sick bed—or when you were out in that storm at sea, and the wind had torn away the mast—or when your gun exploded in your hand—you had been howling in hell now, but He has not forgotten you and you are yet alive. Oh, may His long-suffering lead you to repentance for having lived as if there were no God to love, and yourself the only thing worth caring for!

But, soul, let me remind you, that long-suffering does not last forever. The Roman judges were attended by lictors, as you know; these lictors carried on their shoulders a bundle of rods, and in the center an axe. Now, when the judge condemned any man to be beaten by the rods, the following scene always took place. The rods were tied about with leather thongs, which were knotted a great many times. When the judge condemned the man to be beaten, his back was stripped, the lictor then untied one knot, and then another, and another, which took some little time, and during all this time the judge was looking in the face of the person to be scourged, watching him to see if he saw hardness of heart and rebellion there. If he did, then the blows came heavy, and perhaps the axe followed. But, if he looked in the criminal's face and saw repentance expressed there, it often happened that before the last knot was untied, the judge would say, "The punishment is remitted, tie up the rods again." Now, you who have forgotten God, remember His rods, too, are bound up with many knots. Many of those knots have been untied for some of you. Six years ago you laid ill with the cholera; there was a knot untied then. Before that you had had many warnings that were like loosening of the knots. And now, this morning, the fingers of Eternal Justice are loosening another of the knots! Sinner, it may be it is the last, and God is looking in your face, and what does He see there? Does He see a brow of brass? Is your heart saying, "I have loved pleasure and after it I will go"? Then it is possible that justice will untie the last knot, and then comes the axe. Take heed, sinner, when once God's axe is taken, you cannot escape it! He shall dash you in pieces, and there is none to deliver. O, God of mercy, touch the sinner's heart, and make him repent! Compel him to feel his need of Christ! Lord, lead him to Jesus, and then, by Your grace, the rods shall never be untied, and he shall never be beaten!

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THE DANGER OF DOUBTING
NO. 439

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 16, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." 1 Samuel 27:1.

TO doubt the loving-kindness of God is thought by some to be a very small sin. In fact, some have even exalted the doubts and fears of God's people into fruits and grace, and evidences of great advancement in experience. It is humiliating to observe that certain ministers have pampered and petted men in unbelief and distrust of God, being in this matter false to their Master, and to the souls of His people. Far be it from me to smite the feeble of the flock; but their sins I must and will smite, since it is my firm conviction that to doubt the kindness, the faithfulness, and the love of God is a very heinous offense! Unbelief is akin to Atheism. Atheism denies God's existence—unbelief denies His goodness, and since goodness is essential to God, these doubts do, in reality, stab at His very being! That can be no light sin which makes God a liar; and yet unbelief does, in effect, cast foul and slanderous suspicion upon the veracity of the Holy One of Israel. That can be no small offense which charges the Creator of heaven and earth with perjury; and yet, if I mistrust His oath, and will not believe His promises, sealed with the blood of His own Son, I count the oath of God to be unworthy of my trust; and so I do, in very deed, accuse the King of heaven as false to His covenant and oath! Besides, as I shall have to show this morning, unbelief of God is the fountain of innumerable sins. As the black cloud is the mother of many raindrops, so dark unbelief is the parent of many crimes; and what if I should say that unbelief concentrates the vice of ages into a moment, and gathers up the virus of all the offenses of the race in one transgression? I would not be far from the mark. But I shall say no strong words in the preface, because I think the incident in David's history, to which I shall call your attention this morning, will be in itself enough to lead you to give your verdict with mine, that unbelief is a damnable sin, that it should be condemned by every believer, should be struggled against, should if possible be subdued, and certainly should be the object of our deep repentance and abhorrence!

Now let us listen to David, and may his sin and sorrow be as beacons to warn us from evil! "David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." First, I shall remark that *what he said in his heart was false;* secondly, we shall ask the question, *how he came to think so?* And then we shall notice, in the third place, *what mischief came of such a hard unbelieving thought.*

I. First, THE THOUGHT OF DAVID'S HEART WAS FALSE. He said, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul."

We might conclude it to be false upon the very face of it, *because there certainly was no evidence to prove it.* On no one occasion had the Lord deserted His servant; he had been placed in perilous positions very often, but not one single instance had occurred in which God's strength was not sufficient for him. The trials to which he had been exposed had been varied; they had not assumed one form, only, but many; yet in every case, He who sent the trial had also graciously ordained a way of escape. David could not put his finger upon any entry in his diary, and say of it, "Here is evidence that God will forsake me." In looking back through his whole life, from the time when he kept his father's sheep, and slew the lion and the bear, onward to the day when he challenged the Philistine, and upward to this moment, when he had just escaped from his blood-thirsty pursuer, he could not find a solitary fact which would be proof that God had changed His mind, and would leave His anointed to fall into the hands of his cruel enemy.

Now, mark—when you and I doubt God's Word there is this to be said of it—we mistrust it without a cause. I bear my willing testimony that I have no reason to doubt my Lord, nor even the shadow of a reason—and I think that you who were in Christ many years before I knew Him can say that since you have trusted in Him you have never once had any reason to suspect His faithfulness, or to imagine that He would cast you away. Brothers and sisters, we condemn not a man without evidence! Shall we condemn our loving Lord without evidence? I challenge heaven, and earth, and hell, this morning, to bring any proof that God is untrue! From the depths of hell I call the fiends, and from this earth I call the tried and afflicted believers, and to heaven I appeal and challenge the long experience of the blood-washed host, and there is not to be found in the three realms a single one who can bear evidence of a fact which should disprove the goodness of God, or weaken His claim to be trusted by His servants! Now, let our unbelief be thrown out; let our sense of justice expel it at once. Let us be just to God as well as to man; and if never yet has He failed any of His people, or broken a solitary promise, far be it from us to doubt or to be unbelieving!—

"Thus far we prove that promise good
Which Jesus ratified with blood.
Still He is gracious, wise and just,
And still in Him let Israel trust."

But, again, what David said in his heart was not only without evidence, but *it was contrary to evidence*. What reason had he to believe that God would leave him? Rather, how many evidences had he to conclude that the Lord neither could nor would leave him? "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." That was good reasoning. Why not reason like that now, David? Why not say, "Your servant slew the Philistine, Your servant escaped from the javelins of Saul, when the mad monarch would have pinned him to the wall; Your servant escaped from all the devices of Doeg; Your servant escaped when Saul pursued him in the tracks of the

wild goats and in the caves of Engedi; Your servant escaped out of the power of Achish, the Philistine; and, lo, this Saul, who seeks my head, out of his hand shall I escape also"? That would have been a rational conclusion, a proper way of dealing with evidence; but to say, after such love and kindness past, "He will let me sink at last," was to draw a lying conclusion, and to bring in a verdict directly contrary to the evidence!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, your case is similar—at least mine is. O Lord God! You have not left us at any time. We have had dark nights, but the star of love has shone forth amid the blackness; we have had our cloudy days, but our sun has never set until we have had glimpses of sunlight from heaven. We have gone through many trials, but never to our detriment, always to our advantage; and the conclusion from our past experience—at least, I can speak of my own positively—is that He who has been with us in six troubles, will not forsake us in the seventh! He has said, "I will never, never leave you and will never, never, never forsake you"; do not think I repeat these "nevers" too often? I repeat the text just as I find it in the Greek! What we have known of our faithful God goes to show that He will keep us to the end, and even to the last, He will be our helper. Go not, then, contrary to evidence! What should we say of a jury who, after having heard a case in which the verdict should evidently have been "Not Guilty," should, nevertheless, say "Guilty"? Let the earth ring with the cry of indignation! A man has been condemned not only unjustly, but in the very teeth of evidence which proved his innocence! O heaven and earth, ring with the universal indignation of honest men, that we should think God untrue, when all the evidence of our past lives goes to prove that He *is* true and faithful to His Word—

"Our Savior's Word abides sure,
His record is on high,
He who has made our souls secure,
Was never known to lie!
Munitions of stupendous rock
Our dwelling place shall be;
There shall our souls without a shock
The wreck of nature see."

Thirdly, this exclamation of David was *contrary to God's promises*. Samuel had poured the anointing oil on David's head—God's earnest and promise that David would be king. Let David die by the hand of Saul, and how can the promise be fulfilled? Many times had God assured His servant David that He had chosen the son of Jesse to be the leader of His people; let him die, and how can that be true? It was, therefore, contrary to the promise of God that David should fall by his enemy's hand! Christian, it is contrary to every promise of this precious book that you should become the victim of the lion of hell! How, then, could He be true who has said, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I never forget you." What were the value of that promise—"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has Mercy on you"? Where were the truth of Christ's words—"I

give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them to Me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand"? Where were the doctrines of grace? They would be proved to be a lie if one child of God should perish! Where were the veracity of God, His honor, His power, His divine grace, His covenant, His oath, if any of those for whom Christ has died, and who have put their trust in Him, should, nevertheless, be cast away? Oh, by this precious book which you believe to be true, unless you are prepared to cast it away as a vile thing of falsehood, distrust not your Lord, but rather say—

"The gospel bears my spirit up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope
In oaths, and promises, and blood."

But further, this wicked exclamation of David was *contrary to what he himself had often said*. Here I convict myself, I remember on one occasion, to my shame, being sad and doubtful of heart, and a kind friend took out a paper and read to me a short extract from a discourse upon faith. I very soon detected the author of the extract; my friend was reading to me from one of my own sermons! Without saying a word he just left it to my own conscience, for he had convicted me of committing the very fault against which I had so earnestly declaimed. Often might *you*, brothers and sisters, be found out in the same inconsistency; "Oh," you have said, "I could trust Him though the fig tree did not blossom, and though there were no flocks in the field, and no herd in the stall." Ah, you have condemned the unbelief of other people, but when it touched you, you have trembled, and when you have come to run with the horsemen, they have wearied you, and in the swellings of Jordan, *you* have been troubled. So was it with David. What strong words he had often said when he addressed others! He said of Saul, "His time shall come to die; I will not stretch out my hand and touch the Lord's anointed." He felt sure that Saul's doom was signed and sealed; and yet, in the hour of his unbelief, he says, "I shall yet one day fall." What a strange contradiction was that! What a mercy it is that *God* changes not, for *we* are changing two or three times a day! But our own utterances, our own previous convictions are clean contrary to the idea that He can ever leave us or forsake us. I appeal, as did that ancient worthy who appealed from Philip drunk to Philip sober, I appeal from Philip unbelieving to Philip in a proper state of mind. I bring up before you your own thoughts, your own emotions, your own joyous shouts of song, your own psalms of victory, and I ask you to make these consistent with your present doubts. "Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should arise against me, in this will I be confident." That is David. "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." That is David, too! "I will love You, O Lord, my strength! The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies." That is David. "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul." That is David

again. Do not fetch up any other evidence; let the man convict himself; his unbelief is absurd from his own showing. So with you and with me, brothers and sisters; we are great fools when we doubt God, and that is saying the best of it; what the worst of it is, God only knows. O Lord, from this great sin deliver us!

Yet once more, this exclamation of David was *contrary to the facts*. I mean not merely contrary to the facts that were in evidence, but contrary to the facts that were transpiring at that very moment! Where was Saul? Saul was seeking a miserable witch of Endor, to raise Samuel from the dead. The spears of the Philistines were being sharpened for the battle, and the arrows were being made ready upon the string that should reach the heart of the King of Israel; and yet, here is David, just within a short period of attaining the kingdom and of seeing Saul slain, saying, "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul." Oh, if he could have read the mysteries, if he could have understood what the right hand of God was doing, and what the Eternal One designed for him, he would never have whined thus his unbelief! And so with you and with me. "Ah, but," you say, "it is not so with me this morning; I am brought very low." Yes, and God is getting ready to bring you up very high. "Ah, but my trouble is a very dreadful one." Yes, and His bare arm is a very potent one, and He knows how to deliver His children. "Yes, but I do not see." No, and you do not *need* to see! It is still being done. God's purposes are ripening. Now, do not misjudge them! Do not antedate the time of your deliverance, but patiently wait and quietly hope. I know that some of us, when we have escaped from our trials, have said, "Well, if I had known it had been so, I would not have been so troubled about it." Just so, and now, I pray you, though you do not know it, yet still believe it, and do not run contrary to the fact in doubting God! You are very poor, are you? But still you take care of your children. What would you say to your child if he were sitting down at the table crying? "What do you cry for, child?" "Because there is no food for me." "Why, silly child," you would say, "I was just cutting a slice from the loaf; do not cry till you are sure there is no food." The Lord says to us often, "What do you cry for, silly child? This is what I was doing behind the mysteries of My providence, getting ready some sweet and precious mercy for you."—

"The clouds you so much dread,
Are big with mercies and shall break
With blessings on your head!
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace.
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face!"

II. But I must now, while my strength shall hold out, proceed to the second part of the discourse, namely, HOW WAS IT THAT DAVID CAME TO THINK THUS OF HIS GOD?

The first answer I give is, *because he was a man*. The best of men are men at the best, and man at the best is such a creature that well might David himself ask, "Lord, what is man?" If we always performed feats of faith, onlookers might imagine that we were demi-gods, for in truth, I say

that the feats which a man of faith can do are only surpassed by the doings of the Almighty One Himself! Next to omnipotence is faith; no, not next to it in some respects, for faith can do all that omnipotence can, when God makes it strong. What were the hosts of the Philistines to Samson? "Heaps upon heaps with the jawbone of an ass, have I slain a thousand men." And what were the pillars of the temple to him? He bowed himself with all his strength, and pulled down the goodly palace of the Philistines upon the princes and upon the assembled multitudes! Faith can do everything; but if faith never gave place to unbelief, we might be tempted to lift up the believer into a demi-god and think him something more than mortal! That we might see that a man full of faith is still a man that we might glory in infirmities, since by them the power of God is the more clearly proved, therefore, God was pleased to let the feebleness of man grievously show itself. Ah, it was not *David* who achieved these former victories, but *God's grace* in David! And now, when that is removed for a moment, see what Israel's champion becomes!

But again; you must consider that *David had been exposed to a very long trial*. Not for one week, but for month after month he had been hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. Now, a man could bear one trial, but perpetuity of tribulation is very hard to bear. To lay one's head down upon the block seems to me to be comparatively easy, but to be strapped, as were some of the martyrs, to a stake, and be roasted on a slow fire, hour after hour, while the limbs wither in the heat, must have been awful. The martyrdom of an hour is sudden glory, but the martyrdom of a life—there needs to be something more than human to endure this! To be crucified, to have the hands and feet nailed fast, but the vital parts intact, to have all the pangs of death, with all the strength of life! Now, such was David's trial—always safe, but always harassed; always secure through God, but always hunted about by his foe. No place could give him any ease. If he went unto Keilah, then the citizens would deliver him up; if he went into the woods of Ziph, then the Ziphtes betrayed him; if he went even to the priests of God, there was that dog of a Doeg to go to Saul and accuse the priest! Even in Engedi or in Adullam, he was not secure; he was secure, I grant you, in God, but always persecuted by his foe. Now, this was enough to make the wise man mad, and to make the faithful man doubt. Do not judge David too harshly; at least judge yourselves as harshly. I think that if we also were tempted, we would fall as he did.

Then again, you must remember, *David had passed through some strong excitements of mind*. Just a day or so before he had gone forth with Abishai in the moonlight to the field where Saul and his host lay sleeping; they passed the outer circle where the common soldiers lay, and quietly and stealthily the two heroes passed without awaking any. They came at last to the spot where the captains of the hundreds slept, and they trod over their slumbering bodies without awakening them. They reached the spot where Saul lay, with his spear stuck in the earth at his bolster, and his cruse of water standing, that he might refresh himself if he awoke in the night. And Abishai said, "The Lord has deliv-

ered him into your hands; let me smite him; I will smite him but this once." David holds back Abishai's hand; he will not permit it, but he says, "As the Lord lives; the Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed." So he escaped from this temptation, as he had previously, when he only cut off the hem of Saul's robe, instead of smiting him as he might have done in the caves of Engedi. Now, brothers and sisters, a man may do these great things helped by God, but do any of you know that it is a sort of natural law with us, that after a strong excitement there is a reaction? I will give you a picture. There is Elijah yonder. He has built an altar unto the Lord his God; the priests of Baal have built another. Elijah appeals to God. "He who answers by fire, let him be God." The priests of Baal supplicate their god. He answers not. They cut themselves with lancets and with knives. Their dumb idol could not affirm his own deity! Elijah mocks them. "Cry aloud," he said, "for he is a god; perhaps he sleeps, and needs to be awakened." So in grim sarcasm, he stirs up the wrath of the priests of Baal. No answer comes. Now it is Elijah's turn. He bows the knee, and lifts up his hands to heaven. The flame descends! Be astonished, you unbelievers! It licks up even the water in the trenches, and the 12 consecrated stones are themselves consumed and are carried in smoke to heaven, even as the flame of the burnt offering. "Take the prophets of Baal, let not one escape," cries the stern Elijah. He grasps one of them and drags him down the hill, and the willing people follow, dragging by the hair of their heads the false priests down to the brook. And then, stripping to his sleeves, he dyes himself with the gore and blood of these, the haters of God, and the betrayers of His people, till the brook runs red with the smoking blood of Baal's priests! Now, what will happen after that? When Elijah gets away from all this heroic daring, because he is a man, there will be a reaction, and lo, he is afraid of Jezebel, who hunted for his life! He cries, "Let me die; I am no better than my fathers," and he hides himself, till God says, "What are *you* doing here, Elijah?" Now if Elijah, the most iron saint of ancient times, felt the result of human weakness, much more might we expect it of David! So that again I say, we are not to judge *him* too severely, unless we feel prepared with the same measure that we mete to him to also mete out to ourselves!

But there was another reason, for we are *not* to excuse David. He sinned, and that not merely through infirmity, but through evil of heart. It seems to us that David had put off prayer. In every other action of David's, you find some hint that he asked counsel of the Lord. He says to Abiathar, "Bring here the ephod," and he enters upon no enterprise without first asking of the Urim and Thummim what was God's mind. But this time, what did he talk with? Why, with the most deceitful thing that he could have found—with his own heart, for "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." I do not find that he mentioned it to God's priest; he did not make it a matter of prayer; he could not venture to pray when he undertook it himself. No, he acted on his own head, and a man will soon find that head is full of addled brains

that can judge without appealing to God! Having restrained prayer, he did the foolish act; he forgot his God, he looked only at his enemy, and it was no wonder that when he saw the force and strength of the cruel monarch, and the perseverance of Saul's persecution—that he said, "I shall one day fall before him." Brothers and sisters, would you wish to hatch the egg of unbelief till it turns into a serpent? Put off prayer! Would you see evils magnified, and mercies diminished? Would you find your tribulations increased sevenfold, and your faith diminished in proportion? Put off prayer? I say unto you this day, if you will neglect your closet, all the troubles you have ever had shall be as nothing compared with what will yet come upon you! The little finger of your future doubts shall be thicker than the loins of your present mental anguish! You shall know what man can do when he leaves his God, and you shall find out in the bitterness of your soul what an evil thing it is to leave the living fountain and hew out to yourself a broken cistern which can hold no water!

I have thus, I think, as well as may be, opened up the causes of David's unbelief. Some of them will hit your case, my brothers and sisters. You may find some portion here. Well, if you find out the cause, remember that the remedy lies somewhere near it. If a forgotten closet will make you weep, a frequented closet will make you smile. If the excitement of delight has been followed by depression, that excitement itself, if you seek it again, will be the best cure. And finally, your mind, made strong to endure these blessed excitements shall be sweetly strengthened for the bliss of heaven, and on earth you shall be capable of enjoying the heaven which some of the saints have known before they crossed the stream of death!

III. But I must hasten on, for my failing voice tells me I must soon conclude; But not until we have discharged, briefly, the third point—WHAT WERE THE ILL EFFECTS OF DAVID'S UNBELIEF?

It strikes me that this was one of the sins to which David referred, when he asked God to forgive the sins of his youth, and his former transgressions. We have looked so often at his sin with Bathsheba, that we have been apt to think he had no other faults. Whereas, one must say it, the life of David for some few months after this exclamation, was sad, and one might wish it could be blotted out; it was sad, sad, indeed. But we will talk of these matters in detail, though briefly.

What did his unbelief make him do first? *It made him do a foolish thing,* the same foolish thing which he had regretted once before. Now, we say a burnt child always dreads the fire; but David had been burnt, and yet, in his unbelief, he puts his hand into the same fire again! He went once to Achish, king of Gath, and the Philistines said, "This is that David of whom they said, 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.'" And David was greatly afraid, and "feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard," (which to the Eastern was the surest sign of his being mad if he despised his beard), and they drove him away, for Achish said, "Why, then, have you brought him to me? Have I need of mad men that you have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my

presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?" Now, he goes to the same Achish again! Yes, and mark you, my brothers and sisters, although you and I know the bitterness of sin, yet if we are left to our own unbelief, we shall fall into the same sin again! I know we have said, "No! Never, never! I know so much by experience what an awful thing this is." Your experience is not worth a trifle to you apart from the continual restraints of divine grace! If your faith fails, everything else goes down with it; and you, you gray-headed professor, will be as big a fool as a very boy, if God leaves you alone! In fact, I must say it, reverencing as I do the gray head, that of all fools in the world, old fools are the worst. I have seen more falls among aged Christians than among any other sort, till one has been apt to pray, "Lord, save those who are in the slippery paths of old age." I have often said there is no Scriptural example of a young man falling into any gross, great sin. All the Scriptural examples are quite the other way, and think I might say, as the pastor of this church, that the most sorrowful cases of excommunication we have ever had, have been about men who had some gray hair on their heads, or were fathers of families; far more often than about the young. The reason being, I think, this—that often the old saint begins to rely on his past experiences, and if he does so, it is all over with him; for we are just as much fools after 70 years' spiritual education, as we were when we first entered into the school, if the Lord leaves us to ourselves. We do grow. We do learn, the Lord being with us; but if we are left, we are no stronger after we have been established in the faith, than we were before! I say again, if we were left at any moment, no matter who we may be, sin would soon be our pursuit, and iniquity our companion. We must offer the same prayer, "Hold You me up, and I shall be safe," to the very end of the chapter, and we must finish our lives just as David finished the 119th Psalm with that confession, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments."

But next—for the beginning of sin is like the letting out of water, and we go from bad to worse, *he went over to the Lord's enemies*. Would you have believed it—he who killed Goliath sought refuge in Goliath's land! He, who smote the Philistines, trusts in the Philistines! No, more, he, who was Israel's champion, becomes the chamberlain to Achish, for Achish said, "Therefore will I make you keeper of my head forever," and David became the captain of the bodyguard of the King of Philistia and helped to preserve the life of one who was the enemy of God's Israel! Ah, if we doubt God, we shall soon be numbered among God's foes. Inconsistency will win us over into the ranks of His enemies, and they will be saying, "Why are these Hebrews here?" And the question will be passed round from man to man, "Is not this David of whom they said, 'Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands?' What is David doing here?" Brothers and sisters, if "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall," I may, without wresting Scripture, say, "Unbelief goes before destruction, and a doubting spirit before a fall," for so it is. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." "The just shall live by faith, but if any man turn back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him"—the two

sentences put together as if the failure of our faith would surely lead to a turning back to sin!

Have patience with me while I notice once again that not only thus did David become numbered with God's enemies, but that *he actually went into open sin*. You will read this chapter, and the next, and the next, at your leisure—and you will perhaps have leisure this afternoon; it will keep you from talking about ministers, and about a great many other things that are just as well let alone on Sunday afternoons, for that is the general gossip of Sunday afternoon—"Did you ever hear Mr. So-and-So, and Mr. So-and-So?"—ministers being thought a subject useful for Sundays—that is to say, the pulling of them to pieces! However, if instead of that, you will read those chapters, you will be profited. David did two very evil things. He acted the part of a liar and deceiver. Harsh words, you will say, to use of David; but they are not too harsh. He went out and slew the Geshurites, and sundry other tribes, and this he did often. When he came back, Achish asked him where he had been, and he said he had been to the south of Judah—that is to say, he made Achish believe that his incursions were made against his own people, instead of being made against the allies of Philistia. This he kept up for a long time, and then, as one sin never goes without a companion, for the devil's hounds always hunt in twos, he was guilty of bloodshed, for into whatever town he went, he put *all* the inhabitants to death! He spared neither man, nor woman, nor child, lest they should tell the king of Philistia where he had been. So that one sin led him on to another. And this is a very sorrowful part of David's life. He who believes God, and acts in faith, acts with dignity, and other men will stoop before him and pay him reverence; but he who disbelieves his God, and begins to act in his own carnal wisdom, will soon be this, and that, and the other, and the enemy will say, "Aha, aha, so would we have it," while the godly will say, "How are the mighty fallen! How has the strong man been given up unto his adversary!" O that God the Holy Spirit may preserve our faith in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, that so we may be preserved without spot until the day of His appearing!

Furthermore, not only was David guilty of all this, but he was on the verge of being guilty of still worse sin—*of overt acts of warfare against the Lord's people;* for David, having become the friend of Achish, when Achish went to battle against Israel, he said to him, "Know you assuredly, that you shall go out with me to battle, you and your men." And David professed his willingness to go. We believe it was only a feigned willingness; but then, you see, we convict him again of falsehood. The day comes when a decisive battle is to be fought, and the lords of the Philistines go on before Achish. "Where is David?" "Oh, David is with king Achish in the rear-guard," for the king had made him captain of his lifeguard. He was thus raised to a very high position, the companion of Achish, at his right hand—the commander of the men who were to protect the king in case of danger. Now, there is David, and he is going up against his own people, to fight against his own king, to do mischief against God's own chosen land! It is true that God interposed and pre-

vented it; but this was no credit to David, for you know, brothers and sisters, we are guilty of a sin, even if we do not commit it, if we are willing to commit it. And so was it in this case; no, we are sorry to have to say it, even when the lords of the Philistines interposed, and said, "Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which you have appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us." And David said unto Achish, "But what have I done? And what have you found in your servant so long as I have been with you unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" David was still professing a kind of unwillingness to depart, while God knows he was glad enough to get off so evil an errand. What a mercy it is we have some enemies, for God makes our enemies often our best friends. I forget who it is, but I think it is old Bishop Hall, in his meditations, who says, "When the Lord's people have a deadly cancer, there are many of their friends who are too dainty to let the lances in, but their foes will do it out of spite, and then they get cured thereby; for often does the Lord let our enemies pierce us in some sore which would have gathered and destroyed us, if it had not been that their cruel wound becomes life to us from the dead." So these lords of the Philistines were David's best friends!

To conclude. The last effect of David's sin—and here it blessedly came to close—was this—*it brought him into great trial*. Let me tell the story briefly, and I have done. While David was away with king Achish, the Amalekites invaded the south and attacked Ziklag, which was David's town. For some reason or other, they did not put to death any of the inhabitants, but they took away the whole of the men, the few who were left, the women and children, all their household goods, and stuff, and treasures; they took away everything. And when David came back to Ziklag, there were the bare walls and empty houses, and Ahinoam and Abigail, David's two wives, were gone. And all the mighty men who were with him had lost their wives and little ones. And as soon as they saw it, they lifted up their voices and wept. It was not that they had lost their gold and silver, but they had lost everything! That exiled band had lost their own flesh and blood, the partners of their lives. Then, they mutinied against their captain, and they said, "Let us stone David!" And here is David, a penniless beggar, a leader deserted by his own men, probably suspected by them of having traitorously given up the town to the foe. And then, it is written—and O how blessed is that line!—"And David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." Ah, now David is right; now he has come back to his proper anchorage. Blessed afflictions that drive him back to where he ought to have been all the time! Sin and smart go together; the child of God cannot sin with impunity. Other men may. You who do not fear God may go and sin as you like, and often meet with very little trouble in this world as the consequence of it; but a child of God cannot do that. "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." And so, David had the rod more sharply than he had ever had it before, because he had doubted his God. And what are we? Many of us believe in Christ; but what are we if

God should leave us? Let us heartily join in the prayer, "Lord, increase our faith; hold You us up, and we shall be safe!"

As for you who have no faith in Christ, this last word. If temporary unbelief is so dreadful, what must habitual unbelief be? "He who believes not shall be damned." "He who believes not is condemned already, because he believes not." God help you, Unbeliever, to trust Jesus! It is life to you. It will be life to you in this world, and in the world to come. Trust Him with your soul, and He will never forsake you, but to the end He will keep you! And in the end, He will bless you, and without end, He will glorify you to be with Himself forever! May the Lord bless the words we have uttered and make us faithful, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

"It is Jesus speaks, the sinner's friend,
Dejected saint, today.
Lift up your head, nor downward bend,
But sing your fears away!
Why do you, like the turtle, grieve?
Cast all your cares on Me;
My grace is sufficient, believe,
In every state for thee.
To guard you from ten thousand ills,
And make your standing sure,
Sufficient are My shalls and wills,
That must and shall endure!
At every time, in every place,
In safeguard you shall be,
And find My everlasting grace
Sufficient still for thee!
Jesus, assist us to believe,
For slow of heart are we,
grace from Your fullness to receive,
And thus to honor Thee."

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CHEER FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED
NO. 440

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 26, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, nor would He have told us such things as these at this time."
Judges 13:23.

FAITH is not only the door by which we enter into the way of salvation, as it is written, "He has opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles," but it likewise describes the entire path of Christian pilgrimage, "that we also walk in the steps of that faith." We are not only quickened by faith at the outset of our spiritual career, but we are supported and sustained thereby, in all our subsequent experience—"The just shall *live* by faith." As it is by faith that we come out from the world and begin to tread the heavenly road, so it must be by faith, that we walk the entire journey through. Till we lay down this veil of flesh, till the angel of death shall rend the curtain, and we shall see him face to face, let us not hope to walk by sight or sense, but only by faith in the living God! A life of faith is always very singular; often it seems very foolish to the carnal man. The man who acts by faith often acts imprudently in the eyes of the world; he appears unbusiness-like, because he observes not the maxims of his times, but holds fast by those statutes which God has given us for all time. Faith and patience often encourage a man to go the very way that caution and prudence would tell him not to go. And not infrequently those who are weak in the faith will hold up their hands with astonishment, even if they do not speak with some degree of indignation, at the daring way in which the man strong in faith challenges the promises of God and acts as if he believed them to be quite as true as though they were already fulfilled! You know little, my brothers and sisters, of what it is to walk by faith, if you do not find it to be a way that you know not,

and a path which you have not seen. We saw the last step not until we had taken it, but the foundation on which faith is to put its foot for the next we cannot see. We do, as it were, tread on clouds and find them firm; we put our feet on mists and find them adamant beneath our feet. Happy is that man who, steadfast, upright, cheerful, goes from strength to strength, believing his God! Trusting in his God, he knows no care! Resting in his God he knows no impossibility!

But, it seems from our text, that we have one or two lessons to learn. And, the first is, that the strongest faith has its seasons of wavering. Even Abraham, "the father of the faithful," had his seasons of distrust, when expediency rather than integrity, prompted him. Most of those eminent saints, who are mentioned in Scripture as exhibiting faith in its greatness, appear to have sometimes showed the white flag of unbelief. There may have lived—I will not dare to say to the contrary—there may have lived some man who did never once doubt his God; but I think I have never had the privilege of putting my eyes upon him. There may be, and I hope there are, some Christians who through their whole career never doubted their interest in Christ, and who never had to say—

"It is a point I long to know,
Often it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no,
Am I His, or am I not?"

But, I must say, I think such brethren are few. I think you might travel far before you should meet with any. God forbid I should speak lightly of unbelief! It is the most damnable of sins! God forbid I should say a word in its favor, or encourage its propagation. There cannot be a greater villainy out of Hell than doubting the promises of God! There cannot be a greater act of treason than to mistrust the love, the faith, the tenderness, the truth of the God, who has helped us up to now; but still, the confession must be made, humiliating though it is—we do know that even those believers whose hearts are true, and whose souls are clad in the armor of heaven, do yet sometimes find their loins loose, and their strength fail them. Mr. Pilgrim thought Mr. Great-Heart never had a doubt. And so is it with some of our hearers. They fancy that their pastors certainly never have any trials as to their union with Christ; they can always read their titles clear. Ah, beloved, but if you should ask those men, they might say with Elijah, "I am not better than my fathers."

There are times when the high-soaring eagle droops to the earth; and when he who could scale the stars, has to lay flat upon his face in dust and ashes, crying, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"

These reflections are illustrated by the narrative of our text. Manoah certainly was strong in faith. He did not even see the angel but he believed—"Blessed is he who has not seen and yet has believed"—and when he entreated that he might see the angel, there seemed to be more curiosity than wavering in his faith. He believed God, and no doubt, settled in his own mind that he would be obedient to the heavenly vision. Yet, even he begins to entertain misgivings when he says, "We shall surely die, for we have seen an angel of the Lord." Good Lord, of what small account are the best of men apart from You! How high they go when You lift them up! How low they fall if You withdraw Your hand! It is our joy amidst distress when You enable us to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." But if You take away Your Spirit, we cannot even trust You in the brightest day! When storms gather around us, we can laugh at them if You are with us; but in the fairest morn that ever glowed on human heart, we doubt, and we miscarry, if You are not with us still, to preserve and strengthen the faith, which You have Yourself bestowed!

Dwelling no longer, however, upon that very humiliating truth of God, we come to make a second observation. We have observed that some of these greatest aberrations of faith have occurred just after the brightest seasons of enjoyment. Some of us have learned to be afraid of joy. Sadness is often the herald of satisfaction; but bliss is oftentimes the harbinger of pain. Whether it is that God provides for our struggle by giving us an extraordinary banquet before a season of long fasting, so that like Elijah, we may go 40 days in the strength of this marvelous meat; or whether it is that He cures us of the dangers of surfeit, by sending us on long journeys after we have had high feastings, I cannot say, but so it is. How strangely is it related of our Lord! He went into the Jordan of His baptism; the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove; the Father's voice saluted Him, "You are My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased." What next? "And immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness: and He was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts." John Bunyan, with great wisdom, puts the Palace Beautiful first, and then no sooner does Christian get out of the Palace

gates, than he begins to descend into the Valley of Humiliation. They had given him a sword, and a shield, and a helmet. He had never had those before. Now that he had his sword, he found that he had to use it against Apollyon; now that he had his shield, he had to hold it up to catch the fiery darts; now that he had received the weapon of "All prayer," he found that he had need of it as he walked through that desperate place, the valley of the shadow of death. God does not give His people weapons to play with; He does not give them strength to spend on their lusts. Lord, if You have given me these goodly weapons, it is sure I shall need them in hard fighting. If I have had a feast at Your table, I will remember that it is but a short walk from the upper chamber to the garden of Gethsemane. Daniel, the man greatly beloved, was reduced very low. "All his comeliness was turned into corruption and he retained no strength," when God showed him "the great vision." Thus, too, with favored John, he must be banished to Patmos; in the deep solitude of that Aegean sea-girt island he must receive "The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him." I have noticed, in the ordinary scenes of Christian experience that our greatest joys come just after some of our sorest trials. When the howling tempest has played out its strength, it soothes itself to sleep. Then comes a season of calm and quiet, so profound in its stillness, that only the monstrous tempest could have been the mother of so mighty a calm! So it seems with us. Deep waves of trial, high mountains of joy; but the reverse is almost as often true—from Pisgah's top we go to our graves; from the top of Carmel we have to go down to the dens of lions, and fight with the leopards. Let us be on our watchtower, lest like Manoah, having seen the angel of God, the next thing should be that we say, "We shall surely die, for we have seen the Lord."

It seems very plain from our text, that it is a very happy thing if, when one believer's down, there is another near to lift him up. In this case Manoah found in his wife a helpmeet. It is said by old Master Henry Smith that there is many a man who has had his head broken with his own rib; but there is many a man who has had his heart cured in the same way. So, in this case, if wife and husband had both been down at one time, they might have been long in getting up. But, seeing that when he fell she was there, strong in faith, to give him a helping hand, it was but a slight fall, and, they went on their way rejoicing. If one shall fall,

then his brother shall help him up. What is the lesson here? Why, perhaps some of you have got such strong faith tonight, that you hardly know what to do with it. What should you do? If there was some person fainting in the seat behind you, and you had some strong smelling salts, you would pass them over. Now, sometimes our faith is intended to be as a bottle, to be put to the nostril of other fainting souls. If you are strong, help your weak brothers or sisters. If you see any bowed down, take them on your shoulders, help to carry them. Does not your Master carry the lambs in His bosom? Imitate Him, and sometimes carry a lamb in your bosom, too. It is a divine thing to wipe tears from all eyes—perhaps your faith is meant to be a handkerchief, with which you may wipe away the tears of your brethren. But you say, "Where are the ones low in faith just now?" Wife, perhaps it is your husband! Husband, perhaps it is your wife! It may be daughter, your aged mother! Brother, maybe it is your brother! Perhaps, the very person who sits next to you in the pew, who may at this time, be saying, "I walk in darkness and I see no light." Speak; speak wisely, fervently, affectionately, out of the fullness of your soul, and who can tell? He who said twice, "Comfort you, comfort you, My people; speak you comfortably unto Jerusalem," may make you to be a Barnabas, a Son of Consolation to those who are weary and ready to die!

Is it not the duty of Christians to strengthen the weak hands and to confirm the feeble knees? Do not follow the way of the world. It is always, if a man is going down, "Down with him; the moment he begins to reel, give him a push; send him over at once." And it is so with some coarse-minded professors. If they see a brother a little faint, they tell him something frightful—something about the dragons and the lions, or the giants that are in the road. Instead of that, my brothers and sisters help to prop up your reeling friend for a little season, and it may be that in some brighter day with him, when your dark hour shall come, he will repay with a mighty interest the little cheer which you give him today! It is a good thing, however, to temper kindness with wisdom. You know Manoah's wife did not say, when she found that she knew more than her husband did, "Why how silly you must be! What a stupid man to be frightened like this!" She did not begin, as I know some Christians would do who are stronger in faith than the weak ones, by scolding about the mat-

ter—but no, she used soft liniment for smarting wounds! She knew that it does not do to put stinging nettles to a cut, and therefore, she put soft salve where there had been a very deep wound. Let us do the same. It is time to talk of duty to a brother when you get him out of the ditch; but when you see a man down, I would hardly talk to him about the sin of tumbling in, but pull him out first and brush him clean, and then afterwards tell him to take heed that he fall not there again! I have sometimes had lessons given me about unbelief, when they were not, I think, very profitable. There should be timeliness about our advice, and if we see a man in Manoah's plight, afraid of dying, we should use the discretion of Manoah's wife, and encourage and cheer his heart.

The text seems to me, to suggest certain consolations which ought to be laid hold of by believers in Christ in their time of sore trouble. Let me speak to any Christian present tonight who has a trouble—we will suppose it temporal trouble.

"These are hard times!" Times have always been hard ever since I remember them, and I suppose they always will be, for they used to be hard in our grandfathers' days, and there seems to be no likelihood, but what they will continue to be so. Yet we always talk of "The good old times," and when our children succeed us, they will speak about our times as being "The good old times," too. The fact is, the present time is the best time that ever was, and "now" is the only time that belongs to us, for the past is gone, and the future has not come. The present is what we have got in hand; let us make the right use of it. But you have had losses, and crosses, and disappointments. You are chastened every morning, and you are troubled all day long, and Satan whispered to you last Saturday night, when you were putting up the shutters, and as tired as you could be, "It is no use going to the house of God tomorrow. There is nothing there for you. God has been troubling you all week; He means to destroy you; He is going to give you up—you may do what you will, but the current is too strong; you may tug and pull, but you will starve, for all that. God has forsaken you, and your enemies are persecuting you on every side." Well, now, it would be a very curious thing if it were true; but it is not true, for the reasons which Manoah's wife gave!

Remember, first, the Lord has in your case, accepted a burnt offering and a meat offering at your hand. You know that when your faith laid

hold of Christ, God did not spurn the sacrifice you brought. When you said, for the first time in your life—

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

He did not reject the offering which you then presented to Him, but He spoke with a loving voice and said, "Go and sin no more. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you." Since that time you have brought the meat offering of your prayers and they have been heard, you have had answers of peace. In looking back upon the past, you can remember many times and seasons when God has especially answered you as though He would rend the heavens, and put out His right hand full of the mercies which you needed. Now, would the Lord have heard you? Above all, would He have accepted Christ for you? Would He have accepted your faith and saved you in Christ, if He had meant to destroy you? What? Can you trust Him with your soul, and not trust Him with your shop? Can you leave eternity with Him, and not time? What? Trust the immortal Spirit, and not this poor decaying, moldering, flesh and blood? Man! Shame on you! If the Lord had meant you to die, He would not have accepted the offering at your hand. But, you say, He will forsake you in this trouble. Remember what things He has shown to you. See how Manoah's wife said, "Would He have shown us such things as these?" Why, what has your past life been? Has not it been a wonder? You have been in as bad a plight as you are in tonight scores of times, and you have got out of them. "There is a big wave coming over my head." Yes, but there have been 50 waves as big as that which have passed over your head without drowning you, and this will not, either. "It is a deep river I have to ford." Ah, but you have waded through streams as deep as that, and you have not been drowned! Besides, remember how He showed you His love in a strange city, and His faithfulness, perhaps, in a far-off land? When there was none to comfort you, and none to help you, His own right hand defended you, and His right hand brought salvation to you! I can say joyfully and cheerfully—

"When trouble like a gloomy cloud,
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He, near my side, has always stood,
His loving-kindness, O how good!"

And, I often think myself the biggest fool in the world for ever daring to doubt my God again after such singular interpositions both of providence and divine grace as you and I have seen in this Church and in the midst of this congregation! If He had meant to destroy us, would He have shown us such things as we have seen? After such kindness in the past, will He let us sink at last? God forbid!

Besides this, Manaoh's wife gave a third reason, "Nor would He at this time have told us such things as these." She meant that He would not have given them such prophecies of the future as He had done, if He meant to kill them. It stood to reason; she seemed to say, "If I am to bear a son, we are not going to die." And so, remember, God has made one or two promises which are true, and if they are true, it stands to reason He won't leave you! Let us have one of them. "No good thing will I withhold from them who walk uprightly." Then, as you are to have every good thing, you must have it; it is absolutely certain that God is not going to leave you without good things now! Or take another, "When you go through the rivers I will be with you, and through the floods, they shall not overflow you." Mark that! It is certain that God will not permit the floods to overflow you! Then it stands to reason that you cannot be drowned! It is a good thing for a Christian who is much tried in business to carry his check book in his pocket, but mark what kind of check book I mean. Get a copy of *"Clarke's Precious Promises."* They are the promises collated from Scripture put under the different heads. I generally have kept a copy in my pocket, so that when I have had a trouble of a particular sort, I could turn to the head under which my trouble would come, and I never turned there without finding a promise to meet it. Or whenever your trial comes, go home to your Bible, open it, ask the Lord to direct you, and with a little search I think you will soon find a promise that was made on purpose for you. It may have suited 20 cases before, but, you can only say if an angel had come down from heaven to bring a message precisely adapted to your peculiar trial, it could not have been better worded! The arrow could not have hit the center of the mark more surely than it has. Well, then, if the Lord had meant to destroy you, would He have given you that promise? Would He thus have deluded you? Oh, this is far from Him! Let the fact that He has accepted Christ for you, that He has already shown you so much favor, and that He has

given you such precious promises, let these, I say, lead you to think that He will not destroy you, He will not leave you!

But, we will suppose for a moment, in the next place that you are in some spiritual trouble. "Oh," you say, "this is worse than temporal trial," and indeed it is. Touch a man in his house, and he can bear it; touch him in his children, and he may bear that, but touch him in his bone and in his flesh, no, go farther, touch him in his soul, and in his faith, and then it is hard to lay hold on God and still trust Him. The enemy had sorely thrust at Manoah to vex him, and make him fret. There may be some here whose spiritual enemy has set upon them dreadfully of late, and he has been howling in your ears, "It's all over with you! You are cast off; God has rejected you; you are twice dead, plucked up by the roots, you are wandering stars, you are clouds without rain, you are one of those who knew the way of righteousness, but have turned away from it, you have gone back to your old sin! God has cursed you, like Esau, has rejected you; you have sold your portion for a mess of pottage and you are cast out forever!" No, soul, thus says the Lord to you, "Was there not a time when Christ was precious to you?" O backslider, was there not a season when you could put your finger into the prints of the nails, and your hand into His side? Poor fallen soul, was there not a period when that precious hymn of Toplady's was sweet to your ears?—

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

Then I tell you, soul, if the Lord had ever meant to destroy you, He would never have permitted you to know a precious Christ, or to put your trust in Him! Besides, fallen though you now are, through sore travail, yet was there not a time when you saw the beauty of God in His temple? I went to the house of God with the company that kept holy day; His name to me was as ointment poured forth! My soul delighted herself in her God, and my spirit made her boast in her King. O Jesus, once You were very sweet to me! I knew the plague of my own heart even then, but I knew Your power to save, I knew the fellowship of the Father, and of His Son Jesus Christ—

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill."

Our soul! What a mercy it is that the world cannot fill it, and what a greater mercy still that God will fill it, for He never emptied a soul He did not mean to fill, He never stripped a man He did not mean to clothe, He never made one a spiritual beggar without intending to make Him spiritually rich! And if you, tonight, are brought to the first stage of desperation, you are brought to the first stage of hope. Now that man comes to his wit's end, God shall begin to magnify His mercy and His truth!

To conclude the argument of Manaoh's wife, what promises God has made even to you! What has He said of His people? "I will surely bring them in." "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." And what does Christ say again?—"Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." But turn to that Book for yourself. See the promises made to the soul that ever did believe in Christ, and you may say, once and for all, "If He had meant to destroy me; He would not have made such promises as these! If He meant to desert me in spiritual trouble, He would never have brought me this far." To the Christian who is near his death, I commend this text, to the gray-headed tottering saint, to the consumptive girl, whose cheeks betray the worm within, to you who are going down the steep decline, and whose feet begin to chill with the waters of the black river! He has accepted Christ at your hands, be not afraid to die. He has showed you the riches of His faithfulness up to now; trust Him for the rest. He is engaged by covenant, yes, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, to bring you to heaven. Do not doubt, but boldly ford the stream, for in its deepest parts you shall feel the bottom! Thus boldly live and boldly dare to die, for when you go through the valley of the shadow of death, He will be with you, His rod and His staff shall comfort you.

Now, it may happen tonight that I have some *young* Christians here, who have only during the last week or two been converted to God, and they have been falling during the last two or three days into the Slough of Despond. I hope this sermon may help them out, for of you is it true that if you have laid hold of Christ, He would not have enabled you to do that,

if He meant to leave you! If you have been shown the evil of your own heart, He would not have shown you that if He meant to destroy you; and if He has caused you to lean upon any promise, depend upon it He will give you that promise, and fulfill it in your experience. He will save you! I think about five days after I first found Christ, when my joy had been such that I could have danced for very mirth at the thought that Christ was mine, all of a sudden I fell into a sad fit of despondency. I will tell you why. When I first believed in Christ, I am not sure that I thought the devil was dead, but certainly I had a kind of notion that he was so mortally wounded he could not disturb me. And then I certainly fancied that the corruption of my nature had received its death blow. I read what Cowper said—

"Since the dear hour that brought me to Your foot,
And cut up all my follies by the root."

And, I really thought that Cowper knew what he was saying; but never did any poet blunder as terribly as Cowper did when he said that, for no man, I think, has got his follies cut up by the roots yet! However, I fondly dreamed mine were. I felt persuaded that they would never sprout again. I was going to be perfect—I fully calculated upon it—and lo, I found an intruder I had not reckoned upon, an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God! So I went to that same Primitive Methodist Chapel where I first received peace with God, through the simple preaching of the Word. The text happened to be, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "There," I thought "that's a text for me!" I had got as far as that—in the middle of that very sentiment—when the minister began by saying, "Paul was not a believer when he said this." Well now, I knew I was a believer, and it seemed to me from the context that Paul must have been a believer, too. Now, I am sure he was. The man went on to say that no child of God ever did feel any conflict within. So I took up my hat and left the place, and I do not think I have frequented such places since. They are very good for people who are unconverted to go to, but of very little use for children of God. That is my notion of Methodism. It is a noble thing to bring in strangers; but a terrible thing for those who are brought in to sit and feed there! It is like the parish pound, it is a good thing to put sheep in when they are strayed, but there is no food inside; they had better be let out as soon as possible to find real food for the soul. I knew that that man understood nothing of

experimental divinity, or of practical heart theology, or else he would not have talked so. A good man he was, I do not doubt, but utterly incompetent to the task of dealing with a case like that. Then we say to you tonight, who are in such a case, we are not at all surprised; this is just where God's people generally come soon after conversion. If they get over that Slough of Despond, they may go on merrily for a long way—years perhaps—certainly for whole miles, as Mr. Bunyan says that, when Christian got out of that Slough, he went for a long distance along a high road within walls—called the Walls of Salvation—and so it is. Once get over that, that first season of spiritual depression, which is partly caused by the excessive exhilaration of our mental frame after conversion, and we shall go on readily enough, rejoicing in God! Be not troubled, young Christian, about this matter; go you again to Christ—put your trust in Him anew! Go once more as a poor lost sinner, and take Jesus to be your all-in-all. Cast yourself flat on your face again before His cross; go and wash anew in the fountain filled with His blood! Let your espousals come over again, and then the joy of your espousals shall come again! And so, God keep you and God bless you, that the Evil One touch you not. "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall he damned." Believe, then, on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house. May God give His blessing for the Savior's sake! Amen.

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THE ELDERS BEFORE THE THRONE
NO. 441

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 23, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Around the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. The four and twenty elders fall down before Him who sat on the throne, and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created." Revelation 4:4; 10, 11.

THE universe of God is one; heaven and earth are not as separate as unbelief has dreamed. As the Lord has but one family, written in one register, redeemed with one blood, quickened by one Spirit, so this whole household abides in one habitation forever! We, who are in the body, abide in the lower room which is sometimes dark and cold, but bears sufficient marks that it is a room in God's house; for it is to the eye of our faith often lit up with heavenly luster, and we, even we, while we are yet here, are by blessed earnests made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. It is the same house, I say; but ours is the lower room, while our glorified brethren are up there, in the upper story, where the sunlight streams in everlastingly, where no chilling winds or poisonous breath can ever reach. It was well said that God's great house seems to have two wings; the one was a hospital and the other a palace. We are as yet in the wing on the left hand side, which is the hospital. We came into it sick, even unto death, leprous to our very core, polluted from head to foot, having no soundness in us anywhere; and in this hospital, we are undergoing the process of cure—a cure which is already certain, which is soon to be perfected; and then, we shall pass from the hospital, into the palace, where "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," we shall be recognized as the aristocracy of God, princes of the blood-royal of the universe, "sons of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus." It is still but one building—one roof covers the whole, both hospital and palace; one family, we dwell in it—one Church, above, beneath, though now divided by the narrow partition of death!

Now, to a great extent there is a likeness between the lower room and the upper room. As on earth we prepare for heaven, so the state of the saints on earth is heaven foreshadowed. In many respects, the condition of the child of God on earth is a type of his condition in heaven; and I may say without fear of question that what the character of the saints is above, that should be the character of the saints below. We may very safely take for our example those glorified spirits. We need not be afraid that we shall be led astray by imitating them, by learning their occupations, or by attempting to share their joys. Surely the things in heaven are patterns of the things on earth, and as *they* are before the throne of

God, so ought we to be, and so shall we be in proportion as we live up to our privileges, and receive the likeness and image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

beloved brothers and sisters, it is upon this subject that I want to speak this morning. God is making heaven very near to us. We are now so large a church that according to the laws of mortality, we lose five or six every month by death, and frequently two or three are removed in a week! We can hardly hope to meet together upon a single Sunday without hearing that another of the stars is set. Some little time ago, we went to the grave with an excellent elder of our church, who had long known the Master, and had served Him well—and now, during the coming week, it will be our lot to perform the same mournful office for another brother who has been in Christ, I suppose, these 40 or 50 years, and who has served this church for some little time with industry and zeal, but this week has been removed from our midst to join "the general assembly and church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven." The veil grows thinner and thinner, and our faith in the unseen grows stronger. As the advanced guard of the army wades through the stream, and we hear their triumphant shouts upon the other shore, this world fades away, and that better land stands out in stronger and more glorious reality than it did before! Come, let us talk to one another by the way, this morning, of that better land, and let us encourage each other's hearts to make ourselves through God such as *they* are who sit upon their thrones, and to make *this* land, through the Spirit, such as that land is where God sheds His light forever!

With regard to the spirits before the throne of God, we shall have three things to say this morning. First, a little *concerning their state and enjoyments;* then, further, concerning *their occupations and spirit;* and a few words with regard to *their testimony and precepts to us, as, speaking from the upper spheres, they urge us to follow their example.*

I. First, then, brothers and sisters, with regard to THE STATE AND ENJOYMENTS OF THE SPIRITS BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD. In John's vision, you perceive that the Church of Christ is represented by the 24 elders who sat around the throne of God. We are to look upon them as being the representatives of the great body of the faithful gathered to their eternal rest.

1. Mark, then, in the first place, that the saints in heaven are represented as "*elders*," which we take to refer not merely to the office of the eldership, as it is exercised among us, although it seems most fitting that the officers should be the representatives of the whole body—but the reference is rather to the fullness of growth of believers before the throne of God. Here we have elders, and those who are elders in office should be chosen, because they have had spiritual experience, are well taught in the things of the kingdom of heaven, and are, therefore, elders by divine grace, as well as elders by office; but in all our churches, we have many who are babes in Christ, who as yet can only receive the elements of the gospel. We have many others who are young men, strong but not matured. They have the vigor of manhood, but they have not yet the ripeness of advanced age. The elders in the church are those who, by reason of years, have had their senses exercised; they are not the saplings of the

forest, but the well-rooted trees; they are not the blades of corn springing up, but the full corn in the ear awaiting the reaper's sickle! Such are the saints before the throne of God. They have made wondrous strides in knowledge; they understand now the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of the love of Christ, which still surpasses even *their* knowledge! The meanest, if there are such differences, the meanest of the glorified understands more of the things of God than the greatest divine on earth! The rending of the veil of death is the removal of much of our ignorance. It may be that the saints in heaven progress in knowledge—that is possible, but it is certain that, at the time of their departure, they made a wondrous spring; they are babes no longer; they are children and infant beginners no more; God teaches them in one five minutes, by a sight of the face of Jesus, more than they could have learned in 70 years while present in the body and absent from the Lord! Their heresies are all cleared away with their sins; their mistakes are all removed; the same hand which wipes away all tears from their eyes wipes away all specks from their eyes, too! Then, they become sound in doctrine, skillful in teaching; they become masters in Israel by the sudden infusion of the wisdom of God by the Holy Spirit. They are "elders" before the throne of God! They are not unripe corn gathered green and damp, but they are all fully ripe, and they come to the garner as shocks of corn come in their season.

Perhaps they are represented as elders to show the dignity and gravity which shall surround saints of God in heaven. We sometimes hear complaints made about the younger members of churches, that they are somewhat light in their conversation. Well, this has always been the fault of young people, and, as I said the other day, when one complained, *I* could not make lambs into sheep, and while they were lambs, I suppose they would show some playfulness! It seems to be the natural failing of young people to be overflowing with mirth, and sometimes overtaken with levity. But there is a gravity which is very becoming in Christians, and there is a solidity which is extremely comely in the young believers; and I think, when we make a profession of our faith in Christ, though we are not to cast away our cheerful faces, but to be more happy than we ever were before, yet we must put away all unseemly levity, and walk as those who are looking for the coming of the Son of Man, hearing this voice in our ears, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!" Now, that fault can never be brought against the Church of God before the throne; there they are elders, glorious, blissful, happy, but yet serene and majestic in their joy. Theirs is not the prattling joy of the child, but the deep silent bliss of the full-grown man. As the senators in the Roman senate sat down in solemn grandeur, so that even the invading barbarians were overawed by their majestic bearing, so let our holier tranquility and joyful serenity cast an influence over the foes of our religion! Look upwards, Christians! There are the elders before the throne of God, representatives of what you and I, and all of us who trust in Christ, shall soon be! Let us be laying aside childish things; let us be getting ready for the elders' dignity; let us leave the toy, the trifle, the plaything, to those who know not the immortal

manhood of believers, and let us go on unto perfection, growing in divine grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

In passing, I may observe, that the number of *twenty-four* is somewhat puzzling. There have been different attempts made to account for it. They say that this was the number of the Sanhedrin; but that is not clear. Others think that as the number 12 was the symbol of the Jewish Church, in the 12 tribes, so 12 more may have been added to represent the accession of the Gentile Church. Or it may show the multiplication of the Church, that though small, so that it is numbered by twelve, its number, while still definite and complete, is now larger than it was before. But, still better, I think, as there were 24 courses of Levites, who were porters at the gate of the temple and 24 courses of priests who offered sacrifice, so the number 24 is made use of to show that the service of God in His temple is complete, that there are as many as will be needed, that every part of the divine service will be taken up, and around that altar which smokes before God eternally, there shall be a full complement of those who shall bow before Him, and do Him homage.

2. But, secondly, you will notice that these elders are said to be *around the throne*. We suppose, as near as we can catch the thought of John, sitting in a semi-circle, as the Jewish Sanhedrin did around the Prince of Israel. It is a somewhat singular thing that in the passage in Canticles, where Solomon sings of the king sitting at his table, the Hebrew has it "a round table." From this, some expositors, I think without straining the text, have said, "There is equality among the saints." In heaven, they are not some sitting at the head and some sitting lower down, but there is equality in the position and condition of glorified spirits. Certainly that idea is conveyed by the position of the 24 elders. We do not find one of them nearer than the other, but they all sat round about the throne! We believe, then, that the condition of glorified spirits in heaven is that of nearness to Christ, clear vision of His glory, constant access to His court, and familiar fellowship with Him. Nor do we think that there is any difference before the throne of God between one saint and another. We believe that all the people of God, apostles, martyrs, ministers, or private and obscure Christians, shall all have the same place *near the throne,* where they shall forever gaze upon their exalted Lord, and forever be satisfied in His love! There shall not be some at a distance, far away in the remote streets of the celestial city and others in the broad thoroughfares; there shall not be some near the center, and others far away on the verge of the wide circumference; but they shall all be near to Christ, all ravished with His love, all eating and drinking at the same table with Him, all equally His favorites and His friends.

Now, brothers and sisters, as we bade you imitate the saints in their eldership and perfection, so would we exhort you to imitate them in their nearness to Christ; oh, let us be on earth as the elders are in heaven, sitting round about the throne of God! May Christ be the center of this church! May He be the center of your thoughts, the center of your life! If an angel should fly across this assembly this morning, when he came back to heaven, could he say, "I saw them in the house of God, sitting around the throne. Their eyes were gazing on the slaughtered Lamb; their hearts were loving and praising *Him;* they desired to do *Him* homage

and to pay *Him* reverence"? And what do you think of tomorrow, and the other days of the week? Will it be true of you that you are sitting before the throne of God? Brothers and sisters, we are out of our proper place when we are looking after anything but Christ! "We are not our own; we are bought with a price." Why live as if we were our own? He is our husband, our soul is espoused to Him! Oh, how can we live at such a distance from Him? He is our life; He makes us live, He makes us blessed—how can we be so much forgetful of Him? How can our hearts be such strangers to their beloved? Jesus! Draw us nearer to Yourself! Oh, to be nearer to Your throne, Lord, even while we are here! O take us up to You, or else come down to us! Say unto us, "Abide in Me, and I in you." And permit our souls to say, "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me."—

"Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without You I cannot live!
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without You I dare not die."

3. A third point of likeness strikes us at once. It seems that the elders sitting around the throne were represented to the illuminated eye of John as *"clothed in white raiment."* Not in raiment of party colors, where there were some spots, and yet some signs of whiteness. They are without fault before the throne of God. They have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," and the Spirit of God also has so thoroughly renewed them, that they are "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." They have been presented holy and unblameable before the throne of God! BGrothers and sisters, in this too, they are an example to us. Oh, that the Spirit of God might keep the members of this church, that our garments might be always white! Perfection we must not hope to see *here;* but oh, we must aim after it! If one should never unite with a Christian Church till he found one which is perfect and free from all fault, then such a man must be a schismatic forever, for with no Christian people could he ever join. Yet, this is what we aspire unto—to be faultless before God! We desire to so walk, and to so act among men, that our conduct may never bring a slur upon our profession—that our language, our actions, our motives, everything that is about us, may witness to the fact that we have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him! O brothers and sisters, it is impossible for one pastor, assisted even by the most earnest of elders, to oversee so large a flock as this! Let me ask, have you kept your garments white this last week? Oh, if you have stained them, I beseech you, repent, repent bitterly before God! And if any of you have backslidden, I pray you, do not be hypocrites; let your guilt be fully confessed before God. If you cannot honor this church, do not dishonor it; if you cannot glorify Christ by your walk and conversation, at least do not trample under foot His blood, and put His cross to an open shame! There is nothing which can so injure a church, and cut the sinews of its strength, as the unholiness of its members! When we are "fair as the moon, and clear as the sun," then we shall be "terrible as an army with banners," but not till then. Those blots upon the escutcheon, those spots upon the garment, are soon perceived by a lynx-eyed world; and then, they turn round and say, "Ah, these are your Christians! This is your religion!" The sons of Belial make excuses for their

own conscience, and go on in their sin, hardened by our mistakes. Oh, let this be your prayer, I exhort you, you who are mighty in prayer, never forget this day and night, "Lord, keep Your people! Hold them up." I can say it has been at all times the bitterest draught I have ever had to drink, when any who have professed the name of Christ have turned back unto vanity. To bury you is but a blessed duty in comparison with noting and correcting backsliding and apostasy! I know my prayer for myself has been a hundred times, "A speedy death, a soon and sudden sleeping beneath the green turf, or even a painful, agonizing, languishing decay, upon a bed of pain, rather than you should live to see your pastor stain his profession, and fall from his integrity." If it is so with the minister, it must be so with each of you! Better for you that you depart at once than that you should live bearing the name of Christ, to make that name a reproach and a byword among the heathen! Lord, help us, that we, like Your saints above, may be clothed in white garments!

4. Further, to carry on the parallel. You perceive that these elders *exercised a priesthood*. Indeed, their being clothed in white garments, while it is an emblem of their purity, also represents them as being priests unto God. They themselves expressly sing in the 10th verse of the 5th chapter, "You have made us unto our God kings and priests." They exercise the office of the priesthood, as you perceive, by the double offering of prayer and praise. They hold in their hands the censers full of sweet incense, and the harps which give forth melodious sounds. Brothers and sisters, in the wilderness of old they were not all priests. One special tribe, and one family out of that tribe, alone, could exercise that office; the rest of the people stood in the outer court. As for the most holy place, into that only came the high priest and he only once a year, so much exclusion was there in that age of shadows! But now, all believers are priests; we have all a right to stand in the priest's place, to offer sacrifice and incense. No, more, through Christ we enter into that which is within the veil, and stand in the most holy place, and look at the bright light from the Shekinah, fearing not that we shall die, but having boldness and confidence through the new and living way, the rent body of Christ! The saints before the throne of God are represented as all of them in the holy place, around the throne, all officiating, every one of them presenting sacrifice. Brethren, what are *we* doing? Let us look up to them as the priests of God, and then, ask ourselves, are *we* celebrating His worship, too? Brother, did you this morning, before you came up to this house, lift up your hand with the bowl of incense in it, in your earnest prayer for a blessing upon His people? Have you this day, in our sacred song, been laying your fingers mystically among the strings of your golden harp? What did you do last week, my brothers and sisters? What *were* you? Can you say that you were a priest? Or, must you not blush that you were rather a buyer and a seller, or a thinker and a writer, than a priest unto our God? And yet, this is our high calling; this is our blessed vocation. Our earthly calling is but little honor to us, nor should it engross our richest thoughts; our *heavenly* calling is of the most importance; it is that which is to last forever; it is that which should have the cream of our soul's attention. We are priests! Oh, brothers and sisters, if we have failed in the past, may God give us grace for the future! And during the

coming days of the next work-day week, may He help us, that our buying and our selling, our traveling and our tarrying at home, may all be the exercise of priesthood! You know, you can make "the bells upon the horses" holiness to the Lord, and the very pots of your house can be as the bowls upon the altar; you need not go out of your everyday callings to be priests, but be priests in your callings! Sanctify the Lord God in your workshops, in your fields, in your marketplaces, in your exchanges; and whatever you do, whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, who has made you priests and kings unto Him!

I know there is a sad tendency among us all to leave the priesthood to some peculiar clan. Mark you, members of this Church; I will be no priest for you! It is as much as I can do to exercise the priesthood to which God calls me on my own account, to offer my own thanks and my own petitions. I will have none of your responsibilities; you must be priests for yourselves! You cannot shift this burden off, nor would you wish, I am sure, if you are true-hearted. You say you are poor, you are unknown, you have no talent! You need it not, these cannot make you priests! How came the sons of Aaron to the priesthood? By birth; and so with you! You have been "born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, nor of blood, but of God," and the priesthood is the inalienable inheritance of the new birth! Exercise your office, then, be you who you may, O beloved of the Lord! In the name of Him who has "begotten you again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," live as men and women sanctified for divine service, who cannot and must not be servants of men and slaves of sin.

5. Once more and I think I shall have said enough upon this first point. There is yet another likeness between the saints in heaven and those on earth. You perceive that these *had on their heads crowns of gold*. They reigned with Christ. He was a King, and He made them kings with Him. As in the old Persian court, the princes of the blood wore crowns, so in the court of heaven, the princes of the blood, the brethren of the Lord, are crowned, too. They are royal senators; they sit upon thrones, even as He who has overcome, and sits down with His Father on His throne. These thrones they have to show their dominion, their rights and jurisdiction. Know you not that we shall judge angels, and that when Christ shall come, He will bring His people with Him, and they will sit upon His throne as co-assessors with Him? Then the wicked, the persecutors, the revilers of God's people, shall be brought to judgment and the saints, whom they despised, shall be their judges! So that when Christ shall say, "Depart, you cursed," there shall be heard the thundering assent of the ten thousands of His saints, as they say, "Amen," and confirm from their hearts the sentence of the all-righteous Judge. Therefore do these elders sit upon their thrones!

Now, beloved, let us imitate them in this. "Oh," you say, "but I cannot wear a crown as they do." Nevertheless, you are a king; for they who are Christ's are kings. Take care, brothers and sisters that you wear your crown by reigning over your lusts! Reign over your sins! Reign over your passions! Be as a king in the midst of all that would lead you astray. Christ Jesus has broken the neck of your sin; put your foot upon it; keep

it under; subdue it. Be king in the dominions of your own being. In the world at large, act a king's part. If any would tempt you to betray Christ for gain, say, "How can I? I am a king. How shall I betray Christ?" Let the nobility of your nature come out in your actions. Forgive in a royal manner, as a king can forgive! Be ready to give to others as God has helped you, as a king gives. Let your generosity of spirit be right royal; let your actions never be mean, sneaking, cowardly, dastardly. Do the right thing, and defy the worst. Dare all your foes in the pursuit of that which is right, and let men see, while they look upon you, that there is a something under your homely appearance which they cannot understand. Men make a great deal of fuss about the blood of the aristocracy; I dare say it is not very different from the blood of crossing-sweepers. But there is a great deal of difference between the life-blood of the saints and the life-blood of the proudest prince; for they who love Christ have fed upon His flesh, and have drunk of His blood, and have been made partakers of the divine nature. These are the royal ones; these are the aristocrats; these are the nobility, and all are mean beside. Christians, perhaps some of you have not reigned as kings during the last week. Perhaps you have been either murmuring, like poor whining beggars, or you have been scraping, like dunghill rakers, with your covetousness. Or perhaps you have been sinning, like idle boys in the street, who roll in the mire. You have not lived up to your kingship! Now I pray you, ask God's grace that during the week to come you may say of sin, "I cannot touch it, I am a king; I cannot demean myself with it," that you may say of this earth's dross, "I cannot go down and scrape that; my heritage is above," that you may be able to say of everything that is low and mean, "Shall such a man as I do this? How can I come down from the elevated position to which God has called me, to act as others act, from their motives and with their ends?" Let, then, the state of the saints above, while it is the theme of our delightful thought, while we anticipate the time when we shall fully partake of it, be also an example to us while in these lands below!

II. Briefly upon our second point—THE OCCUPATION AND SPIRIT OF THOSE GLORIFIED ONES, AS THEY SHOULD BE IMITATED BY US BELOW.

1. Notice their occupation. First of all, it is one of *humility*. At the 10th verse in our fourth chapter, we perceive it is written, "They fall down before Him." They are kings, but yet, they fall down—they wear royal crowns, but yet, they prostrate themselves. They are second to none in God's universe; they stand as first in the peerage of creation; yet, before the King, they have no honor and no esteem, but as if they were slaves and menials, they cast themselves upon their faces before His throne, having nothing of their own whereof to glory, but boasting alone in Him! The more holy, the more humble! Where holiness is in perfection, there humility is in perfection, too. The cherubim veil their faces with their wings, while they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!" So do these elders, taking the same posture of humility, bow before the throne of God!

Brothers and sisters, are we as humble as we should be? If we think we are, we at once betray our pride! But let us understand how unseemly anything but humility must be to us. We are yet on earth; if they in

heaven boast not, how dare we? We are yet sinful and erring; if the spotless ones bow, what shall we do? If we threw dust and ashes on our heads, and acknowledged ourselves to be the vilest of the vile, yet were the words not too coarse for us or the action too humiliating. Far from us is the pride which would let us exalt ourselves! Pride is natural to us all, brothers and sisters we cannot get rid of it, even though we strive against it. What shall we say of those who nurture it—whose very carriage and walk betray the pride of their hearts? What shall we say of the pride which finds root in the purse, or that which shows itself in outward array and garments? What shall we say of the pride of station and of rank, which will not permit the professedly Christian to speak with his poorer brother? Oh, these are damnable things! I hope we despise, and are rid of these; but there is a subtler pride—a pride which mimics humility—a pride which comes in after prayer, or after preaching, or after anything that is done for Christ. Let us strive against it, and be it our constant and daily endeavor to fall before the throne of God, "While less than nothing we can boast, and vanities confess."

2. But, as they fall before the throne of God in humility, you will note that they express their *gratitude*. It is said they cast their crowns before the throne. They know where they got them, and they know to whom to ascribe the praise. Their crowns are their own, and, therefore, they wear them on their heads. Their crowns were Jesus' gift, and, therefore, they cast them at His feet. They wear their crown, for He has made them kings, and they cannot refuse the dignity; but they cast the crown at His feet, for they are only kings by right received from Him, and acknowledge Him thus to be King of kings, and Lord of lords. It was a custom, you know, in imperial Rome, for those kings who held dominion under the emperor, on certain occasions, to take off their crowns and lay them down before the emperor, so that when he bade them put them on again, they had fully recognized that their rights of kingship flowed only through him. So do they who are before the throne of God! With what rapture, with what joy, with what delight, do they cast their crowns there! To think they have a crown, and a crown to cast before Him! Brothers and sisters, I am afraid when you and I get any graces, or have been made useful in Christ's cause, we are glad for the thing's sake; but we are not right, if so; we should be glad because we have something to cast at *His* feet. Have you faith? I must thank *Him* for faith, I must lay it at His feet and say, "Jesus, use my faith for Your glory, for You are its author and finisher." If you and I shall, by divine grace, persevere to the end, and shall arrive at heaven, it will be a joy to think that we are saved, but we will lay it all at the door of divine love! Will you wear a crown, believer? Will you accept jot or tittle of the glory? O no, you will each of you disown anything like the Arminian's proud boast of free self-will! It will be grace, grace, divine grace, alone, in heaven! There will be no division and no discord in that eternal hymn. We will cast our crowns at once before Him, and we will say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all the praise." We imitate them, then, in this—in our gratitude mingled with humility.

3. Further, I well perceive that these elders spent their time in *joyous song*. How glorious was that strain—"You are worthy to take the Book,

and to open the seals thereof: for You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." These elders knew that the time was come when all earth and heaven should be more than usually glad. They, with the four living creatures, whom we take to be the representatives of some special order of presence-angels, about whom we know but little, led the strain; and as the music rolled through the aisles of heaven, distant angels, who were in all parts of God's dominion keeping watch and ward, stood still and listened till they had caught the strain. And then, they joined with loudest notes, till from north and south, and east and west, from the highest star and from the uttermost depths, there came up the blessed refrain from ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Then, as these angelic ones sent up the song, the inferior creatures caught the divine infection, and in heaven and earth, in the sea and the uttermost depths, the voice was heard, and all creatures responded, while the universe echoed with the song, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." This is the occupation of saints before the throne of God; be it yours, brothers and sisters. Let us, as God's redeemed, sing with all our hearts, and let us enlist others in the strain. Let us remember that we are to be leaders in the hymn of God's works. We are to begin with, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," but we are not to end there! We are to go on bidding all God's works praise Him, till we come to a climax like that of David, "Bless the Lord, you hosts, you ministers of His who do His pleasure; bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul." The world is the organ—we are the players. We are to put our fingers upon the notes and wake the universe to thunders of acclaim! We are not to rest with our own feeble notes, but we must wake even the dumb earth itself, till all the planets, listening to our earth, and joining her song, shall sing forth the music of the ages! God give you, brothers and sisters, a desire to imitate the saints! Some of you perhaps are good hands at groaning; perhaps some of you have come up here today mourning and murmuring; lay these things aside! Take up your proper vocation, and now smite the strings of your harp; magnify the Lord! Let the day of jubilee come to your spirits! You saints of God, rejoice! Yes, in your God exceedingly rejoice!

4. Yet once again—these saints not only offered praise, but *prayer*. This was the meaning of the bowls, which are so foolishly translated *vials*. A vial is precisely the opposite of the vessel that was intended—the vial is long and narrow—whereas this is broad and shallow! A bowl is meant, full of incense, covered over with a lid, and perforated with holes, through which the smoke of the incense rises. This does not mean that the 24 elders offer the prayers of the saints below, but their own prayers. Some have asked, "Is there any prayer in heaven?" Certainly, there is room for prayer in heaven! If you need proof, we have it in the chapter which follows the one out of which we have been reading this morning—the ninth verse of the sixth chapter—"I saw under the altar the souls of them who were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which

they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, do You not judge and avenge our blood on them who dwell on the earth?" There is prayer. Perhaps the prayers of the saints are the major portion of that perpetual litany which goes up to heaven. But leaving that for a moment, let us imitate them. If *they* pray, how much more reason have we? If they plead for the universal Church, they who enjoy the rest of God, how should we pray who are still in this land of temptation and of sin; that see the perils of our brethren, know their weaknesses, and their afflictions? Let us draw near unto God; let us never cease, day and night, to offer intercession for the whole company of the elect!

5. I must not forget, however, that these elders before the throne of God were ready not only for prayer and praise, but for *all kinds of service*. You remember there was one of them, when John wept, who said, "Weep not." Depend upon it, that elder had been occupied in visiting the sick when he was on earth; and often when he had gone into their cottages and found them sorrowing, he had said unto them, "Weep not." And the good man had not lost his character when he went to heaven, although it had been spiritualized and perfected! And seeing John weeping, he said to him, "Weep not." Ah, those saints before the throne of God, if there were mourners there, would comfort them, I know. And if they could be sent down here to visit any of the sorrowing children of God, they would be too glad to do it. Then there was, you remember, another of the elders, who said to John, for his instruction, "Who are these who are arrayed in white robes, and from where came they? And I said unto him, sir, you know. And he said to me, these are they who came out of great tribulation." I venture to believe that this elder used to teach a catechumen class on earth; that he had been in the habit of teaching young people, and he put the question to John first, as he had been in the habit previously of putting it to young disciples on earth. The saved ones would be ready to teach us now, if they could; and they do today bear testimony for Christ, for, to the ages to come, God through His Church makes known to principalities and powers the exceeding riches of His divine grace.

Now, those before the throne are willing to *comfort the weeper or to instruct the ignorant*. Let us do the same! And may it be ours to wipe the tears from many an eye, to chase the darkness of ignorance from many a young heart. Have you been doing that lately, brothers and sisters? If not, mend your ways; be more earnest in these good works—visit the fatherless, the widow, the suffering, the mourning, those in prison, and teach the ignorant and those who are out of the way.

III. And now, lastly, WHAT IS THEIR WORD AND LESSON TO US THIS MORNING? Bending from their shining thrones, being dead, they yet speak; and they say to us—

First, by way of encouragement, brethren, *follow on*. Be not dismayed. We fought the same battles that you fight and passed through the like tribulations; yet, we have not perished, but enjoy the eternal reward. Press on! Heaven awaits you; vacant thrones are here for you—crowns which no other heads can wear—harps that no other hands must play. Follow courageously, faithfully, trusting in Him who has begun the good work in you, and who will carry it on.

Hear them, again, as they say, Mark the footsteps that we trod; for only in one way can you reach our rest. We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They say to the entire world, If you would be clean wash there, too. None but Jesus can save your souls. Trust in Him. Repose in His atonement; confide in His finished work; flee to His sacrificial blood. You shall be saved by faith in Him, even as we have been—

"I asked them from where their victory came.
They with united breath
Ascribed their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death!"

Friends! Are you trusting in Christ? My hearers, many of you are perfect strangers to me this morning. I ask you, are you putting your trust in Christ? Have you come under the shadow of His cross to find a refuge from His vengeance? If not, no golden crown can be for you. No harp of gold. But, whoever you may be, if you will believe in Christ Jesus, and put your soul into His hands, you shall be a partaker of the glories which He has laid up for them who love Him!

Lastly, they say to us, as they look down from the battlements of heaven, Are you getting ready to join our ranks, to take up our occupations, and to sing our songs? Answer for yourself, my brothers and sisters, as I must answer for myself. Are you living for your own pleasure? Then, you must die; for, "He who sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." Are you living for Christ? Then, shall you live; "Because He lives you shall live also." Are you a priest to God today? You shall bear the golden bowl in heaven! Are you instead a servant of your own body, your own lusts, your own gain, your own pleasure? Then, the lowest depths must be your portion! Heaven is "a prepared place for a prepared people." Are we prepared? Brothers, Sisters, can we say, "We hope in Christ; He is our only trust"? And do we endeavor to live to Him? And though with many failings and frailties, yet can we still say, "For me to live is Christ"? Oh, if it is so—

"Come, death, and some celestial band, to bear our souls away!"

But if it is not so, then our end must be destruction, because our God has been our belly!

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GOD'S WILL AND MAN'S WILL
NO. 442

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 30, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"So then, it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy."
Romans 9:16.

"Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely."
Revelation 22:17.

THE great controversy which for many ages has divided the Christian Church has hinged upon the difficult question of "the will." I need not say of that conflict that it has done much mischief to the Christian Church, undoubtedly it has; but I will rather say, that it has been fraught with incalculable usefulness; for it has thrust forward before the minds of Christians, precious truths of God, which, but for it, might have been kept in the shade. I believe that the two great doctrines of human responsibility and divine sovereignty have both been brought out the more prominently in the Christian Church by the fact that there is a class of strong-minded hard-headed men who magnify sovereignty at the expense of responsibility; and another earnest and useful class who uphold and maintain human responsibility oftentimes at the expense of divine sovereignty! I believe there is a necessity for this in the finite character of the human mind, while the natural lethargy of the Church requires a kind of healthy irritation to awaken her powers and stimulate her exertions. The pebbles in the living stream of truth are worn smooth and round by friction. Who among us would wish to suspend a law of nature whose effects on the whole are good? I glory in that which at the present day is so much spoken against—sectarianism, for "sectarianism" is the sanctimonious phrase which our enemies use for all firm religious belief. I find it applied to all sorts of Christians. No matter what views he may hold, if a man is but in earnest, he is a sectarian at once! Success to sectarianism! Let it live and flourish! When that is done with, farewell to the power of godliness; when each of us, to maintain our own views of truth, and to maintain those views firmly and strenuously, then the truth of God shall fly out of the land, and error alone shall reign—this, indeed, is the objective of our foes—under the cover of attacking sects, they attack true religion, and would drive it, if they could, from off the face of the earth! In the controversy which has raged, a controversy which, I again say, I believe to have been really healthy, and which has done us all a vast amount of good—mistakes have arisen from two sources. Some

brethren have altogether forgotten one order of truths, and then, in the next place, they have gone too far with others. We all have one blind eye, and too often we are like Nelson in the battle, we put the telescope to that blind eye, and then protest that we cannot see! I have heard of one man who said he had read the Bible through 34 times on his knees, but could not see a word about *election* in it; I think it is very likely that he could not—kneeling is a very uncomfortable posture for reading, and possibly the superstition which would make the poor man perform this penance would disqualify him for using his reason! Moreover, to get through the Book 34 times, he probably read in such a hurry that he did not know what he was reading, and he might as well have been dreaming over "Robinson Crusoe" as the Bible! He put the telescope to the blind eye.

Many of us do that; we do not want to see a truth of God, and therefore we say we cannot see it. On the other hand, there are others who push a truth too far. "This is good! Oh, this is precious!" they say, and then they think it is good for everything; that in fact, it is the only truth of God in the world! You know how often things are injured by overpraise; how a good medicine, which really was a great benefit for a certain disease, comes to be utterly despised by the physician, because a certain quack has praised it up as being a universal cure; so puffery in doctrine leads to its dishonor! The truth of God has thus suffered on all sides; on the one hand brethren would not see all the truth, and on the other hand they magnified out of proportion that which they did see! You have seen those mirrors, those globes that are sometimes hung up in gardens? You walk up to them and you see your head ten times as large as your body, or you walk away and put yourself in another position, and then your feet are monstrous and the rest of your body is small; this is an ingenious toy, but I am sorry to say that many go to work with God's truth upon the model of this toy! They magnify one capital truth, till it becomes monstrous; they minify and speak little of another truth till it becomes altogether forgotten! In what I shall be able to say this morning, you will probably detect the failing to which I allude, the common fault of humanity, and suspect that I also am magnifying one truth at the expense of another; but I will say this, before I proceed further, that it shall not be the case if I can help it, but I will endeavor to honestly bring out the truth of God as I have learned it, and if in anything you see that I teach you is contrary to the Word of God, reject it! But mark you, if it is according to God's Word, reject it at your peril; for when I have once delivered it to you, if you receive it not, the responsibility lies with you!

There are two things, then, this morning I shall have to talk about. The first is, that *the work of salvation rests upon the will of God and not upon the will of man;* and secondly, the equally sure doctrine, that *the will of man has its proper position in the work of salvation, and is not to be ignored.*

I. First, then, SALVATION HINGES UPON THE WILL OF GOD, AND NOT UPON THE WILL OF MAN. So says our text—"It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy," by which is clearly meant that the reason why any man is saved, is not because *he* wills it, but because *God* willed, according to that other passage, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." The whole scheme of salvation, we declare, looms first to last, hinges and turns, and is dependant, upon the absolute will of God, and not upon the will of the creature!

This, we think, we can show in two or three ways; and first, we think that an *analogy furnishes us with a rather strong argument.* There is a certain likeness between all God's works; if a painter shall paint three pictures, there is a certain identity of style about all the three, which leads you to know that they are from the same hand. Or, if an author shall write three works upon three different subjects, yet there are qualities running through the whole which will lead you to assert, "That is the same man's writing, I am certain, in the whole of the three books." Now, what we find in the works of nature, we generally find to be correct with regard to the work of providence; and what is true of nature and of providence, is usually true with regard to the greater work of divine grace. Turn your thoughts, then, to the works of *creation.* There was a time when these works had no existence—the sun was not born; the young moon had not begun to fill her horns; the stars were not; not even the illimitable void of space was then in existence! God dwelt alone without a creature. I ask you, with whom did He then take counsel? Who instructed Him? Who had a voice in that council by which the wisdom of God was directed? Did it not rest with His own will whether He would create or not? Was not creation itself, when it lay in embryo in His thoughts, entirely in His keeping so that He would or would not just as He pleased? And, when He willed to create, did He not still exercise His own discretion and will as to what and how He would create? If He has made the stars spheres, what reason was there for this but His own will? If He has chosen that they should move in the circle rather than in any other orbit, is it not God's own fiat that has made them do so? And when this round world, this green earth on which we dwell, leaped from His molding hands into its sunlit track, was not this also according to the divine will? Who ordained, save the Lord, that there the Himalayas should lift their heads and pierce the clouds, and that there the deep cavernous recesses of the sea should pierce earth's heart of rock? Who, save Himself, ordained that yonder Sahara should be brown and sterile, and that yonder isle should laugh in the midst of the sea with joy over her own verdure? Who, I say, ordained this, except God? You see running through creation, from the tiniest animalcule up to the tall archangel who stands before the throne, this working of God's own will! Milton was nobly right when he represents the Eternal One as saying—

"My goodness is most free
To act or not: Necessity and Chance

Approach not Me, and what I will is fate."

He created as it pleased Him! He made them as He chose! The potter exercised power over His clay to make His vessels as He willed, and to make them for what purposes He pleased! Do you think that He has abdicated the throne of grace? Does He reign in creation and not in grace? Is He absolute King over nature and not over the greater works of the new nature? Is He Lord over the things which His hands made at first and not King over the great regeneration, the new-making wherein He makes all things new?

But take the works of *providence*. I suppose, there will be no dispute among us that in providential matters God orders all things according to the counsel of His own will. If we should, however, be troubled with any doubts about that matter, we might hear the striking words of Nebuchadnezzar when, taught by God, he had repented of his pride—"All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What are You doing?" From the first moment of human history even to the last, God's will, shall be done! Though it is a catastrophe or a crime—there may be the second causes and the action of human evil—but the great first cause is in all! If we could imagine that one human action had eluded the prescience or the predestination of God, we could suppose that the whole might have done so, and all things might drift to sea, anchorless, rudderless, a sport to every wave, the victim of tempest and hurricane. One leak in the ship of providence would sink her, one hour in which omnipotence relaxed its grasp, and she would fall to atoms! But it is the comfortable conviction of all God's people that "All things work together for good to them who love God," and that God rules and overrules and reigns in all acts of men, and in all events that transpire! From seeming evil He is still producing good, and better still, and better still in infinite progression, still ordering all things according to the counsel of His will! And do you think that He reigns in providence and is King there, and not in grace? Has He given up the blood-bought land to be ruled by man, while common providence is left as a lonely province to be His only heritage? He has not let slip the reins of the great chariot of providence, and do you think that when Christ goes forth in the chariot of His grace it is with unguided steeds, or driven only by chance, or by the fickle will of man? Oh, no, brothers and sisters! As surely as God's will is the axle of the universe, as certainly as God's will is the great heart of providence, sending its pulsing through even the most distant limbs of human act, so in divine grace let us rest assured that He is King, willing to do as He pleases, having mercy on whom He will have mercy, calling whom He chooses to call, quickening whom He wills and fulfilling—despite man's hardness of heart, despite man's willful rejection of Christ—His own purposes, His own decrees, without one of them falling to the ground! We think, then, that analogy

helps to strengthen us in the declaration of the text that salvation is not left with man's will.

2. But, secondly, *we believe that the difficulties which surround the opposite theory are tremendous. In fact, we cannot stand to look them in the face.* If there are difficulties about ours, there are ten times more about the opposite! We think that the difficulties which surround our belief that salvation depends upon the will of God, arise from our ignorance in not understanding enough of God to be able to judge them; but that the difficulties in the other side do not arise from that cause, but from certain great truths of God, clearly revealed, which stand in manifest opposition to the figment which our opponents have espoused! According to their theory—that salvation depends upon our own will—you have first of all this difficulty to meet, *that you have made the purpose of God in the great plan of salvation entirely contingent.* You have an "if" put upon everything! Christ may die, but it is not certain, according to their theory, that He will redeem a great multitude; no, not certain that He will redeem *any,* since the efficacy of the redemption, according to their plan, rests not in its own intrinsic power, but in the will of man accepting that redemption. Hence if man is, as we declare he always is, if he is a bond slave as to his will, and will not yield to the invitation of God's grace, then in such a case, the atonement of Christ would be valueless, useless, and altogether in vain, for not a soul would be saved by it. But, even when souls are saved by it, according to their theory, the efficacy, I say, lies not in the blood itself, but in the will of man which gives it efficacy. Redemption is therefore made contingent; the cross shakes, the blood falls powerless on the ground, and atonement is a matter of perhaps! There is a heaven provided, but there may be no souls who will ever go there if their coming is to be of themselves. There is a fountain filled with Christ's blood, but there may be none who will ever wash in it unless divine purpose and power shall compel them to come! You may look at any promise of divine grace, but you cannot say over it, "This is the sure mercy of David," for there is an "if," or a "but," or a "perhaps." In fact, the reins are out of God's hands! The locking pin of the shaft of the wheel of creation is taken away; you have left the whole economy of grace and mercy to be the gathering together of fortuitous atoms impelled by man's own will, and what may become of it at the end nobody can know! We cannot tell on that theory whether God will be glorified or sin will triumph. Oh, how happy are we when we come back to the old-fashioned doctrines, and cast our anchor where it can get its grip in the eternal purpose and counsel of God, who works all things to the good pleasure of His will!

Then another difficulty comes in. Not only is everything made contingent, but it does seem to us *as if man were thus made to be the supreme being in the universe!* According to the free will scheme, the Lord intends good, but He must wait like a lackey on His own creature to know what his intention is. God wills good and would do it, but He cannot, because

He has an unwilling man who will not have God's good thing carried into effect! What are you doing, sirs, but dragging the Eternal from His throne, and lifting up into it that fallen creature, man; for man, according to that theory, nods, and his nod is destiny! You must have a destiny somewhere; it must either be as God wills, or as man wills. If it is as God wills, then Jehovah sits as sovereign upon His throne of glory, and all hosts obey Him, and the world is safe. If not God, then you put man there, to say, "I will," or "I will not; if I will it I will enter heaven; if I will it I will despise the grace of God; if I will it I will conquer the Holy Spirit, for I am stronger than God, and stronger than omnipotence! If I will it I will make the blood of Christ of no effect, for I am mightier than that blood, mightier than the blood of the Son of God Himself! Though God makes His purpose, yet will I laugh at His purpose; it shall be *my* purpose that shall make His purpose stand, or make it fall!" Why, sirs, if this is not Atheism, it is idolatry! It is putting man where God should be, and I shrink with solemn awe and horror from that doctrine which makes the grandest of God's works—the salvation of man—to be dependent upon the will of His creature whether it shall be accomplished or not. Glory I can, and must, in my text in its fullest sense! "It is not of him, who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows His mercy."

3. We think *that the known condition of man is a very strong argument against the supposition that salvation depends upon his own will;* and hence is a great confirmation of the truth of God that it depends upon the will of God; that it is God who chooses, and not man—God who takes the first step, and not the creature. Sirs, on the theory that man comes to Christ of his own will, what do you do with texts of Scripture which say that he is dead? "And you has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." You will say that is a figure of speech. I grant it, but what is the meaning of it? You say the meaning is, he is *spiritually* dead. Well, then I ask you, how can he perform the *spiritual* act of willing that which is right? He is alive enough to will that which is evil, only evil, and that continually, but he is not alive to will that which is spiritually good. Do you not know, to turn to another Scripture, that he cannot even *discern* that which is spiritual? "For the natural man knows not the things which are of God, seeing they are spiritual, and must be spiritually discerned." Why, he has not a "spirit" with which to discern them! He has only a soul and body—and the third principle, implanted in regeneration, which is called in the Word of God, "the spirit," he knows nothing of, and he is, therefore, incapable, seeing he is dead and is without the vitalizing spirit, of doing what you say he does. Then, again, what do you make of the words of our Savior where He said to those who had heard even Him, "You *will not* come to Me that you might have life"? Where is free will after such a text as that? When Christ affirms that they will not, who dares say they will? "Ah, but," you say, "They could if they would!" Dear sir, I am not talking about that; I am not talking about if they would. The question is *"will they?"* And we say "no," they never will by nature. Man

is so depraved, so set on mischief, the way of salvation is so obnoxious to his pride, so hateful to his lusts, that he cannot like it, and will not like it, unless He who ordained the plan shall change his nature, and subdue his will! Mark, this stubborn will of man is his *sin;* he is not to be excused for it; he is guilty because he will not come; he is condemned because he will not come; because he will not believe in Christ, therefore is condemnation resting upon him, but still the fact is not altered for all that—he will not come by nature if left to himself! Well, then, if man will not, how shall he be saved unless God shall *make him willing*—unless, in some mysterious way, He who made the heart shall touch its mainspring so that it shall move in a direction opposite to that which it naturally follows?

4. But, there is another argument which will come closer home to us. *It is consistent with the universal experience of all God's people that salvation is of God's will.* You will say, "Mr. Spurgeon, you have not had a very long life." I have not, but I have had a very extensive acquaintance with all sections of the Christian Church, and I solemnly swear before you, that I have never yet met with a man professing to be a Christian, let alone his really being so, who ever said that his coming to God was the result of his unassisted nature! Universally, I believe, without exception, the people of God will say it was the Holy Spirit who made them what they are—that they would have refused to come as others do unless God's grace had sweetly influenced their wills. There are some hymns in Mr. Wesley's hymnbook which are stronger upon this point than I could ever venture to be, for he puts prayers into the lips of the sinner in which God is even asked *to force him to be saved by divine grace!* Of course I can take no objection to a term so strong, but it goes to prove this, that among all sections of Christians, whether Arminian or Calvinistic, whatever their doctrinal sentiments may be, their *experimental* sentiments are the same! I do not think they would, any of them, refuse to join in the verse—

"Oh, yes, I do love Jesus
Because He first loved me."

Nor would they find fault with our own hymn—

"It was the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin!"

We bring out the crown and say, "On whose head shall we put it? Who ruled at the turning-point? Who decided this case?" And the universal Church of God, throwing away their creeds, would say, "Crown *Him!* Crown *Him!* Put it on *His* head, for *He* is worthy; *He* has made us to differ; *He* has done it and unto *Him* be the praise forever and ever!" What staggers me is that men can believe dogmas contrary to their own experience—that they can hug that to their hearts as precious to which their own inward convictions must give the lie!

5. But, lastly, in the way of argument, and to bring out our great battering ram at the last. It is not, after all, arguments from analogy, nor reasons from the difficulties of the opposite position, nor inferences from the known feebleness of human nature, nor even deductions from experience, that will settle this question once and for all. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Do me the pleasure, then, to use your Bibles for a moment or two, and let us see what Scripture says on this main point. First, with regard to the matter of God's preparation, and His plan with regard to salvation, we turn to the apostle's words in the epistle to the Ephesians, and we find, beginning in the first chapter and the third verse, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will"—a double word you notice—it is according to the will of His will! No expression could be stronger in the original to show the entire absoluteness of this thing as depending on the will of God! It seems, then, that the choice of His people and their adoption is according to His will. So far we are satisfied, indeed, with the testimony of the apostle. Then in the ninth verse, "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him." So, then, it seems that the grand *result* of the gathering together of all the saved in Christ, as well as the primitive purpose, is according to the counsel of His will. What stronger proof can there be that salvation depends upon the will of God?

Moreover, it says in the 11th verse—"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will." A stronger expression than "of His will"—"of His *own* will," His free, unbiased will, His will alone. As for redemption as well as for the eternal purpose—redemption is according to the will of God. You remember that verse in Hebrews, 10th chapter, ninth verse—"Lo, I come to do Your will, O God. He takes away the first that He might establish the second. By that will we are sanctified." So that the redemption offered up on Calvary, like the election made before the foundation of the world, is the result of the divine will! There will be little controversy here—the main point is about our new birth, and here we cannot allow of any diversity of opinion! Turn to the gospel according to John, the first chapter and 13th verse. It is utterly impossible that human language could have put a stronger negative on the vain-glorious claims of the human will than this passage does—"Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of

God." A passage equally clear is to be found in the Epistle of James, at the first chapter and the 18th verse—"Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures." In these passages—and they are not the only ones—the new birth is peremptorily, and in the strongest language put down as being *the fruit and effect of the will and purpose of God.* And as to sanctification, which is the result and outgrowth of the new birth, that also is according to God's holy will. In the first of Thessalonians, fourth chapter and third verse, we have, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." One more passage I shall need you to refer to, John, the sixth chapter and 39th and 40th verses. Here we find that the preservation, the perseverance, the resurrection, and the eternal glory of God's people, rests upon His will. "And this is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." And indeed this is why the saints go to heaven at all, because in the 17th chapter of John, Christ is recorded as praying, "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." We close, then, by noticing that according to Scripture, there is not a single blessing in the new covenant which is not conferred upon us according to the will of God, and that as the vessel hangs upon the nail, so every blessing we receive hangs upon the absolute will and counsel of God, who gives these mercies even as He gives the gifts of the Spirit according as He wills! We shall now leave that point, and take the second great truth of God, and speak a little while upon it.

II. MAN'S WILL HAS ITS PROPER PLACE IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION. *"Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely."* According to this, and many other texts of Scripture where man is addressed as a being having a will, it appears clear enough that men are not saved by compulsion. When a man receives the divine grace of Christ, he does not receive it against his will. No man shall be pardoned while he abhors the thought of forgiveness! No man shall have joy in the Lord if he says, "I do not wish to rejoice in the Lord." Do not think that anybody shall have the angels pushing them from behind into the gates of heaven! They must go there freely or else they will never go there at all. We are not saved against our will! Nor again, mark you, is the will taken away, for God does not come and convert the intelligent free agent into a machine. When He turns the slave into a child, it is not by plucking out of him the will which he possesses. We are as free under grace as ever we were under sin; no, we were slaves when we were under sin, and when the Son makes us free we are free indeed, and we were never free before! Erskine, in speaking of his own conversion, says he ran to Christ, "with full consent against his will" by which he meant it was against his *old* will; against his will as it was till Christ came, but when Christ came, then he came to Christ with full consent, and was as willing to be

saved—no, that is a cold word—as *delighted,* as *pleased,* as *transported,* to receive Christ as if divine grace had *not* compelled him! But, we do hold and teach, that though the will of man is not ignored, and men are not saved against their wills, that the work of the Spirit, which is the effect of the will of God, is to *change the human will,* and so make men *willing in the day of God's power,* working in them to will and to do of His own good pleasure! The work of the Spirit is consistent with the original laws and constitution of human nature. Ignorant men talk grossly and carnally about the work of the Spirit in the heart as if the heart were a lump of flesh, and the Holy Spirit turned it round mechanically. Now, brothers and sisters, how is your heart and my heart changed in any matter? Why, the instrument generally is *persuasion*. A friend sets before us a truth we did not know before; he pleads with us; he puts it in a new light, and then we say, "Now I see that," and then our hearts are changed towards the thing. Now, although no man's heart is changed by moral persuasion in itself, yet the way in which the Spirit works in his heart, as far as we can detect it, is instrumentally by a blessed persuasion of the mind. I say not that men are saved by moral persuasion, or that this is the first cause, but I think it is frequently the *visible means*. As to the secret work, who knows how the Spirit works? "The wind blows where it lists, and you hear the sound thereof, but you cannot tell from where it comes or where it goes: so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." But yet, as far as we can see, the Spirit makes a revelation of the truth of God to the soul, whereby it sees things in a different light from what it ever did before, and then the will cheerfully bows that neck which once was stiff as iron, and wears the yoke which it once despised—and wears it gladly, cheerfully and joyfully! Yet, mark, the will is not gone; the will is treated as it should be treated; man is not acted upon as a machine, he is not polished like a piece of marble; he is not planed and smoothed like a plank of wood, but his mind is acted upon by the Spirit of God, in a manner quite consistent with mental laws! Man is thus made a new creature in Christ Jesus, by the will of God, and his own will is blessedly and sweetly made to yield.

Then, mark you—and this is a point which I want to put into the thoughts of any who are troubled about these things—this gives the renewed soul a most blessed sign of grace, insomuch that if any man wills to be saved by Christ, if he wills to have sin forgiven through the precious blood, if he wills to live a holy life resting upon the atonement of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit, that will is one of the most blessed signs of the mysterious working of the Spirit of God in his heart! Such a sign is it that if it is real willingness, I will venture to assert that that man is not far from the kingdom of God! I say not that he is so saved that he, himself, may conclude he is, but there is a work *begun,* which has the germ of salvation in it. If you are willing, depend upon it that God is willing! Soul, if you are anxious after Christ, He is more anxious after you! If you have only one spark of true desire after Him, that spark

is a spark from the fire of His love to you! *He has drawn you, or else you would never run after Him!* If you are saying, "Come to me, Jesus," it is because He *has come to you,* though you do not know it. He has sought you as a lost sheep, and therefore you have sought Him like a returning prodigal! He has swept the house to find you, as the woman swept for the lost piece of money, and now you seek Him as a lost child would seek a father's face. Let your willingness to come to Christ be a hopeful sign and symptom.

But once more, and let me have the ear of the anxious yet again. It appears that when you have a willingness to come to Christ, there is a special promise for you. You know, my dear hearers that we are not accustomed in this house of prayer to preach only one side of the truths of God, but we try, if we can, to preach it all. There are some brethren with small heads, who, when they have heard a strong doctrinal sermon, grow into hyper-Calvinists, and then when we preach an inviting sermon to poor sinners, they cannot understand it, and say it is a "Yes and no" gospel. Believe me, it is not a "Yes and no," but "Yes and yes!" We give our "Yes" to all the truths of God, and our "No," we give to no doctrine of God. Can a sinner be saved when he wills to come to Christ? *YES*. And if he does come, does he come because *God brings him?* YES! We have no nays in our theology for any revealed truth of God! We do not shut the door on one word and open it to another. Those that do that are the "Yes and no" people who have a "No" to the poor sinner, when they profess to preach the gospel! As soon as a man has any willingness *given to him,* he has a special promise. Before he had that willingness he had an invitation. Before he had any willingness, it was his *duty* to believe in Christ, for it is not man's condition that gives him a *right* to believe. Men are to believe in *obedience* to God's command! God commands *all men* everywhere to repent, and this is His great command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "This is the commandment that you believe in Jesus Christ whom He has sent." Hence, your right and your duty to believe; but once you have got the willingness, then you have a special promise—"Whoever will, let him come." That is a sort of extraordinary invitation. I think this is the utterance of the special call. You know how John Bunyan describes the special call in words to this effect—"The hen goes clucking about the farm yard all day long; that is the *general* call of the gospel; but she sees a hawk up in the sky, and she gives a sharp cry for her little ones to come and hide under her wings; that is the *special* call; they come and are safe." My text is a special call to some of you. Poor soul, are you willing to be saved? "O, sir, I am willing, willing indeed! I cannot use that word. I would give all I have if I might but be saved." Do you mean you would give it all in order to purchase it? "Oh no, sir, I do not mean *that*. I know I cannot purchase it. I know it is God's gift, but still, if I could but be saved, I would ask nothing else—

'Lord, deny me what You will,

Only ease me of my guilt!
Suppliant at Your feet I lie,
Give me Christ, or else I die!'"

Why, then, the Lord speaks to you this morning! To you, if not to any other man in the chapel, He speaks to you and says—"Whoever will, let him come." You cannot say this does not mean you! When we give the general invitation, you may exempt yourself perhaps in some way or other, but you cannot now! You are willing, then come and take the water of life freely! "Had not I better pray?" It does not say so; it says, take the water of life. "But had not I better go home and get better?" No, take the water of life, and take the water of life *now!* You are standing by the fountain outside, and the water is flowing and you are willing to drink; you are picked out of a crowd who are standing round about, and you are especially invited by the person who built the fountain. He says, "Here is a special invitation for you; you are willing; come and drink." "Sir," you say, "I must go home and wash my pitcher." "No," he says, "come and drink." "But, sir, I need to go home and write a petition to you." "I do not need it," he says, "drink now, drink now!" What would you do? If you were dying of thirst, you would just put your lips down and drink. Soul, do that now! Believe that Jesus Christ is able to save you now! Trust your soul in His hands now! No preparation is needed! Whoever will, let him come; let him come at once and take the water of life freely. To take that water is simply to trust Christ; to repose on Him; to take Him to be your all-in-all. Oh that you would do it now! You are willing! God has made you willing! When the crusaders heard the voice of Peter the Hermit, as he bade them go to Jerusalem to take it from the hands of the invaders, they cried out at once, "Deus vult! God wills it! God wills it!" And every man plucked his sword from its scabbard, and set out to reach the holy sepulcher, for God willed it. So come and drink, sinner. God wills it! Trust Jesus. God wills it! If you will it, that is the sign that *God* wills it! "Father, Your will be done on earth even as it is in heaven." As sinners, humbly stoop to drink of the flowing crystal which streams from the sacred fountain which Jesus opened for His people; let it be said in heaven, "God's will is done! Hallelujah, hallelujah!" "It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." Yet, "Whoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely."

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THE TWO DRAUGHTS OF FISHES
NO. 443

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 6, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."
Luke 5:4.

"And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you shall find some. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it in for the multitude of fishes."
John 21:6.

THE whole life of Christ was a sermon. He was a prophet mighty in word and deed; and by His deeds as well as His words He taught the people. It is perfectly true that the miracles of Christ attest His mission. To those who saw them, they must have been evident proof that He was sent of God. But we ought not to overlook that probably a higher reason for the miracles is to be found in the instruction which they convey. To the world without, at the present time, the miracles of Christ are more difficult to believe than the doctrine which He taught. Skeptics turn them into stones of stumbling, and when they cannot object at the marvelous teaching of Jesus, they attack the miracles as monstrous and incredible. I doubt not that even to minds seriously vexed with unbelief, the miracles, instead of being helps to belief, have been trials of faith. Few indeed are there in whom faith is worked by signs and wonders; nor indeed is this the gospel way of bringing conviction to the soul—the secret force of the living word is the chosen instrumentality of Christ, and wonders are left to be the resort of that Anti-Christ by whom the nations shall be deceived. We, who by divine grace have believed, view the miracles of Christ as noble attestations to His mission and divinity, but we confess that we value them even more as instructive homilies than as attesting witnesses; it is our conviction that we should lose much of the benefit which they were meant to convey to us, if we were merely to view them as seals to the roll, for they are a part of the writing of the roll itself! The marvels worked by our blessed Lord are acted sermons filled with holy doctrine, set forth to us more vividly than it could have been in words. We start with the assumption upon which our sermon will be grounded this morning, that Christ's miracles are sermons preached in deeds, visible allegories, truths embodied, principles incarnated and set in motion. They are, in fact, the pictures in the great book of Christ's teaching, the illustrations by which He flashed light into dim eyes!

We have heard of some ministers who could say that they had often preached from the same text, but they had never delivered the same discourse. The like may be said of Christ. He often preached upon the same truth of God, but it was never precisely in the same manner. We have read in your hearing this morning, the narrative of two miracles (Luke 5

and John 21) which seem to the casual observer to be precisely alike. But he who shall read diligently and study carefully, will find that, though the text is the same in both, the discourse is full of variations. In both the miraculous draughts of fishes, the text is the mission of the saints to preach the gospel—the work of man-catching—the ministry by which souls are caught in the net of the gospel, and brought out of the element of sin to their eternal salvation. The preacher is compared to a fisherman. The fisherman's vocation is a toilsome one; woe be to that minister who finds his calling to be otherwise! The fisherman must go forth in rough weathers, and at all hazards; if he should only fish in a calm sea, he may often starve. So the Christian minister, whether men will receive the Word with pleasure, or reject it with anger and wrath, must be ready to imperil reputation and risk comfort; yes, he must hate his own life also, or he is not worthy of the heavenly calling. The fisherman's is a rough occupation; no dainty fingers may come in contact with his nets. It is not a trade for gentlemen, but for rough, strong, fearless men, who can heave a rope, handle a tar-brush, or scour a deck. The ministry is not meant for your dainty souls who would go delicately through this world without a trial, an offense, an insult, or a sneer. Such work is meant for men who know how to do business on great waters, and can go abroad upon the sea, not fearing the spray or the waves. The fisherman's calling, too, must be carried on perseveringly; it is not by one grand haul that a man makes his fortune; he must constantly cast forth his net. One sermon makes not a preacher; he who shall but now and then deliver himself of some carefully prepared oration, is no true minister of God. He must be instant in season and out of season; he must cast his net in all waters; he must in the morning be at his work, and in the evening he must not withhold his hand. To be a fisherman, a man must expect disappointments; he must often cast in the net and bring up nothing but weeds. The minister of Christ must reckon upon being disappointed; and he must not be weary in well-doing for all his disappointments, but, must in faith, continue in prayer and labor, expecting that at the end he shall receive his reward. It needs no great labor for you to work out at leisure the comparison between fishermen and the gospel ministry, the simile is so aptly chosen.

The two narratives before us have a degree of uniformity; that shall be our first point. *But they have a greater degree of dissimilarity;* we will bring that out in the second place. And, then, thirdly, we will suggest *some great lessons which they both combine to teach us.*

I. First, then, IN THESE TWO MIRACLES THERE ARE MANY POINTS OF UNIFORMITY. They are both intended to set forth the way in which Christ's kingdom shall increase.

1. First you will perceive that in both miracles we are taught that *the means must be used.* In the first case, the fish did not leap into Simon's boat to be taken; nor, in the second case, did they swarm from the sea and lay themselves down upon the blazing coals that they might be prepared for the fisherman's feast. No, the fishermen must go out in their boat. They must cast the net; and after having cast the net, they must either drag it ashore, or fill both boats with its contents. Everything is done here by human agency. It is a miracle, certainly, but yet, neither

the fisherman, nor his boat, nor his fishing tackle are ignored; they are all used and all employed. Let us learn that, in the saving of souls, God works by means; that as long as the present economy of grace shall stand, God will be pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them who believe. Every now and then, there creeps up in the church a sort of striving against God's ordained instrumentality. I marked it with sorrow dating the Irish Revival. We constantly saw in some excellent papers remarks which I thought exceedingly injurious, wherein it was made a subject of congratulation that no man was concerned in the work, no eminent preacher, no fervent evangelist; the whole was boasted to be conducted without human instrumentality. That was the weakness of the Revival, not its strength! You say it gave God more glory. Not so! God gets the most glory through the use of instruments. When God works without instruments, doubtless He is glorified; but He knows Himself in which way He gets the most honors, and He has Himself selected the plan of instrumentality as being that by which He is most magnified in the earth. We have this treasure. How? Alone? And without any earthly accompaniments? No; but in earthen vessels. Why? That God may have less glory? No; but in the earthen vessels on purpose, "that the excellency of the power may be of God," and not of us! God makes the infirmity of the creature to be the foil to the strength of the Creator! He takes men who are nothing in themselves, and works by them His splendid victories!

Perhaps, we would not admire Samson as much if he had dashed the Philistines in pieces with his fists, as we do when we find that with such a weapon, so unadapted to the work, as the jawbone of an ass, he laid on heaps the thousands of his foes. The Lord takes ill weapons, that with them He may work great deeds! When He said, "Let there be light, and there was light" without any instrument, He showed His glory; but when instead thereof, He takes the apostles and says again, "Let there be light," and sends *them* forth who were darkness in themselves, and makes them the medium of lighting up a dark world, I say there is a greater glory! And if the morning stars sang together when they first saw light upon the newly made earth, surely the angels in heaven rejoiced even more when they saw light thus streaming upon the dark earth through men, who, in and of themselves, would only have increased the blackness, and made the gloom denser! God works by means of men whom He especially calls to His work, and not, as a rule, without them. The Plymouthist strives to get rid of the pastorate, but he never can, for the Lord will always continue to give pastors after His own heart to feed His people, and all attempts made by the flock to dispense with these pastors will lead to leanness and poverty of soul. The outcry against the "one man ministry" comes not of God, but of proud self-conceit, of men who are not content to learn, although they have no power to teach. It is the tendency of human nature to exalt itself which has raised up these disturbers of the peace of God's Israel, for they will not endure to submit themselves to the authorities which God has Himself appointed, and abhor the teachings of the apostle, where he says, by the Spirit of God, "Obey them who have rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable to you."

Brothers and sisters, I warn you, there is a spirit abroad which would pull down the men whom God Himself has raised up, that would silence those into whose mouths God has put the tongue of fire, that foolish men might prate according to their own will to the profit of no one, and to their own shame! As for us, we shall, I trust, never cease to recognize that agency by which the Lord works mightily among us! We would check no ministry in the Church of God. We would but be too glad to see it more abundantly exercised. Would God that all the Lord's servants were prophets! But we enter our solemn protest against that spirit which, under presence of liberty to all, sets aside the instrumentality by which the Lord especially works. He will have you still keep the fishermen to their nets and to their boats; and your new ways of catching fish without nets, and saving souls without ministers, will never answer, for they are not of God! They have been tried, and what has been the result of the trial? I know not a church in existence that has despised instrumentality, but it has come to an end within a few years, either by schism or decay. Where, upon the face of the earth, is there a single church that has existed 50 years where God's chosen instrumentality of ministry has been despised and rejected? "Ichabod!" is written upon their walls. God rejects them because they reject God's chosen way of working. Their attempts are flashes in the pan, meteoric lights, will-o'-the-wisps, swellings of proud flesh, bubbles of foam, here today and gone forever on the morrow!

2. Again, in both our texts there is another truth of God equally conspicuous, namely, that *means of themselves are utterly unavailing*. In the first case, you hear the confession, "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing." In the last case, you hear them answer to the question, "Children, have you no meat?" "No"—a sorrowful No. What was the reason for this? Were they not fishermen plying their special calling? Verily, they were no raw hands; they understood the work. Had they gone about the toil unskillfully? No. Had they lacked industry? No, they had *toiled*. Had they lacked perseverance? No, they had toiled *all night*. Was there a deficiency of fish in the sea? Certainly not, for as soon as the Master comes, there they are in large numbers. What, then, is the reason? Is it not because there is no power in the means of themselves apart from the presence of Christ? The Great Worker who does not discard the means would still have His people know that He uses instrumentality, not to glorify the instrument, but for the sake of glorifying Himself! He takes weakness into His hands and makes it strong, not that weakness may be worshipped, but that the strength may be adored, which even makes weakness subservient to its might. Brothers and sisters, let us as a church always keep this in mind, that without Christ we can do nothing! "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." Put no dependence upon societies, upon committees, upon ministries, upon anything that we can do. Let us work as if it all depended upon us; but let us come to God depending upon Him, knowing for sure, that it does not rest with us, but with Him alone! Let us send forth the missionaries to the heathen; let us send forth our men into the dark streets and lanes of London; let us scatter tracts; let us distribute the Word of God; let us send forth preachers by scores from our "School of the prophets," but when this is done, let us not sit still and say, "Now, it is all accom-

plished, good must come of it." No, Lord, unless Your blessing descends from on high, as well might we have done nothing, for no eternal results can follow!

How often this drives me to my knees! The surprising work which God is doing in connection with this place lifts up my heart with joy; but then, the fear lest it all should come to nothing for lack of His blessing casts my spirit to the very earth. You will remember, I dare say, that one brother was moved, some time ago, to distribute a volume of the sermons preached here to every student in Oxford and Cambridge. After that had been done, and some 200,000 sermons had been distributed, he then gave them to every member of Parliament, to every peer of the realm, and to princes, kings and emperors of Europe, and having accomplished that work, he has another in hand of great magnitude! Dear friends, as I think of these books traveling everywhere among high and low, the rich and poor, in all places of the land, my heart is glad; but then, if God withholds the blessing, as well had they never been born in the press and circulated by human hand! What good can they do? Let the net be ever so broad, ever so strong, and let it be ever so industriously cast into the sea, yet, we shall toil all the night and take nothing unless the Master comes to bless the work! Let us, then, be always in prayer for the blessing! Let us remember that we have done nothing until we have prayed over what we have done, let us consider that all the seed we have put into the ground is put there for worms to eat, unless we have dropped into the soil the preserving grain of prayer to keep that other grain alive! We shall have harvests, if we wait on God for them, but after all our sowing, if we look to the soil, the seed, or the sower, we shall see nothing for our pains!

3. Thirdly, there is clearly taught in both these miracles the fact that it is *Christ's presence that confers success*. Christ sat in Peter's boat. It was His will that by a mysterious influence the fish were drawn to the net, as though He had a hook, a secret hook in each of their jaws, could stop them in their sportive leaps, and hurry them all to one common spot. It was His presence on the dry land, when He spoke from off the shore to His toiling disciples out yonder and said, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat"—it was His presence that drew the fish to the place where they were taken. Oh, brothers and sisters, we must learn this—that it is Christ's presence in the midst of the church that is the church's power—the shout of a King in the midst of her! It is the presence of Christ's great representative, the Holy Spirit that is to give the church force! "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." There is the attraction. The Spirit gives the power, and we must tarry until we get it; and when we have it, then we cannot preach in vain, for we become "a savor of life unto life" to those who hear. Christians, Christ's presence with you must be your power! Be much in fellowship with Him; catch much of His Spirit; meditate much upon His sufferings; keep close to His person; and then, wherever you go, there shall be a power about you which even your adversaries shall be compelled to acknowledge! Oh, that we had more of Christ's presence in us as a church! Lift up your hearts for it. If Christ is here at all, let us not grieve Him. "I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up nor awake my love till He pleases." And if He

is not here, let us rise from the bed of our sloth and go forth and seek Him, crying, "Oh, You whom my soul loves, tell me where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon!" And if you find Him, I charge you hold Him and let Him not go till you bring Him into your mother's house, into the chamber of her that bore you, even the Church of Christ. There, will we hold Him, there, will we embrace Him, and He shall show to us His loves.

4. In both instances, the *success* which attended the instrumentality through Christ's presence *developed human weakness*. We do not see human weakness more in non-success than in success. In the first instance, in the success, you see the weakness of man, for the net breaks and the ships begin to sink, and Simon Peter falls down with—"Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He did not know so much about that till his boat was full; but the very abundance of God's mercy made him feel his own nothingness! In the last case, they were scarcely able to draw the net because of the multitude of fishes. Brothers, if you or I would know to the fullest extent what utter nothings we are, if the Lord shall give us success in winning souls, we shall soon find it out! As we see first one, and then another, and then scores and then hundreds, brought to the Lord Jesus, we shall say, "Who has begotten me these? How can such wonders be worked by me?" And we shall fall prostrate before the footstool of sovereign grace, and confess that we are unworthy of such amazing favors! Let the church spread, let her conquests be many, let her overrun whole provinces with her heavenly arms, and instead of man becoming more famous, man shall sink lower and lower, and it shall be more and more fully perceived that it is the Lord! Little works, such as have been common in our churches for years, where twos and threes are added, are quite consistent with great self-congratulation, and so is utter barrenness. Mark the pompous carriage of many a fruitless preacher and see if it is not so. Let the Lord make bare His arm and the man humbles himself in the dust, for when hundreds are gathered in, this cannot be the minister, this is the finger of God! The man is forgotten, then, in the very abundance of his success, and the Lord, alone, is magnified in that day! Oh, that God would do in the Churches of England some great and stupendous works by all His ministers! Then, would they discover their own weakness and then, would the name of God be glorified! You frequently meet with the observation, if a man is successful in winning souls, "I am afraid he will grow proud—how we ought to pray that he may be kept humble!" Brothers and sisters, that is a very necessary prayer for anybody; but it is no more necessary for the man who is successful than for the unsuccessful one; in fact, it is an assumption of pride on any person's part to think that he has less need to pray against pride than any other man. Think not that when the church prospers, it becomes necessarily proud. No, the very fullness of the boat makes it sink, and the very abundance of the miracle makes us cry out the more, "It is the Lord," for we feel that it could not have been of man, for it is out of man's reach to have accomplished such wonders!

So far, then, there is a likeness running through the whole. Means must be used—means alone, unavailing; Christ's presence gives the suc-

cess! That success develops human weakness, and leads to the exclamation—"It is the Lord!"

II. Having, then, shown the likeness, you will be still more interested in REMARKING THE DISSIMILARITY.

Allow us to say in the commencement, that we think the first picture represents the Church of God as we see it; the second represents it as it really is; the first pictures to us, the visible; the second the invisible. Luke tells us what the crowd sees. John tells us what Christ showed to His disciples, alone. The first is common truth which the multitude may receive, the next is special mystery revealed only to spiritual minds. Observe, then, carefully, the points of divergence.

1. First, there is a difference in the orders given. In the first, it is, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." In the second it is, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat." The first is Christ's order to every minister; the second is the secret work of His Spirit in the word. The first shows us that the ministry is to fish anywhere and everywhere. All the orders that the Christian has, as to his preaching, is, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your net." He is not to single out any particular character; he is to preach to everybody, sensible sinners and insensible sinners. He is to preach to the dead dry bones of the valley as well as to the living souls. He is not to look where the fish are, but just to throw the net in, doing as his Master tells him, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Those ministers who preach only to the elect should remember this! Our business is to include all sorts of fish, and not to be particular about where we are, but just splash the net in. What if we are in town, or city, or village? What if we are among the rich or poor, learned or illiterate? What if we are among the debauched or immoral? We have nothing to do with that—our duty is the same, to "Launch out into the deep, and let down the net"—that is all. Christ will find the fish—it is no business of ours! The secret truth is that, when we are doing this, the Lord knows how to guide us, so that we "cast the net on the right side of the boat." That is the secret and invisible work of the Spirit, whereby He so adapts our ministry, which is in itself general, that He makes it particular and special! We speak to all, and He speaks to some. We blow the trumpet, but only the bankrupt debtors hear it—only those who are truly of the Spirit of God know the joyful sound and rejoice therein! *We* cannot single them out, but God can. We thrust in the blessed loadstone of the gospel, and that heavenly magnet has an affinity to some hearts which God has quickened, so, that as many as were ordained unto eternal life, believe! The apostles preached to the crowd, but the Lord God, the Holy Spirit, who had decreed the salvation of His chosen, sent the Word home with power to the chosen and separated ones! What a joy it is to think that we always have a picked congregation here, for the Lord has picked them! Though they are crowded together promiscuously—here the good, and there the bad, all sorts mingled and mixed together—yet, God brings them in according to His eternal purpose, and all the while, there is a core of chosen souls inside the mass of the congregation to whom God is applying the Word. We cast the net, after all, on the right side of the boat and we do find it full!

2. In the first instance, you will clearly see that there is a distinct plurality. The fishermen have nets—in the plural; they have boats—in the plural. There is plurality of agency employed. Each man seems to come out distinctly. In the next case, it is one. There are many men, but they are all in *one boat*. They unitedly drag the net, and it is but *one net*—there is no division, it is all one. Now, this is the visible and the invisible. To us, the means that God makes use of to bring sinners to Himself are various. Sometimes, we are in one boat trying to catch all the fish we can. There is another boat over yonder, and they are trying to do the same. We ought to consider them as being partners, and whenever our boat gets too full, we should beckon to our partners in the other boat to come and help us. We ought not to look upon those brothers who differ from us as though they were emptying the sea, and competing against us. The more the merrier! The more men to do good, the more will the Lord's name be praised! I think, in many of our towns, where some of our whining brothers say that all good people should go to one chapel, that it is far better to have three or four. I question whether the plurality of agency involved in denominations is not a great benefit and blessing! Instead of, in the slightest degree, standing out against my brothers for carrying out their convictions, I praise them and look upon them as partners in another boat. Our denominational distinctions help to keep us awake, thus, we stir one another up, and do far more good in the world than would be the case if there were only a nominal church. God would have the agency diverse. There must be several nets, and there must be several fishermen, and these fishermen in different boats. So far as we are able to see, there will always be a Paul and a Barnabas, who cannot get on together; there will always be outward divisions in the ministry; and I avow myself the advocate and lover of these things! As I said last Sunday, the thing called Sectarianism I do not disown but maintain! [See Sermon #442, Volume 8—GOD'S WILL AND MAN'S WILL—read/download, by God's grace, all 63 volumes of CH Spurgeon sermons, and over 574 Spanish translations free of charge at www.spurgeongems.org]

But let us look to the inward. In John, they are all in one boat, all fishing together, and all dragging one net. Ah, brothers and sisters, this is what is really the fact. We do not see it, but all God's ministers are dragging one net, and all God's Church is in one boat! Oh, I bless God for that sweet doctrine! It is no use striving after outward uniformity; we shall never see it. Neither the texture of the human mind nor the will of God require it. It is of no use to contend against the diversities which exist in the great visible church; I do not know that these differences are evils. They are the natural results of man's finite character, and must and will exist to the end of the chapter. It is the unity of the Spirit; it is unity in Christ Jesus; it is unity in love to one another that God would have us regard! Let us learn this unity from the fact, that after all, though we may look as if we differed, yet, if we are God's ministers, there is only one ministry! If we are God's Church, there is only one Church in the world! There is only one spouse of the Lord Jesus; there is only one fold and one Shepherd. Though to our eyes it will always be so, two boats, or 20 boats; two nets, yes, 50 nets, yet to Him who sees all things better than we do, there is only one boat and one net; and they shall all, who are taken in that one net, be safely brought to shore!

3. Thirdly, there is another difference. In the first case, how many fish were caught? The text says, "A great multitude." In the second case, a great multitude is taken, too, but they are all counted and numbered: "An hundred and fifty and three." Luke does not tell us how many were caught the first time, for there were some of them not worth the counting; but the second time, you will perceive the exact number is recorded, "an hundred and fifty and three." What was *Peter's* reason for counting them? We cannot tell. But I think I know why the Lord made him do it. It was to show us that, though in the outward instrumentality of gathering the people into the church, the number of the saved is to us a matter of which we know nothing definitely; yet, secretly and invisibly the Lord has counted them even to the odd one. He knows well how many the gospel net shall bring in! See where the Word is preached what great multitudes are brought in! Thousands, tens of thousands are added to the different Churches of Christ, and make a profession of their faith. It was impossible to reckon all over Christendom how many have been taken in the outward net of the visible Church of Christ. But, brothers, it is quite possible for it to be known of God how many shall be brought at last, and how many now are in the *invisible* Church. He has counted them, foreordained their number, fixed them, and settled them! The number, "an hundred and fifty and three" seems to me to represent a large definite number. They shall be in heaven a number that no man can number, for God's elect are not few; but they shall be a number whom God can number, for "The Lord knows them who are His." They shall be a number certain and fixed, which shall neither be diminished nor increased, but shall abide the same according to His purpose and will! Now, I, as a preacher, have nothing to do with counting fish. My business is with the great multitude. Splash goes the net again! Oh, Master! You who have taught us to throw the net and bring in a multitude, guide into it the hundred and fifty and three!

4. Yet again, notice another difference. The fish that were taken the first time appear to have been of all sorts. The net was broken, and therefore, doubtless some of them got out; there were some so little that they were not worth eating, and doubtless were thrown away. "They shall gather the good into vessels and throw the bad away." In the second case, the net was full of great fishes; they were all great fishes, all good for eating, all the 153 were worth keeping, there was not one little fellow to be thrown back into the deep again! The first gives us the outward and visible effect of the ministry. We gather into Christ's Church a great number. And there will always be in that number some who are not good, who are not really called of God. Sometimes we have church meetings in which we have to throw the bad away. We have many blissful meetings where it is gathering in the fish—and what big hauls of fish has God given to us! Glory be to His name! But, at other times, we have to sit down and look our fish over, and there are some who must be thrown away; neither God nor man can endure them. Thus is it in the outward and visible church. Let no man be surprised if the tares grow up with the wheat—it is the order of things, it must be so. Let none of us wonder if there are wolves in sheep's clothing—it always will be so. There was a Judas among the twelve; there will be deceivers among us to the end of

the chapter! Not so the invisible Church—the Church within the Church—the holy of holies within the temple. In that, there is none to throw away! No; the Lord who brought them into the net, brought the right sort in; He did not bring one hypocrite or apostate! And having brought them in to the exact number of one hundred and fifty and three, they cannot one of them get out again, but they are kept in that net, for that net does not break! They are in the secret invisible Church of Christ, and they cannot get out of it, let them do what they may! They may even give up their nominal profession, and thus, get out of the visible Church, but they cannot give up their secret possession; they cannot escape from the secret and invisible Church, and they shall all be kept there till the net is dragged to land, and the whole 153 saved!

5. Yet again, you notice in the first case the net broke, and in the second case, it did not. Now, in the first case, in the visible church, the net breaks. My brothers are always calling out, "The net is broken!" No doubt, it is a bad thing for nets to break; but you need not wonder at it. We cannot just now, when the net is full, stop to mend it; it will break. It is the necessary consequence of our being what we are that the net will break. What do I mean by this? Why, that instead of having some one denomination, we have 20 or thirty! The net is broken. I do not at all grieve over it. I believe it is what must be as long as we are flesh and blood. For until you get a set of perfect men, you will never have anything but these divisions! The net must break and will break. But glory be to God, the net does not break after all in reality, for though the visible Church may seem to be torn to pieces, the invisible Church is one! God's chosen, God's called, God's quickened, God's blood-bought, they are one in heart, and one in soul, and one in spirit. Though they may wear different names among men, yet, they still wear before God their Father's name written on their foreheads; and they are, and always must be, one! You perceive, brothers and sisters that I do not advise you to strive for a nominal unity. The more you strive after that, the more divisions there will be. Certain brethren left many of our denominations and formed, they said, a church that would not be a sect. All they did was to make a sect the most sectarian of sects—the narrowest and most bitter of cliques, though containing some of the best men, some of the best Christians, and the ablest writers of the times! You cannot make a visible uniformity, it is beyond your power—the net is broken. There now, take care of the fish and leave the net alone, but still maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of perfectness. Take care that you are not a schismatic in your heart, that you hold no heresy in your soul, that you are one with all them who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; and in this, you will soon see that the net is not broken, and that the saints are one. Ah, I bless God that, when once we get with God's people—it does not matter what they are—we soon find the net is not broken! There are many godly clergymen of the Church of England with whom I commune with the greatest joy, and I have found the net was not broken; and in conversing with brothers and sisters of all denominations, some who from doctrine, some who from sentiment, stand wide as the poles asunder, I have still found and known that there was such a real and perfect harmony of heart that the net was not broken! I do not believe that charity would ev-

er have had such perfect work in Christ's Church if it had not been for our being divided into tribes, like the 12 tribes of old. It is no charity for me to love a brother who thinks as I think—I cannot very well help it! But for me to love a dear brother who differs from me in some points—why there is exercise and room for my charity; and as God has left trials and troubles to exercise faith, I believe He has left us in many doctrinal difficulties on purpose—to exercise our love till the day shall come when we shall all grow to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus! The net is not broken, brothers and sisters, do not believe it, and when you read about this denomination and that, do not be grieved at these names and tribes, but rather, thank God for them! Remember, that is the visible church and the net is broken; but there is an invisible Church where the net is not broken, where we are one in Christ, and must be one forever!

There are several other points of difference, but I think we have hardly time to enlarge upon them. I will only hint at them. In the first case, which is the visible church, you see the human weakness becomes the strongest point. There is the boat, ready to sink, there is the net, broken, and there are the men, all out of heart, frightened, amazed, and begging the Master to go away. In the other case, it is not so at all. There is human weakness, but still they are made strong enough. They have no strength to spare, as you perceive, but still they are strong enough, the net does not break, the boat goes slowly to land dragging the fish; and then, lastly, Simon Peter pulls the fish to shore. He must have been strong. They were just strong enough to get their fish to shore. So, in the visible church of Christ you will often have to mourn over human weakness—but in the invisible Church, God will make His servants just strong enough—just strong enough to drag their fish to shore! The agencies, means, instrumentalities, shall have just sufficient force to land every elect soul in heaven, that God may be glorified!

Then, notice, in the first case, in the visible church, they launched out into the deep. In the second case, it says they were not far from the shore, but a little way. So, today, our preaching seems to us to be going out into the great stormy deep after fish. We appear to have a long way to reach before we shall bring these precious souls to land. But, in the sight of God, we are not far from shore; and when a soul is saved, it is not far from heaven. To us, there are years of temptation, and trial, and conflict; but to God, the Most High, it is finished—"It is done." They are saved—they are not far from shore!

In the first case, the disciples had to forsake all and follow Christ. In the second, they sat down to feast with Him at the dainty banquet which He had spread. So in the visible church today, we have to bear trial and self-denial for Christ, but glory be to God, the eyes of faith perceive that we shall soon drag our net to land, and then, the Master will say, "Come and dine," and we shall sit down and feast in His presence, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God!

III. The time is gone and I close by NOTICING ONE AMONG MANY LESSONS WHICH THE TWO NARRATIVES IN COMMON SEEM TO TEACH.

In the first case, Christ was in the boat. Oh, blessed be God, Christ is in His Church, though she launches out into the deep! In the second

case, Christ was on the shore. Blessed be God, Christ is in heaven. He is not here, but He has risen; He has gone up on high for us. But whether He is in the Church, or whether He is on the shore in heaven, *all our night's toiling shall, by His presence, have a rich reward!* That is the lesson. Mother, will you learn it? You have been toiling long for your children. It has been night with you as yet. They give no evidence of divine grace. Rather, they give many signs of sin, and they grieve your spirit. Your night's toiling shall have an end; you shall, at last, cast the net on the right side of the boat! Sunday school teacher, you have been diligently laboring long, and with but little fruit. Be not discouraged, the Master will not let you work in vain; in due season, you shall reap if you faint not; and as these disciples had a great sea harvest, so shall you have a harvest of souls! Brother minister, you have been plowing some barren rock, and as yet, no joyful sheaves have made your heart glad. You shall, doubtless, "Come again, rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you." And you, O Church of God, travailing for souls, meeting daily in prayer, pleading with men that they will come to Christ, what if they are not saved yet? The morning comes, the night is far spent, and the Master, Himself shall soon appear! And though He may not find faith on the earth, yet, His advent shall bring to His Church the success for which she has waited—such success that, as a woman remembers no more her travail because a man is born into the world, so shall the Church remember no more her toils, her efforts and her prayers, because Christ's kingdom has come, and His will is done on earth even as it is in heaven. Work, dear friends! If there are any of you who are not working, *begin now;* if there are any of you not saved as yet, the Lord grant that when the Word is preached, you may be caught in it as in a net! We throw it out once this morning; we hope to throw it again this evening. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," for "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believes not shall be damned." Flee to Christ! Escape from the wrath to come! May the Spirit apply that word to you, and lead you to the place where high on Calvary, with bleeding hands and feet, the Savior dies! One look at Him and you are saved! Look, sinner, and live! God save you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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THE PORTION OF THE UNGODLY
NO. 444

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Behold, they shall be as stubble, the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame; it shall not be a coal to be warmed by, nor a fire to sit before."
Isaiah 47:14.

THIS text is part of a terrible description of God's judgment upon Babylon and Chaldea. The prophet had clearly written out the indictment of the Lord against that tyrannical people, and having proved their guilt, he pronounces their sentence. He accused them of showing no mercy to the inheritance of the Lord which, in His wrath, He had given into their hands. He charges them with pride and boastfulness, for Chaldea had said in her heart, "I am, and there is none beside me," and Babylon had boasted, "I shall be a lady forever; I shall see no sorrow." He testifies against their boldness and presumption; for they were given to pleasures and lived carelessly, expecting no ill. Thus, said the prophet, speaking in the name of the Lord, "You have trusted in your wickedness—you have said, 'None sees me.' Your wisdom and your knowledge, it has perverted you; and you have said in your heart, I am, and none else beside me." On account of these iniquities the destruction of Chaldea and Babylon was to be sudden, terrible and complete! They were to be so utterly destroyed, that there should not be one single comfortable reflection connected with their state. There should be a fire to consume, but none where to keep warm; the burning should not be as when wood crackles in the flame, when glowing ashes or a charred log may be left, but they should be as stubble, utterly consumed, without vestige or remembrance! How to the very letter this has been fulfilled, let the modern discoveries of our great travelers tell. We need no better evidence of the truthfulness and divinity of Scripture, than that which is furnished by prophecies which have been fulfilled, in lands concerning which we had no knowledge until of late. In the good Providence of God there have been dug out from mounds of rubbish and heaps of decayed matter, slabs and stones, bearing in their carvings and inscriptions, the most amazing proofs that the Lord has said, and has fulfilled it; that He has spoken, and it has come to pass. O virgin daughter of Babylon! You have been made to sit on the ground; there is no throne—O daughter of the Chaldeans! You are no more tender and delicate, but your nakedness is uncovered, and your shame is seen. Sit silently and get into darkness, O daughter of Chaldea, for you shall no more be called the lady of kingdoms.

It is a truth beyond dispute, that God's justice is not partial; that the description of the destruction which He awards to one class of sinners, is a most fair picture of what He will do with others, for God has two or three ways of dealing with men in His justice. He has not many different weights and measures, for these things are an abomination unto the Lord! He lays righteousness to the line, and judgment to the plummet, and He awards vengeance unto impenitent men by an established and an invariable rule. So, then, the ruin of Chaldea is to us, today, a representation and metaphorical description, of the destruction, which shall surely come upon impenitent sinners, in that day when the Lord comes out of His place to judge His enemies, and to rid Himself of His adversaries!

It is with great trembling of heart that I come to this subject this morning. I have preached to you, lo, these many months in this Tabernacle, and I have delighted most to lift up my Master's cross, and to speak of the sufficiency of His blood, and of the fullness and freeness of His divine grace. But, there are times when the Lord's hand lies upon us, and we cannot refuse to speak of His terrible things in judgment. I feel today somewhat like the apostle when he said, "Knowing therefore *the terror of Lord,* we persuade men . . . as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's place, be you reconciled to God." We believe that the Lord would not have said so much about the terrible things of His law and justice in Scripture—for He has said more about them than any other subject, except the cross—if it had not been that there is a healthy use to be made of the vengeance which the Lord executes upon the wicked, and that it will be both for the benefit of the righteous and for the awakening of the ungodly, sometimes to thunder out the sentence of the Lord! Be it, therefore, known unto you, O sons of men, that Ebal and Gerizim still stand, both the blessing and the curse—and either the one or the other must be yours!

To look at our text at first sight, the figures seem contradictory, for the first metaphor is, "They shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame." But, the next figure is apparently opposite to it—"It shall not be a coal to be warmed by, or a fire to sit before." We shall first *take the first figure* and *then the second,* and thirdly, we shall close by endeavoring to dwell upon that important word with which the verse begins, which is put there like a hand in the margin to draw our attention to it, put there as a sort of signal, hung out from heaven, to tell us, that there is something here upon which we ought to meditate with attention—I mean the word *"Behold!"*

I. With reference to the FIRST SENTENCE. You will see in reading it over, that one of the most striking thoughts which it conveys to the mind is this, *that the punishment of the wicked will be easily inflicted.* "They shall be as stubble." Nothing can be easier to kindle than stubble when it is fully dry. Strike the match, and the whole is on a blaze, for it bears within itself the materials of an inferno. So shall it be with impenitent

sinners; it shall not be hard for God to visit them with vengeance, for they bear in their own hearts the material of their punishment. Oh, ungodly and impenitent man, there is that in yourself today which, left alone and permitted to ripen, will bring hell upon you! We read in Scripture of the worm that dies not, but that worm may be bred in the corruption of the sinner's lusts. We read of the fire that never shall be quenched, but that fire will find its fuel in the hearts of lost spirits. We read of the pit that has no bottom, but sin has dug a pit for itself of fathomless depth. Sinner, the Lord needs not to forge huge chains of iron, or build cells of darkness; He shall find in sinners the means of their punishment! He needs not to make tormentors for you, you shall be your own executioner; from no bitter herbs need He distil your draught of woe, you yourself shall mingle the cup which you shall drink; the racks of torture and the whips of torment your own soul shall make! Hear me, man, *you have in yourself the power of memory,* and that power shall become a vehicle of sorrow to you! Memory shall look back upon all your past sins, and each of these, though now they seem to you to be glossy as the scales of the serpent, shall sting you and infuse into your veins a worse poison than the viper ever knew! Your memory shall recall the pleasures which you did once enjoy, but from which you are banished forever. Your memory shall remind you of the warnings you did once receive, and of the loving invitations which sounded in your ears. When it is all over with you, your memory shall be stronger than it is now. You shall have abundant time to remember every circumstance of your ruin; and your memory, enlarged and strengthened, shall bring up the record of every neglected Sunday, of every secret sin, yes, of those forgotten words of profanity, those secret iniquities which have been buried deep by time, but which shall be disinterred by the hand of eternity. Even now, at the very recollection of your sin, your cheek reddens with shame; but when memory gets a voice that will be heard, then shall you indeed become pale, and your knees shall knock together with fear! The voice which says, "Son, remember," is as terrible as the pouring out of the vials of the wrath of Almighty God!

You have, besides your memory, *a conscience;* a conscience which you have strived to silence; but, even drugged and gagged as it is, it sometimes makes you feel unhappy. When conscience smote the heart of Judas, you remember, he went out and hanged himself; but even the conscience of Judas was not so awake, as will be the understanding and judgment of the sinner, when condemned forever! You will then find, sinner, that you cannot mitigate the guilt of sin! You will then see sin in its true colors. You will not then be so apt at making excuses for it; the hand of truth shall rend all those rags away. You will find then, that conscience will not be trifled with as it is now. Now you try to make it hold the scales with an unjust hand, but then it will deliberately award you the due reward of your deeds. O, man, your memory and your conscience shall be as two great millstones grinding you to powder, or as two con-

tending winds which shall with their tempestuous strivings break you in pieces, as the ships of Tarshish are broken by the north wind! Then, added to your memory, and to your conscience, there shall come, *your increased knowledge*. You know enough now to leave you without excuse; but then your knowledge shall increase so as to leave you without pretense of apology. You shall then perceive the craft of the tempter who deluded you. You shall then see the blackness and the filthiness of sin as you do not see it now. Then shall you understand the greatness and the goodness of the God whom you have despised; you shall then discern the glory of the heaven which you have lost; you shall then begin to get an idea of that eternity which shall roll over your head forever! Your knowledge shall swell; your mind shall be strengthened; you shall grow; you shall have time enough for development; and all this increased light shall be but an increase of pain to your eyes, and all this increase of wisdom shall be but a fresh source of misery for your impenitent spirit! Believe me, man, I speak not thus that I may agitate you merely for the sake of causing you pain. God forbid I should do that! But oh, if I can but awaken you; if but some thunder-clap may awaken you before you have slept yourself into hell, I shall be but too happy, and you will not think my words too rough if they are the means of bringing you to the knowledge of Christ, and of eternal life! Why, do you not know, man, that your sin, itself, without anything besides, will be enough to make you as stubble to the flame? What is sin on earth? Is it not the mother of misery? Does a man ever do wrong without smarting for it? And those sins which are committed by the body, do they not entail, even on earth, their own punishment and doom? Then if sin in the bud here is bitter, what will it be when it is full-blown? Sin bears its punishment in its own heart! Besides, *think of your companions*. Shut up 50 drunkards and profane men together, and would they not soon make a hell for themselves without any interposition of divine power? What will it be when they are bound up in bundles; when the tens of thousands of those who obey not Christ, shall find themselves in their own place? Oh, they will be as the flesh in the seething-pot, as the oil in the cauldron, as the firewood in the flame, as the coals in the fire! They shall be tormenting and be tormented; exciting one another to worse sins, and direr blasphemies, and so increasing in each other the horror of the great darkness which results from separation from God and enmity against Him. You shall find, sinner that God needs send no devils to torment you; your sins shall be devils enough, your companions in the pit of hell shall be fiends enough, while your memory, your conscience, and your knowledge, shall add such fuel to the flame that you shall, indeed, be as stubble cast into the fire!

That is the first truth of God clearly set forth in the text; but secondly; and solemnly, there is also another very plainly taught, namely, *that this punishment shall be most searching and terrible*. The metaphor of fire is used in Scripture because it is that which, of all things causes the most pain, and is the most searching and trying. One would suppose that

death by fire must be one of the most painful that can be endured, and the pangs of burning reach to the very inwards of human life. The judgment of God is quick and powerful, it shall search your inwards; it shall reach the secret parts of your belly; there shall be no part of your frame or of your heart that shall be free from its inroads. As fire consumes, and so reaches to the very essence of things, so shall the wrath to come reach to the very essence and subsistence of the soul! It shall be utter and overwhelming destruction which shall totally consume everything like joy and hope; it shall be a penetrating and a piercing of the very veins and the marrow of the man, and he shall not be able to escape. In Scripture this wrath to come is sometimes spoken of as the second death. Imagine a man dying, dying in pangs, and then rising again to die again, and so continually dying and yet living—expiring and yet breathing—perishing and yet existing; being dissolved, but yet, being still in the body! You have now before you, then, the Biblical view of punishment—"the second death."—

"To linger in eternal death,
Yet death forever fly."

O soul, there are no words that human eloquence can ever find, however dreadful, that can reach the thousandth part of this great argument! No language that was ever uttered by the sternest prophet, no dreadful denunciations that ever flowed from the most burning lips, could ever attain to the tremendous terror of the wrath to come! I know men say of God's preachers, that at times they speak too harshly. sirs, we cannot speak half harshly enough! We tell you again, even weeping, that our poor feeble words cannot portray your danger! We cannot ourselves even feel the danger as we would wish; but oh, if our lips had language, if we could but speak as sometimes we feel, we would move you till you should neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, until you had sought and found a refuge in the wounds of Christ! But we are so dull, or else your hearts are so hard, that when we speak we are like men who throw stones against a wall, and the stones come back upon us! Oh, that instead, we might be this morning like the man who drew the bow at a venture, that the arrow may find a place in the joints of your harness, where your heart may be wounded with the arrows of the King!

Thirdly, when we look at our text, we see most evidently, that this destruction *will be most inevitable,* for the express words of the prophet are, "They shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame." There *is* hope now; there shall be no hope then. There is a new and living way now; there shall be no way then. The gate of mercy is open now; it shall be fast bolted forever then. There is a ladder which reaches from earth to heaven, but there is no ladder which reaches from hell to heaven. There is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would pass from them to us cannot, neither could we go to them, even if we would wish to venture there—

"Fixed is their everlasting state,

Could man repent, it is then too late!
Justice has closed mercy's door,
And God's long-suffering is no more!"

It is inevitable, we say. How can they avoid it? Man, have you strength to fight with the Most High? Can you defy the Eternal God to battle, and go forth in your weakness to meet the Lord God of Hosts? If so, *then* might you hope to escape, but then you would be God yourself, and Jehovah would be no God! But you are a puny man—a tooth-ache makes you tremble; a little feather in the wind makes you shake. You are a dying man; you have not power to keep yourself in life; your breath is in your nostrils, and wherein are you to be accounted of? Certain is it, then, that by your own power, you will not be able to escape out of the power of the flame! But, can you escape by your wit? Why, you have not wit enough now to fly to Christ; you have not wisdom enough now to look to Him. Where, then, could you find the wisdom that could invent another plan of salvation? The way of salvation by Christ, is the only one that even God's wisdom has revealed to us. No! Fool, you can never find another, nor in hell will you ever have the comfort of the hope of another, for there shall you understand, that no other foundation can man lay, than that which is laid—Jesus Christ the Righteous! Or do you think to escape from God by hiding from His presence? Ah, where will you go? Could you seek the heart of the mountains, God is there, for He, by His strength, sets them fast! If you could dive into the depths of the sea to seek its deep cavernous recesses, even there would He reach you, for His hand dug the channels of the ocean, and the strength of the sea is His, also! Would you try to escape behind the clouds of darkness?—

"Darkness and light in this agree—
Great God, they're both alike to Thee!
Your eyes can reach Your foes as soon
Through midnight shades as blazing noon!"

Or would you hope to fly beyond the range of the known universe? Man, He is there, for He fills all things! And, as it was said of the world in the days of the Caesars, that it was only one great prison for the offender, so that go where he might, Caesar would track him—so shall you find the universe, even could you escape from your prison, to be but one great den where the Eternal eye should see you, and the Eternal hand should reach you! No, there is no escape, there is no deliverance, and there is no means of avoiding sin's penalty, when life is over. It is "Escape from the wrath to come" *today;* but then escape shall be a thing unknown.

These three truths of God stand clearly enough in our text—that the punishment of the wicked will be easily inflicted, that it will be most dreadful in its character, and that it will be most inevitable. Do I speak to any here who say they do not believe it? Well, sir, I might only say this much to you—you profess to be a Christian nominally, do you not? And you, you say, live in a Christian land. Now, if so, if you do really believe this book to be the Word of God, then what can you say in denial of a future judgment? You must believe in the wrath to come, and in the gen-

eral judgment. If not, turn Turk; say so at once; turn infidel; or something of that kind; but never again pretend to be called a Christian, and live in a Christian land, and to be one of a Christian people! Never profess that, while you object to that which is one of the fundamental truths of revelation—one of these great things, about which, there can be no dispute among those who receive this book as being a revelation from God! But, you will tell me again, that you think I speak too harshly of it. O sirs, not half so harshly as Isaiah! Not half so plaintively as Jeremiah or Ezekiel, or in such telling words as did my blessed Master! The Lord Jesus, though the most loving of spirits, was the most stern of preachers! In His sermons, while there is everything that could melt and woo, there is no lack of the great and terrible thunderbolt, and the sounding forth of wrath to come, and the judgment which must await the impenitent! But again, you will say to me, why do you speak like that? Why not dwell upon more pleasant themes? Because, as the Lord, my God, lives, before whom I stand, I wish to be free of the blood of all men! What is it to win your applause today? Or, what is it to gain your censure? Do you think, sirs that the breath of your applause is that on which we live? Do you fancy that your opinion of our ministry is anything to us? No, not if God has sent us! If we are but what you may think us to be—impostors to please you—then, indeed, we should eschew all such subjects as these; we should be silent upon the hard sayings, and only prophesy smooth things. If we cared for popularity and such like, we should put these doctrines behind, and cry, "Peace, peace, and sew pillows to your armholes." But, as God has sent us, and as we know we must give an account of our ministry, we tell you that if you perish, it shall not be for lack of warning! And if you must go down to hell, it shall be with your eyes open! If you will have your sins, you shall know that you must have the punishment with them; and if you will reject Christ, and if you will despise Him, it shall be with this fact before you, that you did it willfully, knowing what you did, knowing that those who do such things shall not escape the just vengeance of God! Oh, may God but convince you by the spirit of His truth and the solemn realities of the judgment, and the wrath to come, and we shall need no excuse, and no apology; but you would rather think us to be false traitors to your souls if we did not boldly speak on these matters!

II. But, our text now changes its figure, and therefore we, still keeping to the same subject, change our mode of address. "Thus says the Lord, There shall not be a coal to be warmed by, nor a fire to sit before." By which is meant that there shall be nothing in hell that can give the sinner a moment's comfort. Nothing! Let me picture him there. The text says, "Behold," as though it were a thing to be seen with the eyes, and to be heard with the ears. Behold you, then, for a moment, a spirit cast away from God, and receiving the due reward of its deeds. That spirit, we say, has not a coal to warm itself, nor a single thing that can yield it a ray of joy. The soul lifts its eye to *heaven;* there are the glorified spirits

before the throne of God—but the sight of heaven affords no comfort to the lost in hell, for they say, "See what glory we have lost! What transcendent joys we have missed! What bliss we renounced, that we might have the mirth of an hour, and the misery of eternity!" And as they look up, they shall see some of their old companions there. Some who were once sinners like themselves, but who have sought for mercy through the precious blood, and having washed their robes in it, stand before the throne of God! And then, the lost ones shall wring their hands, and curse the day in which they were born, that they should have rejected the mercy which they heard proclaimed in their hearing, while others were saved; and this shall tend to make the contrast of their condition appear the more dreadful. And then, they will see there the poor tried saints of the Lord whom they were likely to mock, and they will say, "Ah, there is the man whom we despised; he reigns, and we suffer; Lazarus, the beggar that lay at our gate full of sores, and was licked of the dogs, is there in Abraham's bosom, and we are tormented in this flame." Soul, the thought of heaven shall fan the flames of hell! The sense of the glory of the righteous shall depress the spirit with a double woe; and at the thought of what you have lost, there shall always be in your ears a sound, "How are you fallen, O you son of the morning! How are you cast down from heaven, and brought into the depths of hell!" Nor when the spirit turns its eyes around upon *hell itself,* shall it see any reason for comfort there. I know there are some who say, "Well, if I am lost, there will be many more who will be." Ah, but the multitude of the damned will be no consolation to the damned! The more there are, the more wretched shall they be; for maybe, O reprobate, as you shall cast your eyes around, you will meet the eyes of the woman whom you did lead astray, and she will curse you to your face! Perhaps drunk as you are in your musings, you will see the lad whom you first took to the ale-house and taught to be a beast like yourself! Knaves, there shall you meet your partners in your trade! There shall the ungodly see eyes which shall look upon them glaring like eyes of fire, which they can never avoid—the eyes of those whom they duped, and deceived, and misled. Most horrible of all, must be the position of the professed minister of Christ, who did not preach the gospel, or who never cared for the souls of men! Oh, if such a lot should ever be mine, think of the million eyes of those in hell, every one of them darting flames of fire at the false preacher, who did not care for their souls! Better to be a devil, than to be a preacher who was untrue to his Master! Better to sink to hell as a prostitute, or as a thief, than to go to perdition as a clergyman or a minister, who has not preached the Word of God with all his might! There shall be no comfort in the company that they find there; neither heaven nor hell shall yield them a coal to be warmed by; nor, indeed, will they be able to find any comfort *in themselves, nor in their thoughts.*

Now, we sometimes find men who get comfort to themselves out of the doctrines of God's gospel. I have known a man come up to this house of

prayer, and under some soul-searching sermon, he has been alarmed, and he has gone home and sat with his finger upon his brow in thought, for a little season, and said, "You almost persuaded me to be a Christian." His heart seemed ready to break, but at last he has risen up and said, "If I am to be damned, I shall be damned, and if I am to be saved, I shall be saved," and he has made the doctrine of predestination a coverlet in which he might wrap himself and sleep comfortably. Souls, you shall not be able to do that then! In the world to come, no doctrine will be able to yield you a moment's comfort! Instead of it, your thoughts shall be a case of knives, cutting and piercing your souls, and every truth of God you have ever known, yes, and every falsehood that you have once believed, shall be spikes upon the bed where you seek to find some peace! Indeed, there is never any real joy to the sinner even here, when his mind is awake, and certainly there will be none hereafter. Why, the greatest torture to which you could put some men would be to make them *think!* How do some of our men live? They drink hard, and go to bed drunk; they wake up in the morning, and they are very low and miserable; and then, they must have a little drink again to lift their spirits up, and, when they have lost their reason, they get happy! But, if they would sit down and think awhile over their present estate, they would kill themselves! This is how many a one has been made a suicide. When they have had a moment's sober thought, they have looked at themselves; and if this on earth has brought men to the noose, and to the knife, what will it do in hell, when, forever, forever, and forever, their thoughts shall revolve, and revolve, and revolve again, upon sin and its punishment, upon divine grace despised, upon mercy rejected; upon an angry God, and upon the all-devouring wrath, which has come forth from His presence?

But again—the sinner shall certainly find *no comfort in God*. Mark you, if the sinner could say *there* what he now says *here*, he would have comfort in God; for now he says, "If God is to treat me thus in the world to come, it will be unjust." Ah, you will not think so *then*, for this shall be the sting of it all—"I deserve it. I deserve it. I brought this on myself!" You may mutter now about the hardness of God, and call Him a cruel taskmaster—but when your better sense gets the upper hand, as it will do—then you will be compelled against your will to acknowledge that He is not too severe; that He is not too hard with you! Oh, if the lost spirits in hell could but believe God to be unjust, their pains would cease! But, it is the conviction that He *is* just, and that every pang and every throe they have willfully brought upon themselves by despising Him, and running in a false way—it is that conviction, which will be the hell of hell! No, more, sinner; when you are there, you will not be able to say that God has broken a single promise that He ever made to you! If there is a soul in hell that could say, "I sought the Lord, but He would not be found of me"—if he could say—"I did trust Christ, but He did not save me." If he could say, "I did seek and pray, but He would not hear"—if he could say, "I did humble myself, and leave my sin; I did come to Him, and say, Je-

sus, Savior, pity me. Have mercy upon me through Your precious blood." If he could say that, and then add, "And yet I was not saved"—then that man would have no hell, because he would always have some excuse. But, there is not one among you that will ever have an excuse! If you are lost, it will be because you did not pray! And if you perish, it will be because you did not repent! And if you are cast away, it will be because you would not believe in Christ! You shall find no comfort in any broken promises; but those which are now the hope and joy of the penitent, shall then be your dread and fear. Moreover, you sometimes comfort yourselves with the thought that you cannot help it, that it must be so, and therefore, you are comforted in it. But you will get no comfort in that thought in the world to come, for then you will clearly perceive that your sin was willfully undertaken, that you did it to please yourself, that you followed your own wayward, headstrong will, instead of bowing to the will of God! O, there is nothing in God, nothing in His promises, nothing in His threats, nothing in His Word, which will at the last great day, yield a coal for the sinner to be warmed by, or a fire by which he can sit before! It will be black, black despair, and not a solitary ray of light shall come from God to that soul!

But further—the sinner shall then find no comfort *in the past*. I know he will look back upon his past joys, but what will he say of them? He will call himself 10,000 fools, to think, that for such little paltry joys as those, he should have lost eternal bliss! The drunk will doubtless remember his cups, but, it will be to call himself an idiot, to think, for a little drink, and the sweet excitement of his palate for an hour, he should have damned himself to all eternity! Ah, and the very thought of those enjoyments, will act as a foil to set forth the present state in which he is; he will have the sin without the pleasure of it! The dregs, but not the wine! The bitterness, the worm-wood, and the gall, but not the froth upon the cup! *That* he has had in time, but, now, he has to drink the bitterness to all *eternity!* As he looks back, instead of comfort, O sirs, what agony the past will give you! Should I be so unhappy as to have in my congregation this morning, one man who shall at last perish, I do not doubt, that this present assembly will flash before his eyes. Ah, then he will say, "I remember how the preacher spoke; whatever he did not say, he did warn me to flee from the wrath to come; however feebly he put it, I ought not to have thought of that, but I should have remembered the truth and my interest in it." Oh, by these tears which these eyes must shed, and by the emotions which this heart does feel for your soul's salvation, I plead with you—do not remain in such a state, that when you die you will have to say, "He cared more for me than I cared for myself; he thought more of my conversion than I ever thought of it; and he wished more to see me brought to eternal life than I have ever done." Oh, let not the past become as bitter as this! Young man shall your mother's tears and your father's prayers, when they sought to bring you to Christ, make a part of the bitter remembrances of eternity? And you, my dear

hearers, who sit here constantly, must these seats cry out against you? Must this house of prayer bear witness against you? Must I appear at the great bar of God, and say "My Lord, it is just; I did warn them. They *were* prayed for; they *were* wept over; they *were* wooed; as a mother loves her children, so has my soul loved them"? Must it be so? God forbid! But it must, unless you repent! "Except a man be born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And what remains then, but that he must be driven from the presence of God to the place where hope can never come? God have mercy on you, for if He does not, you shall find not a coal to warm you in the recollections of the past!

Then, when that soul is lost, it certainly shall find no coal to warm itself by in its *condition in the present*. Now, ungodly men get some degree of comfort from the very ruin of their state. I mean this—some of them are presumptuous. They say, "What do I care? I will defy all this. Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" And this gives some sort of comfort here; but you will not be able to face it out thus in eternity. The most brazen among the ungodly crew shall then hide his face for shame; like Belshazzar, his knees shall knock together, and his loins be loosed. Then shall the stout-hearted fail, and the soul of the mighty shall be bowed down. Ignorance, too, gives many men comfort here. They do not know their state, and so they are at peace. But you will have no ignorance then—you will know, even as you are known, so that this also shall be taken away. Here also stupidity often gives men peace. They will not feel. You may hammer them with the law, but they are not moved; you may preach as though you would move a heart of stone, but they are not moved. Ah, but hearts of stone shall be no more in hell! They shall be hearts of flesh to suffer, though not hearts of flesh to repent! Then the stout heart shall be taken away, and the proud spirit shall tremble, so that there shall be nothing in the present condition of the lost that can yield them any comfort.

Nor will there be anything to comfort them in their *future condition*. They may look on through the long vista of the eternal ages, and never see the shadow of a hope. Forever, forever, forever—wave after wave—stream after stream of sorrow! Forever, forever, forever! Oh, it would make holiday in hell, if it could be proved that the pains were not eternal! But it stands, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." "Where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched." No hope! When a woman has no hope, we wonder not that she seeks the cold river; when a man has no hope, we wonder not that he is taken to the asylum as a lunatic; but when the *soul* has no hope, and then it will be death and madness combined forever, forever, forever!

III. And now, our text bids us "BEHOLD," therefore I pray you, beloved; turn not away your eyes from this meditation. Children of God, behold it; it will make you grateful—

"Oh, were it not for grace divine,
This case so dreadful had been mine."

Does not the thought of the misery from which you have escaped make you love your Savior? And oh, Christian, will it not make you love poor sinners, too? Do you not feel as if you wanted to be doing something to pluck them as brands from the burning? Knowing the terrors of the Lord, do you not wish to be the saviors of men? Wake, you sleepers! Woe unto you if you can think of these things, and still be quiet! "Woe unto them who are at ease in Zion," who can see men perish without doing anything to rescue them! Woe unto you! Woe unto you! How can you be the servants of God?

But especially, you who are unconverted, the text says, "Behold." It is a gloomy subject for you to think upon, but better to think of it now, than to think of it forever. Better to weep the tears of penitence, than the tears of despair, and better the pangs of conviction, than the pangs of condemnation! Better for a little season to lose your mirth, and your merriment to get heaven and eternal life, than it is to have your joys now, and then to be driven forever from the presence of the Lord! I am about to close the sermon, and you will go your way and there will be some few blessed by the Holy Spirit, in whom God's Word will abide. But oh, for the many of you, for the many of you, we do but preach in vain! We do but speak to ears that are dull of hearing, and to hearts that will not feel! If I have told you what is false, reject it—laugh at it! If I have tried to stir you up about a theme which does not concern you, turn on your heels and go your way! But oh, sirs, if these things are real; if they are true; if there is but a step between us and death, I entreat you, by the love you bear to your own selves, if not by any care for God or Christ, to meditate upon these things! And may God lead you out of self to Christ—away from your sin to Him who is the great sin-bearer, that you may find in Him eternal life! "Turn, turn, why will you die, O house of Israel?" Why will you perish? Why will you go down to destruction? Why will you make your bed in hell, and dwell with everlasting burnings? God turn you! May God turn you now, and by His grace save you! And to Him shall be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

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THE OLD, OLD STORY
NO. 446

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MARCH 30, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"In due time Christ died for the ungodly."
Romans 5:6.

THERE is a doctor of divinity here tonight who listened to me some years ago. He has been back to his own dwelling place in America, and he has come here again. I could not help fancying, as I saw his face just now, that he would think I was doting on the old subject, and harping on the old strain; that I had not advanced a single inch upon any new domain of thought, but was preaching the same old gospel in the same old terms as ever. If he should think so, he will be quite right! I suppose I am something like Mr. Cecil when he was a boy. His father once told him to wait in a gateway till he came back, and the father, being very busy, went about the city; and amidst his numerous cares and engagements, he forgot the boy! Night came on, and at last when the father reached home, there was great inquiry as to where Richard was. The father said, "Dear me, I left him early in the morning standing under such-and-such a gateway, and I told him to stay there until I came for him; I should not wonder but what he is there now." So they went, and there they found him! Such an example of simple childish faithfulness is no disgrace to emulate. I received some years ago orders from my Master to stand at the foot of the cross until He came. He has not come yet, but I mean to stand there till He does. If I should disobey His orders and leave those simple truths of God which have been the means of the conversion of souls, I know not how I could expect His blessing. Here, then, I stand at the foot of the cross, and tell out the old, old story, stale though it may sound to itching ears, and worn threadbare as critics may deem it. It is of Christ I love to speak of—Christ who loved and lived, and died, the substitute for sinners, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God!

It is somewhat singular, but just as they say fish go bad at the head first, so modern divines generally go bad first upon the head and main doctrine of the substitutionary work of Christ. Nearly all our modern errors, I might say all of them, begin with mistakes about Christ. Men do

not like to be always preaching the same thing. There are Athenians in the pulpit as well as in the pew who spend their time in nothing but hearing some new thing. They are not content to tell over and over again the simple message, "He who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life." So they borrow novelties from literature, and garnish the Word of God with the words which man's wisdom teaches. The doctrine of atonement they mystify. Reconciliation by the precious blood of Jesus ceases to be the cornerstone of their ministry. To shape the gospel to the diseased wishes, and tastes of men becomes far more deeply their purpose, than to remold the mind and renew the heart of men that they receive the gospel as it is. There is no telling where they will go who once go back from following the Lord with a true and undivided heart, from deep to deep descending, the blackness of darkness will receive them unless divine grace prevents! Only this you may take for a certainty—

"They cannot be right in the rest,
Unless they speak rightly of Him."

If they are not sound about the purpose of the cross, they are rotten everywhere. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." On this rock there is security! We may be mistaken on any other points with more impunity than this; they who have built on the rock, though they build with wood, and hay, and stubble, to their sore confusion, for what they build shall be burned, they themselves shall be saved yet so as by fire.

Now that grand doctrine which we take to be the keystone of the evangelical system, the very cornerstone of the gospel, that grand doctrine of the atonement of Christ we would tell you again, and then, without attempting to prove it, for that we have done hundreds of times, we shall try to draw some lessons of instruction from that truth of God which is surely believed among us. Man having sinned, God's righteousness demanded that the penalty should be fulfilled. He had said, "The soul that sins shall die." And unless God can be false, the sinner must die! Moreover, God's holiness demanded it, for the penalty was based on justice. It was just that the sinner should die. God had not appended a heavier penalty than He should have done. Punishment is the just result of offending. God, then, must either cease to be holy, or the sinner must be punished. Truth and holiness imperiously demanded that God should lift His hand and smite the man who had broken His law and offended His majesty. Christ Jesus, the second Adam, the federal head of the chosen ones, interposed. He offered Himself to bear the penalty which they ought to bear; to fulfill and honor the law which they had broken and dishon-

ored. He offered to be their Surety, a substitute, standing in their place and stead. Christ became the vicar of His people; vicariously suffering in their place; vicariously doing in their stead that which they were not strong enough to do by reason of the weakness of the flesh through the fall. This which Christ proposed to do was accepted of God. In due time Christ actually died, and fulfilled what He promised to do. He took every sin of all His people, and suffered every stroke of the rod on account of those sins. He had compounded into one awful draught the punishment of the sins of all the elect! He took the cup; He put it to His lips; He sweat as it were, great drops of blood while He tasted the first sip, but He never desisted, but drank on, on, on, till He had exhausted the very dregs, and turning the vessel upside down He said, "It is finished!" And so, at one tremendous draught of love the Lord God of salvation had drained destruction dry! Not a dreg, not the slightest residue was left; He had suffered all that ought to have been suffered; had finished transgression, and made an end of sin! Moreover, He obeyed His Father's law to the utmost extent of it; He fulfilled that will of which He had said of old—"Lo, I come to do Your will, O God: Your law is My delight." And having offered both an atonement for sin and a complete fulfillment of the law, He ascended up on high, took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool, and interceding for those whom He bought with blood that they may be with Him where He is. The doctrine of the atonement is very simple. It just consists in the substitution of Christ in the place of the sinner—Christ being treated as if He were the sinner, and then the transgressor being treated as if he were the righteous one. It is a change of persons; Christ becomes the sinner; He stands in the sinner's place; He is numbered with the transgressors. The sinner becomes righteous; he stands in Christ's place and is numbered with the righteous ones. Christ has no sin of His own, but He takes human guilt, and is punished for human folly. We have no righteousness of our own, but we take the divine righteousness; we are rewarded for it, and stand accepted before God as though that righteousness had been worked out by ourselves. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly," that He might take away their sins!

It is not my present objective to prove this doctrine. As I said before, there is no need to be always arguing what we know to be true. Rather let us say a few earnest words by way of *commending this doctrine of the atonement*. And afterwards I shall propound it *by way of application to those who as yet have not received Christ*.

I. First, then, BY WAY OF COMMENDATION.

There are some things to be said for the gospel which proclaim the atonement as its fundamental principle. And the first thing to be said of it is, that in comparison with all modern schemes, *how simple it is!* Brethren, this is why our great gentlemen do not like it, it is too plain! If you will go and purchase certain books which teach you how sermons ought to be made, you will find that the English of it is this—pick all the hard words you can out of all the books you read in the week, and then pour them out on your people on Sunday—and there is a certain set of people who always applaud the man they cannot understand! They are like the old woman who was asked when she came home from Church, "Did you understand the sermon?" "No," she answered, "I would not have the presumption." She thought it would be presumption to attempt to understand the minister! But the Word of God is understood with the heart, and makes no strange demands on the intellect.

Now, our first commendation on the doctrine of the atonement is that it commends itself *to the understanding*. The wayfaring man, though his intellect is but one grade beyond an idiot, may get a hold on God's truth of substitution without any difficulty. Oh, these modern theologians, they will do anything to spirit away the cross! They hang over it the gaudy trappings of their elocution, or they introduce it with the dark mysterious incantations of their logic—and then the poor troubled heart looks up to see the cross and sees nothing there but human wisdom! Now I say it again, there is not one of you here that cannot understand this truth of God that Christ died in the place of His people. If you perish, it will not be because the gospel was beyond your comprehension. If you go down to hell, it will not be because you were not able to understand how God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. It is astonishing in this age how little is known of the simple truths of the Bible; it seems to be always admonishing us how simple we ought to be in setting them forth. I have heard that when Mr. Kilpin was once preaching a very good and earnest sermon, he used the word, "Deity," and a sailor sitting down below leaned forward and said, "Beg your pardon, sir, but who's he, pray? Do you mean God Almighty?" "Yes," said Mr. Kilpin, "I do mean God, and I ought not to have used a word which you could not understand." "I thank you, sir," said the sailor, and looked as if he would devour the rest of the sermon in the interest which he felt in it even to the close! Now that one unvarnished fact is but an index of that which prevails in every land. There must be simple preaching. A doctrine of atonement that is not simple, a doctrine which comes from Germany, which needs a man to be a great scholar before he can comprehend it, himself, and to be a

still greater orator before he can tell it to others—such a doctrine is manifestly not of God, because it is not suited to God's creatures! It is fascinating to one in a thousand of them, but it is not suited to those poor of this world who are rich in faith; not suited to those babes to whom God has revealed the things of the kingdom while He has hidden from the wise and prudent. Oh, you may always judge of a doctrine in this way. If it is not a simple doctrine, it does not come from God! If it puzzles you, if it is one which you cannot see through at once because of the mysterious language in which it is couched, you may begin to suspect that it is man's doctrine, and not the Word of God!

Nor is this doctrine of the atonement to be commended merely for its simplicity, but because while suiting the understanding it also *suits the conscience*. How it satisfies the conscience, no tongue can tell! When a man is awakened and his conscience stings him, when the Spirit of God has shown him his sin and his guilt, there is nothing but the blood of Christ that can ever give him peace. Peter might have stood up at the prow of the boat and have said to the winds and to the waves, "Peace, be still," but they would have gone on roaring with unabated fury! The Pope of Rome, who pretends to be Peter's successor, may stand up with his ceremonies and say to the troubled conscience, "Peace, be still," but it will not cease its terrible agitations! The unclean spirit that sets conscience in so much turmoil cries out, "Jesus I know, and His cross I know, but who are you?" Yes, and it will not be cast out! There is no chance, whatever, of our finding a pillow for a head which the Holy Spirit has made to ache, save in the atonement and the finished work of Christ. When Mr. Robert Hall first went to Cambridge to preach, the Cambridge folks were nearly Unitarians. So he preached upon the doctrine of the finished work of Christ, and some of them came to him in the vestry and said, "Mr. Hall, this will never do." He asked "Why not?" "Why, your sermon was only fit for old women." "And why only fit for old women?" asked Mr. Hall. "Because," they said, "they are tottering on the borders of the grave, and they need comfort, and, therefore, it will suit them, but it will not do for us." "Very well," said Mr. Hall, "you have unconsciously paid me all the compliment that I can ask for; if this is good for old women on the borders of the grave, it must be good for you if you are in your right senses, for the borders of the grave is where we all stand."

Here, indeed, is a choice feature of the atonement, it is comforting to us in the thought of death. When conscience is awakened to a sense of guilt, death is sure to cast his pale shadow on all our prospects, and encircle all our steps with dark omens of the grave. Conscience is generally

accompanied in its alarms with the thoughts of the near-approaching Judgment, but the peace which the blood gives is conscience-proof, sickness-proof, death-proof, devil-proof, Judgment-proof, and it will be eternity-proof! We may well be alarmed at all the uprisings of occupation and all the remembrance of past defilement, but only let our eyes rest on Your dear cross, O Jesus, and our conscience has peace with God, and we rest and are still! Now we ask whether any of these modern systems of divinity can quiet a troubled conscience. We would like to give them some cases that we meet with sometimes—some despairing ones—and say, "Now, here, cast this devil out if you can; try your hand at it," and I think they would find that this kind goes not out except by the tears, and groans, and death of Jesus Christ, the atoning sacrifice! A gospel without an atonement may do very well for young ladies and gentlemen, who do not know that they ever did anything wrong. It will just suit your lackadaisical people who have not got a heart for anybody to see; who have always been quite moral, upright and respectable; who would feel insulted if you told them they deserved to be sent to hell; who would not for a moment admit that they could be depraved or fallen creatures! The gospel, I say, of these moderns will suit these gentle folks very well I dare say, but let a man be really guilty and know it; let him be really awake to his lost state, and I declare that none but Jesus—none but Jesus, nothing but the precious blood can give him peace and rest! These two things, then, commend us to the doctrine of the atonement, because it suits the understanding of the lowliest, and will quiet the conscience of the most troubled.

It has, moreover, this peculiar excellence, that it *softens the heart*. There is a mysterious softening and melting power in the story of the sacrifice of Christ. I know a dear Christian woman who loved her little ones and sought their salvation. When she prayed for them, she thought it right to use the best means she could to arrest their attention and awaken their minds. I hope you all do likewise. The means, however, which she thought well calculated for her objective, was the terrors of the Lord. She used to read to her children chapter after chapter of *Alleine's Alarm to the Unconverted*. Oh, that book! How many dreams it gave her boy at night about the devouring flames and the everlasting burnings. But the boy's heart grew hardened, as if it were tempered rather than melted by the furnace of fear! The hammer welded the heart to sin, but did not break it. But even then, when the lad's heart was hard, when he heard of Jesus' love to His people, though he feared he was not one of them, still it used to make him weep to think Jesus should love anybody

after such a sort. Even now that he has come to manhood, law and terrors make him dead and stolid, but Your blood, Jesus, Your agonies in Gethsemane and on the cross, he cannot bear; they melt him; his soul flows through his eyes in tears; he weeps himself away from grateful love to You for what You have done! Alas for those who deny the atonement! They take the very sting out of Christ's sufferings; and then, in taking out the sting, they take out the point with which the sufferings of Christ pierce, and probe, and penetrate the heart! It is because Christ suffered for my sin, because He was condemned, that I might be acquitted and not be damned as the result of my guilt—it is this that makes His sufferings such a cordial to my heart—

"See on the bloody tree,
The illustrious sufferer hangs!
The torments due to you,
He bore the dreadful pangs,
And cancelled there, the mighty sum,
Sins present, past, and sins to come!"

At this present hour there are congregations meeting in the theatres of London, and there are persons addressing them. I do not know what their subjects are, but I know what they ought to be. If they want to get at the intellects of those who live in the back slums; if they want to get at the consciences of those who have been thieves and drunkards; if they want to melt the hearts of those who have grown stubborn and callous through years of lust and iniquity, I know there is nothing will do it but the death on Calvary, the five wounds, the bleeding side, the vinegar, the nails, and the spear. There is a melting power here which is not to be found in the entire world besides!

I will detain you yet once more on this point. We commend the doctrine of the atonement because, besides suiting the understanding, quieting the conscience, and melting the heart, we know there is a power in it to *affect the outward life*. No man can believe that Christ suffered for his sins and yet live in sin! No man can believe that his iniquities were the murderers of Christ, and yet go and hug those murderers to his bosom! The sure and certain effect of a true faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ is the purging out of the old leaven, the dedication of the soul to Him who bought it with His blood, and the vowing to have revenge against those sins which nailed Jesus to the tree. The proof, after all, is in the trial. Go into any parish in England where there lives a philosophical divine who has cut the atonement out of his preaching, and if you do not find more harlots, and thieves, and drunkards there than is usual, write me down mistaken! But go, on the other hand, into a parish where

the atonement is preached, and that with rigid integrity, and with loving earnestness—and if you do not find the ale-houses getting empty, and the shops shut on the Sunday, and the people walking in honesty and uprightness—then I have looked about the world in vain! I knew a village once that was perhaps one of the worst villages in England for many things; where many an illicit still was yielding its noxious liquor to a manufacturer without payment of the duty to the government, and where, in connection with that, all manner of riot and iniquity were rife. There went a lad into that village, and but a lad, and one who had no scholarship, but was rough, and sometimes vulgar. He began to preach there, and it pleased God to turn that village upside down, and in a short time the little thatched chapel was crammed, and the biggest vagabonds of the village were weeping floods of tears, and those who had been the curse of the parish became its blessing; and where there had been robberies and villainies of every kind all round the neighborhood, there were none, because the men who did the mischief were themselves in the house of God, rejoicing to hear of Jesus crucified! Mark me; I am not telling you an exaggerated story now, nor a thing that I do not know. Yet this one thing I remember to the praise of God's grace, it pleased the Lord to work signs and wonders in our midst. He showed the power of Jesus' name, and made us witnesses of that gospel which can win souls, draw reluctant hearts, and mold the life and conduct of men afresh! Why, there are some brothers and sisters here who go to the refuges and homes to talk to those poor fallen girls who have been reclaimed. I wonder what they would do if they had not the gospel tale to carry with them to the abodes of wretchedness and shame? If they should take a leaf out of some divinity essays, and should go and talk to them in high-flowing words, and philosophies, what good would it be to them? Well, what is not good to them is not good to us, either! We need something we can grasp, something we can rely upon, something we can feel; something that will mold our character and conversation, and make us to be like Christ!

II. Secondly, one or two points BY WAY OF EXHORTATION.

Christian, you believe that your sins are forgiven, and that Christ has made a full atonement for them. What shall we say to you? To you first we say what a joyful Christian *you ought to be!* How you should live above the common trials and troubles of the world! Since sin is forgiven, what does it matter what happens to you now? Luther said, "Smite, Lord, smite, for my sin is forgiven; if You have but forgiven me, smite as hard as You will," as if he felt like a child who had done wrong, and cared not

how his father might whip him if he would but forgive him! So *I* think you can say, "Send sickness, poverty, losses, crosses, slander, what You will; You have forgiven me, and my soul is glad, and my spirit is rejoiced."

And then, Christian, if you are thus saved, and Christ really did take your sin, while you are glad, *be grateful and be loving*. Cling to that cross which took your sin away; serve Him who served you. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Let not your zeal bubble over with some little bubble of a song. You may say—

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

but sing it not in words unless you mean it! Oh, mean it! Is there nothing in your life that you do because you belong to Christ? Are you never anxious to show your love in some expressive tokens? Love the brethren of Him who loved you! If there is a Mephibosheth anywhere who is lame or halt, help him for Jonathan's sake! If there is a poor tried believer, try and weep with him, and bear his cross for the sake of Him who wept for you and carried your sins!

And yet, again, Christian, if this is true that there is an atonement made for sin, *tell it, tell it, tell it!* "We cannot all preach," you say? No, but tell it, tell it! "I could not prepare a sermon." Tell it—tell the story—tell of the mystery and wonder of Christ's love! "But I should never get a congregation." Tell it in your house—tell it by the fireside. "But I have none but little children." Tell it to your children, and let them know the sweet mystery of the cross, and the blessed history of Him who lived and died for sinners! Tell it, for you know not into what ears you may speak! Tell it often, for thus you will have the better hope that you may turn sinners to Christ. Lacking talent, lacking the graces of oratory, be glad that you lack these, and glory in your infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon you—but do tell it! Sometimes there are some of our young men who get to preaching who had better hold their tongues, but there are many others who have gifts and abilities which they might use for Christ, but who seem tongue-tied. I have often said that if you get a young man to join a rifle corps, he has got something to do, and he puts his heart in it; but if you get the same young man to join a Church—well, his name is in the book, and he has been baptized, and so on—but he thinks he has nothing more to do with it! Why, brothers and sisters, I do not like to have members of the Church who feel they can throw the responsibility

on a few of us while they themselves sit still! That is not the way to win battles!

If at Waterloo some nine out of ten of our soldiers had said, "Well, we need not fight; we will leave the fighting to the few; there they are, let them go and do it all." Why, if they had said that, they would very soon have all been cut in pieces! They must every one of them take their turns, horse, and foot, and artillery; men who were light-armed, and men of all kinds; they must each march to the fray. Yes, and even the guards, if they are held back as a reserve to the last, yet they must be called for—"Up guards and at 'em"—and if there are any of you here who are old men and women, and think you are like the guards, and ought to be spared the heavy conflict, yet up and at them, for now the world needs you all, and since Christ has bought you with His blood, I beseech you be not content till you have fought for Him, and have been victorious through His name! TELL IT! TELL IT! TELL IT—with voices of thunder tell it! Yes, with many voices mingling together as the sound of many waters—TELL IT! TELL IT till the dwellers in the remotest wilderness shall hear the sound! Tell it till there shall be never a cot upon the mountain where it is not known; never a ship upon the sea where the story has not been told. Tell it till there is never a dark alley that has not been illuminated by its light, nor a loathsome den which has not been cleansed by its power. Tell out the story that Christ died for the ungodly!

With a few words of application to unbelievers I draw to a close. Unbeliever, if God cannot and will not forgive the sins of penitent men without Christ taking their punishment, rest assured He will surely bring you to judgment! If, when Christ, God's Son, had imputed sin laid on Him, God smote Him, how will He smite you who are His enemy, and who have your own sins upon your head? God seemed at Calvary, as it were, to take an oath—sinner, hear it!—He seemed, as it were, to take an oath and say, "By the blood of My Son I swear that sin must be punished," and if it is not punished in Christ for you, it will be punished in you for yourselves! Is Christ yours, sinner? Did He die for you? Do you trust Him? If you do, He died for you! Do you say, "No, I do not"? Then remember that if you live and die without faith in Christ, for every idle word and for every ill act that you have done, stroke for stroke, and blow for blow, vengeance must chastise you!

Again, to another class of you, this word; if God has in Christ made atonement and opened a way of salvation, what must be your guilt who try to open another way; who say, "I will be good and virtuous. I will attend to ceremonies. I will save myself"? Fool! You have insulted God in

His most tender point, for you have insulted His Son! You have said, *"I* can do it without that blood." You have, in fact, trampled on the blood of Christ, and said, "I need it not." Oh, if the sinner who repents not is damned, with what accumulated terrors shall he be damned, who, in addition to his impenitence, heaps affronts upon the person of Christ by going about to establish his own righteousness? Leave it! Leave your rags, you will never make a garment of them; leave that pilfered treasure of yours; it is a counterfeit; forsake it! I counsel you to buy of Christ fine raiment, that you may be clothed and fine gold that you may be rich.

And consider this, one and all of you, oh my hearers! If Christ has made atonement for the ungodly, then let the question go around, let it go around the aisles and around the gallery, and let it echo in every heart, and let it be repeated by every lip—"Why not for ME?" and "Why not for ME?" Hope, sinner, hope! He died for the *ungodly*. If it had said He died for the godly, there would be no hope for you! If it had been written that He died to save the good, the excellent, and the perfect, then you have no chance! He died for the *ungodly;* you are one! What reason have you to conclude that He did not die for YOU? Listen, people; this is what Christ says to you—"Believe and you shall be saved." That is, trust, and you shall be saved. Trust your soul in the hands of Him who carried your load upon the cross; trust Him NOW! He died for you; your faith is to us the *evidence,* and to you the *proof* that Christ bought you with His blood. Delay not; you need not even stay to go home to offer a prayer. Trust Christ with your soul NOW! You have nothing else to trust to; hang on Him! You are going down; you are going down. The waves are gathering about you, and soon shall they swallow you up, and we shall hear your gurgling as you sink. Look! He stretches out His hand! "Sinner," He says, "I will bear you up; though hell's fiery waves should dash against you; I will bear you through them all, only trust Me."

What do you say, sinner? Will you trust Him! Oh, my soul, remember the moment when first I trusted in Him? There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, but I hardly think that is greater joy than the joy of the repenting sinner when he first finds Christ! So simple and so easy it seemed to me when I came to know it. I had only to look and live, only to trust and be saved! Year after year I had been running about here and there to try and *do* what was done *beforehand,* to try and get ready for that which did not need any readiness. Oh, happy was that day when I ventured to step in by the open door of His mercy, to sit at the table of divine grace already spread, and to eat and drink, asking no questions! Oh, soul, do the same! Take courage. Trust Christ, and if He casts you

away when you have trusted Him—my soul for yours as we meet at the bar of God! I will be pawn and pledge for you at the last great day if such you need! But He cannot and He will not cast out any who come to Him by faith! May God now accept and bless us all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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RESURRECTION—CHRIST THE FIRST FRUITS
NO. 445

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 20, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them who slept."
1 Corinthians 15:20.

THE fact of Christ's resurrection is exceedingly well attested. It was necessary that it should be beyond dispute, since it lies at the very basis of our holy faith; it is consoling to think that it is so; for thus our foundation stands most secure. Our Lord was careful to show Himself after His resurrection to those who, having known Him before His decease would be able to answer for the identity of His person. Had He merely shown Himself to strangers, who had not known Him before, they might have been able to say that they had seen such a one, but they could not have affirmed that He was the same person who had been buried; but showing Himself to men like Thomas, and bidding them put their fingers into the print of the nails and thrust their hand into His side, He gave to men the most absolute proofs of His resurrection, and received from the most competent witnesses the most assured evidence that no deception had been practiced. "Handle Me, and see that it is I Myself," was a challenge of identity all the more conclusive because it was addressed to the men who had known Him intimately during the whole period of His ministry! The witnesses were men who had nothing to gain by giving their evidence, but everything to lose; they were unlearned men, utterly unfitted to found or promulgate an impostor, and their evidence was so clearly borne out by the absence of the body of Christ from the tomb that it was found necessary to invent an impossible story in order to account for that absence. The eye-witnesses were just the right men, such as prudence would select if we had now to hand down such a transaction to future faith and history. Our Lord, to put the matter beyond controversy, took care to appear many times, and to numerous companies. Our apostle gives a summary of those appearances which had most fully come under his own notice. "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, He was seen of above 500 brethren at once; of whom the greater part remains unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (1 Cor 15:5-8). From the evangelistic reports, we are led to believe that Christ appeared no less than 12 times to His disciples; for some of these instances which the apostle Paul mentions under one head, may include two or three appearances; as, for instance, "then of the twelve" may denote His two visits to the apostles; for you remember He first appeared to them when Thomas was absent, and afterwards when Thomas was present. Isaac Ambrose gives a summary of these appearances to this effect. He showed himself to Mary

Magdalene by herself, then to all the Marys, next to Simon Peter, alone, afterwards to the two disciples journeying to Emmaus; to the 10 apostles when the doors were shut; to all the disciples when Thomas was with them; to Peter, John, and others while fishing in lake Tiberias; to 500 brethren at once; to James, the Lord's brother; to the 11 disciples in Galilee; to all the apostles and disciples at Olivet before His ascension; and lastly, to the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. There may even have been more than these, for we have no proof that all His appearances are on record. Enough, however, we have, and more would answer no useful end.

So clear is the evidence of Christ's resurrection, that when Gilbert West—a celebrated infidel—selected this subject as the point of attack, sitting down to weigh the evidence and to digest the whole matter, although filled with prejudice, he was so startled with the abundant witness to the truth of this fact, that he expressed himself a convert, and has left as a heritage for coming generations a most valuable treatise, entitled, *"Observations on the Resurrection of Christ."* He laid down certain laws of evidence to begin with, and then went to the matter as though he had been a lawyer examining the *pros* and *cons* of any matter in dispute; and this, which is the fundamental doctrine of our faith, seemed to him so exceedingly clear that he renounced his unbelief, and became a professor of Christianity!

Does it not strike you that very many events of the greatest importance recorded in history, and commonly believed, could not in the nature of things have been witnessed by one-tenth as many as the resurrection of Christ? The signing of famous treaties affecting nations—the births of princes—the remarks of cabinet ministers—the projects of conspirators—and the deeds of assassins—any and all of these have been made turning points in history, and are never questioned as facts, and yet, few could have been present to witness them! I venture to assert that even the most recent political event, which has caused so much sorrow to our whole nation—the death of the lamented Prince Albert—had not nearly as many witnesses as the resurrection of Christ! If it came to a matter of dispute, it was far easier to prove that Christ is risen, than to prove that the Prince is dead! If it came to the counting of the witnesses who saw the Prince die, and could attest the identity of the body now resting in the royal vault with that which they saw fever-stricken in the bed-chamber, it strikes me they would turn out to be far fewer than those who saw the Lord after He had risen, and were persuaded that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified and had burst the bonds of death! If this fact is to be denied, there is an end to all witness, and we say deliberately what David said in haste—"All men are liars"—and from this day forth, every man must become so skeptical of his neighbor, that he will never believe anything which he has not himself seen! The next step will be to doubt the evidence of his senses; to what further follies men may then rush, I will not venture to predict! We believe that the very best attested fact in all history is the resurrection of Christ. Historical doubts concerning the existence of Napoleon Bonaparte, or the stabbing of Julius Caesar, or the Norman Conquest, would be quite as reasonable as doubts concerning the resurrection of the Lord Jesus! None of these matters have such witnesses as those who testify of Him—witnesses who were manifestly truthful, since they suffered for their testimony and most

of them died humiliating and painful deaths as the results of their belief. We have more and better evidence for this fact than for anything else which is written in history, either sacred or profane! Oh, how should we rejoice, we who hang our salvation wholly upon Christ, that beyond a doubt it is established that, "Now is Christ risen from the dead."

But you may ask the question at the outset, "Why is it that the resurrection of Christ is of so much importance?" Upon it we have said that the whole system of Christianity rests; for, "If Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; you are yet in your sins" (1 Cor 15:14, 17). The *divinity* of Christ finds its surest proof in His resurrection, since the apostle tells us in the first chapter of Romans, at the fourth verse, that Christ was, "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." It would not be unreasonable to doubt His Deity if He had not risen! Moreover, Christ's *sovereignty* also depends upon His resurrection, for Scripture affirms—"To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord, both of the dead and living" (Rom 14:9). Again, *our justification*, that choice blessing of the covenant, hangs upon Christ's resurrection. "He was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom 4:25). No, more—our very *regeneration* depends upon His resurrection, for Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit, exclaims, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). And most certainly our *ultimate resurrection* rests here; for, "If the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead, dwells in you, He who raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you" (Rom 8:11). If Christ is not risen, then shall we not rise! But if He is risen, then they who are asleep in Christ have not perished, but in their flesh shall surely behold their God. It would not be difficult to enlarge this catalog. The fact is that the silver thread of resurrection runs through all the blessings, from regeneration onward to our eternal glory, and binds them together!

It is time to pass on, and come more fully to the text. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them who slept." Let me draw your attention, first of all, to *the pictures here given of the death of the saints*. Further, we shall observe *the singular relationship which exists between Christ's resurrection, and the resurrection of the saints*. And before we leave the subject, we shall *suggest certain practical considerations arising from the doctrine before us*.

I. First of all, then, THE TEXT GIVES A VIEW OF DEATH VERY COMMOM IN SCRIPTURE, BUT NOT SUFFICIENTLY ACCEPTED AMONG US.

The representations of the text, I take it, are twofold. Death is here compared to a sleep—"The first fruits of them who *slept."* But moreover, you will plainly perceive, it is compared also to a sowing; for Christ is pictured as being *"the first fruits."* Now, to a harvest there must have been a sowing. If the resurrection of Christ is the first fruits, then the resurrection of the elect must be looked upon as a harvest, and death would, therefore, be symbolized by a sowing.

1. First, then, we have before us the picture so commonly employed in Scripture of *death as a sleep*. We must not make a mistake by imagining

that *the soul* sleeps. Such a heresy was once received by a large number of persons—it has long ago been rejected as being inconsistent—as well as with natural as with revealed religion. The soul undergoes no purgatorial purification or preparative slumber in the limbo of the fathers; beyond a doubt, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise," is the whisper of Christ to every dying saint! They sleep in Jesus, but their souls sleep not. They are before the throne of God, praising Him day and night in His temple—singing hallelujahs to Him who has washed them from their sins in His blood. It is the *body* that sleeps in its lonely bed of earth, beneath the coverlet of grass, with the cold clay for its pillow.

But what is this sleep? We all know that the surface idea connected with sleep is that of *resting;* that is doubtless just the thought which the Spirit of God would convey to us. The eyes of the sleeper ache no more with the glare of light or with the rush of tears; his ears are teased no more with the noise of strife or the murmur of suffering; his hands are no more weakened by long protracted effort and painful weariness; his feet are no more blistered with journeying to and fro along a rugged road; there is rest for aching heads, and strained muscles, and overtaxed nerves, and loosened joints, and panting lungs, and heavy hearts, in the sweet repose of sleep! On yonder couch, however hard, the laborer shakes off his toil, the merchant his care, the thinker his difficulties, and the sufferer his pains. Sleep makes each night a Sabbath for the day. Sleeps shuts, too, the door of the soul, and bids all intruders tarry for awhile, that the royal life within may enter into its summer garden of ease. From the sweat of his brow, man is delivered by sleep, and the thorn and thistle of the curse cease to tear his flesh. So is it with the body while it sleeps in the tomb. The weary are at rest; the servant is as much at ease as his lord. The galley slave no more tugs the oar, the slave forgets the whip. No more the worker leans on his spade, no more the thinker props his pensive head. The wheel stands still, the shuttle is not in motion, the hand which turned the one, and the fingers which threw the other are quiet! The body and all its members find the tomb a couch of sufficient length and breadth. The coffin shuts out all disturbance, labor, or effort. The toil-worn believer quietly sleeps, as does the child weary with its play, when it shuts its eyes and slumbers on its mother's breast. Oh, happy they who die in the Lord! They rest from their labors, and their works do follow them. We would not shun toil, for though it is in itself a curse, it is, when sanctified, a blessing! Yet toil, for toil's sake, we would not choose, and when *God's* work is done, we are too glad to think that *our* work is done, too. The mighty husbandman, when we have fulfilled our day, shall bid His servants rest upon the best of beds, for the clods of the valley shall be sweet to them. Their repose shall never be broken until He shall wake them up to give them their full reward! Guarded by angels, curtained by eternal mysteries, resting on the lap of mother earth, you shall sleep on—you inheritors of glory—till the fullness of time shall bring you the fullness of redemption!

Moreover, we look upon sleep as a season of *forgetfulness,* and in this, too, it images death. "Their memory and their love are lost," they are "alike, unknowing and unknown." Their sons come to honor, and they know it not; or their seed degenerates, but it causes them no grief. Let armies march over their tombs—their tramp shall disturb them no more than the crawling of a worm; let the vault of heaven blaze with the flam-

ing bolts of God, let the earth shake at the awful voice of the thunder, let the cedars be broken, let the rocks be shivered, let the sea roar; there, under their green hillocks, they slumber as peacefully as though it were a soft summer evening when the hum of a bee or the flitting of a fly were the only sounds! The dead may be remembered by their kinsfolk; but they remember not. They have forgotten the joys and the sorrows, the peace and the strife, the defeats and the victories of time. The soul forgets not, and we have no reason to believe that the glorified are ignorant of what is going on below. We have far more presumptive evidence that they "know even as they are known"—that they still have communion with the living Church on earth, and that the Church victorious is not sundered from the Church militant in point of knowledge; but as to their bodies, what do their bodies know? What does the human organism now understand? Take up the skull—see if there is memory there. Look at the place where once the heart was, and see if there is any trace of present emotion. Gather into your hands the bones—see if they are still obedient to muscles which could be moved at will as passing events might affect the mind. Try to discover any live coals amid your heap of ashes—a heart still quivering with delight, or an eye moistened by a sorrow. These dry bones are forgetful, indeed; steeped in forgetfulness, these decayed skeletons know nothing!

But yet, once more—sleep *has its intent and purpose*. We do not close our eyes without aim and open them again without benefit. The old cauldron of Medea has its full meaning in sleep. In the old tradition, we read of Medea, the enchantress, casting the limbs of old men into her cauldron that they might come forth young again. Sleep does all this in its fashion. We are old enough oftentimes, after hours of thinking and of labor, but we sleep, and we wake refreshed, as though we were beginning a new life. The sun begins a new day when he rises from the eastern sea; and we begin a new life of renewed vigor when we rise from the couch of quiet rest.

"Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

Now, such is the effect of the body's visit to its grave. The righteous are put into their graves all weary and worn; but such they will not rise. They go there with the furrowed brow, the hollowed cheek, the wrinkled skin; they shall wake up in beauty and glory. The old man totters there, leaning on his staff; the palsied comes there trembling all the way; the halt, the lame, the withered, the blind journey in doleful pilgrimage to the common dormitory, but they shall not rise decrepit, deformed, or diseased, but strong, vigorous, active, glorious, immortal! The shriveled seed, so destitute of form and comeliness, shall rise from the dust a beauteous flower! A green blade, all fresh and young, shall spring up where before there was the dried decayed grain. Well said the holy martyrs, when their limbs were being torn away—"We cheerfully resign these members to the God who gave them to us." Our members are not ours to hold or lose, no torment can rob us of them in reality; for, when we wake up in Christ's likeness, it will not be as halt or lame, but full of strength and vigor—more comely than earthly sons of men! The winter of the grave shall soon give way to the spring of resurrection and the summer of glory. Blessed is death, since it answers all the ends of medicine to this mortal frame, and through the divine power disrobes us of the leprous rags of flesh, to clothe us with the wedding garment of incorruption!

One reflection must not escape our notice—this is not a dreamy slumber. The sleep of some men is much more wearying than refreshing. Unbidden thoughts steal away the couch from under them and throw them on the rack. The involuntary action of the mind prevents us at times from taking rest in sleep. But not so with the dear departed. In that sleep of death, no dreams can come; nor do they feel a terror in undressing for that last bed, for no phantoms, visions, or terrors by night shall vex their peace! Their bodies rest in the most profound slumber. It is sleep, indeed, such as the Lord gives, for "So He gives His beloved sleep."

Nor ought we ever to look upon it as a hopeless sleep; we have seen persons sleep who have been long emaciated by sickness, when we have said, "Those eyes will never open again; he will sleep himself from time into eternity." We have felt that the sleep was the prelude of the eternal slumber, and might probably melt into it. But it is not so here. They sleep a healthy sleep—not thrown over them by death-bearing drugs, or fell disease, they sleep to wake, and not to die the second death. They sleep to wake—to wake in joyous fellowship, when the Redeemer stands in the latter day upon the earth! Sleep on, then, you servants of the Lord, for if you sleep, you shall do well; indeed, concerning these departed ones, we may well speak of taking rest in sleep!

Dear friends, ought not this view of death as a sleep to prevent our looking upon it in so repulsive a light? I know we like not to look at dead bodies; we are afraid to touch them. Some foolish people do not like to remain in the same house with a corpse, at least alone, or at night. There is a certain horror connected with the ruins of our earthly house. Did you ever feel horror at a sleeping child? Do you feel any sort of dread of your sleeping mother, or your slumbering husband or wife? Have you felt anything dreadful to draw back the curtain of the little cot and to gaze upon the sweet young face when the eyes are closed in happy sleep? Oh, why, then, should you think it dreadful to look upon the sleeping believer's brow? True, there are marks of decay which are not pleasant to nature; but are they not the footprints of the retreating enemy and signs that the corruptible is passing away to make room for incorruption? Do not those very marks which mar the form indicate that the ragged smoke-blacked tent of Kedar is being pulled down so that the curtains of Solomon may glitter in their place, and that the soul may dwell there as in a fair pavilion? Oh, look not upon the departed as though they were dead, but speak of them as Christ did of His friend—"Our friend Lazarus sleeps." Let the ears of your faith hear the Master say, "And *I* come that I may awake him out of his sleep." Let not the grave seem more abhorrent to you than your bedchamber!

Let there be, by no means, such a view of the death of the redeemed as to wish them back again! Would you wish, when your friend has long been in excruciating pain, and at last falls into sleep, to shake him in his bed, to awake him, to tell him some idle tale? No; you have been watching for hours, and you have said, "Oh, that he could have a little sleep! Doctor! Can you not give some sleep to this poor tortured frame?" And at last you have said, "Thank God, his eyelids drop; speak softly; tread lightly; he sleeps!" And you have been afraid even to let your foot fall upon the ground, lest you should awaken him. And what? After all the pain, the suffering, the temptation, and the trial of your friends, do you wish to awaken them? Rather I think you should say, "I charge you, O

you daughters of Jerusalem, that you ask not that he should be stirred up or awakened until Jesus pleases. Let him sleep on while the night lasts; and then, at the trump of the archangel, and the voice of God, he shall wake in the morning when the sun has risen upon the earth!"

2. The text affords us, however, a second figure. *Death is compared to a sowing*. The black mold has been plowed; certain dry-looking seeds are put into a basket, and the farmer takes his walk, and with both hands he scatters right and left, broadcast, his handfuls of seeds. Where have they gone? They have fallen into the crevices of the earth; the clods will soon be raked over them, and they will disappear. So is it with us. Our bodies, here, are like those dry grains of wheat. There is nothing very comely in a grain of wheat, nor yet in our bodies. Indeed, Paul calls them "these vile bodies." Death comes—we call him a reaper—mark, I call him a sower—and he takes these bodies of ours, and sows us broadcast in the ground. Go to the cemetery, and see his fields; mark how thickly he has sown his furrows! How closely he has plowed the rows! What narrow headlands he has left! We say, they are there *buried*. I say, they are *sown*. They are dead, say we; no, say I, they are put into the earth—but they shall not abide there forever! In some sense, these holy bodies of the just are dead; "For that which you sow is not quickened unless it dies," but it is not a death unto death, but rather a death leading unto *life!* That molding body is no deader than yonder decaying seed which you have just now disturbed in its bed of earth, it shall soon spring up again and you shall see a harvest. We do lose sight, it is true, and of those who have gone from us, for there must be a burial, how else can the seed grow? Truly it is never a pleasant sound, that rattle of the clay upon the coffin lid. "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes," nor to the farmer, for it's own sake, would it be a very pleasant thing to put his grain into the dull cold earth; yet I know of no farmer who ever wept when he sowed his seed! We have not heard the farmers groan and sigh when they scatter their baskets of seed corn; rather, we have heard them cheerily singing the song of mirth, and have heard them anticipate the reaper's joy, when they have trod the furrows! Have you seen them robed in black, or wearing the dull clothes of mourning, while they tread the brown ridges of the fertile earth? We grant you that in itself considered, it were no wise or gladsome thing to bury precious grain amid dead clods of earth, but viewed in the light of harvest, since there must be a burial, and after the burial, rottenness and decay, both of these lose all traces of sorrow, and become prophets of joy! The body must become worms' meat; it must crumble back to its former elements, for "dust you are, and unto dust shall you return"; but this is no more our sorrow, for, "In Christ shall all be made alive."

Nor will we even mourn because of the stench and rottenness of death. The life germ in the grain of wheat must begin to feed on the food laid up in store for it; a kind of decay must seem to take place; but I know no farmer ever weeps because the seed which he has put into the ground has swollen and lost its former size and shape! He never mourns if he is told the seed he has put into the ground is undergoing the death that is necessary for its future growth. No, he rejoices in patient hope! Why then, you worms, should you force me to weep? And why, corruption, should you make me sigh? Rather will I call you my brothers and my mother, for your kindly glooms are but part of the road to immortality!

After sowing and decay, comes a springing up, and the farmer soon perceives, in a few short weeks, the little green blade—the son of the buried life. So with the dead! There is soon to come, and how soon we do not know—the springing up; we shall thus perceive that they were not lost, but only committed to the grave, in readiness for "the redemption"—put there that our souls might, when reunited, receive them in a better and nobler form!

Dear friends, if such is death—if it is but a sowing, let us have done with all faithless, hopeless, graceless sorrow! "The granary is empty," says the farmer. Yes, but he does not sigh over it; for the seed is put into the ground, in order that the granary may be filled again! "Our family circle has been broken," you say. Yes, but only broken that it may be formed again! You have lost a dear friend—yes, but only lost that friend that you may find him again, and find more than you lost! They are not lost; they are sown; and as "light is sown for the righteous," so are the righteous sown for light. The stars are setting here to rise in other skies to set no more. We are quenched like torches only to be lit once more with all the brilliance of the sun!

II. We will not tarry longer on this point, but rapidly carry you to the second—THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AND THAT OF BELIEVERS.

The text tells us that Christ is "The first fruits of them who slept." Some professors take very great delight in the hope that they may be "alive and remain," at the coming of Christ, and so may never die. I confess I greatly rejoice in the hope that Christ will come; but the prospect of never dying has no sort of charms for me, for I think those who never die lose a great privilege; at least, to our comprehension it seems so, for Christ is "The first fruits of them *who slept."* Oh, then, it is a blessed thing to sleep, that Christ may be to us in the relationship of first fruits! They who never die can hardly know so much of fellowship with Christ in His death as those who fall asleep in Jesus. Whereas, you and I, who feel the pin's prick of the dart of death, will be able to say in eternity, "I too passed through the grave. He was with me passing through the valley of the shadow of death; I, in my own proper person, knew a death and a resurrection too, even as did my Lord, which you who never died can only understand by hearsay and report." Oh, happy they who die! They who are alive and remain shall not precede them in any privilege or honor.

But what is meant by Christ being "the first fruits"? You will remember that there was a feast of the Jews called the feast of first fruits, when the first sheaf was brought out from the harvest as a token of the whole, and first of all, heaved upward as a heave-offering, and then waved to and fro as a wave-offering, being thus dedicated to God, in testimony of the gratitude of the holders of the soil for the harvest which the Lord had given. Now, this happened on the first day of the week. You will remember that the Passover was celebrated first; then came a Sabbath Day; then, after that came the feast of first fruits. So Christ died on the Passover day; He, as the slaughtered Lamb of God, of God's Passover, died exactly at the Passover season. The next day was the Sabbatical rest—Christ's body, therefore, tarried in the grave. Then, early in the morning of the first day, before it was yet light, while yet the sun was rising upon the earth, Christ rose—on the morning of the feast of the first fruits; and

so He is revealed as the blessed Wave Sheaf preceding and consecrating the whole harvest!

But the uninstructed believer asks me to explain at greater length. Beloved, remember then, *that Christ was the first that rose from the dead in order of time.* You will mention to me Enoch and Elijah. We answer that they never died, but were translated that they should not see death. You will remind me of the widow's son who was raised by Elijah, and the young man restored by Elisha. Yes, but these are not cases in point. They were raised, but they died again. All the instances in the Old Testament are only temporary restorations, and so also those in the New. In no instance, save in that of Lazarus, were any of them buried at all, so that none of them came out of their graves; and even in the case of Lazarus, he lived but to die; he had a furlough from the tomb; but at the expiration of the due time, his body was yielded to the appointed keeper. Christ was the first who really rose no more to die! He leads the vanguard through the dark, and His brow first salutes the light of the plains of heaven beyond the gloom. Men admire the man who is first to discover a new country; the name of Columbus shall ring in the ears of ages, because he first crossed the stormy sea to win another world; the name of the man who climbed the mountains, and first saw the broad Pacific with exceedingly great joy, is well remembered. Oh, then, sing it in songs, sound it with voice of trumpet to the ends of the earth—Christ is the first who returned from the jaws of death to tell of immortality and light!

He is also *first in point of cause;* for as He comes back from the grave, He brings all His followers behind Him in one glorious train! We read of Hercules in the old mythology descending into Hades and bringing up his friend. Verily, went Christ there, and He gave no sop to Cerberus, but cut off his head. Like a sun, He suddenly flashed upon the night of death and scattered its darkness! Like Samson in Gaza, He tore up the gates of death and carried away the bars of the grave. Like David, He delivered His flock out of the jaws of the lion, and took the monster by the beard and slew him. Like Abraham, He resumed triumphantly from the slaughter of the kings. Like Moses, He led His Israel out of the house of bondage. With ten thousand times ten thousand, He came forth with a high hand and an outstretched arm. Who is this who comes up from the land of darkness—from the gates of the grave? Who is this that drags behind Him captive the grim prince of the realms of death shade? Who is this, so strong, so mighty, that adamantine walls give way before Him, and gates of brass are broken in two? It is He! It is He! It is the same conqueror who came from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah! The victory on the cross is succeeded by a victory in the tomb! He who won heaven for earth when He died, wins heaven for the dead when He descends into the grave. Sound His praises! Proclaim His victories! Let heaven itself take up the strain; He has "led captivity captive," rifled the grave, and robbed death of his sting! He is the death of death, and Hell's destruction!

But then, again, He is first *in point of pledge*. The first fruits were a pledge of the harvest. "From where, O husbandman, from where have you brought yonder sheaf?" "I gathered it," he says, "from the fields that are waving with plenty." "Verily," says the priest, "the harvest is plenteous this year, and full and many are the ears, for this sheaf bears good witness." From where, O divine power, did You bring this glorious sheaf, this body of our Lord, so bright and glorious? From where did You bring

it, O Spirit of the Lord? Is there a harvest of many shocks of corn such as this? "Yes, verily," says the teacher; "This is but one among many, the first born among many brethren." We know right well that there must be a glorious harvest of resurrection forms and immortal bodies, since Jesus Christ, clothed in immortality and light, walks among the sons of men, the Pledge of all the rest!

He was, again, the first fruits, not only as a pledge, but as the *representative* of the whole. When the first fruit sheaf had been waved before God, it was considered that all the harvest had been brought into the sanctuary; it was all dedicated, all consecrated, from that very hour. So when Christ rose as a heave offering from the sepulcher, and when He went about among the people as a wave offering, moving among His disciples, He consecrated the whole harvest! All the righteous dead were virtually risen in Him; all the chosen members of His body had a resurrection when their head appeared as "risen indeed." And moreover, they were all dedicated and consecrated to God, by His dedication as the first fruits to the Most High! Triumph, you children of God, triumph in this! You are risen in Christ today! We see not the saints as yet ascended; rather, we see their bones dried in the valley, and we ask, "Can these dry bones live?" But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, and we know that He is risen, and sits at the right hand of the Father, and by faith, we perceive that as our covenant head, He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places even in Him, for He is the head over all things to His Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all-in-all! Never doubt, believer, of your resurrection, since the second Adam was loosed from the bands of the tomb!

III. And now, lastly, we will close by noticing THE INFLUENCE OF THE WHOLE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION AND CHRIST'S CONNECTION WITH IT UPON OUR OWN SPIRITS.

First, let us look well to the *holiness of our bodies*. "Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit? If any man defiles the temple of God, him will God destroy." We do not believe in consecrated churches; we think it altogether absurd to talk of holy bricks and mortar; but we do know by Scriptural authority that the body is holy—that the body of the saint is as really holy as men pretend that churches and temples may be. Now, brothers and sisters, if our eyes look upon vanity, we have defiled the windows of God's house; if our tongues speak that which is evil, have we not desecrated the gates of the temple of the Lord? Let us see to it that our feet carry us nowhere but where our Master can go with us, lest the pillars of our house become our destruction, like the pillars of the Philistine temple of old! Let us mind that our hands be outstretched for nothing but that which is pure and lovely, lest like Belshazzar we profane the vessels of the Lord's temple. They who pamper the body, they who look to its adornment, they who regard its physical health more than its moral purity, forget the higher end of their being; for what is beauty after all? What is the comeliness which human skill can give? See that skull? "Go, take that to my lady's chamber, and tell her, though she paints herself an inch thick, to that complexion must she come at last!" And say to all who think so much of comeliness and goodliness—that deadly brown, which worms and earth shall bring upon you, that is the natural complexion of man, and to that the fairest must be

bronzed at last! But there is another way of minding your complexion, by seeing that your cheeks never need be reddened with shame, that your hands are never black with evil deeds, that your flesh is not soiled by lasciviousness, or contact with that which is evil. "Will you take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?" asks the apostle Paul, when he bids men see to it that their bodies are chaste and pure! Know you not that your very flesh, if you are Christians, has been bought with Christ's blood, and that precious is your very dust in His sight? Mind you, O mind you, that the slime of the serpent come not here, and that you defile not the members of your body, lest the Lord abhor you, and cast you out from His presence, as things He cares not for, being none of His!

Let us look at things in this light, and so, by the Holy Spirit, escape from sin. What? Shall these eyes that are one day to, "See the king in His beauty," be delighted with vanity? Shall these lips that are to be tuned to melodious sonnets "sung by flaming tongues above," talk that which is light and frivolous, and ministers not unto edification? What? Shall these fingers that are to strike the golden harps be given up to work unrighteousness with greediness? No, as we are to be fellows with the angels, and more glorious than they, and as these bodies are to be made like unto Christ's body, let us keep them pure, washed with clean water by His Spirit, renewed and preserved, that we go not astray unto sin!

But, secondly, another thought arises here. *Are we among those for whom Christ thus stood as first fruits?* For Christ is to rise first, as the first fruits; "afterwards, they who are Christ's, at His coming." Then, when do the wicked rise? There are two resurrections; and "Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection; on such the second death has no power." When the Lord shall come from heaven, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God, then the dead in Christ shall suddenly start from their sleep, and shall be offered to God as the great harvest, the great Pentecost, of which Christ's resurrection was the first fruits. What then shall become of the wicked? They shall continue rotting in their graves; the worm shall feed upon them; they shall be ashes beneath the feet of the saints; and while the righteous shall tread this earth, and, on the scene of their conflict, enjoy a thousand years of triumph with Christ; while Christ's feet shall stand in the latter day upon Mount Olivet; while His people shall bow around Him, and shall reign with Him triumphant over the creature that was once subject to vanity, beneath their feet shall be the dead bodies of their ungodly persecutors, and deep down in their graves shall rot those infamous kings and princes, and those careless crowds and nations who knew not Jehovah, and would not be obedient unto His Son! They said, "Let us break His bands asunder; let us cast His cords from us." And now, where are they? "Death has dominion over them in the morning and the righteous triumph over them, while they lie shamefully like those who fall in battle, a portion for foxes."

But what then? When the splendors of the millennial age are over, and then comes the end; the King shall ascend the judgment seat; He who came to reign with His people, shall suddenly, sitting upon His throne, bid His angel proclaim the last judgment. Then, unwillingly shall souls, tormented in Hell, come back from Tophet to be reunited with their equally guilty bodies, and He, who is able to destroy both body and soul

in Hell, shall say, "Gather them together in bundles to burn them." He shall pronounce their sentence, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh, that you and I may be among the harvest, and not the vintage! There are two ingatherings mentioned, you remember, in the Revelation. The harvest is the gathering in of the righteous; they are carefully housed in God's barn. The vintage is the gathering of the wicked; they are cast into the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God, "and they are trod under foot till their blood runs forth up to the horses' bridles." Now, how am I to know whether I belong to that portion of which Christ is the first fruits? Why, thus—If Christ rose for me, and if I rose in Him, then I died in Him! Oh, soul, do you believe that Christ died for you? Have you a part in His passion? Do you hope in His agonies? Do you rest on His cross? If so, He who died for you rose for you too, and you are a part of that holy lump of which Christ was the holy offering. Have you died with Christ yourself? Are you dead to the world? Do you hate the things that you once loved? Are you weaned from your old pleasures? Do you seek for something higher and better? Ah, then, if you have died with Him, you are risen with Him! Say now, do you desire to be one with Christ? For if you are one with Him in heart, you shall be one with Him in all His trophies and His glories! Do you say, "No, I care not for Christ"? Soul! Soul! If you die in that mind you shall have no part in the first resurrection; but when the wicked rise, then shall you "Awaken to shame and everlasting contempt." But, and if you say in your heart this morning, "I believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead according to the Scriptures, and I put my sole and only trust in Him; He is to me all my salvation, and all my desire," go your way; you shall "stand in your lot at the end of the days." You shall have your portion among them who are sanctified; you shall rejoice together with Him, and sit down at His marriage banquet forever!

God add His own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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GOD'S ESTIMATE OF TIME
NO. 447

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 27, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."
2 Peter 3:8.

FROM this text certain persons, more desirous to find arguments for their theories, than a truthful exposition of the apostle's meaning, have drawn the inference that a day in Scripture is typical of a thousand years—that is to say, that inasmuch as God was six days in creating the heavens and the earth, and then rested on the seventh day, so we must expect to have a thousand years for every day. A thousand years in which the new heavens and the new earth will be in preparation, and then, we shall enjoy in the seventh thousand a period of perfect peace and holiness. Now, such may possibly be the case. It may so happen that when the six thousandth year of labor shall be over, we shall enter upon the millennial rest; the last millennium may be a Sabbath to the preceding six. But even if we knew this, I am not sure that it would be of any great assistance to us in foretelling the day when the Church militant would be universally triumphant through the coming of her Lord, for the chronology of the past is surrounded with so much obscurity that we question whether any man will be able to tell us when the 6,000 years will be over, or within a hundred or two of how old the world is! Our curiosity would be rather tantalized than gratified, even if this theory could be verified, for all the chronologies we have, even that which the translators have put into our Bibles, are matters of conjecture, and their accuracy is far from indisputable. We could not, therefore, ascertain the times and seasons any more certainly, nor ought we desire to do so, for the Father keeps them in His own power, and as for the time of the end, we believe no man knows it, no, not even the angels of God! Brothers and sisters, we do not wish to discover what God has hidden, nor to question where He declines to answer. It is certain, however, that our text does *not* teach the doctrine of the Sabbatical seventh thousand years, for looking at the whole drift of the passage, you will see that the words were written to meet the arguments of some who said, "Where is the promise of His coming; for since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." "No," answers the apostle, "It is not so."

And then he quotes the memorable case of the flood as an instance of divine interposition. Knowing, moreover, that even the faithful had begun to chide the tardy hours, and think the promise long in fulfillment, he meets the adversary and consoles the friend by the words of our text. He

as much as says, "You know not what you say when you speak of length of time, for you forget that in God's estimate, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The apostle, no doubt, wrote this also for the encouragement of Christians in our day, who, because the chariot of Christ is long in coming to the triumph, are growing weary and are ready to cast down their arms, and leave the conflict. Like a good officer rallying the dispirited, he exhorts them to patience; "Beloved, it is not long; it may seem a tedious age to you, but it is fitting that you tarry for a while. Cease your impatience, and while you cry, 'Why are His chariots so long in coming?' remember that the time is not long to Him; to Him, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day." What the apostle seems to teach as the general principle is that our estimate of time is not the right one, certainly not the divine standard; and that when we look at time in relation to God, we must remember that the distinctions which are known to us are not observed by Him.

Before, however, I enter upon the subject itself, let me remark that the apostle says he would not have us ignorant concerning this matter; and therefore, beyond a doubt, great importance is to be attached to it. Some have a willful ignorance, and of them the apostle speaks in the preceding, verse—"This they willingly are ignorant of." See to it, brothers and sisters, that you do not commit this sin of shutting your eyes to the light of God! Others have an idle ignorance; they will not study; they do not search the Scriptures; and, therefore, many things are not revealed to them. That the soul should be without knowledge is not good; and more especially, that the Christian's mind should be without knowledge of God must be exceedingly harmful! We cannot form an idea of what God is, but we should be very careful that we do not make Him to be what He is not. Our apostle is most earnest that, upon this point of God's eternity, we should make no mistakes, and should not estimate and measure the existence of the infinite one by our rules and standards, because, practically, the worst effects may flow from an error here. Impatience may ripen into unbelief; this may rot into petulant complaint, and that may breed inaction, sloth, disobedience, rebellion, and we know not how many other evils!

But now, to the text at once, and we will handle it, as God shall help us, in three ways. First, we shall say a little as to *the general principle of the text;* secondly, taking the words of the passage, we shall dwell upon *God's estimate of a day;* and then, in the third place, still keeping to the words of the sentence, we shall enlarge upon *God's estimate of a thousand years*.

I. First of all, then, we shall take the statement before us AS A GENERAL PRINCIPLE, "That one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

1. In opening up this general principle, we remark that *all time is equally present with God*. When we know that an event is to transpire today, it appears very near to us; but when we know that it will not occur until a thousand years have elapsed, we think nothing of it. We feel that we shall have gone to our graves long before that era, and therefore, the

event does not strike us as having any connection with ourselves. Now, it is not so with God. All things are equally near and present to His view. The distance of a thousand years, before the occurrence of an event, is no more to Him than would be the interval of a day; with God, indeed, there is neither past, present, nor future! He takes for His name the "I AM." He does not call himself the "I WAS," for then we would conceive that He used to be something which He is not now—that some part of His character had changed, or some attribute ceased from existence—for there is an ominous sound of annihilation in the sound of the word, "He WAS." Is it not rather a knell for the dead, than a name for the living? Nor does our Lord God speak of Himself as the "I SHALL BE," for that might lead us to imagine that He is not now something which He is to be in the ages to come—whereas, we know that His being is perfect, His essence infinite, His dominion absolute, His power unlimited, and His glory transcendent. Development is out of the question, He is all today that He will be in future. Of the Lord Jesus, we read that He is the Everlasting Father, and yet, He has the dew of His youth. Childhood, manhood and old age belong to creatures, but at the right hand of the Most High, they have no abode. Growth, progress, advancement—all these are virtues in finite beings, but to the infinite, the thought of such change would be an insult! Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, belong to dying mortal—the Immortal King lives in an eternal *today*. He is the I AM; I AM in the present; I AM in the past; and I AM in the future. Just as we say of God that He is everywhere, so we may say of Him that He is always. He is everywhere in space; He is everywhere in time. God is today in the past; He is today already in the future; He is today in that present in which we are.

This is a subject upon which we can only speak without ourselves fully understanding what we say, but yet, perhaps, a metaphor may tend to make the matter a little simpler. There is a river flowing along in gentle slope toward the sea. A boatman is upon it; his vessel is here, soon it is there, and soon it will be at the river's mouth—only that part of the river upon which he is sailing is present to him. But up yonder, on a lofty mountain, stands a traveler; as he looks from the summit, he marks the source of the river and gazes upon its infant stream, where as yet it is but a narrow line of silver. Then, he follows it with his clear eyes until it swells into a rolling flood, and he tracks it till it is finally absorbed into the ocean. Now, as the climber stands upon that Alp, that whole sparkling line of water adorning the plain is equally present to him from its source to its fall; there is not one part of the stream which is nearer to him than another; in the long distance, he sees the whole of it, from the end to the beginning. The boatman yonder has shifted his place since we have been looking upon him from the top of the mountain; he cannot see the whole of the river; he can only speak of the river under the heads of where he *was*, where he *is*, and where he is *to be;* but we who see it as a whole, speak of it as a whole, and it is all present before our view. Such, we think, is the stream of time to God. From the altitude of His observance, He looks down upon it and sees it in one gaze; taking in, not at many thoughts, but at one thought, all the revolutions of time and all the

changes of ages, and seeing both the thousands of years that have gone, and the thousands that are yet to come, as present at one view before His eyes! Or, to use another figure—there are some stars which are known as double stars, and with the strongest telescope it seems impossible to discover any distance between them; they are all but joined. There are certain motions by which the astronomer perceives they are two stars, and not one—but to the common observer they seem as one. Even with the strongest telescope, we say, no distance is apparent between them; and yet, it is perfectly certain that there may be millions and millions of miles of space between those two stars, but from the distance at which we stand, they resolve themselves into one! So it is with the events of time. Such, for instance, as the fall and the redemption; there is to us a space of some thousands of years; but God, who is far-seeing, from His lofty throne looks down upon them and they resolve themselves into one. He sees the fall as taking place in the morning of time, and the redemption as completed before eventide has come! To Him, they are one thought! We look at the fall and weep over it, and then, afterwards, we view the restoration in Christ and rejoice; but God regards the whole as one—the fall and the rising again of Israel are one. He links them so closely together that He clearly beholds the glory which, by the whole occurrence, is brought to Him, and the common good which is given to the creatures that His hands have made. I know that by figures, however simple we may make them, we cannot set forth God to human eyes, for the face of none of His attributes can be seen; yet it seems to me that we may, by these thoughts, be led to remember that a thousand years in the future are to God but as one day, and so, too, with the past, since He looks upon all things in one eternal NOW, as they stand perpetually present before His eyes!

Let the sinner remember this. His sins, he says, were committed 10 or 20 years ago. To God they are present in unmitigated hue of scarlet at this moment! Let the sinner remember this when he thinks of death and of the penalty after death. "Ah," he says, "it is a long time to come." Not so, sinner! To God it is but as a day, and if you could estimate it aright, how near the Judgment is to you, and how close are those consuming flames into which impenitent souls must be cast! Think of this, I pray you, O dying sinner. Tremble and God help you to look upon your years as one day, and oh, remember, that one day in hell will be more painful than a thousand years on earth! God keep you from that place, for His name's sake!

2. Still, taking the text as a general principle, it teaches us in the next place, *that all time is equally powerless with God to affect Him.* A day does not make any particular change in us that we can notice. We do not meet our friend at night, after having seen him the previous morning, and say, "My dear sir, how much older you look!" There is no doubt we all do grow older in one day, but the change is not very perceptible, at least by such coarse, common optics as those which mortal men possess! But if you take 50 years—what a difference is perceptible in any of us! Some of my dear friends round about me, who are now gray or bald, were, 50 years

ago, fine, tall, handsome young men in the full strength and vigor of their days. And others of us, 20 years ago were prattling boys, fond of play and frolic, and now we have come to manhood and are bearing the burden and heat of the day! The fingers of time blot the epistle of life very sadly. As to this present congregation, wait but a 100 years and where shall we all be? Unless the Lord comes, we shall, every one of us, be slumbering in the dust, awaiting the trumpet of the archangel! But as a day seems to make no change with us, so but far more truthfully, a thousand years make no change with God. Ages roll on, but He abides the same as when the waves break themselves against the rock, and the rock stands fast forever. Brothers and sisters, we need be under no apprehension that God will ever be affected with *weakness* through the revolutions of time. The Ancient of Days, always omnipotent, faints not; neither is weary! Is the Lord's arm waxed short? Is His ear heavy that He cannot hear? Is His arm shortened that He cannot save? We shall find, if this creaking earth is to perform revolutions upon its axle for another thousand years longer, that the Lord will show Himself as strong to help His servants, and as mighty to crush His foes as previously! And as time brings no weakness, certainly it shall bring no *decay* to God. Upon His brow there is never a furrow; no signs of palsy are in His hands. In the vision, His head and hair, we are told, are white like wool, as white as snow, as the emblem of His eternity, as the Ancient of Days; but "His locks are bushy and black as the raven," said another, as the emblem of His perpetual youth and of His eternal strength. O Sun, your fires shall one day become extinct! O Moon, you shall hide your light! And you, you Stars, when you are ripe, shall fall like fig leaves from the tree! And as for you, O Earth, your ancient mountains already crumble to decay, and you yourself and all that dwells on you shall pass away as a garment that is worn out! But as for You, O God, You are the same and of Your years there is no end; from everlasting to everlasting You are God! And as no weakness and no decay can be brought to God by time, *so no change in His purpose* can ever come through revolving years. To that which He has set His seal, He stands fast, and what His heart decrees, that will He do. He knows no change; He is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should change His mind.

Moreover, as there can be no change in His decree, so *no unforeseen difficulties can intervene to prevent the accomplishment of it.* Has He not said, and will He not do it? Has He not commanded, and shall it not come to pass? There shall be no unforeseen and unprovided energy required—no unexpected impediments shall block up His path. Up till today, He has leveled the mountains and bridged the seas; up till now, His own right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory; up till now, no weapon formed against Him has prospered, and every tongue that has risen against Him in judgment, He has condemned; and so shall it be, world without end! As long as there is a work to do, He shall do it; as long as there is an enemy to conquer, that enemy shall be overcome. Conquering and to conquer is Your course, O Lord, and throughout all ages You are the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle! One

day, in the matter of change, is to God as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

3. Yet further—no doubt the text intends to teach *that all time is insignificant to God*. Within the compass of a drop of water, we are told that sometimes a thousand living creatures may be discovered, and to those little creatures, no doubt, their size is something very important. There is a creature inside that drop which can only be seen by the strongest microscope, but it is a hundred times larger than its neighbor, and it feels, no doubt, that the difference is amazing and extraordinary. But to you and to me, who cannot even see the largest creature with the naked eye, the gigantic animalcule is as imperceptible as his dwarfish friend! They both seem so utterly insignificant that we squander whole millions of them, and are not very penitent if we destroy them by the thousands. But what would one of those little animals say if some prophet of its own kind could tell it that there is a creature living that could count the whole world of a drop of water as nothing, and could take up ten thousand thousand of those drops and scatter them without exertion of half its power; that this creature would not be encumbered if it should carry on the tip of its finger all the thousands that live in that great world—a drop of water; that this creature would have no disturbance of heart, even if the great king of one of the empires in that drop should gather all his armies against it and lead them to battle? Why, then the little creatures would say, "How can this be; we can hardly grasp the idea?" But when that philosopher could have gotten an idea of man, and of the utter insignificance of its own self, and of its own little narrow world—then it would have achieved an easy task compared with that which lies before *us* when we attempt to get an idea of God! The fact is, it is only because He is infinite that He can even observe our existence. We think of the infinite nature of God in being able to marshal all the stars, and govern all the orbs which bespangle the brow of night; but I take it to be quite as great a wonder that He should even know that such insignificant nothings as we are in existence, much more that He should count every hair of our heads, and not allow one of them to fall to the ground without His express decree! The infinite is as much known in the minute as in the magnanimous, and God may be as really discovered by us in the drop of water as in the rolling orb. But this is wonderful of God, that He even observes us! What do you think now, brothers and sisters? Do you not think that the thousand years which we make so much fuss about are only comparable to a drop, and that the one day that we think so little of is a particle of that drop, and that both the drop and the particle are alike to God and are utterly insignificant to Him? They are not to be mentioned; they are but ciphers in His great existence! They are but drops in the ocean of His life; they are but one leaf in an eternal forest of existence; they are but one grain of sand on the mighty shore of the perpetual being of the Eternal One! A thousand years are as a day, and a day as thousand years.

4. I think we ought also to learn from the text *that all time is equally obedient to God*. You and I are the servants of time, but God is its sover-

eign Master. I cannot make an hour longer than it is—I often wish I could. When there is but an hour's space between some important labor, and more preparation is needed, one would pull an hour at both ends if one could; but it is rigidly an hour and refuses to be lengthened! There are times when we would make a day, if we could, much shorter. When we are racked with pain, we say in the morning, "Would God it were evening!" We want to bring the two ends of the day together, but unhappily they refuse to move from their fixed position. Time, inexorable Time, goes on, with so many ticks of the clock, and though every motion of the pendulum may be as the cutting of a sword into our vitals, yet Time will not relent, but on he goes! To the miserable, he will never be fast, and to the happy, he will never be slow. He himself, and his footsteps, retain incessantly one ordained motion. Not so, however, with God! Time is not His master. If He shall say to the sun, "Stand still and you, moon, in the valley of Ajalon," they must stand there eternally, unless He bids them move again. And if, on the other hand, He should bid them speed their course till the dial should go forward many degrees, it must be so. The horses of the sun must hasten their speed; they must fly onward as God Himself shall ordain, for He is their charioteer, and the reins are in His hands. To Him, if the days were longer, or if they were shorter, it would be nothing; He cares not for these. Oh, brothers and sisters, we understand Him not! But let us adore Him! We cannot comprehend Him, but let us admire Him! I say again, this is wonderful that He is Time's Master, and bids him move slowly or rapidly, and Time is obedient to the behests of the Eternal God. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

II. Only a few words upon the second head—GOD'S ESTIMATE OF A DAY. He can make a day as useful, and to Him, it shall be as long as a thousand years!

Brothers and sisters, I think this is one of the most brilliant of the Church's hopes. We have been asking, "How many converts have been made by the Missionary Society during 50 or 60 years?" And we have said, "Well, at this rate, how long will it be before the world is converted?" Ah, "At this rate." But how do you know *God's* rate? God can do as much in a day as has been done in a thousand years that are past, if so He wills it! To the snail, a furlong is a very long distance, but to a stag or a hound, how little it is; and then, to a steam engine it is nothing; and then, to a ray of light it becomes nothing at all. And then, there may be something that travels as much more swiftly than light as light does more swiftly than the snail, and then, where would distance be? It is annihilated! It is gone! So is work, and labor, and toil with God. It is for you and I continually to work, work, work, and if our pace is but that of the snail, we must still persevere, hoping to reach the end. But the day may come when God shall make one minister more mighty than a thousand; when one sermon shall be enough to convert a congregation; when that one congregation shall in an instant be endowed with fiery tongues and all the brothers shall go forth, and themselves become preachers; and before one day, one natural day is set, it may be possible for God to have

made the light of the gospel flash from one end of the earth to the other, as quickly as the light of the sun travels from east to west! Limit not the Holy One of Israel—

"When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?
When He His people's cause defends,
Who, who shall stay His hand?"

When He comes forth out of His chamber like the sun, what thick darkness shall shade His light? He loosens the bands of Orion, and guides Arcturus with his sons—shall He not, when He chooses, loose the bands of His Church, and guide forth those stars of His right hand—the chosen preachers of the gospel of Christ? Only let Him will it, and there shall be one day written in the records of the Church that shall be equal in achievements, in conquests, and in triumphs, to any thousand years of her history recorded previously! This should lead us to remember that when God speaks of judging the world at the Day of Judgment, He will find no difficulty in doing it. Two hundred judges might find it difficult to try in one day all the cases that might be brought before them in a single nation. But God, when He holds the great judgment, shall be able to convict every guilty one, and to absolve every penitent, and that, too, in one day! The judgment could not be performed better if it lasted through an age; it shall be none the worse because it is confined to a day. Oh, Master, let us see Your great works! Come forth, and once again make days illustrious things! When You brought Your people out of Egypt; when You did lead them through the Red sea, You needed not a thousand years to break the chivalry of Egypt, and to raise a wail from the sons of Mizraim. 'Twas but an uplifted rod—a few hours of divided sea, a terrific union of the parted floods, and lo, Egypt's horses and chariots passed away, and they sank like lead in the mighty waters! You needed not a thousand years to break the power of Jabin, king of Hazor—You did but speak, and the mighty river, the river Kishon, swept them away! The stars fought from heaven, the stars fought against Sisera. The might of the heathen was broken, and Israel was free! You did not need a thousand years to drive back Sennacherib. Lo, You did put Your bit into his mouth, and Your hook into his nose, and in one night, the angel of the Lord smote the horse and the rider, and they lay dead, and you led him back into confusion into the house of his god, and he fell by the hands of the offspring of his heart! Glory be unto You, Jehovah! When You rise up in the greatness of Your might, You shall slay kings and overthrow mighty kings! The two-leaved gates of brass shall open, and the bars of iron shall be cut in pieces! You shall in one day cause the nations of the earth to say, "The Lord, He is God, the Lord, He is God, the Lord, He is God alone."

III. But we now turn to notice GOD'S ESTIMATE OF A THOUSAND YEARS. A day is to Him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The complaint which is brought by mournful unbelieving Zion is, "He is long in coming! His widowed spouse waits for Him, but the bridegroom tarries." Oh, the long and dreary winter, oh, the dark and dreary winter, when will summer come? When shall the rain be over and

passed, and the voice of the turtle be heard in our land? We have tarried 1860 years and more, and yet no coming of the Son of Man! The dweller in the isle brings no tribute, the inhabitant of the wilderness bows not to lick the dust. Christ reigns not yet in Jerusalem, nor do His ancients behold His face wearing the crown of His Father David. "How long, how long?" the saints under the altar cry, "How long?" And the saints at the altar here today take up the same wailing notes, "How long? How long? How long?" But He answers, "I am not long. What if I have waited and the time is long to you? Yet, it is not long to Me." God bids you think for a moment, that if you really measure aright, it is no lengthened period of time that He has made the vision to tarry. For see you first, my brothers and sisters, the time that has elapsed since Christ's crucifixion is not long *compared with Eternity*. Try, if you can, to measure Eternity. You will find your task impossible. Even should another thousand years roll on, what would some three thousand years be compared with Eternity? You might form a comparison between a shell full of water from the sea in the child's hand, and the whole of the sea, itself, but it were not possible by human figures to put down the comparison between two or three thousand years and Eternity. No, the comparison cannot be made! It is nothing contrasted with all things; it is the unit put in comparison with the infinite! Why, therefore, do you think Him long? If in all eternity you are to meditate upon the riches of God in Christ revealed to you in these 6,000 years, if through all the eternal cycles this is to be the subject of your meditation, do you wonder that it should have been so long? Marvel you not rather that it should be so short a time?

Then, again, when you say that God is long in the accomplishment of His great purposes, remember that *He has no need to be in a hurry*. Whatever you and I find to do, we must do it with all our might—for there is neither work nor device in the grave where we are hastening! But God lives and lives forever. Our sun goes down; if the laborer would get his day's work done, he must toil with the sweat upon his brow. But God's sun never goes down. He may, like a God, take His own time, and go about His work leisurely. Surely He need not run to reach His purpose! When two little kings grow offended with one another, straightway they hasten into war; but when some mighty monarchy becomes provoked, it can take its time and wait, and marshal all its troops for the battle. You might have seen yesterday, the clouds gathering hastily, with the winds pursuing them in fierceness. Their black host speedily covered the face of the sky; the rain fell in rattling drops, and poured upon the earth in torrents. There was haste and fury, but we knew from the very haste with which the clouds came together, that they only betokened a hurried storm. It is when the clouds come slowly up to the great rendezvous—when at last God's trumpet sounds to summon His black warriors to the battle—when you behold, at length, the sharp flash, the glitter of His spear, who is the Lord of tempests, and His mighty ones come up to be marshaled in their line—then the trumpet sounds again exceedingly loud and long, and for many an hour the earth shall be deluged with the rain, and men shall shake when they hear the voice of God breaking the

cedar and rending the mountaintops! That which gathers long, lasts long; the little is always in a hurry, but the great can wait. "He who believes shall not make haste," simply because believing makes him great; and God, on whom believers rest, makes no haste because of His greatness! He may well take His time, and go leisurely about His work. There is no need, we say, that the Lord our God, who is rich in years, should spend His time as we must do who have but slender store.

Besides, there is an advantage in His being slow—*it tests our faith*. We are getting weary, some of us, because we have little faith; but if the Church of Christ shall keep on from this day till another thousand years, sending out the pick of her ministry to the most desolate regions to preach; if she shall continue to send her young, brave sons, fresh to the altar of distant martyrdom; if our churches at home shall continue to pay a spiritual taxation like that which Israel paid when Solomon's temple was in the building; if everyone of us shall be willing to spend and to be spent for God; and if the Church shall keep at that stretch for 2,000 years to come, (we pray God she may not have the trial), but if she should, then there will be honor unto her God, who by His grace sustained her, and there will be honor to her faith, which thus honored God! To win a fight when it lasts but for an hour, what is there in it? One gallant charge, and the enemy flees. Comrade, that is a battle worthy to be written with your Waterloos and your Marathons, when hour after hour, and day after day, valor disdains to succumb, and patience endures the fight while foot to foot the soldiers stand! To see gallant courage fiercely longing for the charge, but obediently awaiting the signal! Look, brothers and sisters, how they stand like lions at bay, stand bearing wounds and agony, and the horrors of death, until at last, the captain gives the triumphant signal, and they dash upon their foes, the ranks of the enemy are broken, and the enemy fall at their feet! So is it today. We are standing in our churches, like British soldiers in their solid square, we roll our deadly musketry against our enemy, but the foe is in the distance, and we cannot reach him. Great Master, You shall come, and then, at one triumphant charge, we shall give but one great cheer—"The Lord God omnipotent reigns," and they shall fly like chaff before the whirlwind, and like the mist before the storm!

Further, it is well that God should thus be long, because *He is unraveling revelation*. I fear I have seldom been in the position of those hearers, who would wish the preacher to be longer—but there have been books of which one could say when we have reached the last page, "Would that there would be another volume; that our interest might continue!" Now, what is the history of the Church but the great book of God's revelation of Himself to man? The Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to loosen the seals, and to open the book for us, and year after year, He reads another page and yet, another in the Church's history. Brothers and sisters, if Christ should come today, if we should have no more conflicts, no more difficulties, no more trials, then we might suppose that the book had come to its brilliant golden finis; but if it keeps on a thousand years to come, so much the better—the glowing eyes of angels wish not for the

end of the story, and the bright eyes of immortal spirits before the throne, when it shall be all over, shall not regret that it was too long! No, let it go on, great Master; let a thousand years run on; our loving hearts will patiently bear it, as though it were but one day.

And more—the victory of Christ at the end will be all the greater, and the redemption all the more glorious, because of this long time of strife and confusion. I have often admired, in reading history, how in the grand duel between good and evil, God has seemed to give all the advantage to His foe. Did you notice this in the combat of old between Patience and Suffering? God is in Job; Job is on a dunghill—the messengers come in such an order as most naturally to break his spirit—at last, he is touched in his bone, and in his flesh, with sore pains, and yet, in spite of that, Job on the dunghill, is master over the Prince of hell, with Providence at his back! God gave the enemy the advantage, and yet won the victory! So, in the greater battle which is waging now; when first the gospel was preached, learning, eloquence, and power—all these might aid the cause—but Christ disdained to take them. "No," He said, "My enemy shall have the learning; the philosophers of Greece shall have the wisdom of men; their orators shall wield all eloquence, but not My apostles; as for power, I have not chosen the great ones of this world." So that the eloquence, learning, pomp, and power of nations were put into the opposite scale, and then, Christianity came out, like a naked wrestler, all unarmed against one that was clothed from head to foot in mail of proof! The gospel comes out like a David with nothing but a sling and a stone against one, the staff of whose spear is like a weaver's beam! See the hosts of Philistia come up, armed to the teeth, every one of them, and there are thousands of them—there is God's hero—he is but one man. He has no weapon but the decayed bone of an ass's jaw, but he dashes at them right and left, hip and thigh, with a great slaughter, and smites them till heaps upon heaps, with the jaw bone of an ass, has he slain a thousand men!

Brothers and sisters, whenever you see anything in the world which would lead you to believe that the enemy is getting the upper hand, say, "Ah, it is only God throwing in the advantage on the side of His enemies." The battle was fair enough before, but He is giving them all on their side, letting them have every weapon, bidding them take all the power, and all the wit, and all the eloquence and learning. We will beat them yet! Now, in the name of Him who lives and was dead once more we, who are God's servants, full of weakness, throw down the gauntlet against the world that seems to be omnipotent! Against your learning and your eloquence, and your multitudes and your authorities, and your dignities, your powers, and your State alliances, we still throw down the gauntlet! Take it up, O earth, if you dare! But remember, when we make the challenge, we expect stern fighting. We know from God's authority, which cannot lie, that a glorious victory awaits us! Now see, brothers and sisters, this is why God is a thousand years about it! He can shake the old harlot of the seven hills tomorrow if He wills; He can knock down the idol gods today if so it pleases Him. Tonight, before you and I go to sleep, every idol might

be cast to the moles and to the bats if Jehovah willed it—but He does not. "No," says He, "they shall have their time; they shall have their opportunity; they shall strive against Me; I will hold in My power; I will not go forth against them; I will let them lay their plans with deliberation, and execute their schemes at their leisure—but I will laugh at them in their preparations, and I will at last crush them in My hot displeasure." And then, the shout shall be the louder and the choral song shall be the more mighty, and the everlasting hallelujah shall have a deeper bass, and yet, it shall have a shriller note of glory when at the last the triumph shall be won! After all the 400 years of Israel's bondage, Egypt's power was broken and Israel went free; while Miriam took her timbrel and danced before the Lord—so we shall also, in a few days, when all the adversaries are overthrown, take up for ourselves the same song of Moses and the Lamb—"Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He cast into the sea. So let all Your enemies perish, O Lord, and let them that hate You become as the fat of rams."

I shall now leave my subject to the consideration of the faithful to cheer their hearts. If you think the work has been long and tedious, you will not think so any more, brothers and sisters, if you obey Peter's exhortation, "Be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." As to those present who know not Christ, may the one day of their conversion take place today! And that one day of God's grace and favor in their hearts, they shall find to be as good as a thousand years spent in the pleasures of sin! "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned." God help us to believe, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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ANOTHER AND A NOBLER EXHIBITION
NO. 448

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 4, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."
Ephesians 3:10.

THE entire world has been talking during the last three days of the splendid pageant which adorned the opening of the International Exhibition. Crowds have congregated in the palace of universal art; representatives of all the nations of the earth have journeyed for many a league to view its wonders; eminent persons from all empires have appeared in the gorgeous spectacle, and such a scene has glittered before the eyes of all men, as has never before in all respects been equaled, and may not for many a year find a successor to rival it! Why all these gatherings? Why muster you, all you nations? Why do you come here, you gazing sons of men? Surely your answer must be, that you have come together that you may see *the manifold wisdom of MAN*. As they walk along the aisles of the great Exhibition, what do they see but the skill of man, first in this department, and then in the other—at one moment in the magnificent, at the next in the minute—at one instant in a work of elegance in ornament, in the next in a work of skill and usefulness—"manifold wisdom," the works and productions of many minds, the different hues and colors of thought embodied in the various machines, and statues, and so forth, which human skill has been able to produce. We grant you that God has been most rightly recognized there, both in the solemn prayer of the Archbishop, and in the hymn of the Laureate; but still the great objective, after all, was to behold the manifold wisdom of man! And had they taken away man's skill and man's art, what would there have been left? Brothers and sisters may the greatest results follow from this gathering! But we must not expect that it, or anything else short of the gospel, will ever bring about the universal reign of peace. We must never look to art and science to accomplish that triumph which is reserved for the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ; yet may it spread the feelings of benevolence—may it bind together the scattered children of Adam—may it fuse into a happy and blessed union the kindreds of men that were scattered abroad at Babel, and may it prepare the way, and open the gates, that the gospel may proceed to the uttermost ends of the earth!

It is, however, very far from my mind to direct your attention to the marvels which crowd the area of the huge temple of 1862. I invite you, rather, to follow me to a nobler exhibition than this, where crowds are

gathering—not of mortals, but of immortal spirits! The temple is not of art and science, but of divine grace and goodness, built with living stones, cemented with the fair colors of atoning blood, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone"—that temple, the Church of the living God, "the pillar and ground of the truth." Into this great palace crowd ten thousand times ten thousand of the host of God, "cherubim and seraphim," or by whatever other names those bright intelligences may be known among themselves—"principalities and powers," the different degrees in the hierarchy of immortal spirits, if such there are—they are all represented as intently gazing upon the wondrous fabric which God has reared. Along the aisles of that Church, along the ages of its dispensations, stand the various trophies of divine grace and love—the jewel cases of virtues and graces which adorn the believer, the mementoes of triumphs gotten over sin and hardness of heart, and of victories achieved over temptation and trial. And as the spirits walk along these corridors full of divine workmanship, they stand, they gaze, they admire, and wonder and speed back their way to heaven, and sing more loudly than before, hallelujah to the God whose manifold wisdom they have beheld in the Church of God below!

Beloved friends, our text is a strange one; if you will reflect that the angels, the elder-born of creatures when compared with us, have been with God for many an age; and yet I do not know that it is ever said that by anything else they ever learned "The manifold wisdom of God." They were with Him when He made the earth and the heavens; perhaps during those long periods when the earth was forming—"In the beginning," when "God created the heavens and the earth," the angels were known to visit this world, and to behold alive, and in their glory, those strange shapes of mystery which now we dig up in fossil from the earth. Certainly in that day when "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face thereof," the angels knew the hidden treasure; and when He said, "Let there be light, and there was light," when that first ray of light seemed like a living finger to touch the earth and waken it to beauty, then seraphic fingers swept their heavenly harps, and "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." Yet I do not learn, though they were with the Great Worker during the seven days of creation, though they saw "the cattle after their kind, and the fowls of the air after their kind," and the fish of the sea, and all the plants and herbs, yet I see not that in all this there was made known unto them "The manifold wisdom of God"!

No, more, when man, the Master's last work, walked through Eden—when, with his fair consort by his side, he stood up to praise his Maker, though he was "fearfully and wonderfully made," though in his mind and body there was a display of wisdom unrivalled before—yet I do not learn that even in man, as a creature, there was made known "The manifold wisdom of God"! Yes, and more than this—when other worlds were made,

when the stars were kindled like glowing flames by light of Deity, if there were other peoples, and other kindreds, and other tribes in those myriads of far-off lands, I do not find in the creation of all those hosts of worlds which adorn the wide fields of ether, that there was then made known to celestial spirits "The manifold wisdom of God"! No, more, in all the dispensations of divine providence apart from the Church, in all the mystic revolutions of those wondrous wheels that are full of eyes, apart from the Church, there has not been made known to these beings to the fullest extent the wisdom of God! Ah, and brothers and sisters, remember yet once more, that they with undimmed eyes look upon the glory of Him who sits upon the throne, so far as it can be seen by created vision; they behold the beatific vision; they are glistening in the splendors of Deity, and veil their faces when at His footstool they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." And yet, though standing, as it were, in the sun, though they are foremost of all the creatures, nearest to the eternal throne, I do not read that by all this they have in the highest sense learned "The manifold wisdom of God"!

What an idea, then, does this give to us of the importance of the Church! Brothers and sisters, never let us despise any more the meanest member of it, since there is more to be beheld in the Church than in creation in its utmost breadth; more of the wisdom of God in the saving of souls than in the building the arches of the sky! No, more of God to be seen than even heaven with all its splendors can otherwise reveal! Oh, let us open our eyes that we lose not those divine mysteries which angels desire to look into!

I have now, already, explained the meaning of the text; we have, therefore, but to direct your attention to those points of interest upon which angelic intelligence would be sure to linger. And we shall pray that, while we mention these in brief and running catalog, our hearts may be led to meditate much upon the manifold, the varied wisdom of God displayed in the Church which Christ has bought with His blood!

I. And first, dear brothers and sisters, we think that the grand object of attention in the Church to the principalities and powers is THE SCHEME AND PLAN OF SAVING THE CHURCH. It is this that they so much admire and wonder at. It has been exceedingly well said by others, that if a Parliament had been held of all the spirits in heaven and in earth, and if it had been committed to this general assembly to ordain and fix upon a plan whereby God might be just, and yet, the justifier of the ungodly, they must all have failed to achieve the task! Those lofty minds, doubtless, consider with delight the fact that in God's way of saving His Church, all His attributes shine out with undiminished luster. God is just; they know it in heaven, for they saw Lucifer fall like lightning when God cast him out of his dwelling place on account of sin. God is just; and as much so upon Calvary, where his Son hangs and bleeds, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," as He was when He cast down the Son of the Morning. The angels see in salvation this great won-

der of justice and peace embracing each other—God as sternly just as if there were not a particle of mercy in His being, smiting His Son for the sin of His people with all the force of His might—God, yet as merciful as if He were not just, embracing His people as though they had never sinned, and loving them with a love which could not have been greater had they never transgressed. They understand how God so hated sin that He laid vengeance on His only begotten, and yet, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." As in the crowns of Oriental princes the most precious jewels shone in clusters, so as in one wonderful *corona* all the infinite attributes of God shine out at once in all their combined glory around Your cross, O Jesus, earth's wonder and heaven's prodigy! This difficulty, so delightfully met, so completely disposed of by the atonement of Christ, causes the angels to behold "The manifold wisdom of God."

But, further, when the angels see that by this great plan all the ruin that sin brought upon mankind is removed, they again wonder at the wisdom of God! And when they especially notice the way in which it was removed, the strange and mysterious methods which God used for rolling away the stone from the door of the human sepulcher, they yet more bow down with awe! Did we lose Eden in Adam? Lo, the Lord Jesus Christ has given us a better than Paradise! Did we lose the dignity of manhood? Lo, today we regain it in Christ—"for You have put all things under His feet." Did we lose spotless purity? Again we have obtained it in Christ, for we are justified through His righteousness and washed in His blood. Did we lose communion with God? We have obtained it this day; for "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Did we lose heaven itself? Ah, heaven is ours again; for in Him we have obtained an inheritance and are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." And all this mischief is made to destroy itself, God overruling it to be its own destruction; the dragon stung with his own sting; Goliath killed with his own sword; Death is slain by the death of the man who was crucified; sin is put away by the great sin offering, who "bore our sins in His own body on the tree." The grave is plagued by its own victim since Christ lay a captive within it. Satan casts out Satan in this case. We rise by man as by man we fell—"As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive." The worm in whom Satan triumphed, is the worm in whom God is glorified! It was man whom Satan sought to make the instrument of divine dishonor, and it is man in whom God triumphs over all the crafts and cruelties of hell. This, the angels wonder at, for they see in this scheme of salvation, meeting as it does every mischief, and meeting it on its own ground, "The manifold wisdom of God."

Observe, also, that through the great scheme of salvation by the atonement, God is more glorified than He would have been if there had been no fall, and consequently no room for a redemption. The angels admire "The manifold wisdom of God" in the whole story of the human

race, seeing that in the whole of it, from the beginning to the end, God is more glorified than He would have been had it all been written in letters of gold, without one sin or one suffering on the part of the human race. O Lord! When You did permit for a moment Your people to go astray like lost sheep, there might have been silence in heaven, since Your enemy had triumphed, since the precious ones whom You had loved were given up into the hand of the enemy! When the jewels of Christ were lost for a little season amidst the miry clay and ruins of the fall, there might have been a furling of Jehovah's banner; for perhaps it seemed to angels as though God had been defeated in His highest praise; but when Christ comes back "from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah," wearing upon His royal head the crown in which every jewel is securely set that once was in the hand of the enemy—when the Shepherd comes back from the mountains, wearing on His shoulders the lost sheep which had gone astray, there is more joy in heaven over the lost ones that are found again, than there could have been over all of them had they never gone astray! The deep bass of the fall shall swell the song of the restoration; the hollow moans, as they seemed to be, when heard alone, shall but make a part of the grand swell of the eternal song, as it shall peal up to the throne of the Lord God of hosts! brothers and sisters, if you would think for a while upon the whole work of God, taking in it the fall as being foreseen and foreknown, until the day when all the chosen seed shall meet around the throne, I think you will be struck with its glory as a whole. It was within the compass of the power of God to make creatures who would love Him, to make beings who would be attached to Him by very close ties; but—I speak with reverence—I do not see how omnipotence itself, apart from the fall and the redemption by the sacrifice of Christ, when He gave Himself to die for us, could have made such creatures as the redeemed will be in heaven! Brothers and sisters, if we had never fallen, and never been redeemed, we could never have sung of redeeming grace and dying love! We could not, and the angels could not; we could not have known the heights and depths, and lengths and breadths of the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Feasted with heavenly food, we might have admired His bounty, but not as we now do when we eat the flesh of Christ; made to drink the wine pressed from heaven's own clusters, we might have blessed the giver of the feast, but not as we now can do, when we drink the blood of Jesus as our sweet wine! Pure and holy, we could have praised Him, and we should have done so, but not as we now can, when we have "washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." There is a nearer relationship now than there could have been in any other way, if God had not taken humanity into alliance with Himself, if the Word had not been made flesh and dwelt among us! I say there may have been other plans, but certainly no mortal mind can conceive any other. This seems to be the most wonderful, the most God-like, the most divine, that a creature shall be made perfectly free; that that creature shall offend, shall discov-

er the justice of God through the punishment being laid upon a substitute, but shall learn the love of God through that substitute being God Himself! This creature was ordained to be attached to the Eternal One by ties of filial relationship, by bonds of affection so strong, that the pains of the rack, and the flames of the fire, should not be able to separate it from the love of God. And in heaven this creature shall feel that it owes nothing to itself, nothing to its own natural efforts, but all to Him who loved it, and who bought it with His blood! And therefore, this grateful being shall praise God, after a sort, superior by many high degrees to the attainment of any other. Oh, dear friends, I think if we study the subject for a few hours alone, we shall see that in nothing that God has done is there such a discovery of His wisdom as in the plan of redeeming love! Go round about her, O angels of the Lord; mark well her bulwarks and count the towers thereof; consider her palaces; behold the impregnable strength of covenant engagements; see the largeness and broadness of electing love; behold the veracity and truthfulness of divine promises! See the fullness of divine grace and efficacy in the pardoning blood; see the faithfulness and the immovability of the divine affection, when once it is set on men; and when you have admired the whole, go back, Spirits, and more sweetly than before, unite with us in our song—"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive honor, and blessing, and majesty, and power, and dominion forever and ever."

II. Secondly, without a doubt the wisdom of God is made known to angels and principalities in THE VARIOUS DISPENSATIONS THROUGH WHICH THE CHURCH HAS PASSED. At first the Church was, indeed, a little flock, a few chosen out of the mass—Abram, the Syrian, ready to perish and a few godly ones in his household. Then the stream widened a little, and there became 12 tribes; and soon the dispensation became clearer. Moses was raised up, and Aaron, whom God had chosen. Then the angels desired to look into the typical rites and ceremonies of that ancient dispensation. They were pictured standing on the mercy seat, with wings outstretched, with their faces bent downwards as if they would gladly behold the secret which the golden lid concealed. Doubtless, as they saw the sacrifice, whether it was the burnt offering, the peace offering, or the sin offering—as they saw the gorgeous ceremonies of the tabernacle, or the yet more splendid rites of the temple, they admired the wisdom of God, as it was set forth in the dim symbol and shadow. How much more must they have admired it, when the Sun of righteousness arose with healing beneath His wings, when they saw the sacrifice superseded by the one great offering, the high priest set aside by the man, who having once offered one sacrifice forever, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high! How they have marveled since that time as truth of God after truth of God has been expounded in the experience of believers, as doctrine after doctrine has been revealed to the Church of Christ by the illuminations of the Holy Spirit! Oh, brothers and sisters, the angels, when they compare the past with the present, and again, the pre-

sent with the past, the choosing of the Jewish olive, and the leaving out of the rest of the trees, and then, the grafting-in of the Gentiles from the wild olive, and the casting out of the natural branches, how much they must have admired the singular variety of God's dispensations, when they know, as certainly they do, that His grace remains the same!

In climbing or in descending a lofty mountain, one is struck with the sudden change of views. You looked on the right just now, and you saw a populous city in the plain; but you turn a corner and looking through a break in the forest you see a broad lake; and in a moment or two your road winds again, and you will see a narrow valley and another range of mountains beyond. Every time you turn, there is a new scene presented to you. So it would seem to the angelic spirits. When first they began to ascend the hill on which the Church stands, "Mount Zion, which is above, the mother of us all," they saw the wisdom of God manifested as Abraham saw it. A turn in the road, and they saw it as Moses beheld it; another, and they had a view as David was likely to gaze upon it; and then, when they ascended to clearer light, and the mists that hung about the mountainside had all been scattered, and had fallen in one gracious shower of divine grace, they saw it as the apostles beheld it when they stood upon Mount Olivet! And since then, through every trial of the Church, as the 18 centuries have rolled on since the Master went up to heaven, they have been constantly catching fresh views, and seeing fresh manifestations of the varied and constantly-changing wisdom of the unchanging God, as it is manifested in His dealings with the Church! So that both in the dispensations, as well as in the plan, there is made known to principalities and powers "The manifold wisdom of God."

III. Thirdly, to be brief upon each point, we may conclude, without any doubt, that they mainly see the wisdom of God in His Church, IN THE CHURCH'S COVENANT HEAD AND REPRESENTATIVE. Oh, when first they heard that the Lord of life and glory was to be made flesh and to dwell among us, how they must have admired the plan of heaven's going down to earth, that earth might come up to heaven! The baby in the manger commanded all their songs. When they saw that baby become a man and heard Him preach, how they must have marveled at the wisdom of sending God Himself to be God's own prophet! When they saw that man living a life of perfect holiness, how they must have clapped their wings at the thought that man could see perfection now in God's own self, shrouded in human form! But when it came to atonement, and they learned that God's people must be crucified in Christ, how struck must they have been, as the thought burst upon them for the first time, that the whole host of the elect were to sweat great drops of blood through one man—that they were to be flagellated, to be scourged, bruised, and spat upon, in one man—that the host of the chosen were to carry the cross of their condemnation upon one man's shoulders—that that one man was for them all, to take all their load of guilt and, nailed to the tree, bleed away His life for the whole body! Oh, I say, when they saw that low-

ly man, with all the sins of the whole chosen company resting upon His shoulders, and knew this solitary man to be God—able to carry the whole—they must have marveled, indeed, at the wisdom of God! And when that triumphant man cried, "It is finished!" having drained the cup of damnation to its utmost dregs, till there remained not one black drop for another of the elect to drink—when that one man descended into the grave, and the whole company of the faithful were buried with Him, oh, how they marveled! When again they beheld the second Adam bursting His grave clothes, rending the chains of death as though, like another Samson, He had broken the green branches of the Philistines, as though they were but thread, how astonished they were when they thought that the elect were risen in that glorified person! And when that man was received up into heaven, and the cloud hid Him from mortal view, how they rejoiced to see Him rise! But much more to think that we also were risen in Him, and in Him had ascended up on high—in Him the whole Church, I say, leading their captivity captive! When that representative person, with acclamation beyond all measure, rose to the throne of the Father, and took His seat at the right hand of the dreadful Majesty on High, how wonderful must have been the admiration of the spirits when they thought that He had raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus! Perhaps there is no doctrine that is more astounding to Christians than this. I know if we need a theme that will enlarge our minds, the subject of the union of the chosen with Christ is certainly the most expansive—

"O sacred union, firm and strong,
How great the grace, how sweet the song,
That worms of earth should ever be
One with incarnate Deity!
One when He died, one when He rose,
One when He triumphed over His foes;
One when in heaven He took His seat,
And angels sang all hell's defeat!
This sacred tie forbids all fears,
For all He has and is, is ours;
With Him our head we stand or fall,
Our life, our surety and our all!"

"The manifold wisdom of God," in thus constituting Christ the covenant head and representative of the elect in all its various shapes and shades, must have been discovered to angelic beings!

IV. Though that were a theme that might require a full discourse, we leave it at once to turn to another. In the fourth place, the manifold wisdom of God is made known to principalities and powers IN THE CONVERSION OF EVERY CHILD OF GOD.

There are some very singular implements in this present Great Exhibition; marvelous feats of human skill; but there is one thing they have not there that is to be found in the Church of the living God, and that is a heart-melter, an instrument for turning stone to flesh! There are inven-

tions for melting granite, and for liquefying flints, but I know of no invention, but one, and that is not to be found in any earthly show, for melting the adamant of the human heart. Now when the Lord takes the profane man, or the infidel, or the proud, self-righteous Pharisee, or some tall, intimidating, careless sinner, and casts his heart into a fountain filled with Jesus' blood, and it begins to melt with penitence, the angels see the matchless wisdom of God! But I am sure, also, that there is not in the Exhibition another instrument called a heart-healer—an invention for binding up broken hearts and making them one again, and healing all their wounds; but the Lord is pleased by the same instrument by which He breaks hearts, to heal them. That blood, which melts the flint, restores us the heart of flesh. Having first melted the heart, He next shows His matchless skill by taking away despair, despondency, and terror, and giving to the poor conscience perfect peace and rest—no—exulting joy and boundless liberty! As the angels see the proud man bow his knees, as they hear him in his silent chamber pour out his heart in sighs and groans, they say, "It is well, great God, it is well!" And as they see him come down from that chamber, light of foot, and joyous of heart because his sin is all forgiven, with his groans all turned into songs, the angels say, "It is well, great God, it is well! You wound, but You heal; You kill, and You make alive." Conversion is the greatest prodigy that we know of. If there are no such things as miracles today, believe me, I have neither eyes nor ears! But you say, "What miracles?" I answer, not miracles in smitten rocks that yield rivers of water, or seas that are divided by prophetic rods, but miracles in hearts and consciences, obedient to holy, heavenly power! I have seen in my short life more miracles, and stranger miracles than Moses ever worked, and wonders as great as Christ Jesus Himself ever performed on flesh and blood; for they are His miracles today that are worked through the gospel!

If it were appropriate just now, I might point to some in these galleries and on this ground floor, and ask them to tell what miracles God did for them, and how they are here today in one happy circle met for the praise of God! Men who once were everything that was vile; but they are washed, they are sanctified. The tears start in their eyes now, when they think of the drunkard's cup, and of the swearer's oath with which they were once so well acquainted. Ah, too, and of the dens and visions of filth, and of lasciviousness which they once knew; and they are here, loving and praising their Lord! Oh, there are some in this house today who, if they could speak, would say they are the greatest sinners out of hell, and the mightiest wonders out of heaven! If our gospel is hid, it is only hid to those who willfully shut their eyes to it! When one sees harlots reclaimed, thieves, drunkards, swearers made to be saints of the living God, do not tell us that the gospel has lost its power! O sirs, do not dream that we shall believe you while we can see this power, while we can feel it in our own souls, while every day we hear of conversions, while scarcely a week rolls on without some score of brands being plucked

from the eternal burning! And, I say, if the Church of God on earth admires these conversions, what must angels do who are more acquainted with the guilt of sin, and know more of the loveliness of holiness, and understand better the secret heart of man than we do? How must they gladly and exultingly admire in each distinct conversion as it presents phases different from any other, the "Manifold wisdom of God!" That ingenious toy called the kaleidoscope at every turn presents some near form of beauty, so the different converts who are brought to Christ by the preaching of the Word are every one unlike the other; there is something to distinguish each case; by them, to the very letter, our text is proven, the manifold wisdom, the much varied wisdom of God is displayed! I have sometimes understood the word "manifold" as comparing grace to a precious treasure that is wrapped up in many folds. First this, then the next, then the next must be unfolded, and as you unwrap fold after fold, you find something precious each time. But, it will be long before you and I shall have unwrapped the last fold, and shall have found the wisdom of God in its pure glittering luster, lying stored within as the angels behold it in the Church of the living God!

V. But time has failed me, and therefore, I must leave points upon which I wanted to dwell. The principalities and powers, to this day, find great opportunities for studying the wisdom of God in THE TRIALS AND EXPERIENCE OF BELIEVERS, in the wisdom which subjects them to trial, in the divine grace which sustains them in it, in the power which brings them out of it, in the wisdom which overrules the trial for their good, in the grace which makes the trial fit the back or strengthens the back for the burden. They see wisdom in the prosperity of Christians when their feet stand like hinds' feet upon their high places; they see the same in the despondencies of believers when even in the lowest depths they still say, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." As every day brings to us our daily bread, so every day brings to heaven its daily theme of wonder and the angels receive fresh stores of knowledge from the ever-new experience of the people of God! They lean from the battlements of heaven today to gaze on you, you tried believers! They look into your furnace as did the King of Babylon, and they see the fourth man with you like unto the Son of God! They track you, O you children of Israel in the wilderness; they see the places of your encampment, and the land to which you are hastening. And as they mark the fiery cloudy pillar that conducts you, and the angel of God's house that leads the van and brings up the rear, they discover in every step of the way, the wonderful wisdom of God!

VI. And lastly, beyond all controversy, WHEN THE LAST OF GOD'S PEOPLE SHALL BE BROUGHT IN and the bright angels shall begin to wander through the heavenly plains and converse with all the redeemed spirits, they will then see "The manifold wisdom of God." Let the angel speak awhile for himself. "Here," he says, "I see men of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, from Britain to Japan, from the frozen north to

the burning zone beneath the equator; here I see souls of all ages, babes here, snatched from the womb and breast, and spirits that once knew palsied age to whom the grasshopper was a burden. Here I see men from all periods, from Adam and Abel down to the men who were alive and remained at the coming of the Son of God from heaven. Here I see them from the days of Abraham, and the times of David, and the period of the Apostles, and the seasons of Luther and of Wickliffe, even to the last times of the Church. Here I see them of all classes. There is one who was a king, and at his side, as his fellow, is another that tugged the oar as a galley-slave. There I see a merchant prince who counted not his riches dear unto him, and by his side a poor man who was rich in faith, and heir of the kingdom of God. There I see the poet who could sing on earth of Paradise Lost and Regained, and by his side one who could not put two words together, but who knew the Paradise Lost and the Paradise Regained within the Eden of his own nature, the garden of his own heart! Here I see Magdalene and Saul of Tarsus, repenting sinners of all shades and saints of all varieties, those who showed their patience on a lingering sick bed, those who triumphed with holy boldness amid the red flames, those who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy; the monk who shook the world, and he who cast salt into the stream of doctrine and made it wholesome and pure; the man who preached to his millions, and brought tens of thousands of souls to Christ, and the humble cottager who knew but this Bible true, and herself the partaker of the life of Christ—here they all are, and as the spirits wander and look first at this and then at that—first one trophy of divine grace, and then at another monument of mercy, they will all exclaim, 'How manifold are Your works, O God! In wisdom have You made them all. Heaven is full of Your goodness which You have worked for the sons of men.'"

And now, dear friends, the sermon is done, when I ask you just these questions. The first shall be a question for the children of God, and the other for those who know Him not.

First, to the children of God; do you think you and I have sufficiently considered that we are always looked upon by angels, and that they desire to learn by us the wisdom of God? The reason why our sisters appear in the house of God with their heads covered is "because of the angels." The apostle says that a woman is to have a covering upon her head, because of the angels, since the angels are present in the assembly, and they mark every act of indecorum, and therefore, everything is to be conducted with decency and order in the presence of the angelic spirits. Think of that, then, when this afternoon we shall be talking together. Let us not talk in such a way that a visitor from heaven might be grieved with us; and when we are in our general assemblies met together, let us not discuss ignoble themes, but let the matters which we discuss be truly edifying, seasoned with salt. Especially in our families, might we not say more about Christ than we do? Do we not often spend days, perhaps

weeks, without making any mention of such things as we could wish angels to hear? You are watched, brothers and sisters, you are watched by those that love you! The angels love us and bear us up in their hands lest we dash our feet against the stones. They encamp about our homes; let us entertain these royal guests. Since they cannot eat our bread and sit at our table to partake of our good cheer, let us talk of subjects which will delight them in a manner with which they shall be gratified, and let their presence be to us a motive why we should so conduct ourselves that to angels and principalities may be made known by us the wisdom of God!

And, lastly, what do some of you think angels would say of *your* walk and conversation? Well, I suppose you don't care much about them, and yet you should. For who but angels, will be the reapers at the last, and who but they shall be the convoy to our spirits across the last dark stream? Who but they shall carry our spirit like that of Lazarus into the Father's bosom? Surely we should not despise them. What has your conduct been? Ah, sirs, it need not that the preacher speak; let Conscience have her perfect work! There are some here over whom angels, could their eyes have known a tear, would have wept day and night. You have been almost persuaded to be Christians. You have known the struggles of conscience, and you have said, "I would to God I were altogether such as the saints are!" But you are still unconverted. Stay, spirit, guardian spirit, you who have watched over this son of a sainted mother, wing not back your disappointed flight to heaven! He relents, he relents! Now the Spirit of God is moving in him. *"It shall be,"* he says, *"it shall* be." "I repent and believe in Jesus," but oh, spirit, you will yet be disappointed, for he is about to say, "In a little time; go your way for a little season; when I have a more convenient season I will send for you." Angel, you will be disappointed yet, but if the soul shall say, "Now, even now, in this house of prayer, I cast myself upon the finished atonement of Christ; I trust in Him to save me," wing your flight aloft, you glorious angel! Tell the cherubs around the throne of God that the prodigal has returned, and an heir of heaven has been born! Let heaven keep holiday, and let us go into our homes rejoicing, for he who was dead is alive again, and he who was lost is found!

May the Spirit of God do this, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

1Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS
NO. 449

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 11, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Joseph said unto his brothers, I am Joseph; does my father yet live? And his brothers could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brothers, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here: for God did send me before you to preserve life."
Genesis 45:3-5.

JOSEPH is a very eminent type of Christ. When he was hated of his brothers because he protested against their sins, and when they sold him for 20 pieces of silver, he was doubtlessly a portrait of the despised and rejected of men whom His disciple betrayed. Afterwards, in his temptations in the house of Potiphar, in the slander and consequent imprisonment in the round house of Pharaoh's prison, in his later advancement, till he became lord over all the land of Egypt, we clearly see our blessed Lord right well portrayed. Indeed, so well is the picture drawn that there is scarcely a stroke, even though it should seem to be a mere accidental incident of the picture, which has not its symbolic meaning. You shall read the history of Joseph through 20 times, and yet, you shall not have exhausted the type. You shall begin again, and still find some fresh likeness between this despised son of Rachel, and the Son of Mary, who is also God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

It is not, however, my business this morning to enter into a full description of Joseph as the type of Christ. I have a rather more practical objective in hand. I shall endeavor, in the Lord's strength, to deal with tried and troubled consciences, and if it shall be my happy lot to be the means of cheering some sorrowing heart, and opening some blind eye to see the personal beauties, and the intense affection of the Lord Jesus, I shall be but too glad to have been God's messenger to your hearts!

To tarry no longer, but to proceed at once to so good an errand, hopeful that God will help us to accomplish it, I shall direct your attention to the picture before us as being a representation of the way in which the Lord Jesus Christ deals with His erring brothers and sisters, those whom His Father has given Him, and whom He has purchased with His blood.

It seems to me that the condition of Judah and his brothers is a very notable picture of *the state of sinners when they are awakened by the Ho-*

ly Spirit. Secondly, the disguise which Joseph assumed when he dealt so roughly with them is *a master representation of the manner in which Jesus Christ, the loving one, seems to deal harshly with poor coming sinners.* And thirdly, the manifestation which Joseph afterward made to his brothers is but a faint representation of the *declaration of love which Jesus makes to repenting spirits when at last He reveals Himself to them in mercy*.

I. We think that the condition and posture of Judah and his brothers at the feet of the throne of Joseph, trembling in alarm, well describe THE CONDITION AND POSITION OF EVERY TRULY AWAKENED SINNER.

By different methods, Joseph had at last awakened the consciences of his 10 brothers. The point which seemed to have been brought out most prominently before their consciences was this—"We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear. Therefore, is this distress come upon us." And though, in the speech which Judah made, it was not necessary to accuse them of crime, yet, in the confession, "God has found out the iniquity of your servants," Joseph could see evidently enough, that the recollection of the pit and of the sale to the Ishmaelites was vividly before their mind's eyes. Now, beloved, when the Lord, the Holy Spirit, awakens sinners' consciences, this is the great sin which He brings to mind—"Of sin because they believed not on Me." Once the careless soul thought it had very little to answer for—"I have not done much amiss," he said, "a speedy reformation may wipe out all that has been awry, and my faults will soon be forgotten and forgiven." But now, all of a sudden, the conscience perceives that the soul is guilty of despising, rejecting, and slaughtering Christ! What a sin this is, my brothers and sisters! And what pangs we endured when first this crime was laid to our charge, and we were compelled to plead guilty to it! O Lord Jesus, did I accuse You to Your enemies? Did I betray You? Did I sentence You to the cross? Were my cries virtually heard in the streets, "Crucify Him, crucify Him"? Is it true that my sins were the nails which fastened You to the tree? Is it so, that I had a share in Your bloody murder—a tragedy by which the world became a deicide, and man the murderer of his own Redeemer? It is even so; if our conscience is in a right state, we are forced to acknowledge it! Do you not know, sinner, every time you prefer the pleasures of this world to the joys of heaven, you spit in the face of Christ? Every time, when to get gain in your business, you do an unrighteous thing, you are like Judas selling Him for 30 pieces of silver; every time you make a false profession of religion, you give Him a traitor's kiss; every sermon which you hear, which makes a temporary impression on your mind, which impression you afterwards blot out, makes you more and more Christ's despiser and rejecter; every word you have spoken against Him, every hard thought you have had of Him, has helped to complete your complicity

with the great crowd which gathered around the cross of Calvary, to mock and jeer the Lord of life and glory! Now, if there is any sin which will make a man deeply penitent, I think that this sin, when it is really brought home to the conscience, will affect us. To slay Him who did me no hurt, the holy and the harmless One! To assist in hounding to the tree the man who scattered blessings with both His hands, and who had no thought, nor care, nor love, save for those who hated Him! To pierce the hands that touched the leper, and that broke the bread, and multiplied the fishes! To fasten to the accursed wood the feet which had often carried His weary body upon painful journeys of mercy! Oh, this is base, indeed. But when I think He loved *me,* and gave Himself for *me*, that He chose *me*, before the stars were made, or the heavens fixed upon their everlasting arches, and that I, when He came to me in the gospel, should have rejected and despised, and even mocked Him—this is intensely, infinitely cruel! Jesus, You do forgive me, but I can never forgive myself for such a sin as this.

Dear friends, has the Holy Spirit made you feel that you are guilty? If so, I am glad of it, for when we once feel guilty concerning the death of Jesus, our brother; it is not long before He will reveal Himself to us in mercy, blotting out our sin forever!

A second thought, however, which tended to make Joseph's brothers feel in a wretched plight was this, that they now discovered that they were in Joseph's hands. There stood Joseph, second to none but Pharaoh in all the empire of Egypt. Legions of warriors were at his beck and command; if he should say, "Take these men, bind them hand and foot," or, "Cut them in pieces," none could interpose! He was to them as a lion, and they were as his prey, which he could rend to pieces at his will. Now, to the awakened sinner, this also is a part of his misery, that he is entirely in the hands of that very Christ whom he once despised; for that Christ who died has now become the Judge of the quick and dead, He has power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to as many as His Father has given Him. The Father judges no man. He has committed all judgment to the Son. Do you see this, sinner; He whom you despised is your Master? The moth beneath your finger, which you can crush, and that cannot escape from you, may well fear, but you are beneath the fingers of the crucified Son of God. Today, He, whom you have despised, has you absolutely at His will; He has but to will it, and the breath is gone from your nostrils, and while yet in your seat you are a corpse! And more, at His will, you are in hell amidst its flames! Oh, what an awful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, for even our God is a consuming fire.

Remember, sinner, you are in His hands in such a way that unless you repent and receive Him—unless you "Kiss the Son," at once, He may be angry, and you may "perish in the way when His wrath is kindled but

a little." For lo, He comes riding upon the clouds of judgment! Jesus of Nazareth comes, robed in majesty; the books shall be opened, and He shall divide the nations as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. Then, in vain shall you ask the pitiless rocks to give you shelter in their flinty hearts, or the stern mountains to conceal you in their hollow caverns! You shall seek to hide from the face of Him who sits upon the throne, but neither heaven nor earth, nor hell, shall afford you shelter; for everywhere, the eyes of Him who wept shall follow you like flames of fire—and the hands of Him that were once nailed to the tree shall crush you as a cluster in the hand of the gleaner of grapes! You shall feel that it is an awful thing to have turned long-suffering mercy into righteous hatred; you shall know that to have rejected mercy is to have drawn down upon your head the full fury of the justice of the avenger. Yet, further, there was another thought which combined to make Joseph's brothers feel still more wretched; being in his hands, they also felt in their souls that they deserved to be there. We are verily guilty, they said. They offered no apologies, nor extenuations, for that one sin—that crying sin. They might for the matter of Benjamin—but they said, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." Oh, my brothers and sisters in Christ! You know what it is to have the Holy Spirit in your heart, making you plead guilty! Well do I remember when I stood at the bar of God's justice and heard the accusation read out against me! Nothing could I answer but guilty. Indeed, my guilt was so plainly before my eyes that my lips could not frame a denial, and had the judge put on the black cap that day and said, "Take him back to the place from where he came, and give him his portion with the tormentors," I should have been lost—and the great God would have been most just and righteous! Careless sinners may talk about the harshness of God in condemning man to punishment, but once let the Holy Spirit show man the exceedingly sinfulness of sin, and you will never hear a word about that. No, the sinner cries, "Lord, whatever You do with me, You cannot chastise me more than I deserve; though You should crush me beneath Your feet, or though you should pile up the fires of Tophet, and Your breath should be as the stream of brimstone to kindle it, yet, You could not curse too heavily or consume too fiercely your traitorous, rebellious, depraved, and infamous creature! I deserve everything except Your love and Your pity; and if You give me these, I shall be compelled to say, forever and ever, that You gave divine grace to the most undeserving—the most unworthy rebel that ever profaned Your universe!" Brothers and sisters, when conscience goes against a man, he has a stern enemy to contend with. When it is written, "David's heart smote him," such blows come home. So is it with every sinner who is truly led to see his own state. He will feel that he is not only guilty, and that he is in the hands of one from whom he cannot escape, but he will feel that it is right he should be so; and the only wonder

he will have in his own mind is that he has been out of hell so long—that the long-suffering and mercy of God have been so marvelously extended to him!

Under a sense of all these things—note what the 10 brothers did. They began to plead. Ah, nothing makes a man pray like a sense of sin! When we stand guilty before God, then our groans, and sighs, and tears make true and real supplication. I fear there are some of you present who have from infancy repeated a form of prayer who have never prayed in your lives. Yes, and some of you, too, who use an extemporary utterance, and yet who never pray! I do not think men generally pray as a matter of duty. When men fall down in the streets and break their limbs, they do not cry out as a matter of duty—they cry because they cannot help it, and it seems to me that such a prayer God hears, that comes out of a man because he cannot help praying, when the deep agony of his spirit makes him groan, when he cannot be kept from his secret chamber, when he would sooner pray behind a hedge, or in a field, or in an attic, or even in the streets, than not pray at all! If there were an edict issued that no man should pray at all, the really praying man would go into Daniel's lions' den, for he could no more cease to pray than cease to breathe! Can the hart in the wilderness cease from panting for the water brooks? Can a sick child cease from crying for its mother? So the living soul cries after God because he cannot help panting after Him; he must pray or he must die; he must find divine grace or perish, and therefore, in his sore extremity—from an intense and awful agony of heart—he cries again and again, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" This is the prayer that God hears! Such are the petitions which are acceptable to the Lord Jehovah!

Brothers and sisters, will you look at yourselves and at your own experience this morning, and see if you ever were brought down to the spot where Judah and his brothers stood? For I fear we have never been brought rightly unless we have been brought here. He who was never condemned, I think, was never forgiven; he who never confessed his guilt cannot have had a pardon; and if we have never trembled before Jesus the Judge, we can never have rejoiced before Jesus the elder brother!

II. We turn, however, now to remark that THE SINGULARLY ROUGH BEHAVIOR OF JOSEPH IS A NOTABLE REPRESENTATION OF THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST DEALS WITH SOULS UNDER CONVICTION OF SIN.

Joseph always was their brother, always loved them; he had a heart full of compassion for them, even when he called them spies. Kind words were often hastening to his lips, yet for their good, he showed himself to be as a stranger, and even as an enemy, so that he might bring them very low and prostrate before the throne.

My dear friends, our Lord Jesus Christ often does this with truly awakened souls whom He means to save. Perhaps to some of you who are today conscious of guilt, but not of mercy, Christ seems as a stern

and angry Judge. You think of Him as one who can by no means spare the guilty. Your only idea of Him is of one who would say to you, "Get you behind Me, Satan; you savor not the things that are of God." When you read the Scriptures, your mind, perhaps is led to dwell upon His denunciations rather than upon His promises. Such dreadful chapters as the 25th of Matthew are more upon your mind than those blessed portions in John, such as, "Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me." When you do think of Jesus, it is not as of one who is saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." But you rather think you hear Him say, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Poor hearts, you discern all the sternness of His upbraiding, but not the softness and gentleness of His compassion. You see Him dealing fiercely with Pharisees, and reason that He will be even more severe with you! No, you think you have had some proofs that the Lord is not willing to bless you. As Joseph took Simeon before their eyes and put him in prison, as he laid heavy things to his brothers' charge, and said to them, "You are spies, to see the nakedness of the land are you come, by the life of Pharaoh surely you are spies." And as he demanded of them to bring Benjamin down or else he would never see their face again, so you think that Jesus Christ has treated you! You went to Him in prayer, but instead of getting an answer, He seemed to shut up your prayer in prison and keep it like Simeon bound before your eyes. Yes, instead of telling you that there was mercy, He said to you as with a harsh voice, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs." He appeared to shut His ears to your petitions, and to have none of your requests, and to say to you, "Except you renounce a right-eye sin, and a right-arm pleasure, and give up your Benjamin delights, you shall see My face no more," and you have come to think, poor soul, that Christ is harsh and stern. But He is always the gentle Mediator receiving sinners and eating with them. His usual voice is, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But to you He seems no such person, for He has put on a disguise, and you understand not who and what He is.

But you will perceive, brothers and sisters, in reading the narrative, that even when Joseph disguised himself, there was still much kindness discoverable in his conduct, so to the awakened sinner, even while Jesus appears to deal harshly, there is something sweet and encouraging amid it all. Do you not remember what Joseph did for his brothers? Though he was their judge, he was their host, too; he invited them to a great feast; he gave to Benjamin five times as much as to any of them; and they feasted even at the king's table! And so, poor sinner under an awakened conscience, you have occasional feastings at the table of hope. I know while I was under distress, I did have some glimpses of hope. Oh, there were times when His name was very sweet! There were seasons in the

thick darkness when some few rays of light flashed in; when, like the dog that eats the crumbs under the table, now and then there fell a big crust, and my soul was feasted for a while. So has it been with you. Christ has rebuked and chastened you, but still He has sent you food from His royal table. Yes, and there is another thing He has done for you, He has given you corn to live upon while under bondage. You would have utterly despaired if it had not been for some little comfort that He afforded you. Perhaps you would have put an end to your life—you might have gone desperately into worse sin than before—had it not been that He filled your sack at seasons with the corn of Egypt! But mark, He has never taken any of your money yet, and He never will. He has always put your money in the sack's mouth—you have come with your resolutions and with your good deeds, but when He has given you comfort, He has always taken care to show you that He did not confer it because of any good thing you had in your hands. When you went down and brought double money with you, yet the double money, too, was returned. He would have nothing from you; He has taught you as much as that; and you begin to feel now that, if He should bless you, it must be without money and without price!

Yes, poor soul, and there is one other point upon which your eyes may rest with pleasure; He has sometimes spoken to you comfortably. Did not Joseph say to Benjamin, "God be gracious unto you, my son"? And so, sometimes, under a consoling sermon, though as yet you are not saved, you have had a few drops of comfort. Oh, you have gone sometimes out of the house of prayer as light as the birds of the air, and though you could not say, "He is mine, and I am His," yet you had a sort of inkling that the match would come off one day! He had said—"God be gracious to you, My son." You half thought, though you could not speak it loud enough to let your heart distinctly hear it—you half thought that the day would come when your sins would be forgiven; when the prisoner should leap to lose his chains; when you should know Joseph, your brother, to have accepted and loved your soul! I say, then, Christ disguises Himself to poor awakened sinners just as Joseph did, but even amidst the sternness of His manner, for a while there is such a sweet mixture of love, that no troubled one need run into despair!

But, dear friends, I am met by a question. Someone asks, "Why does Jesus thus deal with some coming sinners? Why does He not always meet them at once as He does with some, while they are yet a great way off, and fall upon their necks and kiss them?" Perhaps we can answer this question by another. Why did Joseph thus hide himself, and not manifest himself to his own flesh? The answer is here—Joseph knew there was a prophecy to be fulfilled; the sun, and moon, and 11 stars must make obeisance to him; and their sheaves must bow down before his sheaf. So there is a prophecy concerning us—"That at the name of

Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." And were it not that Christ does thus deal roughly with us, perhaps we would never bow ourselves with that deep humiliation and prostration of spirit which is necessary for *our* good as well for *His* glory! I am sure that any of us who have passed through this state of mind, feel it a privilege to bow down before Him. All hail, Jesus! We bring forth the royal diadem and crown You Lord of all! We wish not to dispute Your sovereignty, nor to interfere with Your absolute dominion. Give Him all the glory! Give Him all the honor! Our spirit bows down with even deeper reverence than the cherubim, who bow before Him with veiled faces, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."

Besides, my dear friends, Joseph's brothers would not have been convinced of their sin at all, if it had not been for this. It was necessary that they should know the greatness of the wrong, that they might know the value of the free pardon. The delay of manifested mercy has done much good to many of the saints; it compelled them to search the fountains of the great deep of their natural depravity, and led them to admire the freeness and richness of divine grace. We would have been but poor fools in Christ's school, if it had not been for the rod with which He whipped us, and the ruler with which He knocked our knuckles in our early days! That blackboard of conviction was a useful enough implement in the school house. If He had not plowed deep, there never would have been a hundred-fold harvest. Since He would build a high house of joy in our hearts, there was a need that He should dig out deep foundations of sorrow—and He did it for our lasting and perpetual good! Could John Bunyan have ever written *Pilgrim's Progress*, if he had not felt abounding sin, and rejoiced in *Grace Abounding?* Could he have ever compiled such a wondrous work as the *Holy War,* if he had not himself felt all the attacks which the Town of Mansoul knew, and heard the beating of the hell drum in his own ears, just as the Mansoulians did, whose tale he tells? Masters of divinity are not to be made by shallow experience; we make not sailors on dry land, nor veterans in times of peace. Christ's rugged warriors, who shall do great exploits for Him, must be like the Spartan youths, they must be brought up by a Spartan training, and flogged, and made to bear the yoke in their youth, that afterwards they may be good soldiers of Christ, able to endure hardness, and to achieve great victories! This, that looks so cruel in Christ, is only masked mercy. He puts the visor on His face, and looks like an enemy, but a friendly heart is still there towards His chosen!

Let us remember, then, if we are today guilty and moaning our guiltiness—we ought not to forget that Christ is a brother, though He seems to be an enemy, that He loves us with a pure and perfect love, though He speaks harshly to us. If He does not answer our prayers, He still intends

to; if no pity or compassion are expressed, yet beyond a doubt, He is not flinty of soul, nor is He hard to be moved to commiserate His children!

III. I now come to the last point, and here, may God be pleased to let His light break in upon darkened souls. JOSEPH AFTERWARDS REVEALED HIMSELF TO HIS BROTHERS, AND SO THE LORD JESUS DOES IN DUE TIME SWEETLY REVEAL HIMSELF TO POOR CONSCIENCE-STRICKEN PENITENT SINNERS.

The reading of the chapter which we heard this morning, is enough to bring tears to all eyes that are connected with tender hearts. I must acknowledge that when reading the chapter in my own study, I could not resist weeping abundantly at the picture which the Holy Spirit has so admirably drawn. Those ten, poor trembling brothers! Judah's speech just finished and all of them on their knees supplicating the clearing of the court house, and then Joseph, whose soul was swelling with such grief and love, bursting out with that, "I am Joseph!" What a scene for tender souls! Though he must have spoken in deep affection, yet, "I am Joseph," must have fallen on their ears like thunder. "*Joseph!* Where are we now? Better for us that we were in a lion's den, than here with him whom we mocked, saying, 'Behold, this dreamer comes,' with him whom we sold, and dipped his coat of many colors in blood, and then took it to his father, saying, 'See whether this is your son's coat or not.'" Well might they tremble! And then, look at the tenderness of Joseph when he says to them again, while they are retiring from him afraid, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt, I pray you come near to me." You hear his pathetic speech as he discovers his brotherhood and relationship, and then you see that generous embrace when, beginning with Benjamin, his next of kin, his own uterine brother, he afterwards weeps with all the rest, and sends them home with favors, enriched and happy. Dear friends, I say this is but a picture of what Christ does to some of us, and of what He is prepared to do to others of you who are trembling at His feet. Notice that this discovery was made *secretly*. Christ does not show Himself to sinners in a crowd; every man must see the love of Christ for himself. We go to hell in bundles, but we go to heaven one by one! Each man must personally know in his own heart his own guilt—and privately and secretly, where no other heart can join with him—he must hear words of love from Christ. "Go and sin no more." "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you."

Mark that as this was done in secret, the first thing Joseph showed them was *his name*. "I am Joseph." Blessed is that day to the sinner when Christ says to him, "I am Jesus, I am the Savior," when the soul discerns instead of the lawgiver, the Redeemer; when it looks to the wounds which its own sin has made, and sees the ransom price flowing in drops of gore; looks to the head, his own iniquity had crowned with thorns, and sees beaming there a crown of glory provided for the sinner!

Sinner, poor troubled sinner, Jesus speaks to you this morning, from His very cross where He bled for You! He says, "I am Jesus, look to Me, trust Me and be saved, repose your confidence wholly upon Me. I will wash you from your sin, carry you safely through time, and land you gloriously in eternity."

Having revealed his name, the next thing he did was to reveal his relationship; "I am Joseph, *your brother."* Oh, blessed is that heart which sees Jesus to be its brother, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, the son of Mary as well as the Son of God! Sinner, whom the Holy Spirit has awakened, Christ is your brother! He feels for you, He has a fellow sympathy with you in the present pangs that wring your heart. He loves you, He loved you before you knew anything of Him; He has given you the best proof of that love in that He has redeemed you with His blood. And revealing his relationship, Joseph also displays *his affection*. "Does my father yet live?" As a brother does, he remembers the head of the household. Jesus tells you that the brotherhood between His soul and yours is not fanciful or metaphorical, but lets His heart go out to you. Penitent sinner, can you believe it? Jesus loves you—loves you though you hated Him. Poor awakened sinner, you think it isn't possible? It *is!* It is not only possible, but certain. He who is heaven's Lord, before whom the angels bow, loves you! I remember one man who was converted to God, who told me that the means of his conversion was hearing a hymn read one Sunday morning in the congregation, when we were worshipping in Exeter Hall, and that hymn was this—"Jesus, *lover of my soul."* And just those words struck him. "Does He love *my* soul? Oh," he said, "nothing had ever broken me before, but the thought that Jesus loved me was too much for me. I could not help giving my heart to Him." The old school men used to teach that it was impossible for any man to know that another loved him without returning the love in some degree. And surely, sinner, though you feel yourself to be the vilest wretch on earth, when we tell you that it is, "A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief," this should be a reason why your heart should go out to Him! He loves you, oh quickened, and convicted sinner! Oh, trust Him, and taste that love in your own heart!

And then will you please notice, that having thus proved his affection, Joseph gave them *an invitation to approach*. "Come near to me, I pray you." You are getting away in the corner. You want to hide away in the chamber, alone. You do not want to tell anybody about your sorrow. Jesus says, "Come near to Me, I pray you. Do not hold your griefs away from Me. Tell Me what it is you need. Confess to Me your guilt; ask Me for pardon, if you want it. Come near to Me, do not be afraid. I could not smite with a hand that bought you; I could not spurn you with the foot that was nailed for you to the tree. Come to Me!" Ah, this is the hardest

work in the world, to get a sinner to come near to Christ. I thought myself that He was such a hard, hard Christ, and that He wanted me to do so much before I might come to Him. When I heard that gracious message, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth," my heart ventured to look and oh, joy of joys, the burden rolled away, the sin was blotted out, my soul stood accepted in Christ! "Come near to Me I pray you." Oh, that I knew where a broken heart was this morning! I think I would point him out, and look him in the face, and say in Jesus' name, "Poor sinner, come near to Me, I pray you." Oh, why do you stay away when Jesus invites? Why do you tarry in your despair when Jesus bids you come to Him? Shall the prisoner hug his chains? Shall the captive cleave to his dungeon? Arise! Be free! Arise, He calls you—sinner, come near to Jesus! salvation is in Him, and as He bids you take it!

I want you to notice again, having given the invitation, what *consolation* Joseph gave! He did not say, "I am not angry with you; I forgive you," he said something sweeter than that—"Be not angry *with yourselves,"* as much as to say, "As for me, you need not question about that—be not grieved nor angry with *yourselves."* So my blessed, my adorable Master, says to a poor, cast down, dejected sinner—"As for My forgiving you, that is done. My heart is made of tenderness, My heart melts with love; forgive yourself; be not grieved nor angry with yourself—it is true you have sinned, but I have died; it is true you have destroyed yourself, but I have saved you. Weep no more; dry those eyes and sing aloud—

'I will praise You every day,
Now Your anger's turned away.
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice!
Jesus has become at length
My salvation and my strength;
And His praises shall prolong,
While I live, my pleasant song!'"

Dear friends, last of all, having thus given them the consolation, he gave deliverance for their understanding in *an explanation.* He says, "It was not you, it was God who sent me here." So does Christ say to the poor soul that feels itself guilty of the Lord's crucifixion. "It was not you," He says, "It was God who sent Me to preserve your lives with a great deliverance." man was the second agent in Christ's death, but God was the great first worker, for He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God! Man did it to destroy righteousness, but God did it to save even the ungodly. Man has the crime, but God has the triumph! Man rules, but God overrules! The gall has become honey, out of the eater has come forth sweetness. Death is destroyed by Jesus' death; hell upturned by hell's blackest deed! Sinner, Christ died to save you with a great deliverance, what do you say? Are you willing to come to Him? If so, He made you willing! Do you say, "But what is it to come?"—to come to

Christ is to trust Him. Are you willing to renounce yourself and your sin and trust Christ, and take Him to have and to hold, for better, for worse, through life and through death, in time and in eternity? Does your heart say, "Yes"? Will you come to this man? Shall there be a match made of it this morning? Shall your heart be betrothed and married to Christ? Ah, then, put this ring of promise on your finger, and go away betrothed unto Christ—and this is the ring—"Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool, though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow."

I feel this morning as though my Master had given me such a sweet message that I cannot tell it as I would, but it may be that there is some soul here that is like a little flower which has opened its cup to catch the dew drop, and it will be good for such a soul. It may be there is a heart here that has been in darkness, and though it is but a candle I can bring, yet that light shall be pleasant to its poor eyes so long used to this horrid gloom. Oh, that some heart here would trust the Lord Jesus! Is there none? Must we go back and say in the closet, "Lord, who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Surely, there is one! Perhaps it is a stranger here, of whom I shall never hear again in this world. Well, but the Lord shall hear of it, and He shall have the praise! Perhaps it is one who has long sat in this house of prayer, invulnerable till now. Perhaps the arrow has found a joint in the harness. O soul! By Him who stretches out His arms of love to you, and by the divine grace that moves you now to run into those arms, come to Him! "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves." It was God who put Christ to death that He might save you with a great deliverance! Trust Jesus and you are saved, and you shall give Him praise, world without end. Amen.

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

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AN EXHORTATION BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON NO. 450

AND A SALUTATION BY REV. MERLE D'AUBIGNE, OF GENEVA, DELIVERED IN THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 18, 1862.

"And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem." 2 Samuel 11:1.

THE last sentence informs us of a circumstance so significant that the Holy Spirit has recorded it twice. In the parallel passage in the Chronicles, you will find a repetition of the statement that, "David tarried at Jerusalem." It had, up to then, been his custom to march at the head of his troops. The king of Israel was the commander-in-chief of the Lord's hosts and by personal deeds of prowess excited the national spirit; but on this occasion, you perceive, he delegates his power to Joab, and seeks inglorious ease. We are informed that the season had arrived when kings go forth to battle—probably the spring, when horses could be maintained by forage and when, if a long siege should be necessary, the armies might sit down before a city with the prospect of advancing summer and ripening harvests. It was a great occasion; for otherwise, how is it that he sent all Israel with Joab? A great war had been provoked, and most important interests were at stake. This makes it the less excusable on the part of the king that he should, when his presence was especially necessary, absent himself from his proper post. Nor do we think that State affairs needed his presence in Jerusalem. No rebellions were hatching; the whole land was quiet, and all the tribes voluntarily submitted themselves to his sway. It does not seem, from the context, that David was at all occupied with State cares; for you find that he rises from his bed at eventide. Contrary to the hardier custom to which he had accustomed himself in his earlier days, after his noontide meal he laid himself down and slept till the sun was setting; and when he arose, it was not to succor the poor, or to dispense justice, but to take a stroll on the housetop!

And then, being idle, having taken his armor off, the arrow smote him—having nothing good to do, the enemy found his awful work; for the tempter planted straight before his eyes a fair temptation, into which he rushed as a bird to the snare, or as a bullock to the slaughter. Happy would it have been for King David had he been in battle! He would not then have known this temptation. Probably if the temptation had presented itself, he would have been so occupied with martial cares that he would not have fallen a victim. Idleness was the mother of the mischief, and if you trace it to its source, the foul iniquity that has made the name of David a special mark for all the Lord's enemies, you will find it had

much to do with his not going out to battle when the country required it—when the season commanded it, and when no affairs of State justified his absence.

You will readily perceive the subject of my address. First, *to the individual Christian;* and secondly, *to the church,* as God shall help me. I will utter warnings against that deadly lethargy which is so apt to steal over us, putting us into a position to be readily assailable by temptation, yes, and to be easily overcome by it, too.

I. To you, BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST, I SPEAK PERSONALLY.

1. Let me direct your special attention to the season at which this temptation to idleness came upon David. Brethren, David never refused to go forth to battle while he was harassed by his adversary Saul. So long as he is hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, David's character is spotless, and his zeal is unrivalled. In his religion there was an intensity of energy, as long as in his life there was an intensity of adversity! But now, an hour of trial is at hand, Saul is dead, and the last of his race sits as a humble pensioner at David's table. The son of Jesse is no more obliged to frequent the tracks of the wild goats, or to hide himself among the glooms of Engedi; his great adversary has long ago fallen by the arrows of the Philistines upon the mountains of Gilboa! But a stealthier foe is lurking in ambush—woe to you, David, if he overcomes you! Ah, Christian, it is a dangerous time to you when temptation has ceased to harass you, when Satan has left you in peace, and when you have placed your foot on your adversary's neck; when the storm has hushed itself to sleep, when a dead calm takes the place of the awful hurricane—it is then you have need to look well to it, for then your soul may lose its former strength and watchfulness, and you may decline into indifference and Laodicean lukewarmness! While the devil assails you on the right hand and on the left, you will hardly be able to rest upon the couch of carnal security. The dog of hell, by barking in your ears, keeps you awake; but when he shall cease his howling, your eyelids will grow heavy, unless divine grace prevents it! When you are no more driven to your knees by furious assaults from hell, you may experience the still more terrible trials of the enchanted ground, and you will have good cause to cry out, "Lord let me not sleep as do others, but let me watch and be sober!"

Yet again, David at this time had obtained the crown, and it was sitting softly and securely upon his head. Dear friends, far from depreciating the full assurance of faith, we know that it is our strength and our joy; but there is a temptation connected with it. The Christian is apt to say, "Now I am saved, I have no doubt about it; for the crown of my salvation encircles my head right royally." believer, be on your watchtower, for the next temptation will be, "soul, take your ease; the work is done; you *have* attained; now fold your arms, and sit still. All will end well, why do you need to vex yourself?" Take care of the seasons when you have no doubts. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." "I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong: you did hide Your face and I was troubled." Bless God for full assurance; but, remember, nothing but careful walking can pre-

serve it. Full assurance is a priceless pearl; but when a man has a precious jewel, and he walks the streets, he ought to be much afraid of pickpockets! When the Christian has full assurance, let him be assured that all the devils in hell will try to rob him of it. Let him be more upon his watchtower than he was before. This is the temptation of assured believers, to sit down upon the throne and say, "I shall sit in my glory forever and see no sorrow; I need no more go forth to fight the Lord's battles."

Yet further—it appears that at this time David was at the height of his prosperity. He had attained to about 50 years of age; the year of his jubilee was come, and everything went on jubilantly. Wherever he turned his hand, he prospered. "Moab is my wash pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph." He could boast exceedingly, for God was with him in all his ways. Ah, dear friends, when a Christian prospers, it is a bad time for him, unless he is on his watchtower. "In all time of our wealth, good Lord deliver us." When a man is poor, when he is sick, when he is tried in his estate, he has need of divine grace; but when he is rich, when his business succeeds, and he and his family are in good health, and all is well, he has need of grace upon grace! It is difficult standing in high places; the brain grows dizzy with looking down. It is not easy to carry a full cup with a steady hand. Smooth places are slippery places. Let us beware, lest when we get full, Jeshurun waxes fat and kicks against the Lord. Summer weather breeds flies; fair weather in the soul brings out the evils and mischiefs of our nature. Heat hatches the cockatrice eggs, and the heat of prosperity often brings out the young serpents of sin! See to it, lest, like David, you refuse to go forth to battle because you are prospering in the world!

To complete the tragedy, David had now the opportunity of indulging himself in all the luxuries of life. He had a palace with all the accompaniments of oriental magnificence. He was no more the humble shepherd, eating a crust from his wallet—no more the chieftain of an outlawed clan, depending upon such churlish husbandmen as Nabal for temporary assistance. The fat of the land was his; the vintage of Ephraim, the corn of Judah, and the dainties brought from afar, from Tyre and Sidon—all were his! He could be clothed in scarlet and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day; then it was that his *soul* grew lean, while the flesh was pampered. Fat steeds sometimes will not work; birds too well fed refuse to sing; and so does it happen, when the riches of the earth are ours freely to enjoy, and the blessings of divine Providence are poured out of the cornucopia of divine Munificence, that we refuse to do the Lord's work, and, like David, go not out to battle.

Dear friends, I *know* that my sermon is pertinent to some of you. I would that I could portray the individuals so clearly, that they could not allot to others the rebuke intended for them! It is a well-known fact, that when some people get rich in gold they grow poor in divine grace. They rise in the eyes of the world and sink in the esteem of their heavenly Lord. Things which believers were glad to undertake when they were little in Israel, they cannot look upon when they have grown great among the inhabitants of Zion! Certain folks, when they can keep a carriage, are

ashamed to frequent the meeting house; they must go to some more respectable place of worship. The truth of God was respectable enough for them when they loved it—but, now, they love the honor of men more than Christ! They can hoodwink their consciences and unite with worldly churches, who love architecture, scholarship, and pomp, more than the truth of God and holiness. "God grant," said one of Wesley's followers, "that the Methodists may never grow rich." And I think I might well say, God grant the Baptists never may. O Lord, give them neither poverty nor riches, but especially let them not grow too respectable to associate with the poor of the land! Why, there are some of you who, when you joined this church, were as earnest as you could be—and where are you now? There are some who were prominent in the prayer meeting—how often do we see them now? Are there not many among us as miserly towards the Lord's cause, as if they did not care a rush for it?

You will say I am being personal. Brothers and sisters, I mean to be, and want to be! And if you feel that this is your case, instead of being offended at the honest rebuke now offered to you, solemnly thank God that it comes home to you! Earnestly retrace your steps, be no more sluggish and sleepy, but for the sake of Him who loves you with an everlasting love, once more cast your souls into His cause, and go forth to fight your Lord's battles! Away with your downy dozing, and comfortable slumbers! Lord, awaken us by a thunderbolt from heaven! When Christians have learned the doctrine, but begin to forget the practice; when they have a little smattering of experience, and think they are *the* men, and wisdom shall die with them; when they despise the broken-hearted and timid—there is but a step between them and a fall! Oh, you who are in such a condition, I solemnly warn you. I sound this day an alarm in Zion. Arise! Arise, you slumberers upon your soft couches, for if you slumber now, you shall one day awake and find yourselves upon the verge of destruction, and only the sovereign grace of God shall bring you back as David was brought back, and restore you once again to the right way, to journey with broken bones to your tomb, sorrowing because of your sin!

2. Observe, my brothers and sisters, that there are certain tendencies abroad which will co-operate with the dangers of the occasion, and unless the Christian is very watchful, will lead him into David's vice of slothfulness. Brethren, what would the flesh do with some of us but make us, if we would let it have its way, as idle as Solomon's sluggard? I do confess, there is, perhaps, no man living that has a stronger temptation to sheer idleness than myself, although, I am no boaster when I say I labor as hard as any man in either hemisphere. Alas, for this body of sin and death, it is hard for a man to serve the Lord aright while imprisoned in it. Brothers and sisters, you will find that not only the mere flesh, but the lusting of the mind, will naturally lead you to be cold in Christ's work. Enthusiasm is not the tendency of Englishmen in matters of religion. Only the Spirit of God can give the tongue of fire, and the rushing mighty wind to the assembled disciples. The flesh lusts continually towards inaction; the inertia of matter reaches its height in the corruption of humanity. We lift up our souls unto God, but we fall down again to the

earth, for our nature has in it more of the sinking of a millstone than the mounting of an eagle! Well does Watts put it—

"Look, how we grovel here below, fond of these trifling toys—
Our souls can neither fly nor go to reach eternal joys."

Beloved, your unmortified flesh will make you idle enough, without any other tempter.

Then there is Satan; he will take care to sing your lullaby and rock your cradle if you want to sleep, for he loves not to see God's warriors on the alert. While they are all asleep, he knows the war will not go on very briskly. An army dosed with chloroform would be quite as useless as if they were chained and manacled! While swords sleep in scabbards, no foe needs dread them. Ah, my fellow soldiers, this is a great artifice of Satan, and one of his craftiest devices, to lull us all into a deep sleep!

Besides, you will find the world has a great tendency to make you cold and dead. What do you feel, brothers and sisters, after some few hours of intermeddling with business? Is not this vain world a foe to divine grace? Unless you are very spiritually minded, do you not find that the world has a dragging-down tendency? I ask the workers, the merchants, the thinkers—do you not find that secular occupations, unless you are exceedingly careful in consecrating them to God—have a tendency to stain the garments of your priesthood, and bring you down from your high standing? The world is to the Christian a hothouse, and he a tender plant that has been the gardener's special care. I would give nothing for that Christian who loves to be in worldly company; I think if any man can find himself quite at home with ungodly persons, he must be one of them, and if even with merely moral persons he can find a settled rest, surely there can be nothing of the high and aspiring nature within him that belongs to the true-born heir of heaven!

But, brethren, I am sorry to have to add one more thing. Even association with some portions of the Church of God, in its present state, may cool the ardor of piety. Ecclesiastical lethargy is perhaps one of the greatest stumbling blocks to young believers. I am not staggered by the world's indifference to religion, for I can understand it, but the indifference of the Church to the progress of Jesus' kingdom is an enigma which one cannot solve. Many a young enthusiastic Christian has had the noble spirit of Christ all but crushed out of him by seeing the dullness and deadness of older saints, who seemed to be pillars in the Temple of God. Oh, have we not heard our young Davids saying concerning our foes, "Who is this Philistine? I will go against him and smite off his head," but a veteran Eliab in the church has said, "Because of the pride and the naughtiness of your heart you have come to see the battle." When he is brought before a Saul-like minister, he says, "Well, young man, you are enthusiastic, you must not attempt to do the Lord's work by simple faith, you must put this helmet on and carry this spear, you must wear this leg armor of brass." And the poor young man, with almost enthusiasm enough in him to melt the armor off his back, has to go out to sure defeat, wearing untried weapons which prove his ruin! Oh, give us back the glorious days when the church was a pillar of fire, and when every new member was a new coal added to the glowing mass! Give us back even

the stakes of Smithfield, if we might have the fiery energy of the first Reformers! Visit us anew with persecution, if we can but renew the diligent prosecution of the ends and aims of the Church of Christ! Let our foes grow angry if *we* may but grow zealous!

3. To pass on rapidly to the third point. What happened through David's tarrying at home? Some men think it a small thing to be doing nothing for Christ; it is a terrible thing, and will be a *damnable* thing, unless God gives you repentance! What happened, I say, to David? Why, now that he was tarrying at home and giving himself up to sloth, he was losing his usefulness and honor by no more fighting the Lord's battles; no more triumphs were being written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah; and even Joab had to send for him to come in at the end of the fray to take the city, lest it should be called by Joab's name. Is it a little thing for a follower of Christ to be losing the immortal honor of serving the Lord? What will men not do to win fame? And shall we, when it lies at our doors, turn aside to our beds of ease, and cast our glory to the ground? Let us be up and doing, for it is no light thing for a faithful servant of Christ to be losing the honor of serving his Master!

David lost his communion and joy. A man cannot be idle and yet have Christ's sweet company. Christ is a quick walker, and when His people would talk with Him, they must travel quickly, too, or else they will soon lose His Company. Christ, my Master, *goes about doing good,* and if you would walk with Him, you must go about upon the same mission. The Almighty, lover of the souls of men, is not likely to keep company with idle persons! I find in Scripture that most of the great appearances that were made to eminent saints were made when they were busy. Moses kept his father's flock when he saw the burning bush; Joshua is going round about the city of Jericho when he meets the angel of the Lord; Jacob is in prayer, and the angel of God appears to him; Gideon is threshing, and Elisha is plowing, when the Lord calls them; Matthew is in the receipt of customs when he is bid to follow Jesus; and James and John are fishing. The manna which the children of Israel kept till morning bred worms and stank—idle grace would soon become active corruption!

Moreover, sloth hardens the conscience—laziness is one of the irons with which the heart is seared. Abimelech hired vain and light persons to serve his turn, and the Prince of darkness does the same! Oh, friends, it is a sad thing to rust the edge off from one's mind, and to lose keenness of moral perception! But sloth will surely do this for us. David felt the emasculating power of sloth; he was losing the force of his conscience, and was ready for anything. The worst is near at hand. He walks upon the housetop and sees the object which excites his lust; he sends for the woman, the deed is done; it leads to another crime, he tempts Uriah; it leads to murder—Uriah is put to death—and David takes Uriah's wife. Ah, David! Ah, David! How are the mighty fallen! How is the prince of Israel fallen and become like the lewd fellows who riot in the evening! From this day forth his sunshine turns to clouds, his peace gives place to suffering, and he goes to his grave an afflicted and troubled man, who, though he could say, "God has made with me an everlasting covenant,"

yet had to precede it with that very significant sentence, "Although my house is not so with God."

Dear friends, is there anyone here among the Lord's people who would crucify the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame? Is there anyone among you who would wish to sell your Master, as Judas did, or turn aside from Christ with Demas? It is easy to do. Oh, you say, you could not do it. *Now*, perhaps you could not. Get slothful; do not fight the Lord's battles and it will become not only easy for you to sin, but you will surely become its *victim!* Oh, how Satan delights to make God's people fall into sin; for then, he does, as it were, thrust another nail into the bloody hand of Christ! Then, he does stain the fair white linen of Christ's own garment; then, he vaunts himself that he has gotten a victory over the Lord Jesus, and has led one of the Master's favorites captive at his will! Oh, if we would not thus make hell ring with Satanic laughter, and make the men of God weep because the cedars of Lebanon are cut down, let us watch unto prayer, and be diligent in our Master's business, "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

My dear friends, we do not exhort you to serve Christ, to be *saved* by it. David *was* saved! I only speak to you who *are* saved, and I beg and beseech you to take notice of David's fall—and of the sloth that was at the beginning of it—as a warning to yourselves. Some temptations come to the industrious, but *all* temptations attack the idle! Notice the invention used by country people to catch wasps. They will put a little sweet liquid into a long and narrow-necked vial. The do-nothing wasp comes by, smells the sweet, plunges in and is drowned. But the bee comes by, and if she does stop for a moment to smell, yet she enters not, because she has honey of her own to make! She is too busy in the work of the commonwealth to indulge herself with the tempting sweets. Master Greenham, a Puritan divine, was once waited upon by a woman who was greatly tempted. Upon making inquiries into her way of life, he found she had little to do, and Greenham said, "That is the secret of your being so much tempted. Sister, if you are very busy, Satan may tempt you; but he will not easily prevail and he will soon give up the attempt." Idle Christians are not tempted of the devil as much as they tempt the devil to tempt them! Idleness sets the door of the heart ajar, and asks Satan to come in; but if we are occupied from morning till night, if Satan shall get in, he must break through the door! Under sovereign grace, and next to faith, there is no better shield against temptation than being, "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

And, dear friends, let me remind those of you who are doing little for Christ, that once you were not as cold as this. There was a time with David when the sound of the clarion of war would have stirred his blood, and he would have been eager for the fray. There was a day when the very sight of Israel marshaled in goodly phalanx, would have made David bold as a lion. Oh, it is an ill thing to see the lion changed like this! God's hero stays at home with the women! There was a time when *you* would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear a sermon, and never minded standing in the aisles; but now, the sermons are tedious to some of you, although you have soft cushions to sit upon! *Then* if there was a Cottage

meeting, or a Street Preaching, you were there. "Ah," you say, "that was wildfire." Blessed wildfire! The Lord give you the wildfire back again; for even if it *is* wildfire, better wildfire than no fire at all—better be called a fanatic than deserve to be called a drone in Christ's hive!

Those of you who do very little for your Master—and there are a few such in this church, who grudge to give of their substance—let me say to you, Are you not ashamed to see how the Lord's other servants serve Him? When Uriah said to David, "The ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go into my house, to eat and to drink? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." When he said that, I think the king must have felt very uneasy in his luxurious sloth! What do you say to this, some of you? You, who were once the chief of sinners, are now saved by divine grace; you have had high privileges, great tastes of love, near fellowship with Him—you are His own elect, anointed, taken up from the dunghill, and made to sit among princes! And yet, you are doing next to nothing for Christ! Oh, dear friends, I would not so much bid you to think over these things, as beseech the Holy Spirit to lay these matters to your hearts, that you may not sleep any longer, but being of the day, may do the day's work, till the day shall end!

II. I shall occupy but a few minutes more, while I endeavor to speak of the text as it refers to THE WHOLE CHURCH; for I think it has a loud voice to the whole of us as a community. Strangers and members of other churches must kindly forget that they are here. I am not about to speak to them, but I am about to speak to *you*—the 2,000 members of this church under my care, to whom I am bound most of all to speak personally and faithfully.

My dear friends, it does seem to me, that to us as a church, the temptation to sloth is very likely to come, for we are very much in the same condition as David. Our enemies do not harass us as much as they once did. When the Parliament is over, we shall have certain newspapers abusing us again, for when they have nothing else to say, they fill up with abusing us. But, there was a time when we had no friends. We look back some eight years ago, when the Church of Christ was very shy of us—we were innovators, preaching in those wicked music halls; it was such a very awful thing to preach the gospel where people would come to hear it! It was going contrary to the customs of the Christian Church to carry the gospel to poor sinners; and good people, holy people, and godly people, thought we were sinners above all sinners on earth! And if an accident did occur, if the tower of Siloam fell, how plainly were we told that we deserved the catastrophe! Then there were sneers everywhere, caricatures, jeers, jibes of all sorts—and you all had to suffer, each your share, with your leader. To a great extent that is over. The clergy of the Church of England do now what it was once infamous for us to do; now the theater hears the voice of Christ; now the cathedrals echo with the holy hymn—blessed be God for all this! We enjoy a degree of peacefulness, and have not now the entire world against us, as once we had. Now we

shall be tempted to fold our arms and say, Let us subside into the easy respectability of other congregations, and let it be well with us.

During all the time God has been pleased to favor us with profound peace in the Church. We have been disturbed by no word of ill-doctrine, by no uprising of heretics in our midst, or any separations or divisions. This is a blessed thing—but still Satan may make it a dangerous matter! We may begin to think that there is no need for us to watch, that we shall always be as we are; and deacons, and elders, and pastor, and church members, may all cease their vigilance, and then the root of bitterness may spring up in the neglected corner, till it gets too deeply rooted for us to tear it up again!

We have accomplished, as a church, and by God's divine grace, the great work which we set for ourselves—the building of this house of prayer. And now we come to our place in our loved house of prayer, and feel the Master's presence with us. But, without a grand goal before our eyes, imperatively demanding self-sacrifice from each one of us, as this goal did; without some enterprise which we can all lay hold of, and feel that we could give our last shilling to carry it out successfully, we are apt to grow rusty, to lean upon our weapons instead of using them, and to withdraw from the Lord's host instead of rushing on to battle with the shout of men who mean to win the victory! Ah, give us back again all the noise, and the confusion, and the strife; let us have once more the coldness, and the harshness, and evil speaking of the entire Church of God, if we may but have our early enthusiasm and earnestness for Christ! Our work of educating men for the ministry may supply the goal for our zeal—may the Lord give zeal for the goal!

Dear friends, let me say solemnly, there are many tendencies to make this church sleep. We come frequently into contact with professed believers who will throw cold water upon every effort—who think doing anything for Christ a work of supererogation, and there is a tendency in us to go with them, and to say, "Let it be so; let us be quiet." It is almost necessary for the church that, at least once in a hundred years, there should arise in it some new body of enthusiasts; for the old churches, though noble at the start, like all human things, flag before long. Why, Methodism, though still most powerful, has nothing like the fire it had in Wesley's and Whitefield's time! It is now no more like a great volcano, sending up torrents of holy fire to heaven in prayer, and sending down streams of all-consuming lava into the plains of sin! It has grown respectable, and learned, and fine. So with each of the churches; do they not all degenerate? No matter whether it is England, America, France, Switzerland—wherever it may be, there is a down-drawing tendency constantly at work; and unless God the Holy Spirit comes in with irresistible might, *we* shall, as a church, succumb to general lethargy, and yield ourselves to apathy.

What shall we do, as a church, then? Let us take heed to our footsteps, every one of us, and be doubly careful—let us meet together in greater numbers for prayer; let each of us feel more and more his individual responsibility to Christ; let us weigh the awful necessities of this huge city; let us put out every energy, and use every agency that can

possibly be employed, for the regeneration of this dark, dark land! If we grow idle; if the Church of Christ universally shall grow idle, we cannot expect that our enemies will be idle, too! Once, the light said to the darkness, "I am growing weary with shooting my arrows every morning at you, O darkness! I am weary with continually pursuing you around the globe. I will retire, if you will." But the darkness said, "No, it is of necessity that if you yield your dominion I shall take it; there can be no truce between you and me."

Friends, I might address the members of this church as it is said an old Scotch Commander once addressed his soldiers when he saw the enemy coming. This was his brief, terse speech—"Lads," he said, "there they are, and if you dinna kill them, they will kill you." Look, members of the church! If you do not put down lethargy and sloth, if you strive not against Popery, Infidelity and Sin, they will put you down! There is no other alternative; to conquer or to die; to live and to be glorious; or to fall ignobly. Look! Jehovah lifts His banner before our eyes today! Rally! Rally! Rally, you soldiers of the cross! The trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long today; and the hell drum on the other side sounds, too! Who dares to hesitate? Let him be accursed! "Curse you, Meroz, curse you, Meroz," says the Lord, "curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof, if they come not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." "He who is not with Me is against Me; he who gathers not with Me scatters abroad." Away with you, you indifferent ones! Don't you know you are either on Christ's side or else you are His adversaries? On! The charge comes—forward, heroes of heaven! What shall become of those who are midway between the two armies? Over you, over you; troops shall trample on your bodies! You shall be the first to be cut in pieces, O you indifferent ones, who are neither this nor that! And then shall come the shock, and then the charge; and as in that conflict you shall have no portion, so in that great triumph which shall surely follow, you shall have no share!

I will now give way to my friend, Dr. D'Aubigne, who will address you for a few minutes, when I have simply reminded those who are not in Christ's army, that with them there is something to come before service, "Except you repent and are converted, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." The door to that kingdom is Christ—trust Him and you are saved. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and your house."

My dear friend, Dr. D'Aubigne, is here this morning, having been called by the Bishop of London, according to the order of our beloved Queen, to preach in the Royal Chapel of St. James. In a kind note with which he favored me last week, he expressed a desire publicly to show his hearty fellowship with his brothers and sisters of the Free Churches of England, and I am delighted to welcome him in the Tabernacle this morning, in the name of this church, and I may venture to add, in the name of all the *Free* Churches of England! May the Historian of the Reformation continue to be honored of the Lord his God!

DR. MERLE D'AUBIGNE—I do not speak your tongue, my dear friends—I speak it very badly, but I will do what I can to make myself

understood. When I heard your dear pastor reading to us the 16th chapter of Romans, I remembered those words which we find very often in the Epistles of Paul—"Love to the saints," and "Faith in the Lord." In the 16th chapter we find a beautiful exhibition of the love to the saints, the children of God. We see it was written from the Church of Corinth, in Greece, to the Church of Rome. Observe how many Christians that Church of Corinth and the apostle knew at Rome! We have a long catalog of names—Priscilla, Aquila, Andronicus, and others. I must confess, my dear friends, to my shame, that in this great assembly I know only two or three names. I know the name of our dear friend, Mr. Spurgeon. I know the name, but not the person, of Mr. North, upon my left, and I know the name of the friend who has received me in your great city, Mr. Kinnaird, "Gaius, my host," as the apostle says. But in this great assembly of 6,000 men and women, and I hope brothers and sisters in Christ, I do not know another name. Well, my dear friends, I would ask you, do you know the names of many Christians in Geneva? You do not know, perhaps, three, perhaps two, perhaps one. Now, that is to me a demonstration that fraternity, or brotherly love, is not so intense in our time, as it was in the time of the apostles! In the first century, for a man to give his name to the Lord was to expose himself to martyrdom; and Christians in that time formed only one household in the whole world, in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Let us remember that, and may we, by the Holy Spirit, say that we who have been baptized with the blood and the Spirit of the Lord, have only one Father, one Savior, one Spirit, one faith, and we are only one house, the house of the living God, the house of Christ, one house of the Holy Spirit in the whole world; not only in Europe, Asia, and Africa, but in America, in Australia, one house, one family! Oh, my dear brothers and sisters let us grow in the love to the saints!

Then, there is another thing, faith; faith in the Lord Jesus. There can be no love to the saved and the redeemed, if there is no true living faith and hope in the Savior and the Redeemer. Well, I suppose all of you in this great meeting would say, "We believe in the Lord, we have faith in Him." Yes, but that faith must be sincere, must be living, must come from the heart! I will tell you one word from Rome. Probably all these friends sent some words to the apostle, but I will tell you one word that was said once in Rome, not at the time of Paul, but at the time of our blessed Reformation. There was in the latter part of the 16th Century, a man in Italy, who was a child of God, taught by the Spirit. His name was Aonio Paleario. He had written a book called, *The Benefit of Christ's Death.* That book was destroyed in Italy, and for three centuries it was not possible to find a copy; but two or three years ago, an Italian copy was found, I believe, in one of your libraries at Cambridge or Oxford, and it has been printed again. It is perhaps amazing, but this man did not, as he ought to have done, leave the Romish church. But his whole heart was given to Christ. He was brought before the judge in Rome by order of the pope. The judge said, "We will put to him three questions; we will ask him what is the first cause of salvation, then what is the second cause of salvation, then what is the third cause of salvation?" They thought that in putting these three questions, he would at last be made to say some-

thing which should be to the glory of the Church of Rome. They asked him, "What is the first cause of salvation?" And he answered, "Christ." They then asked him, "What is the second cause of salvation?" And he answered, "CHRIST." And they asked him the third time, "What is the third cause of salvation?" and he answered, "CHRIST." They thought he would have said, first, Christ; secondly, the Word; thirdly, the church. But no, he said, "Christ." The first cause, Christ; the second, Christ; the third, Christ; and for that confession which he made in Rome, he was condemned to be put to death as a martyr. My dear friends, let us think and speak like that man; let every one of us say, "The first cause of my salvation is Christ; the second is Christ; the third is Christ. Christ and His atoning blood, Christ and His powerful regenerating Spirit, Christ and His eternal electing grace, Christ is my only salvation, I know of nothing else."

Dear friends, we find in the epistle to the Romans these words—"The whole church salutes you." I have no official charge, but I may in a Christian and fraternal spirit say to you, the Geneva Church, the Church in Geneva salutes you; and I would say, the whole Continental Church salutes you, for we know you, and we love, you and the dear minister God has given you. Now we ask from you love towards us. We do what we can in that dark Continent to bring forward the light of Jesus Christ. In Geneva we have an Evangelical Society which has that work before it, and in other places we are also laboring. We ask for our work an interest in your prayers, for the work is hard among the Roman Catholics, and the infidels of the Continent. But as our brother, in the beginning of the service, reminded you that from the little town of Geneva light came, by the grace of the Spirit, to many nations, and especially to England and Scotland, by the ministry of John Calvin, our Reformer. I may mention to you, that upon the tri-centenary anniversary of the death of Calvin, which will take place in two years, on the 27th of May, 1864, we desire to erect in Geneva, a monument to the blessed Reformation and to the Reformer who has been the instrument of God in promoting the true doctrine, not only in Geneva, but in a great many countries, and I ask also your interest in that work, and in that spot which has been blessed since the 16th century, for Switzerland, for France, for the Netherlands, for Germany, for England, for Scotland, and is now blessed for the United States, and for the ends of the earth! I beg of you, dear friends, your deep interest and your earnest prayers for us. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all! Amen.

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CHOICE PORTIONS
NO. 451

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 25, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For the Lord's portion is His people."
Deuteronomy 32:9.

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul."
Lamentations 3:24.

THE love of God changes us into its own image, so that what the Lord says concerning *us*, we also can declare concerning *Him*. God is essentially love, and when this essential love shines forth freely upon us, we reflect it back upon Him. He is like the sun, the great father of lights, and we are as the moon and the planets, we shine in rays borrowed from His brightness. He is the golden seal, and we, His people, are the wax receiving the impression. Our heaven is to be likeness to Christ, and our preparation for heaven consists in a growing imitation of Him in all things. See, brethren, how the Lord gives the Word, and our heart, like an echo, repeats every syllable! The Lord loves His people, and we love Him because He first loved us; He has chosen His saints, and they also have made Him their chosen heritage. The saints are precious to Jesus, and unto us who believe, *He* is precious. Christ lived for us, and for us to live is Christ—we gain all things by His death, and for us to die is gain. The Church is the mirror in which Christ sees Himself reflected; she is like a fair songstress taking up the refrain of Jesus' canticles of love, while He sings, "My sister, My spouse," she answers, "My beloved is mine, and I am His." It is most delightful to perceive how, through divine grace, believers come to have the same feeling towards their God which their gracious Lord has towards them! Our two texts present us with an interesting instance—the Church is God's portion, He delights in her, He finds in her His solace and His joy; but God is also, as the result of this, the Church's portion—her full delight and bliss! Beloved, the love is mutual. And whereas the Lord is married to His people, we perceive that it is no forced match on either side; He voluntarily gave Himself to her, and she joyfully surrenders her all to Him. His whole heart He gave unto His chosen people, and now, they as voluntarily, though led by divine grace, give themselves to Him; and while He clasps His Church in His arms, saying, "You are My portion," she returns the embrace, and rapturously cries, "You are my portion, O Lord."

As God shall help me, and relying only on His divine assistance, I shall try to work out these two texts at some length; we shall commence with, *"The Lord's portion";* we will then proceed to the second, *"His people's portion."*

I. "THE LORD'S PORTION IS HIS PEOPLE."

1. The text teaches us that *the Church of God is the Lord's own peculiar and special property*. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world and they who dwell therein." By creation, as well as by providence, Jehovah is the liege Lord and sovereign possessor of the entire universe! Let none venture to dispute His claims, or say that He is not the great owner of all things, for thus says the Lord, "Behold, all souls are Mine." But He has a special property in His Church. As a king may have ample possessions to all of which he has undoubted right, still he has royal mansions, and crown lands which are in a very special sense his own. So has the Lord of all a peculiar interest in His saints. As Osborne, and Balmoral, and Windsor belong to our sovereign by tenure, which differs from her title and claim to the United Kingdom, so the Church is the peculiar heritage of the King of kings. The whole world is God's by common right, He is Lord of the manor of the universe; but His Church is His garden, His cultivated and fenced field, and if He should give up His rights to all the rest of the wide earth, yet, He never could relinquish His rights to His separated inheritance!

"The Lord's portion is His people." *How are they His?* We answer, first, by His sovereign *choice*. Before they were fashioned, all creatures lay in His mind's eye in the mass of creatureship, and it was in His power to make whom He would as vessels unto honor. He did so ordain to make His chosen, and set His love upon them. When they lay in the impure mass, having all fallen, it was still in His power, through the plan of redemption, to raise up some and to make these His own special heritage. This He did altogether apart from any goodness in them at the time, or any goodness which He foresaw in them. He had mercy on whom He would have mercy, and ordained a chosen company into eternal life. These, therefore, are His by *election*. As our text says, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance, or as the Hebrew has it, *"the cord"* of His inheritance, an allusion to the old custom of measuring out lots by a line or cord; so by line and by lot, the Lord has marked off His own chosen people, "And they shall be Mine, says the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels."

They are not only His by choice, but by *purchase*. He has bought and paid for them to the utmost farthing, so that about His title there can be no dispute. Not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord's portion has been fully redeemed! There is no mortgage on His estate, no suits can be raised by opposing claimants, the price was paid in open court, and the Church is the Lord's freehold forever. See the blood-mark upon all the chosen, invisible to human eye, but known to Christ, for "The Lord knows them who are His"? He forgets none of those whom He has redeemed from among men; He counts the sheep for whom He laid down His life, and remembers well the Church for which He gave Himself. Should any fraudulent adversary dispute His claim, He shows His pierced hands, and points to His wounded side—the emblems of His passion are the seals of His possession!

They are also His *by conquest*. Old Jacob, when he lay dying, gave to Joseph one portion above his brothers, which he had taken out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow. The Lord Jesus can truly say of His people that He has taken them out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow. Your conquering hand, O Jesus, when nailed to the cross, tore away Your children's chains. You have trod our foes in Your anger, and trampled them in Your hot displeasure; behold, their blood is sprinkled upon Your garments, and You have stained all Your raiment. Upon your necks, O you tyrants of the Church, the Anointed has put His feet! He has dashed you in pieces with His own right hand! He has broken the ties of the young lions, and delivered His Israel out of the jaw of the lion, and the paw of the bear. He has obtained His saints as a portion which He divides with the great, and as a spoil which He has taken from the strong. We are Christ's this day by *conquest in us*. What a battle He had in us before we would be won! How long He laid siege to our hearts! How often He sent His terms of capitulation; but we rejected all overtures of submission; we barred our gates; we fenced our walls against Him. The law, with its great battering ram, smote our gates till the posts rocked in their sockets, but we fortified our strongholds, and fought stoutly against the Most High, vowing that we would not be subdued! But ah, do you not remember that glorious hour when He carried our hearts by storm, when He put His cross against the wall, and scaled our ramparts, planting on our strongholds the blood-red flag of His atoning mercy? O brothers and sisters, we are, indeed, the conquered captives of His omnipotent love. Thus chosen, purchased, and subdued, the rights of our divine possessor are undeniable, and we, His people, are the regalia of His royalty, the gems of His crown, the sheep of His pasture, the children of His love, the darlings of His heart—if He could renounce all else which owns His sway, yet can He never give them up of whom it is written, "The Lord's portion is His people"!

2. In the second place, the text shows that *the saints are the objects of the Lord's special care;* "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth"—with what objective?—"to show Himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." The wheels of providence are full of eyes; but in what direction are they gazing? Why, that all things may "work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." God is omnipresent and omniscient—has an eye to all creatures and all things; He sees all immensity; He beholds all things at one gaze. Yet, "The eyes of the Lord," in a special sense, "are upon the righteous." And though His ears are open to all things, yet, in a peculiar manner, "His ears are open to their cry." It is true the Lord is the eternal watcher of the universe and never sleeps; yet, in a very distinct sense, He is the guardian of His Church. "I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day." "Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." He encompasses all things by the Word of His power, and He upholds all things by His might; but His power, His presence, and His pro-

tection, are more peculiarly with His Church, for He is to her "a wall of fire round about her, and a glory in her midst."

The Church, then, as God's portion, is His peculiar care. When she lay at first in her barrenness, as a corner of the vast howling wilderness, He took her under His care. He fenced and hedged her; He began to dig up by the roots her nettles, her thorns, her briers; He sent the spirit of burning into her, by which the weeds of evil were consumed; He plowed her deep with convictions; He harrowed her with the law; He scattered into her the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, which lives and abides forever. When He saw her tender blades springing up, He watched over every one of them, sending the dewdrops, and the rain showers, and the sunbeams, and the wind, just when they were needed; and He continues still to watch, even when her harvest grows ripe, and the blade has given place to the full corn in the ear. He will watch until He Himself, descending from the Great White throne, shall take the golden sickle and reap the sheaves, and return to His eternal garner rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him!

Dear friends, it is sweet to reflect how careful God is of His Church. We are jealous of our eyes, but the Lord keeps His people as the apple of His eye. What a wonderful affection birds have for their young; they will sooner die than let their little ones be destroyed! But like as an eagle flutters over her nest, so does the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem. What love a true husband has for his spouse! How much rather would he suffer than that she should grieve! And just such love has God towards His Church. Oh, how He cares for her; how He provides for her as a king should provide for his own queen; how He watches all her footsteps, guards all her motions; and has her at all times beneath His eyes, and protected by His hands. Hear how He tells of His care in providing for His Israel. "Now when I passed by you, and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love. And I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness: yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became Mine. Then I washed you with water. Yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you also with broidered work, and shod you with badger's skin, and I girded you about with fine linen, and I covered you with silk. I decked you also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon your hands, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel on your forehead, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus were you decked with gold and silver; and your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; you did eat fine flour and honey, and oil: and you were exceedingly beautiful." Never was there care so tender, so perpetual, so faithful, or so affectionate as the care of God over all His chosen ones, for indeed, it is no fiction and no metaphor—the Lord's portion really *is* His people! He covers us with His feathers, and under His wings do we trust, His truth is become our shield and buckler. The Lord is mighty in battle for His Church. He puts out His omnipotence when He first of all delivers her, and no less might does He show every day when He keeps her from falling, that He may present her at

last spotless before His face. Never was castle upon a mountain summit, fortified by nature, so impregnable as is the Church of God—

"Munitions of stupendous rock
Her dwelling place shall be;
There shall her sons without a shock
The wreck of nature see."

3. The text includes the idea that *the Church is the objective of the Lord's special joy*, for a man's portion is that in which he takes delight. Brothers and sisters, how very strong the Scripture is as to the delight which God has in His saints! I am sure you and I cannot see anything in ourselves why the Lord should take pleasure in us; we cannot take delight in ourselves, for we often have to groan, being burdened, and conscious of our sinfulness. I am afraid that God's people cannot take much delight in us, for they must perceive so much of our imperfections, and our follies that they must rather lament our infirmities than admire our graces. Oh, who would not rejoice in this transcendent truth of God, this glorious mystery? The Lord takes pleasure in them who fear Him, in them who hope in His mercy! I do not read anywhere that God delights in the cloud-capped mountains, or the sparkling stars—but I do read that He delights in the habitable parts of the earth, and that His delights are with the sons of men! I do not find it written that even angels give His soul delight, nor does He say, concerning cherubim and seraphim, "I will be a father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters." But He does say that to the poor fallen race of man—debased, depraved, dejected by their sin—but saved, exalted, glorified by His grace! See what terms He uses—He calls them His *dwelling place*. "In Jewry is God known, His name is great in Israel, in Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion." "For the Lord has chosen Zion. He has desired it for His habitation."

Where is a man most at ease? Why at home—

"Wherever we wander, there's no place like home."

Beloved, the Church is *God's* home; and as at home a man unbends himself, takes his pleasure, manifests himself to his children as he does not unto strangers—so in the Church, the Lord unbends Himself, condescendingly manifesting Himself to them as He does not unto the world! O could you think of it, that the chosen of God are as dear to Him as your humble cottage is to you, as the rooftree of your ancestors, and the place of your birth?

We are expressly told that the Church is the Lord's *rest*. "This is My rest forever, here will I dwell for I have desired it." As if the entire world beside were His workshop, and His Church His rest. In the boundless universe, He is busy marshalling the stars, riding upon the wings of the wind, making the clouds His chariot; but in His Church, He is at rest, in Zion, the Everlasting One spends His Sabbaths!

Yet further, there is an unrivalled picture in the Word where the Lord is even represented as *singing with joy over His people*. Who could have conceived of the Eternal One as bursting forth into a song? Yet, it is written, "He will rejoice over you with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." As He looked upon the world, He spoke and said,

"It is very good," but He did not sing. And as He views the works of providence, I hear not that He sings; but when He gazes on you and on me, the purchase of Jesus' blood—His own chosen ones—the great heart of the Infinite restrains itself no longer but, wonder of wonders, and miracle of miracles, God, the Eternal One, sings out with the joy of His soul! Truly, "The Lord's portion is His people."

Once more, remember that the Lord represents Himself as *married to His Church*. What does He say to her? "You shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah: for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. As a young man marries a virgin, even so shall your God marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices over a bride, even so shall your Lord rejoice over you." He puts the affection, you see, in the most brilliant light. It is not only the affection of the husband to the wife, but seeing that some men are changeable, and their love grows cold, the Lord selects that hour of first love when the bridegroom, fresh and newly married, rejoices over his bride. The joy and love of the young honeymoon of married life is but a faint picture of the satisfaction and delight God always has in His people!

Dear friends, this is a subject to be thought of rather than to be talked about, for I find thoughts in my heart this morning, rather than in my head, and I cannot get them out! But this I know, there cannot be a closer union between any two beings than there is between Christ and His people, for they are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. There cannot be a warmer love than this. A mother's love is nothing compared to it—yes, "She may forget her sucking child, and cease to have compassion on the son of her womb. Yet will I never forget you, says the Lord that has mercy on you." The husband may repulse from his arms the chosen one whom once he loved so tenderly but, *"He* hates putting away." Whom once He has embraced, *He* embraces forever. "I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness." Oh, that this love were shed abroad this morning in our poor frozen hearts! Oh, that we felt God's delight in us! For if by faith we knew all this, and by sweet experience could attest it, surely we would be better prepared to join with Jeremiah in the second text and say, "The Lord is my portion, says my soul."

4. Our text teaches us that God's people are *His everlasting possession*. You will say, "Why?" There is an allusion here to the division of the portions among the different tribes. That which was the portion of Asher never could be the portion of Zebulon, and that which belonged to Simeon never could belong to Dan, for there was a law made, that if any man should lose his inheritance by debt, or should be driven to the necessity of selling it, yet, at the year of jubilee, it always came back to him, so that, you see, no Israelite ever lost his portion. Now, God maps out for Himself His people. He says, "These are My portion." And do you think, brothers and sisters, God will lose His portion? No—if He should sell His portion into the hand of the enemy for a season, yet, at the year of jubilee, it would return to Him! Glory be to God that the year of jubilee is

come! We were sold once; it did seem as if we were no more the people of God; but the high priest has died, the year of jubilee has been proclaimed, and now, God's inheritance has come back to Him, and if it could be alienated again, He would recover it! If a man is a child of God, and is allowed to fall, he shall certainly be brought back by bitter repentance before he dies, that his soul at the last may be saved, for God shall not lose His heritage! Have you not noticed, in reading Scripture, how the Israelites always clung tenaciously to their portion? When Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give you for it a better vineyard than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you the worth of it in money." Naboth said to him, "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto you." And so, brothers and sisters, God will never sell His children at any price; nor if He could have better people instead, would He change them. They are His, and they shall be His while time lasts; and when time ends, and eternity rolls on, He never can, He never will, cast away His chosen people! Let us in this rejoice and be exceedingly glad. "The Lord's portion is His people."

II. We turn to our second text—"THE LORD IS MY PORTION, SAYS MY SOUL."

Dear friends, this sentence implies that true believers have the Lord as their *sole* portion. It is not, "The Lord is *partly* my portion," not, "The Lord is *in* my portion." No, He Himself makes up the sum total of my soul's inheritance; the Lord Himself is my portion! Men of this world, we are told, have their portion in this life. In the field they have it in their abundant crops, and in the house they have it in comfort, in riches. Some of them have it in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day; but how is it God gives them so good a portion here? You may have seen a farmer, when he has his meal prepared for his swine; he passes two or three of his little children in the yard as he is going out at feeding time. Why does he not give some of the meal to his children? He scoops it out till he has filled the hog's trough full, and then the swine come and eat till they lie down, full to bursting, their eyes standing out with fatness. How is it he does not give some of it to his children? "Oh, no," he says, "This is not the children's food," and as it is not meet to take the children's bread, and give it unto dogs, so it would not be meet to take the swine's food, and give it unto children! When Martin Luther had a large sum of money sent to him, he gave it all away directly to the poor, for he said, "O Lord, You shall never put me off with my portion in this life." Now, when God's children receive anything in the way of gifts from providence, they thank God for it, and endeavor to use it for His honor and glory, but they still insist that it is not their portion. You know, when you go to a shop to buy goods, they give you the brown paper and the string in the bargain; so when we first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things are added to us, for godliness has the promise of the life that is now, as well as of that which is to come! But we don't go to buy the brown paper and the string; they are not what we are looking after; so with the true Christian, his portion which he seeks after

is his God! This is his *only* portion, he seeks nothing besides. When Abraham had many children by his wife Keturah, you remember it is written he gave them their portions, and sent them away; but he never did so with his Isaac. Lord, let me be Your Isaac! Give the world its portion; give the emperor his crown; give the rich man his money bags and send him away; but let me be a stranger with You as Isaac in his father's tent!

The man, who has such a portion as this, ought not to wish for anything beyond. What can be needed beyond this portion? We are walking in the sunlight today—a fine glorious summer's day—if anyone of you should be crying in your pew this morning, and I should ask, "Why are you weeping?" and you should reply, "I am weeping because I cannot see the stars," we would think you mad, for he who has the sunlight can do without the starlight—so with the believer. Why should he be weeping because he has lost this or lost that?—

"You at all times, will I bless;
Having YOU, I possess all!
How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part with THEE?"

St. Augustine was likely, very often, to pray, "Lord, give me Yourself." A less portion than this would be unsatisfactory! Not God's grace merely, nor His love; all these come into the portion but, "*The Lord* is my portion, says my soul." *More* than His attributes, *more* than His love, *more* than His covenant, is Jehovah Himself the special portion and privilege of His own beloved ones! "My soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him."

As God is our only portion, so He is our *own* portion—"The Lord is my portion, says my soul." I hope He is *your* portion, dear brothers and sisters; but whether He is or not does not concern me so much as whether He is *mine*. Come, brethren, have you got a personal grip of this portion? Are you sure it is yours? Pray for sinners! Ask that God may bring them in, but see, first of all, to your own personal interest in these precious things! Let it go round these pews now. Can you say, "The Lord is MY portion?" Let it not be a general declaration, but a particular affirmation—"The Lord is MY portion." Yes, with streaming eyes, and bursting heart, many a soul here who can now see Jesus hanging on the cross taking away all its guilt, can say, though almost choked with tears, "Yes, blessed be His name, the Lord *is* my portion." Some of you are very poor; you have nothing in the world, but you can say, "The Lord is my portion." Like the old woman who, when she had nothing to eat but a dry crust of bread, and only a cup of water to drink, broke the bread and said, "All this, and Jesus Christ, too?" We have heard of a great man who once took a poor believer and said—"Look over there at those hills." "Yes, sir"; "Well, all that is mine; that farm yonder, and that one yonder, and beyond that river over there—it is all mine." "Ah," said the believer—"look at yonder little cottage; that is where I live, and even that is *not* mine, for I have to rent it, and yet I am richer than you! I can point up yonder and say—there lies my inheritance, in heaven's unmeasured space! And you may look as far as ever you can; you cannot see the limit of my heritage,

nor find out neither where it ends nor where it begins." Oh, what a blessing, brothers and sisters, it is if you and I can say, "He is my heritage!" Do not, I beseech you, be satisfied with generals—come to particulars! I know people think they are going to heaven in the lump, but they never will—men go to hell in bundles, but they go to heaven individually! "But we are a Christian nation." Nonsense about a Christian nation! We are as fairly an un-Christian nation as we are a Christian nation. "Oh but we were all made Christians when we were sprinkled." You are not such fools as to believe this abominable superstition, are you? You know better! How can a drop of water on the forehead change the heart or affect the nature, or floods of water, for that matter? You *know* better than that! Have you been born-again from above? If you have not, you are not the children of God, and you have not a child's portion! Have you passed from death unto life? If not, you have not the portion of the living in Zion! You may, perhaps, have had your portion as the prodigal son did, who said, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me." But unless you are converted; unless you have been brought to put your faith in Christ, you can never have that portion which belongs to the true-born heir of heaven, for to him God has said—"Son, you are ever with Me and all that I have is yours."

But again, the Lord is to His people an *inherited* portion. Many men have to thank God that their fathers were born before them, for *they* worked and made their money, and left their estates to them. It is not every man who is rich who owes his riches to his own industry, and certainly, if you and I are so rich as to have God for our inheritance, we owe it to the fact of our birth. How came I to be the child of God? I was born so—O no, you were born an heir of *wrath*. I know I was the *first* time, but the second time, I was born in the image of His Son, begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! You cannot earn this inheritance by working for it! You cannot purchase it! You can only gain it by inheriting it. Ask yourselves very solemnly whether you know anything of the new birth, and if you do not, as the Lord my God lives, and as your soul lives, you can have no lot or portion in this matter until you do! "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." But if not children, then not heirs and the heritage cannot be yours!

But further, brothers and sisters, this heritage is also ours by *choice*. We have chosen God to be our heritage. Believer, I ask you, supposing it could be left to you now whether you would have God to be your portion, or have the most splendid earthly destiny, which would you have? Oh, you would say, "Let me have my God." At first, I grant you, the will of man is not free to choose Christ, for man chooses evil, and not good, and the Lord must choose our inheritance for us, or else we shall never choose it. "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you," was the Word of Christ through the apostle to all His people. But if we are really called according to the purpose of electing love, we can sing—

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

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

Better to have Christ and a fiery stake, than to lose Him and wear a royal robe! Better Christ and the old Mamertine dungeon of the Apostle Paul, than to be without Christ, and live in the palace of Caesar! Christ Jesus, You blessed portion of our souls! You are altogether lovely; and if we had to begin again, we would, by Your grace, begin with You!

Again, dear friends, God is his people's *settled* portion. When you were married, some of you, there were marriage settlements to be made, deeds to be drawn up, and lawyers called in, and witnesses to sign the marriage covenant. I suppose that when the Princess Alice gets her portion, it will be settled upon her in some way or other, for where there are great portions, there should be settlements. Blessed be the name of the Most High, there is a marriage settlement made upon all the Lord's people—their portion is settled on them! "Yes, and Amen in Christ Jesus," all the promises have been made to the chosen seed! Heaven and earth may pass away, but the covenant of grace shall not be removed; the covenant of day and night may be broken; the waters may again cover the earth, sooner than the decree of divine grace be frustrated! Every promise of the covenant is a consequence to every heir of heaven, nor can Satan break them! No Parliamentary act passed on earth; no deed perpetrated in the conclaves of hell, can ever affect the eternal, immutable, everlasting settlements of covenant grace which are made in Christ Jesus, ordered in all things and sure! The Lord is my settled portion.

The Lord is my *all-sufficient* portion. God fills Himself; and as Manton says, in his exposition of the 119th Psalm, "If God is all-sufficient in Himself; He must be all-sufficient for us." And then, he uses this figure—"That which fills an ocean will fill a bucket; that which will fill a gallon will fill a pint; those revenues that will defray an emperor's expenses, are enough for a beggar or a poor man—so when the Lord Himself is satisfied with Himself, and it is His happiness to enjoy Himself, there needs no more—there is enough in God to satisfy." This is clear reasoning, brothers and sisters, and surely if the expenses of heaven's court never did affect God's riches, all the expenses of our trial and affliction, while we are here, never can diminish the unsearchable riches of God which are in Christ Jesus our Lord!

But, you will tell me that man's wishes are very large, and that it is hard to satisfy them. Ah, my brothers and sisters, I know they are—with anything here below. You may have heard, I dare say, of the gentleman who told his servant, "You have been a very faithful servant to me, John, and as you are getting old, I should like to give you a pension. Now, what do you think would satisfy you?" "Well, Master," he said, "I think if I had 50 pounds a year, I would be very well satisfied, indeed." "Well, think it over," said the master, "and come to me and let me know." So the day comes. "Now, what do you need to satisfy you?" "Well, sir, as I said before, I should never want for anything, or wish for anything in this world, if I had fifty pounds a year." "Well, John, it shall be done. There is the settlement for you—you shall have it." That man went out of the door

and said to a friend, "I wish I had said a hundred." So, you see, it is not easy to satisfy man. When he thinks he is satisfied, he still sees something beyond, the horse leech in his heart still cries, "Give, give." But God is a satisfying portion; you cannot wish for anything more than this—

"All my capacious powers can wish,
In You is richly stored;
Nor can my soul conceive a joy
Which is not in my Lord."

I think I may add—and the experience of every believer will bear me out—we have today a portion in which we take *intense delight*. I have tried in a poor way to show that God had a delight in His people. Beloved, do not His people, when they are in a right state of heart, have an intense delight in Him? friends, we have known what it is to have delight in our children, delight in our church; we have had delight in this house of prayer; we have delight in one another, in sweet companionship and communion. But if you have ever tasted delight in God, you will say with Rutherford, "I have eaten the bread of angels, and my mouth is out of taste for the brown bread of this world." God gives us "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." "I will satiate the soul of My priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the Lord." Oh, the delights that we have in God! They are not ankle-deep delights, nor knee-deep delights, but they are a river to swim in! Here we can bathe our souls; here we riot and revel in inexhaustible luxuriance of delight; here our spirit stretches her wings and mounts like an eagle; here she expands herself, and only wishes she were more capacious, and therefore, she cries, "Lord, expand me, enlarge my heart, that I may hold more of You!" Often have we felt in the spirit with Rutherford, when he cried, "Lord, make me a heart as large as heaven, that I may hold You in it! But since the heaven of heavens cannot contain You, Lord, make my soul as wide as seven heavens, that I may contain Your fullness." "O that the Lord would bless me, indeed, and enlarge my coasts."

And lastly, this is to the saints of God an *eternal* portion. Ungodly man, you have your portion now; it will melt, sir! When the last fire comes, it will be consumed! But the lot of the believers will outlast the fire. The conflagration which devours all the work of man's hands shall not be able to touch, nor even to scorch any part or parcel of the portion of believers. Indeed, it is in the world to come that believers shall have their portion! Here, they have none except trials and troubles—"In the world you shall have tribulation." But as God cannot be seen, and as He is the believer's portion, so their portion cannot be seen! It is a good remark of an excellent commentator upon that passage, "For which cause He is not ashamed to be called their God," he writes to this effect, "If it were only for this world, God would be ashamed to be called His people's God, for His adversaries would say, 'Look at those people, how tried they are, what troubles they have; who is their God?' And," he says, "the Lord speaks as if He might be ashamed to be called their God, if this life were all. But the Scripture says, 'Why God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city.'" Thus may the Lord turn upon

His enemies and say, "I am their God, and although I *do* chasten them sorely, and lead them through the deep waters, yet see what I am preparing for them—see them as they shall be when I shall wipe all tears from their eyes, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." It is in the prospect of bliss so ecstatic, joy so boundless, glory so eternal, that He is not ashamed to be called their God!

We are not ashamed, beloved, to call Jehovah our God! Now, let us go our way this morning to our homes. Let us eat the fat, and drink the sweet in God; let us put on our beauteous array, and be appareled with the sun, and have the moon under our feet. Let us go forth as princes of the blood-royal, and act according to our quality; let us rejoice in the Lord always. Let us show to the world that we are a happy and a blessed people, until our adversaries shall have their mouths watering while they say, "Let us live the life, and die the death of the righteous." "The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places and we have a goodly heritage."

Dear friends, I shall only ask in conclusion—are there not many here who cannot say, "You are my portion, O Lord"? Will you do me this favor this morning? When you get home, will you think what your portion is, and cast your accounts up? If you cannot put God in the list, I tell you that when you have cast your entire portion up, it comes to nothing! It may glitter for a season, but it shall go out like brambles that crackle under the pot, but which die out afterwards in a little heap of white ashes. You have nothing if you have not God! Ask if it is worthwhile for the sake of this empty world to lose eternal things—and if you are convinced it is not, then may God lead you to put your trust in the Lord Jesus, and in the Lord Jesus only! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Or, to give you the full, as Christ puts it, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." He who with his heart believes in Christ, and with his mouth makes a profession of faith, (and it should be done in baptism), shall be saved! God grant us His grace to believe; then our portion is sure forever and ever, in this world and in the world to come!

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THE LORD'S CARE OF HIS PEOPLE
NO. 452

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 27, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He who touches you, touches the apple of My eye."
Zechariah 2:8.

GOD'S love to His ancient people is the theme of many a psalm, and deserves to be rehearsed in the ears of every generation. Abraham was by nature as a rough unhewn stone, but the Lord who chose him in the quarry, having hewn him from the rock, made him a polished pillar, a monument of divine faithfulness! The Lord set His love upon him while he was a Syrian ready to perish; He brought him out of the land of his nativity, and called him from his father's house. Having made a covenant with the solitary man, He multiplied his seed until they became as plentiful as the stars of heaven. The kindness which God showed towards Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He retained towards His chosen people, who sprang of their loins. Even when to all appearance He had deserted them, His face was towards them for their good. If He sent a famine, and broke the staff of life, He provided seven years of plenty in Egypt that the storehouses of Pharaoh might be full for their sakes; if the Egyptians heavily oppressed them, then all the powers of nature were put out of their accustomed pathway to emancipate them from the house of bondage. When He had brought them out into the howling wilderness, His path dropped fatness, the heavens rained forth bread, and the rocks flowed with rivers! He made men to eat angels' food; He carried them as on eagles' wings; He could truly say, "I shod you with badgers' skin, and I girded you about with fine linen." He made His Jeshurun to ride upon the high places of the earth, and fed His Israel with royal dainties, "butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat." Wherever they went, their foes fled before them—Amalek was put to confusion before the people of the Lord; Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, felt the terror of their arm. Even the false prophet, as he looked from the mountain's brow upon them, could only say, "Happy are you, O Israel: who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help, and who is the sword of your excellence? Your enemies shall be found liars unto you; and you shall tread upon their high places."

In due time He brought this people into the best spot of land which the earth knew—a country which indolence and tyranny have rendered

barren, but which anciently overflowed with superabundant fertility! He brought them to a land of hills and valleys, of springs and rivers—a land out of whose heart they might take iron and copper, and treasures in abundance. He established them in a land which flowed with milk and honey, so fertile that even its spontaneous productions, as exampled in the grapes of Eshcol, rivaled the products of the choicest husbandry. Having brought them into this goodly heritage, He drove out the former inhabitants that He might plant His people, and make them dwell in safety. How gracious He was to them in the days of Joshua, and in the years which followed! When He mapped out their lots according to their tribes, He rejoiced to dwell in the midst of them; He had His Tabernacle in Shiloh, and His dwelling place in Zion. He showed not Himself unto other people, but only unto this nation upon which His heart was set. He chastened them but He raised up judges for their deliverance. At last He gave them a king in His anger, and took him away in His wrath! But He sent unto them David—a man after His own heart, before whom their enemies were rooted out, and the nobles among their persecutors were made like Zebah and Zalmunna who fell by the hand of Gideon. Greatly He blessed the nation under David and his immediate successors! Everything in the neighboring countries was ordered only to bring peace and prosperity to the chosen land—Your land, O God, which You have overshadowed with Your wings. Oftentimes they provoked Him but His anger waxed not hot against them. When He lifted up His rod, His strokes were few, and He repented of the evil which He did unto them.

At last, when they became incorrigible in their sins, and made their brows like flint, and their hearts like adamant, for a season He gave them up to captivity. They were taken to Assyria; they were carried away to the rivers of Babylon; the days of their banishment were many, and they wept in the bitterness of their soul. Still, even in their captivity He loved them. When they had forgotten *Him*, He had not forgotten *them,* and in due time He brought them up again out of the house of their bondage, once more to set them in their land. It was about this time when He would give to His people a fresh deliverance, as memorable as the coming out of Egypt, that Zechariah testified, "He that touches you touches the apple of My eye." As much as to say, "I smite you, but I hate the nation that oppresses you; I take the axe to cut down your stubborn pride, but lo, I will break the axe to shivers; I send against you the executioners of My anger, but I will surely punish them, also, for the evil which they have done. He who touches you—even though *I* am the great first cause of the terrible onslaught upon you—'he that touches you, touches the apple of My eye,' and I will be avenged on him in the day of My wrath."

Thus introduced, the text seems to teach us three lessons, upon which we shall speak briefly, and God grant it may be to your edification. It tells us, first of all, *God's esteem of His people*. Secondly, *the danger which surrounds persecutors;* and, thirdly, *the safety of the Church of*

God; for it may be well to remind you that the Jewish nation was a type of the Church of Christ.

I. First, then, our text teaches us GOD'S ESTEEM OF HIS PEOPLE. He esteems them as much as men value their eyesight, and is as careful to protect them from injury, as men are to protect the apple of their eye. The pupil of the eye is the tenderest part of the tenderest organ, and very fitly sets forth the inexpressible tenderness of God's love. As Calvin remarks, "There is nothing more delicate or more tender than the eye in the body of a man; for were one to bite my finger or prick my arm or my legs, or even severely to wound me, I should feel no such pain as by having the pupil of my eye injured." Behold, then, beloved, a mystery of loving kindness and affection! The Lord sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants there are as grasshoppers, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance—how marvelous that He has thoughts of everlasting love towards such worthless things! As we said this morning [See sermon #447, Volume 8—GOD'S ESTIMATE OF TIME—read/download, by God's grace, all 63 volumes of CH Spurgeon sermons, and over 574 Spanish translations free of charge at www.spurgeongems.org] it is wonderful that God should even notice such insignificant creatures as men, that He, in His infiniteness, should be able even to discover such delight in this drop of matter which we call the world! But that wonder is totally eclipsed by another, namely, that God should love such utterly worthless, as well as insignificant, creatures. Oh, Great One, when You did give Your heart, were there not some creatures worthy of it? No! There could be none, for even Gabriel himself was not fit to match the Eternal God. The cherubim and seraphim, the presence angels that stand before God as His holy servitors forever, what were they? They were not pure in His sight, and He charged His angels with folly. The noble created intelligences are so far inferior to our God, that only by wondrous condescension could He *love* them! O God how is it that You could have chosen the debased, depraved, rebellious, hard-hearted creature called man? Why did You look upon such a one and bring him into Your favor? What is man, that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him? This inquiry we cannot answer, and therefore, no more curious to solve this mystery, we will weave it into our everlasting song, and we will sing of Your sovereign grace before Your throne forever. 'Twas of Your divine grace, of Your own will and good pleasure, that You have lifted us up from the dunghill, and made us to sit among princes.

It is not for us to know why the Lord has His people so highly in estimation, for we cannot search to the bottom of this divine mystery; but, brothers and sisters, God's love, which at first came to us freely, has so ennobled us in Christ, that God's present esteem of us in Jesus is not without reason and justification. Love without cause has now imparted and imputed such loveliness to its objects, that in Christ they are fitting

subjects for love's embrace! Know you not that the saints are the *masterpieces of His workmanship?* God has shown His Wisdom in balancing the clouds, and guiding the stars in their orbits; Infinite Wisdom is discoverable in every flower, and in every living thing; but the Wisdom and the Skill of God are far more clearly to be seen in the believer than in any other work of the divine hand! Man, born the first time, was fearfully and wonderfully made, but newly-created and regenerated, he is far more full of marvels than he was before! Therefore, because of the divine Skill which has been shown in our re-creation, well may we be the objects of divine care. When Bernard Palissy had, after long struggles, invented that valuable ware which still remains unmatched, we can suppose that, if a person had entered his room, and broken those invaluable dishes, which were worth their weight in gold, he would have said, "I had sooner that you had burnt my house, or that you had maimed my person, than break these things which have cost me so much thought, so many trials in the furnace, and so much daily watching, and nightly care." When the poor man had pulled up the very floor of his room, to heat the furnace for the last time, before he saw the precious stuff come from the crucible, his work must have been dear to him; and when we think that God, our God, has made His people the objects of His eternal thoughts, the trophies of His noble skill, vessels of honor fit even for the Master's use, it is but little wonder that He should guard them with a jealous care, even as men do the apple of their eye!

Moreover, all the people of God are the object of *the dearest purchase* that was ever known, since they were redeemed not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. Stand at the foot of Calvary, and let the groans of Christ pierce your heart; behold His head crowned with thorns; look at His hands, and His feet streaming like fountains of blood; think for a moment of the awful anguish which His spirit suffered, of the unknown pangs He bore when He redeemed our souls unto God; and you will readily conclude that love so amazing, which could pay a price so stupendous, would not easily loosen its hold of that which it has thus purchased unto itself! We think little of ourselves, when we value ourselves at anything less than the price which Jesus paid; we dishonor the Lord who bought us, if we think ourselves only fit to live unto the flesh, and to this poor temporary world; when, indeed, we are fitted for a heavenly world, and for most divine purposes, seeing that Christ, the Son of the Highest, shed His very heart's blood to redeem us from our sins! Well, I say, may He value highly, those whom He has so dearly bought!

Furthermore, let us remember that to God the Father, the saints are Christ's *most tender memorial,* monuments of Christ's passion and conflict, and the engraved tablets of His death. What is there in heaven which is the record of the Redeemer's achievement? Yonder spirits before the throne of God are the monuments of the battle and the victory! What

is there to bear witness on earth to what the Lord has accomplished? We, who have by faith believed, are now the living triumphs of His conquest! If you and I had erected a lasting and valuable memorial to some beloved child, we should think it a grievous insult, and a serious injury, if an adversary should wantonly and wickedly defile it; and so the Lord looks upon His own people as standing mementoes, and He counts it no small sin, no mean offense, for any of His adversaries, be they ever so great, to touch His anointed, and do harm to His chosen. As obelisks, arches, columns, and pillars are raised in commemoration of heroes, and their glories, even so are the saints the sublime memorials of Jesus Christ! Precious are they for this cause, to the heart of Him who delights in the honors of His only begotten Son! The hosts of heaven shall jealously guard these living stones of memorial.

Yet more—remember that Christ's people are *God's own children,* and you know how even *we*, although we are evil, could not stand still to see our children ill-treated. I have heard a man say sometimes, "You may strike me, and I will not return the blow; you may even spit in my face, and I will put up with the insult; but if you touch my children, my blood is in my face, I cannot endure it." Ask a woman what it is that brings her mettle up the most—is it not if she sees her little ones ill-treated, or hears a word of false accusation spoken concerning them? The God of heaven and earth will not have the princes of the blood royal ill-used! They who are descended from His loins, and are thus the nobles and the peers of the court of heaven, are not to be trod under the foot of man; God will avenge their quarrel at last. Surely as the world shall look on Christ, whom they have pierced, and mourn, so shall they look on the injured and persecuted Church, and mourn because they despised the excellent of the earth, and threw God's jewels into the mire. They are His children, I say, and therefore He loves them! Look around even to the brute creatures. When we would describe the creature most terrible, we speak of the bear robbed of her whelps. If you would describe the strong lion when he lashes his sides with fury, is it not when his cubs have been taken away? Then he rushes to the attack, fearless of the spear, and of the hunter, meditating terribly how he may destroy the murderer of the young lion! So shall it be with the Lord God omnipotent! His fury shall be kindled against the enemy, and He shall tear him in pieces if he touches any of the house of Judah, or of the seed of the Son of David. The King who is in the midst of them is mighty, and He is strong who is their deliverer!

Yet, again, no doubt there is a special reason why God is thus jealous over His people, since he who touches them, does to a certain degree, touch *the person of Christ*—the Father's first-born. Are they not members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones? The cry of Christ from heaven, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" clearly shows that Christ looks upon the persecution of humble men and women as an insult to

Himself! Should any wound your hand, and then say, "I have not injured *you."* You would reply, "But it is *my* hand, and it is so much a part of me, that I cannot separate myself from the injury." So is it with Christ. The poorest, mean, most illiterate Christian, is in the closest union with the glorious Head of the body, and it will be at the enemy's eternal hazard if he touches him, since he is part of Christ's mystical body. If you hurt His people willfully, the Son of man will say, "Inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you have done it unto Me," and the recompense shall follow!

Do you not know that the children of God have a relation towards God the Father, in respect of their being *partakers of His character and dignity?* The saints are God's ambassadors! Among all nations an insult offered to an ambassador is an offense which cannot be readily wiped out. God's ambassadors to the sons of men are His chosen people; they are Christ's representatives on earth, so far as they live up to their profession. They who are the people of God are the Christs of this generation; anointed of the Lord, and sent forth to tell of His love. Their life, if it is as it should be, is the picture of virtue, and an example to mankind. Now, the world's hatred to these men is but a part of their hatred to the Most High. They see His image in His servants, and wantonly insult it, or contemptuously disregard it. When men oppose the people of God, it is because of their holiness; if it could be clearly proven that the world's opposition to the Church was on account of the Church's inconsistency, then it might be pardonable, or even virtuous; but we believe the real reason of the world's enmity is the Church's holiness! Were she not Godlike and divine, she would not be attacked; if she were not clear as the sun, fair as the moon, she would not be terrible as an army with banners, nor would the foe go forth in battle to meet her! Well, then, because holiness is insulted in a persecuted saint, because righteousness is itself debased and defamed when the righteous man is slandered and dishonored, therefore, the battle is not ours, but the Lord's, and He will surely deliver His chosen! Because God espouses the quarrel of the virtuous, and takes up the gauntlet for the weak who desire to serve Him, therefore be careful, you sons of Ham, you children of the persecutor, be careful, for when He fits His arrows to the bow, and draws His sword out of the scabbard, it shall go ill with you, for He remembers His people, and He will avenge His own elect!

II. The second point is THE DANGER OF PERSECUTORS—"He who touches you, touches the apple of My eye."

If a man should seek to thrust his finger into our eye with the purpose of destroying our sight, I think we should not deliberate long as to the way in which to treat him; we would take good care that at all risks to our antagonist we defended a thing so precious! Now, when any molest the people of God, they may be certain of this, that God will surely visit them! Therefore let persecutors take heed how they meddle with God's

eyes. According to the learned Blayney, our text may be read, "Whoever touches you, touches the apple of his own eye." In this sense we understand the passage as declaring that God shall cause the enemies of His Church to work their own ruin; they shall pull out their eyes by their own fingers! The visitation of God will surely blast and wither those persecutors who go on in sin. At times it curses in the form of temporal death; more often, however, in the form of spiritual hardness of heart. I am not one of those who looks upon everything that happens in this world as being a judgment from God; if a boat goes down to the bottom of the sea on a Sunday, I do not look upon that as judgment on those who are in it, any more than if it had gone to the bottom on a Monday! And though many good people get frightened when they hear one affirm this belief, yet I cannot help their fear, but like my Master, I must tell them that they who perish so are not sinners above all the sinners that are in Jerusalem! I looked the other day at *Fox's Book of Martyrs,* and I saw there an illustration of that deeply-rooted mistake of Christian people, concerning God's always punishing men's sins in this life. Fox draws a picture of a Popish priest who is insulting the faith, speaking lightly of the blood of Jesus, and exalting the Virgin Mary—and he drops down dead in the pulpit. Fox holds him up as a picture of a great sinner who dropped down dead for speaking lightly of Jesus, and the good man affirms the wicked priest's death to be a judgment from heaven. Well, perhaps Fox is correct, but I still do not see the connection between his dropping down dead, and the language he employed, for many a preacher who has been *exalting* Christ has fallen down dead in the pulpit! And happy was it for such a man that he was engaged in minding his charge at the time! The fact is, providence smites good men, and bad men, too. And when the storm rages and the hurricane howls through the forest, not only are the brambles and briars shaken and uprooted, but goodly oaks crack and break, too.

We are not to look for God's judgments, except in special cases, in this life. His judgment is in the world to come! Yet, there have been some special cases. Look at Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the greatest persecutors that the Israel nation ever had—his death was so awful that I would disgust you if I described it. Remember, too, Herod the Great. "The disease of which Herod the Great died, and the misery which he suffered under it, plainly showed that the hand of God was then in a signal manner upon him; for not long after the murders at Bethlehem, his distemper," as Josephus informs us, "daily increased in an unheard-of manner. He had a lingering and wasting fever and grievous ulcers in his entrails, a violent colic, and insatiable appetite. He had a venomous swelling in his feet, convulsions in his nerves, a perpetual asthma, and offensive breath; he acquired rottenness in his joints and other members, accompanied with prodigious itching, crawling worms, and intolerable smell—so that he was a perfect hospital of incurable distempers." The Roman

emperor, Julian, a determined enemy of Christianity, was mortally wounded in a war with the Persians. In this condition, we are told, he filled his hand with blood and casting it into the air, said, "O Galilean! You have conquered." History affords you many such cases. God has seemed to say to His providence, as David said to Solomon concerning Joab, "Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace." I read the other day a list, I should think, of a hundred of the mighty persecutors—Roman, and Grecian, and so forth—all of whom came to a most shocking and untimely end. In the face of so many facts, one did feel it fair to draw the inference that, "Bloody and ungodly men shall not live out half their days." There is a story told of the days of the Cavaliers, when they used to hunt up the Puritans for meeting in the woods, in the fields, or on secluded banks, to worship God. One old man, who was parish constable, was asked to be an informer and hunt up a certain meeting in his parish in Northamptonshire, but the old man said, "No," he'd have nothing to do with it—not that he liked those people, for he hated them—"But," he said, "I should not advise any of you to meddle with any of these people. In the good old days, when Sir Harry was alive, he hunted them, and took eight troopers with him to harass the Puritans all round this region; and," he said, "the old man is dead, six of the soldiers are dead. Some of them were hanged, and some of them broke their necks; and I myself fell off my horse, and broke my collarbone in the act of persecuting them. For my part, I have had warnings enough, and I will never meddle with them again."

And, I have no doubt, that history could tell hundreds of tales of that kind, where God has seemed, at last, to leave off His general rule of long-suffering and of patience, and to give to His foes a blow then and there, for their hectoring and intolerable hunting of His children, and harassing them out of the land. Far oftener, however, the penalty has come in *spiritual* things! He has left them to wax worse and worse, till they have become so hardened in sin, that they "breathed out threats against the saints," and licked up the blood of God's children as dogs licked up the blood of Naboth! No sermon has had power to move them; no truth of God could awaken them; no warnings of providence could alarm them; no wooing invitations could win their hearts. They have gone down, down, down a steep descent with their feet slipping in gore—in the red crimson mire, crimson with blood of saints—and in hell they have lifted up their eyes in torment! "I'd like," said one old Romanist in the days of Luther, "I'd like to ride up to my horse's bridle in the blood of Lutherans." And he had his wish before long in another way, for in a dreadful bursting of blood vessels in his own body, he laid weltering in his gore! Not up to his horse's bridle, but covered to his very soul with a suffocation of blood. God has done this, spiritually, to other men. They wanted to slay other men's souls, and the blood, as it were, of their own souls has drowned them. They would let off the light of God, and God has left them

in darkness. They would throw away the salt, and God has given them up to rot, and to become putrid. They slew God's ambassadors, and God has proclaimed eternal war against them—a war which rages now, and will rage in the world to come!

I do not know whether I happen to have any person here who might be called a persecutor. We do not have much persecution to suffer now-a-days—at least, it does not come to much. I know that many servants lose their places, many wives are ill-treated by their husbands—now and then some poor husbands by their wives. And I know that children have been made wretched by their parents. Ah, but when you put these things side by side with Smithfield, and the old Lollard's Tower, they come to nothing! Yet I know that there are many men who only want power, and they would be as violent against God's people as ever the tyrants were in the olden times. Very well, then, as you cannot do what you would do, since you do what you can, God shall visit that, also, upon your head, and you shall find that the jest, and the sneer, and the jibe, and the slander, and the cruel mocking, shall by no means lack their reward.

But, I will not dwell upon a point which we care so little to mention. Let us turn, rather, to the last point, upon which I speak with brevity.

III. THE SAFETY OF THE CHURCH. "The Church is in danger! The Church is in danger!" Do you believe that, dear friends? No, it depends upon whose church it is. But if it is God's Church, all the croakers in the world cannot alarm us, for we believe that God's Church is safe enough, despite everything that may be said! "Oh but the Church is in danger from Romanism!" Nonsense! God can keep that in bounds; the dragon would have drowned the woman with the floods of his mouth centuries ago, if the Lord had not secured her from harm forever! The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church, much less, then, shall the gates of Rome prevail. It is not the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ that is in danger. Perhaps the fat benefices may be; I will not say anything about that; I do not know of any particular promise upon which unscriptural officers, and worldly dignitaries can rely, but the Church of God has special security guaranteed by covenant, by promise and by oath! God is her pledged Preserver, for there is a promise—"I the Lord do keep her; I will water her every moment: lest any hurt her, I will keep her, night and day." The Church is not in danger, and why? Well, first, the very frame of nature was made to protect her. We take up a chestnut or other seed, and we find outside a prickly envelope; then there comes a hard shell, then inside a soft one, and then a film, and then another film, and at last, somewhere in the center, you get the life-germ; and all the rest was made to exist for a time, and to rot and to decay, in order to preserve the life-germ from hurt, and to furnish food for it when it began to spring up. Now, I look upon this great vaulted roof of heaven, and the whole earth as being but the surrounding envelope in which God has wrapped up the living seed of His Church! You will have to break the whole constitution

of earth before you will be able to surprise with destruction those whom God has surrounded by munitions of such stupendous strength. Speaking after a mystical sort, the mountains are round about Jerusalem; the solid rocks of the earth are like arms beneath her; the very stars are her watchers, and the firmament and the heaven of heavens are the gates that shut out her raging foes.

When the Lord made the heavens and the earth, what was the drift of the whole thing? For what was the earth preparing in the old geological past? Preparing, you tell me, for man; but why, and why was man made? God made the whole race of man, but in respect of that chosen life within the race, those elect men and women who are as the substance which is in the oak when it loses its leaves, the holy seed which is the substance of the race and of all time. And when man came into the earth, and multiplied, and God divided the nations and scattered them to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, He divided the whole, looking to His people. He saw at one glance how it would be best for this empire to stand, or that monarchy to fall—how it would be more advantageous for that dynasty to exist through a whole stream of kings, or for that monarch to be cut off in his prime, before his son would be born who would take the scepter from the dying hand—I say that the whole machinery of nature, the whole work of God which He has made, is intended to be the shell in which the Lord preserves His people, and there must come, indeed—"The wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds," and a total unloosening of the pillars of earth and heaven, before you can perish, O you Children of God!

But again, not only does nature, but providence, works for the protection of God's people. "All things work together for good to them who love God." Stupendous agencies are abroad. The wheels are so high that they are dreadful, but the wheels are full of eyes, and they only turn in such a way as shall preserve the Church of the living God! When we shall see the end from the beginning, we shall be amazed as to how it was that everything turned upon the axle of the Church—how the greatest wheel turned on its pole to bring out the elect, to fetch up out of their spiritual darkness the generation who were afterwards to be enlightened, how the biggest wave that followed the keel of the Church's ship was ordained to wash it onward; and how the very wave which seemed to roll the other way, did but in some mystic manner still waft her onward to her desired haven; how storms and tempests, plagues and conflagrations, wars and bloodsheds, all co-worked to bring out the people of God, that the Lord's name might be glorified in them! Like some huge steam vessel, providence bears on the Church, and you must reverse those wheels which lash the sea of events to foam, before you can detain the Church from her haven!

Yet further, not to detain you longer, the Church is constantly preserved, we know, by the ministry of angels. Unseen by us, the angels of

God keep watch and ward around us. They bear up the Church's foot lest she dash it against a stone. They cover her head in the day of battle lest the fiery shafts should penetrate her helmet. By night and by day the watchers of God keep constant guard over the blood-royal of heaven! Let us not be deceived in this matter, thinking that we have to deal here with a fancy or a myth! Angels have more to do with this world than we dream. They are more potent influences for the saints' good than ever we have known, for they are the ten thousand chariots of God, the ten thousand times ten thousand saints of the Most High who stand in their battle array this day! If your eyes are opened, you will be able to say with the prophet—"More are they that are with us than they that are with them." Reckon the angels as your friends; put them not down as though they were weak and feeble, but believe them to be strong, and then you shall not doubt but that the Church shall be preserved as the apple of God's eye.

Then, last of all, God preserves His Church by the overruling of His grace. By a sort of holy alchemy He fetches gold out of dross, medicine out of poison, success out of disaster. From seeming evil, He produces good, and better still, and better still, in infinite progression, so that the evil doings of the Church's enemies turn out for her good in the end, and their worst projects are in the Wisdom of God but designs for her advancement! Let us rest in this, then, quite confident that by all means, and by any means, the Church shall always be safe. She rocks today; a big wave seems to strain her timbers; but He who built her is on board. The eternal hand grasps the helm, and the Mighty One, with unruffled brow, looks at the storm, and bids the ship cut through the foam! She has not turned as yet, though rocks and quicksand threatened to be in her path. Straight as a line, "as an arrow from a bow drawn by an archer strong," she sped on her splendid flight, and on she shall go, though a thousand hells boiled over to stop her heaven-ordained mission! Yonder mighty billow, that seems ready to swallow her up, and give her an eternal grave, shall break before her bow; and if she is for a moment buried in the spray, she shall either come up white from the washing, or she shall leap over it, ascending up to heaven upon its crest! And if she goes down again, as though she would descend into the depths of the sea—the depths of defeat and dismay—it shall be but to bring up some sinner from the depth, and save a soul that otherwise might have been lost! Oh, blessed be God, the Church is never insecure, no, nor yet one of her children—

"Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever!
I know that safe with Him remains,
Protected by His power,
What I've committed to His hand,
Till the decisive hour."

The apple of God's eye shall not be touched. We shall never see a blinded Deity, and until then, we shall never hear that the people of God have perished, and that the Church of Christ has been destroyed by her enemies! Courage, then, soldiers of Christ, courage! Turn not back through shame or fear! Another rush, another advance upon the foe, for you cannot be wounded, you are invulnerable! You cannot be defeated, you are invincible! God is in you, and you must be almighty! He who touches you, touches the apple of His eye! Therefore dare, run risks, and venture for God, for you are always safe when you are venturing for Him!

Our final question is, "Am I thus dear to God?" I would like you, now that I send you away, to ask yourselves that question. You, dear friends up yonder, and you in this mighty tier, and you below, ask yourselves—"Am I thus dear to God?" Let each man and woman ask that question. How can I answer it? Is Christ dear to me? Then I am dear to God! Is Christ dear to me tonight? Do I rest on Him? If I do, I am saved! And if I do not, why should I not now? If I never have believed on Him, why should I not now? If I trust Him, He will save me! Lord, I, even I trust You! Can you say that from your heart? Then the Spirit of God has helped you to say it, and if tonight, poor soul, whoever you may be, you will repose simply and wholly upon the merit of Jesus' blood, and the power of His intercession in heaven, you are saved! Go your way, your sins are forgiven! You are accepted in the beloved, if you have trusted Christ! God help you to rely on Jesus now, and to His name be praise forever and ever! Amen.

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COMPASSION FOR THE MULTITUDE
NO. 453

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 1, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And they said to Him, We have here only five loaves and two fish. He said, Bring them here to Me."
Matthew 14:17, 18.

AS was Christ, my brothers and sisters, when in this world, so are we also. Such, indeed, is our calling of God. As Jesus was "the true light which lights every man who comes into the world," so He says to His disciples, "You are the light of the world." How memorable are those words of our Lord—"As You, Father, have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world!" And how weighty are those expressions of the Apostle—"We pray you *in Christ's stead!"*—"We then, as *workers together* with Him!" There is something more than an interesting parallel that I want you to observe. A rich allegory appears to be couched in the simple record of the evangelists. The history of Christ is in type a history of His Church. A skillful reader would soon think this matter out. You will remember how Christ's Church was wrapped in swaddling bands at the first, how she was laid in the manger of obscurity, how her life was conspired against by heathen kings. You will remember her Baptism of the Holy Spirit, her trials and her temptations in the wilderness. The life of Christ afterwards will soon be thought out by you as shadowing forth a picture of the career of the Church. There is scarcely any point in the entire history of Jesus, from the manger at Bethlehem to the garden of Gethsemane, which is not, besides its personal narrative, a typical and pictorial history of His Church. Thus the Lord has been pleased to bequeath to His Church a great example written in His own holy life. As He raised the dead, so is she to do it through His Spirit that dwells in her. As He healed the sick, so is she to carry on a great healing ministry throughout the world. Or, to come to our text, as Christ fed the hungry, so the Church, wherever she meets with those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, is to bless them in the name of Him who has said, "They shall be filled." Your business as a church today, and my business as a member of the Church of Christ, is to feed hungry souls who are perishing for lack of knowledge with the bread of life. The case before us, we think, will furnish a noble picture of our duty, of our mission, and of what we expect the Master to do for us that we may work mightily for Him.

Let us endeavor first to glance at the whole scene, collecting into harmony the accounts given by the four evangelists; and afterwards, we shall proceed to consider two practical lessons to be deduced from it.

This miracle is recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There is some little divergence in each, as there naturally would be, for no four

spectators could give the same description of any one scene; but what one omits, another supplies; a point that will be most interesting to one, had failed to strike another, and while a third has been interested in something which the fourth had altogether omitted. It appears that Christ had sought out a waste region near the town of Bethsaida. Bethsaida was a place which He had frequently visited. Earnestly, on another occasion, did He warn Bethsaida and Chorazin, reminding them that their privileges would rise up in judgment against them to condemn them for their unbelief. He had sought out this waste place for the purpose of retirement, or for the sake of both Himself and His disciples, that they might rest from their weary toils. The people follow Him, they throng Him all day long. He preaches the gospel to them, He heals their sick; and it was somewhere in the afternoon that the Master, ever patient and prescient of human needs, calls Philip to Himself. Now, Philip was of Bethsaida, and Jesus said to Philip, "From where shall we buy bread that these may eat?" This He said to try him to see whether his faith was proof against misgiving. Had Philip been a wise disciple, he would have replied, "Master, You can feed them." But he was a weak follower of the mighty Lord. You know he afterwards proved his ignorance by saying, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices." And he, then, received a mild rebuke—"Have I been so long a time with you, and yet you have not known Me?" On this, Philip shows that he has not yet learned the lesson of faith. He cannot believe in anything he cannot see with the eyes of sense. Puzzled and amazed, he betakes himself to his fellow disciples to talk over the matter. Andrew suggests that there is a lad hard by that has five barley loaves and two fish. Certainly, Andrew thinks, though they will not be enough, *it is our duty to do our best.* So the loaves and fish are purchased out of the scanty store that Judas handed out, not perhaps without some grief to his heart, that he should have to look so much after other people. As the day wears on, and the sun begins to set, the disciples come to the Master. Though the proposal had been suggested by Him, they seem to think He has forgotten it! So they come to Him and say, "Master, send the multitude away." They had thought over the problem of how to feed these people, and had come to the conclusion that they could not do it. As they could not feed them, the next best thing would be to send them away to provide for themselves. Since they could not supply their necessities, they would endeavor to shut their eyes to their needs. "Master, send them away. Let them go and buy for themselves." The Master promptly replies, "They need not depart," there is no necessity for it—"*You* give them to eat." Indeed, He spoke wisely. Why should hungry men depart from the house of Him who feeds all things, who opens His hands, and satisfies the desire of every living thing? "You give them to eat," He said, that He might bring out from them a fair acknowledgment of their poverty. "Master," they said, "we have here but five barley loaves and two fish: what are they among so many?" Lifting up their eyes upon the vast assembled mass, they roughly calculate that there must be 5,000 men, plus a fair complement of women and of children. The Master bids them bring those loaves and fishes. He takes them, but before He breaks them, being a God of order, He bids the peo-

ple sit down in companies. Mark, who is always such a keen observer, and paints, like Hogarth, all the little minutiae of the picture—says they sat down on the green grass, as if it were exceedingly abundant and verdant just there. Then he adds, they sat down by companies, afterwards using a word, which is translated "in ranks" in our version, but the Greek is such as you would use if you spoke of a long range of beds in a flower garden. They sat down in green beds, as it were, with walks in between them. Mark seems to have got the idea that they were like a number of flowers whom his Master went round to water. When they had all thus sat down, so that the strong might not struggle after the bread, and tread it under foot, and that the weak might not be neglected, all placed in their rows, then the Master lifted up His eyes before them all, asked a blessing, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples and also the fishes.

The disciples went round and distributed to each man, to each woman and child—and they did eat. They had been fasting all day long, so I dare say we should not be far wrong if, following the example of a countryman whom I once heard, we laid a marked emphasis on the word "did"—"They *did* eat!" They ate till their hunger was appeased; they ate till they were filled; they ate till they were abundantly satisfied. Then, I could suppose, on the table, or on a spot of the green grass, where Christ had laid out the first bread and fishes, the fragments that lay there had, in the meantime, multiplied. One does not like the idea of the disciples going round to gather up the odds and ends and crumbs that had fallen from each person; one would hardly think it would have been seemly. But here was bread that was not injured, that had not fallen in the dust or the mire—fragments, and they gathered up more than they had at first! Here, too, we have a wonder. Things had been multiplied by division, and had been added to by subtraction! More was left than there had been at the first! No doubt that was done to disarm doubt, and to defeat skepticism. In later days, some of those men might say, "True, we did eat and were satisfied, or it seemed as if we did, but it might have been in a kind of dream." That bread, which was left, the 12 baskets full, furnished something solid for them to look at, so that they might not think it an illusion. They gathered up the twelve baskets full. This seems to be the crowning part of the miracle. Our Lord Himself, in referring to the miracle in later days, constantly says, "When we fed 5,000 with five barley loaves, how many baskets had you? And when we fed four thousand, how many baskets full did you take up?" As if the taking up of the full baskets at the end was the clenching of the nail to drive home the blessed argument that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who gave His people bread to eat, even as Moses fed the Israelites with manna in the wilderness!

Having thus considered the facts, we shall take them as a basis upon which to build, God helping us, two practical lessons. The text and the miracle itself teach us, first, *our mission and our weakness;* secondly, *our line of duty and Christ's strength.*

I. We are clearly taught here OUR MISSION AND OUR WEAKNESS. Our mission! Behold before you, disciples of Christ, this very day, thousands of men, and women, and children, who are hungering for the bread of life. They hunger till they faint. They spend their money for that

which is not bread and their labor for that which satisfies not. They fall down famished in your highways, perishing for lack of knowledge. Still worse, when they faint, there are some who pretend to feed them. Superstition goes about, and offers them stones instead of bread, and serpents instead of fish. The Papist and the ceremonialist offer to sell these hungry souls something to gratify them; they try to feed, but it will not satisfy; they do but eat the wind, and swallow the whirlwind. The infidel tries to persuade them that they are not hungry, they are only a little nervous; thus he mocks their appetite. As soon will the body be satisfied with bubbles, or the mouth be filled with shadows, as the soul is satisfied with delusions and inventions of man! They faint; they famish; they are ready to die. Those who pretend to supply them do but mock and tantalize their needs. Nor can they feed themselves; their wallets are empty. When Adam fell, he beggared all his posterity; neither man, nor woman, nor child among them is able to satisfy his or her own hunger. The ten thousands of your race in this land—in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America, and Australia—not one among them, should they all subscribe together, could find so much as one loaf upon which a single soul might feed! Barrenness, leanness, and sterility have seized upon all the fields of man's tillage; they yield him nothing. He sows, but he reaps not; he plows but obtains no harvest. By the works of the flesh, no man living can be justified, and in the devices of human tradition or human reason, no souls can possibly find substantial comfort. See, disciples of Christ, see the great need which is before your eyes! Open the eyes of your understanding; let your heart move, let your hearts beat with sympathy, let your souls be alive to pity—do feel for those millions! I beseech you, if you cannot help them, weep over them; let there be now before your mind's eye a clear and distinct recognition of the many hundreds and thousands who are crying to you, "Feed us, for we famish; give us bread to eat, or we die!"

I think I hear you reason in your hearts and whisper one to another, "Who are we that we should feed this multitude? Look at their hosts, who can count them? As the stars of heaven for multitude, so are the seed of Adam; these hungry, craving mouths are almost as numerous as the sands on the seashore; why should we feed them?" Yet remember, this is your mission! Neither should any of you take up and adopt a weakness of faith that was illustrated by Philip's questioning. If ever the world is to be fed, it is with Christ through the Church! Until the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, we are the warriors who must carry the victorious arms of the cross to the uttermost parts of the earth. We are the suppliers of God's free bounty, until the fullness of the Gentiles is gathered in. God commands all men everywhere to repent; and we are to utter His mandate. Oh, my brothers and sisters, you know how Jesus worked the work of His Father; you know how He went about doing good; but do you know how He said, "Greater works than these shall you do, because I go unto My Father"? Let the words sink down into your ears. Let the vision rise perpetually before your eyes. See *your* work! Great as it is, dispirited as you may be by the great multitude who crave your help, yet recognize the appeal to your

faith. Let the magnitude of the mission drive you more earnestly to the work instead of deterring you from it!

Do I hear you murmur, "The multitudes are great, and scant the supply. We have but five loaves, and they are made of barley; we have but two fishes, and they are little ones. The bread hardly suffices for us; the fishes are so small that they will be more bones than meat. What are these among so many?" "Do I hear you tell us, sir, that we as a church are to feed the world—how can we? How few are our talents! We are not rich in substance; we have no wealth with which to supply our missionaries that we may send them out by hosts to lift up the banner of Christ. We have little talent—there are not many among us who are learned or wise—we have not much eloquence. We feel, though we do not feel enough—

'Gladly my pity would reclaim,
And snatch the firebrand from the flame!
But feeble my compassion proves,
And so must weep where most it loves.'

Besides," some of you add, "what can I do individually? Of what use can I be? And what can the few friends who are in earnest do? Why, the world will laugh at such a feeble body of men. They will say, 'What are these feeble Jews doing?' We have a mountain before us, and we have to level it to a plain—how can we do it? Our strength is not sufficient—we are destitute of power! Oh, had we the great and noble on our side! Had we kings to be the nursing fathers, and queens the nursing mothers of our church! Had we the rich to give their lavish treasure, and the learned to give their wit, and the eloquent to give their golden speech—then, we *might* succeed! But alas! Alas! Silver and gold, we have none; and at the Master's feet, we can lay but little—so little that it is utterly insignificant when compared with the world's pining needs, the whole creation's piteous laboring groans."

Then, I think I hear you heave a sigh and say again, "There is no more that we know of, no more bread that is procurable; we cannot buy for all this multitude." Brothers and sisters, if we have little gifts ourselves, we cannot buy the eloquence of others. Indeed, it were no use if it were bought, for *oratory purchased* is of no use to any cause. We need for Christ's cause the free utterance of willing men who "speak through their throats," and feel from their hearts what they propound with their lips! Such speak because they cannot help speaking. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." If we have little ability of our own, we cannot buy more of others. The offices of love can never be assigned to the hireling. But I think I hear your disheartened spirits crying, "If we could add mercenary troops to the hosts of God, we might succeed—if we could procure by our donations more help, more strength for the Lord God of hosts, then, might there be bread in His house, and then, might the multitudes be fed." But two hundred pennyworth would not suffice for the five thousand, and millions would not suffice for the thousand millions of poor ignorant men and women! Master, what *can* we do? There are so many—we have not the bread ourselves, and we cannot buy it on their behalf.

And then, I hear the groan of one who is growing gray in years, "Oh, I feel it, but it is getting late with me, and the world's necessities are get-

ting stern; the hunger has continued until men are famished; they have been without bread till they are ready to perish, and faint by the way! The night comes on, a long and dreary night—who shall work, then? We are ready to go down into our graves; our shadows are lengthened, and our frame is shrunken; we are weak, and hang our heads like bulrushes, as men who seek the grave that has long been seeking them." Let me tell you, brethren and fathers, we who are in our opening youth, we feel that, too. Good God! Our days spin round us now, and our weeks seem to be hissing through the air, leaving a track like that of a burning brand! Work as we may; and some of us can say that we lose no time in Christ's cause, yet we can do nothing! We seem to be like one man alone against an innumerable host, or like a child seeking to remove a mountain with its own puny hands; night is getting spent; we are growing withered, our years are flying by, our deaths are coming on! souls are dying—hell is filling—all down the waterfall of destruction men are being plunged incessantly beyond our sight, beyond our hope; we cannot do it! The more we feel our responsibility, the more our infirmity oppresses us. My Lord, You have called us to a work that is too hard! We cannot do it, Master. We come to Your feet, and we say we cannot give food to these multitudes to eat. Mock us not. Command us not to impossibilities! You have bid us preach the gospel to every creature under heaven; we cannot reach them; we are too few! We are too feeble! We are too weak! We are too devoid of talent! Master, we cannot do it! At Your feet we are ready to fall in sheer despair! But hark! I hear the cries of the multitude as they come up in our ears. They say to us, "We are perishing—will you let us perish? We are famishing—will you let us famish? Our fathers have gone down to hell, and our fathers' fathers have perished for lack of the bread that came down from heaven, and will you let *us* die?" Across from Africa the multitudes look over the sea to us, and they beckon with their fingers—"Will you let *us* perish? Shall we forever be hunting ground for those who delight in chains and bloodshed?" From Asia they lift up the cry—"Will you always leave us? Shall we always be the bond slaves of Juggernaut, Brahma, Servia, and Vishnu?" From Australia they cry to us, such as have not already perished! The Aborigines cry, "Shall we never see the light of the gospel? Shall we never hear the gospel?" And worse than the Aborigines, the wail of not a few that remember in dreams the services of our sanctuaries, but have forgotten in their labors the observance of our Sabbaths, their cry is piercing, indeed. Oh, how terrible is the wail—the combined wail that comes up from all the nations under heaven! *One* man in Paul's dream, who said, "Come over and help us!" was enough to oblige him to action. And here are *millions* not in a dream, but in open vision, who all at once say, "Come and help us!" Did we say, just now, we could not? Surely we must recant our words and say, "We must." Good Master, we must! If we cannot, we must! We feel our weakness, but there is an impulse within us that says we must do it, and we cannot stop, we dare not—we were accursed if we did! The blasts of hell and the wrath of heaven would fall upon us if we renounced the task. The world's only hope, shall we put that out? The lone star that gilds the darkness, shall we quench that? The saviors of men, and shall we fold our arms and let

them die? No! By the love we bear for Your name, by the bonds that unite us to You—by everything that is holy before God, and humane in the sight of our fellow mortals—by everything that is tender, and gentle in the throbbing of our hearts, and the yearning of our hearts, we say we must, though we feel we cannot!

Yet there is a strong tendency in our hearts to shift personal responsibility. "Let us send them away into the villages to buy food." We look towards some Bethsaida in the distance, and say, "Let them go there and get food." This is a strong temptation with many churches. Perhaps, you say, "We have not got all this work to do ourselves; there are other churches; let them do their part. In all the suburbs of London there are chapels. There is the parish church—cannot they hear the gospel there? There is the City Missionary going about after them. What need is there that we should visit them? No doubt, there are some good men preaching in the streets, why should I do it? Let them go into the villages and get food." Ah, but not so; the Master said to you, *"You give them something to eat." "YOU."* Let this church feel that it should look upon the world as if it were the only church, and do its utmost as if it had no helper under heaven, but had all the work to do itself! And let the entire body of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ—instead of looking to societies for evangelization, or to commerce, or to governments—remember that she is the sole savior of the world! Christ never was incarnate in kings and in princes. His incarnation today is in the sacramental host of His elect. If you ask me where is God on earth, I point to the man Christ Jesus. If you ask me where is *Christ* on earth, I point you to His faithful *Church,* called by His Spirit. As Christ was the world's hope, so is the Church the world's hope—and she must take up the charge as if there were not another. Instead of sending some to this town, and some to that, she must hear her Master say, "You give them something to eat."

I do fear, dear friends, that we are, many of us, getting into a very easy state about perishing men, because we stay out of their way. To stop your ears to the cries of the hungry, or shut your eyes to the needs of the widow, and the fatherless, is not the way to relieve famine. Nor is it the way of doing good in the world, to avoid the haunts of the poor, and to leave the dens of desolation and sin. It is ours to touch the leper with our healing finger, not to shrink from his presence! It is ours to go and find out the stripped, and wounded, and helpless of the sons of men, and then to pour in the oil and the wine. Leave the priest and the Levite, if they will, to pass by on the other side. Your Master asks of you, Christian, practical, personal service; and your Christianity is worth nothing unless it makes you heed His word—"You give them something to eat"—unless it makes you, as individual members, and as a united body, do God's work for the world's sake, and for Jesus Christ's sake. I will tell *you,* the people of my charge that the world's salvation is given instrumentally into your hands. As far as your power lies, you are to consider yourselves as the world's hope, and you are to act as such! And what shall I say of you if, instead of accepting this charge from Christ, you shall sit still and do nothing? If, after having built this great house in which you meet, you should disregard others who hear not the Word of

Christ—if, being fed with heaven's food yourselves, you shall be satisfied to let others perish—I tell you that, as a church, Ichabod shall be written upon your brow! The garments of this church shall be torn, and her veil shall be torn away from her. She shall be set as a hissing; she shall be made a pillar of salt, like Lot's wife throughout all generations, if she dares to look back, now that the Master has called her to a great and solemn work. He that puts his hand to the plow, and looks back, is not worthy of the kingdom of God! I have faith in you, dear friends, but I have more faith in my God. I have faith in you that you will not turn back, but accept the awful charge which devolves upon you of giving the light of God to the world. But if you reject it, I will be a swift witness against you at the last great day—that you knew your Master's will and that you did it not—that you were called to the Master's service, and you slunk back again to indolence and sloth!

II. Having thus dwelt upon our mission, and enlarged upon our weakness, it is time to turn the topic and come TO OUR LINE OF DUTY AND THE MASTER'S STRENGTH.

Our line of duty begins, first of all, in immediate obedience to Christ's first command—"Bring them here to Me." "Five loaves, Master, it is all we have; two fishes." "Bring them here to Me." In Mark, the words are used—"Go and see." They were to look in their wallets, and be quite sure that they had not any more. They were to rummage among all their treasures, and bring every crust, every piece of flesh, or bread, to Christ. "Bring them here to Me." "Master, they are barley loaves; only five." "Bring them here to me." "There are two fishes. They are only two. They are not worth thinking of. Let us keep them for ourselves." "No, bring them here to Me." "But they are such little fishes." "Bring them here to Me," He says, "Bring them here to Me." The Church's first duty is, when she looks to her resources, and feels them to be utterly insufficient for her work, still to bring all that she has to Christ! But how shall she bring them? Why, in many ways! She must bring them to Christ *in consecration*. There is a brother, yonder, who says, "Well, I have but little money to spare!" "Never mind," says Christ, "let what you have be brought here to Me." "Ah," says another, "I have very little time that I can spare in laboring to do good. "Bring it here to Me." "Ah," says another, "but I have little ability; my stock of knowledge is very slender; my speech is contemptible." "Bring it here to Me." "Oh," says one, "I could only teach in the Sunday school." "Bring it here to Me." "Ah," says another, "and I do not know that I could do that; I could but distribute a tract." "Bring it here to Me." Every talent that the Church has is to be brought to Christ, and consecrated. And mark this—I speak a strong thing which some will not be able to receive—anything which you have in this world, which you do not consecrate to Christ's cause, you rob the Lord of! Every true Christian, when he gave himself to Christ, gave everything he had. Nothing he has is his own—it is his Master's. We are not true to the Master's cause unless it is so. "What? Not provide for our families?" Yes, verily, but that is given to God. "Not provide for ourselves?" Yes, verily, so long as you are not covetous. Remember, it is your Master's business to provide for *you*. If He provides for you through your own exertions, you are

doing your Master's work, and receiving of His bounty, for it is His work to provide for you. But still, there must always be a thorough consecration of everything you have to Christ. Where your consecration ends, your honesty with God ends. How often you have made the vow in your hymn! And will you not be true to your covenant with Him?—

"All that I am, and all I have
Shall be forever Yours!
Whatever my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign!
And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give Him all!"

"Bring them here to Me"—not only in consecration but also in *prayer*. I think our prayer meetings should be the seasons when the church brings up all her barley loaves and fishes to Christ. To get them blessed, here we come together, great Master, around the Altar. We are weak and feeble, we come to be made strong; we have no power of ourselves, we come that we may receive power from on high; and we wait in the prayer meeting, as Your disciples did in the upper room at Jerusalem, till the Spirit is poured out. It is marvelous how a man with one talent can sometimes do 10 times more than a man with 10 talents, for he has 10 times the divine grace! A soldier, after all, is not always useful according to his weapon. Give a fool an Armstrong gun, and perhaps he will destroy himself with it. Give a wise man but the poorest piece of firearm, and you shall find, with good and steady aim, and bold advance, he shall do more service with his small weapon, than the other with far better arms. So there are men who seem as if they might be leaders in God's house, who are laggards, doing nothing—while there are others who are but little in Israel, whom God, through His grace, makes to be mighty! Bring here, O you servants of the Lord, all that you have kept back; pour all the tithes into His storehouse, that His house may be full! Prove Me now, says the Lord of hosts, if I do not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Let us bring all we have to Christ, likewise in *faith*, laying it all at His feet, believing that His great power can make little means suffice for mighty ends. "Lord, there are only five loaves"—they were five loaves only when we had them in *our* hands. But now, they are in *Your* hands, they are food for 5,000 men! "Lord, there are two fishes"—they were paltry to insignificance while they were ours, but Your touch has ennobled them, and those little fishes shall become food for that vast multitude! Blessed is that man who, feeling that he has truly consecrated all to God, can say, "There is enough; I do not need more talent; I do not need more substance; I would not wish to have more; there is enough for my work; I know it is utterly insufficient in itself, but our sufficiency is of God." Oh, do not tell me, sirs, that we, as a denomination, are too feeble to do much good! Do not tell me that the Christianity of England is too weak for the evangelization of the whole world! No such thing—there is enough, there is plenty, if the Master pleases. If there were only six good men living, and these six were thoroughly consecrated to God, they

would be enough for the world's conversion! It is not the multiplication of your *means!* It is not the complication of your *machinery!* It is not the organization of your *societies!* It is not the qualification of your secretaries for which God cares a whit—it is your consecrated men who are wholly His, and only His! Let them believe that He can make them mighty, and they shall be mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds! I hesitate not to say that there are some pulpits that would be better empty than occupied; there are some congregations to whom it would be far better if they had no preacher at all—for, having a minister who is not ordained of God, and not speaking by faith—they content themselves with things as they are, and grow listless! Were the sham taken away, they might cry out for a real ministry! God would bestow on them one taught of the Holy Spirit, who would speak with a tongue of fire, with inward witness, and with spiritual energy, resting his confidence in God's promises, and His Word. Oh, dear friends, we ought to believe that there is enough means, if Christ does but bless them, enough to bring in God's chosen ones!

"Bring them here to Me," once more, in *active service*. That which is dedicated to Christ in solemn covenant, and in earnest prayer, and in humble faith, must be dedicated in *active service*. Are you *all* at work for Christ? Members of this church, I speak to you first—it is but incidentally that I address other believers here. Are you all doing something for Christ? I think there should not be a single member of this church who is not somehow occupied for the Master. Shall I exclude any? Exclude the weak upon their beds—but they can speak a good word for Him when they are visited! Exclude the dying upon their couches—but they can bear a blessed testimony to His faithfulness when they are going through the river! Exclude the dumb—but they can *act* religion, when they cannot speak it! Exclude the blind—but they can sing His praises! Exclude the utterly incapacitated—but even *these* can magnify the Lord by their *patience!* We ought, every one of us, if we are Christ's, to be serving Him! Am I a son, and have I no duty to my father? Am I a husband, and have I no duties of kindness to the wife? Am I an employee, and shall I be idle, careless and disobedient? Is the Christian's the only name that is merely nominal? Is this a barren title? Is this a medal to be worn? Is this a kind of cross which Christians shall take when they have done no deeds of arms, no valorous conflicts for Christ? Is the Christian only a thing, and not a living reality? The Lord have mercy upon such Christians!

Now, dear friends, if you need any inducements to lead you to bring all that you have to Christ, let me urge this. In bringing it to Him, put your talent into *His* hands, whose hands were pierced for you. You give to Him who is your dearest friend; you give to Him who spared not the blood of His heart, that He might redeem you! Do you not love Him? Is it not an honor to be permitted to show your love to so notable and noble a person? We have heard of women who have worked, and all but starved themselves, to bring food for their children. And as they put the precious morsels into the little ones' mouths, they felt their toil to be nothing, because they were giving it to those they loved. And so with the believer; we should feel that he most blesses himself when he blesses Christ. And,

indeed, when the Christian does anything for Jesus, it more blesses him who gives, than he who receives!

Besides, when you give to Him, you have another inducement—that you are thus giving to the multitudes. I know people think when they are doing something for the church that they are pleasing the minister, or pleasing the deacons. Oh, dear friends, it is not so! What interests have I in the entire world but the love of poor souls? I pray that God, who reads the heart, shall say at the day of judgment that there lives not one who desires more unselfishly the salvation of this world than the minister who addresses you now! And I trust I can speak the same of my brothers in Christ who long to see the world brought in! Look at that hungry world, and when you give the bread, let those eyes that stare upon you, let those who eat so abundantly, thank you and let that be a sufficient recompense for what you have done! There is a man, I think, present now, who I remember, some two or three winters ago, came to me to join the church. And when I sat down in the room to talk to him, I saw by the look of the poor man's face he needed natural bread as well as spiritual bread, so I said, "Before I talk to you, I should like to see you a little refreshed." And we fetched him something to eat. I looked at him for a minute, for I saw his eyes glisten, and I left the room, for fear he should not eat as much as if I were there. This, though I can tell you, when I saw the great pleasure with which he ate, it would have been sufficient compensation to me if that little had cost 10,000 pounds! And when you see the poor sinner lay hold of Christ so greedily, and yet so joyfully—when you see his gleaming eyes, and the tears as they run down his cheeks—you will say, "I am too well paid to have done good to such a poor heart as this. Lord, it is enough! I have fed these hungry souls."

Once again, bring your loaves and fishes to Christ instead of following Christ to get loaves and fishes. Is it no inducement that you should, yourself, be the distributor? When we were children, and our father cut off a small piece from the roast, and sent it to a sick woman over the road, do we not remember how Thomas, Mary, and Ann used to quarrel for turns to take the basin over with the slice of meat? We always liked to knock at the good women's door and say, "Please, we have brought something for your dinner today." Children are always glad if there is something to give away! If you put a penny into their hands, to give to a poor blind man, how cheerfully they run! Just such a feeling as that the Christian has, when out of his talent, which he has consecrated to God, he does something for the world! He is going about among the ranks, and feeding them, and he has joy in the deed.

Now, to close this point: "Bring them here to Me, and you shall have as much left as you had when you brought them." They took up of the fragments more than they gave. Christ will never let any man die in His debt. What you have done unto Him is abundantly repaid, if not in temporals, yet in spirituals. The fragments shall fill the baskets that are so liberally emptied; you shall find that while watering others, you are yourself watered. The joy you impart shall be mutual. To do good is to get good, and to distribute to others for Christ is the surest way of enriching one's self!

The rest of the believer's duty I will briefly sum up. When you have brought your talents to Christ, and have a conscientiousness of your great mission, your next duty is to look up. Thank God for what you have got—look up! Say—"There is nothing in what I do; there is nothing in my prayers, my preaching, my goings, my doings, except You bless the whole. Lord, bless it!" Then, when you have blessed, break. Remember the multiplication never came till after the division, and the addition did not begin till the subtraction took place. So, then, begin to break, do good, and communicate; go abroad and actively serve the Master, and when you have thus broken, and have thus distributed to others, mind that you only distribute from Christ's own hands. You are to put your talents and abilities into Christ's hands; He gives the blessing on it; then, He gives it back to you—afterwards, you give it to the people! If I give you bread from this pulpit to eat, that is my own—it will be of no use to you. But if, having gotten it in my study, I put it in the hands of Christ, and come up here, and Christ hands it back to me, and I give it to you, you shall be fed to the full! This is Christ's way of blessing men; He does not give the blessing first to the world—it is to His disciples—and then, the disciples to the multitude. We get in private what we distribute in public. We have access to God as His chosen favorites; we come near to Him; He gives to us, we give to others! Thus dear friends, I began by setting before you a great and high mission. First, I made you say, "We cannot." Then, I tried to make you say, "We must." And now I need to end by making you say, "We can." Yes! Christ is with us, and we can! God is for us, and we can! The Holy Spirit is in us, and we can! God the Holy Spirit calls us, Jesus Christ the Son of God cheers us, God the Father smiles upon us; we can! We must! We will! The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ!

But, have we believed in Christ ourselves? If not, we can do nothing. Come to Jesus first, then work for Jesus. Give Him your own heart first; then give Him all that you have. So shall He accept your offering, and bless your soul for His name's sake.

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SUNSHINE IN THE HEART
NO. 454

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 15, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart."
Psalm 37:4.

THERE are two teachings in our text which must be very surprising to those who are strangers to vital godliness; to sincere believers these marvels are recognized facts, but to the outside world they will appear very strange. We have here, first of all, the life of a believer described as a *delight* in God; and thus, we are certified of the great truth of God, that true religion overflows with happiness and joy. Ungodly persons and mere professors never look upon religion as a joyful thing; to them it is service, duty, or necessity, but never pleasure and delight. Why should they go up to the house of God? Is it not because of custom—a custom which they would gladly avoid if they dare? Why do they attend to the ordinances of the church? Is it not either out of Pharisaic hope of merit, or from a superstitious dread? How many view the forms of religion as charms to avert ill, or as lesser evils by which they escape from dreaded judgment? What is their service but drudgery, and their worship but weariness? Ask the worldlings what they think of religion—and even when they practice its outward rites, they snuff at it as a dull and dreary thing. "What a weariness it is!" They love it as much as the donkey loves labor, or the horse the whip, or the prisoner the treadmill. They cry for short sermons; indeed, none at all would suit them better! How cheerfully would they clip the hours of Sunday; indeed, if Sabbaths only came but once a month, they would prefer it! The heavy necessity of pious customs weighs upon them as tribute upon a conquered province. They pay to religion an observance of the character of a tax, or a toll, which custom demands; but the free will offerings they know not, and loving enjoyment of hallowed fellowship they cannot understand! They serve God as Cain did, who brought his offering, it is true, but brought it late; brought it because it was the family custom, and he would not be outdone by his brother; brought it of the common fruit of the ground, and with a sullen, loveless heart. These Cainites bring such as they are forced to bring, and mingle no faith in Jesus' blood with their offerings! They come with lead heels to the house of God, and they go away as if they had feathers on their feet! They serve God, but it is either that they may gain thereby, or else because they dare not do otherwise. The thought of delight in religion is so strange to most men, that no two words in their language stand farther apart than "holiness," and "delight." Ah, but believers who know Christ, understand that delight and faith are so blessedly married, that the gates of hell cannot prevail to divorce them! They

who love God with all their hearts find that His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace. Such joy, such delights, such overflowing bliss do the saints discover in their Lord, that so far from serving Him from custom, they would follow Him should the entire world cast out His name as evil! We fear not God because of any compulsion—our faith is no fetter—our profession is no prison; we are not dragged to holiness, nor driven to duty. No, sirs; our religion is our recreation, our hope is our happiness, our duty is our delight!

I know it always will be a slander against Christ's religion that it makes men miserable; but a greater misapprehension, or a baser lie never cursed the world! Because we cannot trifle so foolishly, nor sin as boldly, nor brag as lustily as the servants of sin, therefore you think us miserable! Ah, sirs, it is well written, "A stranger meddles not with our joy." The secret of the Lord is with them who fear Him, and their joy no man takes from them. Let us remind you, however, that still waters run the deepest. The brook which rattles over the stones dries up in the summer; but the deep-flowing river speeds on, come drought or heat, and yet glides silently along the meads. We do not talk so loudly of our joys as you of your merriments, because we have no need to do so; ours are known as well in silence as in exciting company! We need not your society to make us glad, much less the varied accompaniments which prop your bliss; we need neither bowl, nor feast, nor viol, nor dance to make us glad—nor even the stalled ox, and the bursting wine vat to make us rich. Our happiness lies not on passing creatures, but in the Eternal, Immutable Creator. I know, despite all we shall say, this slander will survive from generation to generation—that God's people are a wretched people—but, at least, let us clear our conscience of you, and let us make you without excuse if you believe it again! We *do* have joy; we *do* have delights, such that we would not part with one ounce of ours for tons of yours; not drops of our joy for rivers of your delights! Ours are no tinsel or painted joys, but solid realities; ours are joys that we can take with us to our bed in the silent dust—joys that shall sleep with us in the tomb, and that shall awake with us in eternity; joys that we can look back upon, and so live them over again in retrospect—joys that we can anticipate, and so know both here and hereafter. Ours are not bubbles which only glitter to burst; ours are not apples of Sodom, turning to ashes in our hand; our delights are substantial, real, true, solid, lasting, everlasting! What more shall I say? Dismiss from your minds this mistake! Delight and true religion are as allied as root and flower, as indivisible as truth and certainty; they are, in fact, two precious jewels set side by side in the same socket of gold!

But there is another wonder in our text to worldly men, though it is a wonder well understood by Christians. The text says, "He shall give you the desires of your heart." "Why," the worldly man says, "I thought religion was all self-denial; I never imagined that in loving God we could have our desires; I thought that godliness consisted in killing, destroying, and keeping back our desires." Does not the religion of most men consist in an open abstinence from sins which they secretly love? Negative godliness is very common in this age; it is supposed by most men that our re-

ligion consists in things which we must *not* do, rather than in pleasures which we may enjoy! We must not go to a theater; we must not sing songs, trade on Sundays, use ill words, and so on. We must not do this, and we must not do that. And they suppose us to be a crabbed, miserable race of persons who, no doubt, make up by some private allowance for denying ourselves in public. Now, it is true that religion is self-denial; it is equally true that it is *not* self-denial! Christians have two selves; there is the old self, and therein they do deny the flesh with its affections and lusts; but there is a new self; there is a new-born spirit, the new man in Christ Jesus; and, brethren, our religion does not consist in any self-denial of that! No, let it have the full swing of its wishes and desires, for all that it can wish for, all that it can pant after, all that it can long to enjoy—it may most safely obtain! When I hear persons say, "Well, you know my religion consists in some things that I must do, and in some things that I must not do." I reply, "Mine consists in things that I love to do, and in avoiding things that I hate, and would scorn to do." I feel no chains in my religion, for I am free, and never man more free; he who fears God, and is wholly God's servant, has no chains about him; he may live as he likes, for he likes to live as he ought! He may have his full desires, for his desires are holy, heavenly, and divine! He may take the full range of the utmost capacity of his wishes and desires, and have all he needs and all he wishes, for God has given him the promise, and God will give him the fulfillment of it!

But do not go away with the idea that we are always afraid to put one foot before the other because there are some *must nots* in our way; and do not think that we do not go that way to the right, or that way to the left because we dare not. Oh, sirs, we would not if we might! We would not if the law was altered—we would not have your pleasures if we might! If we could go to heaven and live as sinners live, we would not choose their way and conversation; it would be a hell to us to be compelled to sin, even if sin could go unpunished. If we could have your drunkenness, if we could have your lusts—oh, you ungodly ones—if we could have your mirth and your joy, we would not have them! We do not deny ourselves when we give these up; we despise your mirth, we abominate it, and tread it beneath our feet. "I can't understand," once said a bird to a fish, "how it is that you always live in the cold element; I could not live there; it must be a great self-denial to you not to fly up to the trees. Look how I can mount aloft." "Ah," said the fish, "it is no self-denial to me to live here, and it is my element! I never aspire to fly, for it would not suit me; if I were taken out of my element, I would die unless I was restored to it very soon, and the sooner the better." So the believer feels that God is his native element; he does not escape from his God, or from his Master's will and service; and if for a time he were taken out of it, the sooner he could get back to it, the better. If he is thrown into bad company, he is miserable and wretched until he gets out of it again. Does the dove deny itself when it does not eat carrion? No, verily the dove could not delight in blood; it would not feed on it if it could! When a man sees a company of swine under the oak, delighting themselves in their acorns, and grunting out their satisfaction, does he deny himself, when he passes them by,

without sharing their feast? No, verily, he has better bread at home he can eat, and swine's meat is no dainty to him! So it is with the believer—his religion is a matter of delight, a matter of satisfaction—and that which he avoids, and turns from is very little self-denial to him. His tastes are changed, his wishes are altered; he delights himself in his God, and joyously receives the desires of his heart!

This by way of preface; now, to come to our text itself. There are two things very plainly in the text. The first is *a precept written upon sparkling jewels,* "Delight yourself in the Lord." The second is *a promise priceless beyond rubies,* "He shall give you the desires of your heart."

I. The first is a PRECEPT WRITTEN UPON SPARKLING JEWELS. I have added those last words, because the law of the ten commandments was written upon stone—perhaps hard granite, in which men could take but little delight. But this law of one command, "Delight yourself in the Lord," is no stony law to be written upon tablets of granite! It contains a precept for sparkling brightness, worthy to be written on amethysts and pearls. "Delight yourself in the Lord." Why, brothers and sisters, when *delight* becomes a *duty,* then certainly, duty is a delight! When it becomes my duty to be happy; when I have an express *command* to be glad, then, indeed, I would be a sinner if I refuse my own joys, and turn aside from my own bliss! Oh, what a God we have, who has made it our duty to be happy! What a gracious God, who accounts no obedience to be so worthy of His acceptance, as a gladsome obedience rendered by a joyous heart. "Delight yourself in the Lord."

1. Now, first, *What is this delight?* I have been thinking the word "delight" over, and I cannot explain it. You know it is a word by itself. A delightful word—I cannot use anything but its own self to describe it! If you look at it—it is flashing with *light,* it sparkles like a star, no, like a bright constellation, radiant with sweet influences like the Pleiades. It is joy, yet is it more, it is joy running over; it is rest, but such a rest as allows of the utmost activity of every passion of the soul. Delight! It is mirth without its froth. Delight! It is peace, yet it is more than that, it is peace celebrated with festivity, with all the streamers hanging in the streets, and all the music playing in the soul. Delight! To what shall I compare it? It is a stray word that belongs to the language of Paradise. When the holy words of Eden flew away to heaven at the fall, this one, being entangled in the silken meshes of the net of the first promise, was retained on earth to sing in believers' ears! Where shall I find metaphors to describe it? Man fails me; let me turn, then, to the creatures of God who do not sin. Go to the seaside when the sea is going down, and in some parts of the coast you will see a little fringe just at the edge of the wave. It looks like a mist, but on closer examination you will find there are millions of very small shrimps, leaping up in all manner of postures and forms out of the receding wave, in exuberance of glee and merriment. Or look on a summer eve at the gnats as they dance untiringly, scarcely knowing how to enjoy themselves enough! Or see the lambs in the field, how they skip and leap! Listen to the morning song of the birds of the air, and listen again to their delicious notes at eventide! Look at the fish as they leap from the stream, and hear the insects as they hum in the air—these may

give faint glimmerings of the light of delight! Wing your flight to heaven if you would know what delight means. Watch the spirits there, as their fingers sweep the golden strings! Listen to their voices, as with peals of joy unknown to human ears, they sing unto Him who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in His blood! Mark them as they keep eternal Sabbath in the great temple of the living God, and gaze upon His throne, and gaze and gaze and gaze again, absorbed in glory, beatified in Jesus, full of heaven, overflowing with exceeding joy! This is delight! I fail in the description, I know. You must take the word and spell it over, letter by letter, and then you must pray God to put your hearts into a sweet frame of mind, made up of the following ingredients—a perfect rest from all earthly care; a perfect resignation of yourself into God's hands; an intense confidence in His love for you; a divine love to Him, so that you feel you would be anything or do anything for Him! Then, there must be added to all this, a joy in Him; and when you have these, they must be all set a-boiling, and then, by His grace, you have delight in the Lord your God! Matthew Henry says, "Desire is love in action, like a bird on the wing; delight is love in rest, like a bird on its nest." Such is the meaning of the word, and such the duty prescribed. "Delight yourself also in the Lord."

2. Secondly, *from where comes this delight?* The text tells us, "Delight yourself in the Lord." Delight yourself *in Jehovah,* in His very *existence!* That there is a God is enough to make the most wretched man happy if he believes. The nations crash, dynasties fall, kingdoms reel, what does it matter—for there is God. The father has gone to the tomb, the mother sleeps in the dust, the wife has fallen from our side, the children are removed—but there is God. This, alone, is enough to be a wellspring of joy forever and ever to all true believers. Delight also in His *dominion.* "The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice." Jehovah is King! Come what may of it, *He* sits upon His throne, and rules all things well. The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all. Standing in the chariot of providence, He holds the reins, and guides the dashing steeds according to His own will. God is exalted above the mountains, and above the hills; He has sway in all things, both the magnificent and the minute. Be glad, O daughter of Zion, for the Lord is King forever and ever, hallelujah, hallelujah! Every *attribute* of God should become a fresh ray in this sunlight of delight. That He is wise should make us glad who know our folly. That He is mighty should cause us to rejoice who tremble at our own weakness. That He is everlasting should always be a theme for our music, when we know that *we* are grass, and wither as the green herb. That He is unchanging should always give us a song, since we change every hour and are never long the same. That He is full of grace, that He is overflowing with it, and that this divine grace in the covenant He has given to us, that it is ours, ours to cleanse us, ours to keep us, ours to sanctify us, ours to perfect us, ours to bring us to heaven—all this should tend to make us delight ourselves in *Him!* Oh, believers, you stand today by a deep river; you perhaps have waded into it up to your ankles, and you know something of its clear, sweet, heavenly streams, but onward the depth is greater, and the current more delightful still. Come, take a plunge! Now, plunge into the Godhead's deepest sea! Lose

yourself in His immensity. Let His attributes cover up all your weakness, and all your folly, and everything else that can make you groan, and fill you with despondency. Rejoice in *Him*, though you cannot rejoice in yourselves! Triumph in the God of Israel, though in yourselves you have cause enough for despair!

The Christian also feels that he may delight himself in all that God has done in the past. Those Psalms which end with, "His mercy endures forever"—where we find such divisions as these—"Og, king of Bashan, for His mercy endures forever." "Sihon, king of the Amorites, for His mercy endures forever"—all these show us that God's people in olden times were known to think much of God's actions, so that they did not throw them in a lump into one verse, but divided them, to have a song about *each* of them! So let God's people rehearse the deeds of the Lord! Let them tell of His mighty acts! Let them sing, "Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces Your enemy." "The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is His name." "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." Let them continue to rehearse His deeds, till they come to the deeds of grace in their own hearts; and here let them sing more sweetly than ever. Nor let them cease to sing, for as new mercies flow unto them each day, let day unto day utter His praise, and night unto night testify of His grace! "Delight yourself in the Lord."

If these that I have already mentioned were not enough, we might delight ourselves in all that God is to do; in all the splendid triumphs He has yet to achieve; in all the glories of the latter days; in all the splendors of His throne, when all the hosts of God shall meet at last; in His triumph over death, and hell, and in His ultimate victory over sin, when He shall make the whole earth to become filled with His praise! Oh, brothers and sisters, time would fail us, eternity might fail us, indeed, to catalog all the different points of holy delight which believers, when they are in a spiritual frame of mind, may find in the Lord their God! You should delight yourselves in God the Father, in His eternal love to you when there was nothing in you to love, in His election of your soul, in His justification of you in Christ, in the giving up of His only begotten Son to redeem you from hell! You should delight yourselves in Jesus, you should—

"Tell what His arm has done,
What spoils from death He won!
Sing His dear name alone,
Worthy the Lamb!"

You should delight yourselves in God the Holy Spirit, in His quickening operations, in His illuminations, in His consolations, in the strength which He gives you, in the wisdom which He imparts to you, in the faithfulness with which He attends to you, and in the certainty that He will ultimately perfect you, that you may be met to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light! And here, we might branch out into a thousand themes! Delight yourselves in God as your Father, as your friend, as your helper. Delight yourselves in Jesus Christ as your brother, as your bridegroom, as your shepherd, as your all-in-all. Delight yourselves in Christ in all His offices, as prophet, priest, and king. Triumph in Him, in all His garments, for they all smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Delight yourselves in Christ, in His glory, and in His humiliation, in His

cross, and in His crown, in His manger, and in His eternal triumph, wherein He led captivity captive! Delight yourselves in the Holy Spirit, in all His various dealings with men's minds. Delight in Pentecost, and in Pentecosts that are yet to come. And—but we close. What more should we say? Surely we might talk on forever! Delight yourself in Jehovah, that great, that boundless, that joyful theme—and delight yourself in Him forevermore!

3. Now another question suggests itself. *When is this delight to be practiced?* "Delight yourself in the Lord." Precepts without limit as to time are for perpetual observance. My text does not say, "Delight yourself in the Lord occasionally, or now and then," but at all times. There are two occasions when it is difficult to delight in God, and therefore I will mention these. It is difficult to delight in God when everything goes well with us. "Oh," I hear you say, "I cannot understand that! That is the time when I *do* delight in God the most." Brothers and sisters, I am afraid it is the time when you delight *in God* the least! "Well but when my comforts are round about me, when providence smiles upon me, then I can delight in God." Stop! Are you sure of that? Is it not likely, that often you are delighting in His mercies rather than in *Him?* Delighting in the creature, rather than in the Creator? I fear, beloved, it is our sunshiny days that are the greatest times of temptation. Well may we pray, "In all times of our wealth deliver us." We are somewhat like a foolish wife who, when her husband gives her jewels and rings, grows apt to love the jewels, rather than her husband. We have known many believers who have had divine grace, and mercies, and have had great privileges, and they have come to pride themselves more in the mercies and the privileges than in their God! It is difficult when the wine vat is full, to love God more than the vineyard! It is difficult, when there is a fine harvest, to think more of God than of the sheaves! It is difficult, when you are growing rich, to still say, "This is not *my* treasure." The treasures of earth will dirty our garments unless we see well to our hearts—our soul cleaves to the dust, and dust is no aid to devotion. Oh, take heed, rich believer, that you delight yourself in God; not in your parks and your lawns; not in your gardens, and your houses; your lands, and your estates; for if you delight in these, your gold and your silver are cankered, the moth is in your garment, and the blight will soon be on your heritage! Say, "These are not my portion." *"God* is my portion says my soul."

Another time when it is difficult to delight in God—not as difficult as in this first one—is when everything goes ill with us. Then we are apt to say with old Jacob, "All these things are against me." What a noble opportunity Job lost, when servant after servant came to tell him that everything was gone, when he sat on the dunghill, did scrape himself with a potsherd. If he could have stood upright, and have said, "Now will I rejoice in the Lord, and triumph in the God of my salvation," what a triumph of faith he would have achieved! If he could have thus played the man for God, Job would have been the most splendid character we have in Holy Scripture! He did go far when he said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." There spoke a man whom God had made mighty; but if he could have delighted still more in God when the sores were on him

and they were bursting—that would have been all but superhuman! I think I may say it would have been as much as ever divine grace itself could work in a man! Yet, how often have I noticed, that believers do rejoice in God much more readily in their afflictions, than they do in their prosperity; I have seen the hyssop growing upon Lebanon, and I have seen the cedar growing on the wall; I have seen great saints where there was little mercy; and I have seen driveling saints where there were great providential blessings. God's birds sing best in cages, and the praise of God comes better out of the mouth of the furnace of affliction than even from the top of the mountain of communion! We are so constituted; it seems to me that unless God screws the strings of our heart up by pain and affliction, we never give forth much sweet music to Him. Yet it is difficult, very difficult, for a man, when every earthly prop gives way, to say, "The fig tree does not blossom, the calves perish from the stall, the harvest has been mildewed, the cankerworm eats up all the produce, but still, my delight is in God, and my triumph is in the God of my salvation." Yet, by divine grace, at all times we are to delight in God.

But I hear a voice say, "But when is the Christian to be miserable?" Never, brother, never! "But not even at times?" No; not if he does his duty. "But ought not a believer to sometimes be cast down?" Saints are cast down, but they ought not to be. "Well, but many of God's saints are full of doubts and fears." I know they are, and the more's the pity. "But some of the Lord's children go mourning all their days." It is their own fault; their Lord has not bid them do so. The Scriptures teach us, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again," says the Apostle, "I say, rejoice." "But, are there not times when we may indulge the melancholy vein, and cultivate sorrow?" Well, if you do, you will soon find it grows! God often serves His children as I have known parents do theirs. If His children pray for afflictions, they shall have them until they shall begin to pray 10 times more earnestly to have them taken away. If God's people cry for nothing, they shall soon have something to cry for; if they will make themselves miserable, they will soon have miseries added to their miseries! But as far as the *promise* is concerned, and the *precept* is concerned, it is the daily, constant, hourly duty and business of the true believer to delight himself in the Lord his God!

4. Before I leave this point, I answer four other questions. *Why is this delighting in God so rare? Why do you see so many desponding Christians? Why do you see so many doubting Christians? Why do you see so many whose religion seems to them to be a yoke, a very heavy yoke, too?* It is, I fear, because there is so little on the one hand of genuine religion, and so little, on the other, of deep-toned religion where the little that there is, is genuine. Why, the man who has a religion that is not of his heart, I do not wonder that he is wretched! You have sometimes seen a man with a dog of a breed that does not like the water, and he throws it in—how quickly it gets out again! But, there are some of different breeds, that will swim by the hour, and delight in it. So, now, there are some professors who are known to be hypocrites, by the fact that their religion is against their will; you have put them into it, and they would soon get out! But the true Christian takes to his religion by divine grace with ar-

dor and delight. He loves it, he delights in it; this is one of the best tests to discern between a hypocrite, and a true Christian. Job says of the hypocrite, "Will he delight himself in God?" No—the hypocrite will pull a long face; the hypocrite will look wretched; the hypocrite will make himself as miserable as ever man can be when the time has come for it. He never *did,* and he never *can,* and he never *will,* delight himself in God as a rule; he may have some joy in the outward means, for even Herod heard John gladly, but that is only a spasm. Only the true believer can have a constant, and an abiding satisfaction and delight, in the service and love of God. This is evidence, so sure and infallible, that if any among you delight in God, I conclude, without hesitation, that you are a saved soul! But, if any of you, on the other hand, never have any delight in God of any kind, I question whether you ever knew God at all—for if you have known Him, you must in your degree have found delight in Him. "But what is the good of this delight?" asks one. "Why should Christians be such a happy people?" Why, it is good in all ways! It is good for our God; it gives Him honor among the sons of men when we are glad. It is good for us; it makes us strong. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." It is good for the ungodly, for when they see Christians happy, they long to be believers themselves! It is good for our fellow Christians; it comforts, them and tends to cheer them. Whereas, if we look gloomy, we shall spread the disease, and others will be wretched and gloomy, too! For all these reasons, and for many more that can be given, it is a good and pleasant thing, that a believer should delight himself in God.

II. I now turn, briefly, to the second point of the subject, "He shall give you the desires of your heart." HERE IS A PROMISE PRICELESS BEYOND RUBIES! What connection is there between the first part of the text and the second—"Delight yourself in the Lord," and, "He shall give you the desires of your heart." There is this connection; they who delight in God are qualified to have the promise fulfilled! They are qualified, in the first place, as to the desires. It would not be a safe thing for God to give to every one of you here the desires of your heart; it would be your ruin. One of the best things that the Lord does for some men is to check them, and thwart them. There is many a man who has gone to heaven through not having had his desires, who would have gone to hell if he had had them! Ungodly men have desires that would lead them to the pit of hell, and when God refuses to give them their desires, it is as though He had put chains and posts, and barriers in the road, to keep them from going post haste to their own destruction. The ungodly man is not qualified to have the promise, because he would desire something that would neither glorify God nor profit himself. But, when a man's delight is in God, then his desires are of such a sort, that God may be glorified in the granting of them, and the man, himself, profited by the receiving of them! Again, delighting in God qualifies the believer not only for desiring aright, but for spending aright. Some men, if they had their heart's desire, even if it were a good desire, would, nevertheless, make a wrong use of it; and so it would happen to them as it did to Israel of old, while the meat was yet in their mouths, the curse of God would come upon them. But he who delights in God, whatever he gets, knows how to use it well.

People say *use* is a second nature. Brothers and sisters, *abuse* is the first nature. To abuse mercies is much more the nature of man than to properly use them! But when the believer delights in God, whatever he has from God he spends aright; he makes it not a sacrifice to himself, much less a god before whom he will bow down and worship; but, by God's grace, he makes it a means of serving God better, and delighting himself more in the Master! The rivers of worldly men run *away* from the sea, but the rivers that Christian men have, run *into* the sea. If a worldly man sails along the stream of his mercies, he gets further and further from God, and becomes more and more an idolater; but when the Christian gets mercies, he sails nearer and nearer to his God, and so his mercies become highways to the throne of God Himself!

"Still," asks one, "what are those desires which we are sure to receive?" Now, beloved, we must single out those who delight themselves in God, and I believe the range of their desires will be found in a very short compass. If I had my desire of my God this morning, it is not much for me to say I have no earthly thing that I would desire, "for I have all things and abound." But if the Apostle Paul were here, who had nothing, who was often naked, and poor, and miserable, I am persuaded if he had his wish, he would say, "I have nothing to wish for, nothing upon earth, for I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content." But if I must have a wish, brothers and sisters, I know what I would wish for. I would wish to be perfect, to be free from every sin, from every imperfection, from all self, from all temptation, from all love of the world, from all care for everything or anything that is contrary to God's Word. Is not that your wish, you who delight in God? Would you not, now, if an angel were to stand before you at the pew door; would you not say, "If I may, let me be perfectly set free from the very name, and nature, guilt, and power of sin"? You shall have your desire—the Lord shall give unto you the desires of your heart! But I hear another say, "If I might have my desire, it would be that I might live nearer to Christ; that I might have constant communion with Him till I knew Him, and the power of His resurrection, being made conformable unto His death." Brother, I join you in that desire! I am sure if you had 10 kingdoms offered in the one hand, and this fellowship with Christ in the other, do not I speak the desire of your heart, when I say, you would choose to have communion with Christ rather than these kingdoms? Well, the Lord shall give you the desires of your heart. Only delight yourself in the Lord. "Well," says another, "if I might have my desire, I would have all these things, but I would desire to be always useful." Ah, to be useful! How many men live like Belzoni's toad in the pyramids of Egypt, which had been there two thousand years; and what had it done, but sometimes sleep, and sometimes wake the whole time through? And so some men live and do nothing. "But if I had my desire," I think I hear many of you say, "I should like to be useful; to win crowns for Christ, to save souls for Him, to bring in His lost sheep." Brothers, delight yourself in the Lord, you shall have your desire. Perhaps, not exactly as you would like to word it. You may not be useful in the sphere you aspire to, but you shall be useful as God would have you useful in His own way, and in His own measure!

I must say one thing, though. I have a desire, which if now I might offer it, knowing that it should be granted me, it would be this—I desire to see you all converted. Mothers and fathers, can you not say, "My heart's desire is that my children might be saved, for I have no greater joy than this, that my children walk in the truth of God"? And I, as a minister, say my earnest desire, the highest desire I know, that which my soul feels most when it pants the most, and aspires the most, after some big and great thing, is that I may present every man of you perfect before God at the last! That I may not only be clear of your blood which is a great thing, but that I may have you with me when I shall say, "Here am I, Lord, and the children You have given me for Christ." Oh, you who are members of this Church, will you pray that your minister may delight himself in God, that he may have this desire of his heart? And will you, yourselves, also delight in God, so that when you come to God in prayer, and pray for this congregation, you may be sure He will give you the desires of your heart, because you have delighted yourselves in Him? They said of Martin Luther as he walked the streets, "There comes a man that can have anything of God he likes." You ask the reason of it? It is because Luther delighted himself in his God! Give us some such men in this congregation, and in this church—who love the Lord and rejoice in Him—what an effect their prayers will have! These are the men who have the keys of heaven, and of death, and of hell! These are the men who can open heaven or shut it up, make it rain or rain not! The Church of Rome pretends that she has the keys; but the Church of Christ has the keys without pretending to have them, and these keys swing at the belts of the men who delight in God! You can, by your prayers, bring down such showers of the Spirit upon the Christian Church, that the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose! And, if you cease to delight in God, you can shut up heaven itself, so that no rain descends, and the whole Church becomes barren and unfruitful once again.

Now, to wind up; mark this, this is the only thing that a man can delight in and get his desires. There is a man who delights in money, but he does not get his desire. He gets his money, but he never gets the satisfaction he expected. We read in the papers but the other day, of one who had a singular success in his profession, but who lately attempted suicide, under the notion that he would lose his all through the American war. We remember in this great city, one of the largest merchants who died worth more than three millions of money, for at that amount I think his property was sworn, who during the latter part of his life was accustomed to be paid the same wages as his gardener, and believed that he would certainly die in a workhouse. He had got his broad and wide estates, and money that could not be counted, but he did not get the desires of his heart; he had delighted in his gold, and he had not the desires of his heart. So have we known men who have delighted themselves in fame, and when they have got it, they would have been only too glad to get rid of it. They have been great statesmen, or mighty warriors, and they have been greatly renowned, but when they have gained all the fame, and stood on the very top of the pinnacle, there was not that in it that they expected, and they have said, "Would that I had lived in obscu-

rity, for then I might have known some satisfaction." And look at many of you! When you were apprentices, the desire of your heart was to be journeymen. Well, when you became journeymen, what then? You wanted to be masters, and set up in trade for yourselves! Well, you have set up in trade, and got on pretty well; have you the desires of your heart? Oh, no; that has gone on a little further. Now, you are waiting till you have brought up this large family of yours, and *then,* when you have your children started in life, you are looking out for a villa in the suburbs where you can retire, and spend the rest of your days! And, some of you have the villa in the country, and have wound up your business affairs; have you the desires of your heart yet? Well, not quite yet; there is still something else that you need. Ah, yes—getting the desires of a man's heart is like chasing a phantom! It is here, there, and everywhere—now on the hill, now down in the valley; you leap down on it, and it is away again on the next hill, and then on the next; and you find your chase is fruitless! Satisfaction in this world is like the diamond which the fool sees lying at the foot of the rainbow. So he runs after it, and as he runs, the rainbow is ever in the distance, and he can never find what he expected. If you would have the desires of your heart, delight in your God! Give Him your love! Give Him your heart! Plunge deep into this stream, and you shall have all that you can wish for; the desires of your heart to the full extent shall be granted.

Are there not, in this house today, those who cannot delight in God?—Cannot—cannot—cannot? "How," you say, "can I delight in God? He is angry with me." You are right, you cannot. How can he *delight* in God whose sins are unforgiven, upon whom the wrath of God abides always? Can a man delight in a roaring lion, or in a bear robbed of her whelps? Can a man delight in a consuming fire? Can a man delight in a naked sword that seeks to reach his very heart? God is such to you as long as you are out of His grace. How then can you delight in God? There is one step that is necessary—*believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you shall delight in the Lord. That is, trust yourself to be saved by Christ. Go and put yourself into Christ's hands to have all your sins put away, and when you have trusted Christ, you shall know that your sins are forgiven, that you are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and you may go your way and delight yourself in God, for the promise is this—your desires shall be granted you!

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"THE LOVE OF JESUS, WHAT IT IS—NONE BUT HIS LOVED ONES KNOW"

NO. 455

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, JUNE 18, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT SURREY CHAPEL, BLACKFRIARS ROAD.

"And to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge."
Ephesians 3:19.

IT is the distinguishing mark of God's people that they know the love of Christ. Without exception, all those who have passed from death unto life, whatever they may *not* know, have learned this. Without exception, all those who are not saved, whatever they may know besides, know nothing of this. An ungodly man may know something about Christ's love; he may believe in the fact of it; he may perceive something of the theory of it. He may even be able to follow believers in certain expressions of its enjoyments. But to know the love itself, to taste its sweets, to realize personally, experientially, and vitally, the love of Christ as shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit is the privilege of the child of God, and of the child of God, alone! This is the secure enclosure into which the stranger cannot enter; this is the garden of the Lord, so well protected by walls and hedges that no wild boar of the woods can enter. Only the redeemed of the Lord shall walk here. They, and only they, may pluck the fruits and content themselves with the delights thereof. We may begin the exercises of this evening with a question of self-examination, and we may continue them throughout the whole service, trying to press that question home to your consciences—Do I know the love of Christ? Have I felt it? Do I understand it? Do I feel it now? Is it now shed abroad in my heart? Do I know that Jesus now loves me? Is my heart quickened, and animated, and warmed, and attracted towards Him through the great truth of God that it recognizes and rejoices in—that Christ really loves me, and has chosen me, and set His heart upon me?

We have started the first point. Every child of God knows the love of Christ. We advance another step. All the children of God do not know this love to the same extent. There are in Christ's family, babes, young men, strong men, and a few who are fathers. Now, as they grow and progress in all other matters, so they most certainly make advances here. Indeed, an increase of love, a more perfect apprehension of Christ's love, is one of the best and most infallible gauges whereby we may test ourselves whether we have grown in divine grace or not. If we have grown in grace, it is absolutely certain that we shall have advanced in our knowledge and reciprocation of the love of Christ! Many here present have believed in Jesus, and they know the love of Jesus, but oh, they know it not as some others here do who have gone into the inner chamber, and have been made to drink of the spiced wine of Christ's pomegranate! Some of you have begun to climb the mountain, and the view which lies at your feet is lovely and passing fair, but the landscape is not such as would greet your eyes if you could but stand where advanced saints are now standing, and could look to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south, and see all the lengths and breadths, and depths and heights, of the love of Christ which passes knowledge. To change the figure—the love of Christ is comparable to Jacob's ladder; some of us are standing on the lower rungs, and there are others who are ascending and who rest half way; others, still, are getting up so high that we can scarcely see them by reason of the dimness of our sight; and there are some, perhaps at this hour, who have just reached the topmost rung of this knowledge, and are now stepping, as it were, into the arms of Christ who awaits them at the top! They have attained unto their perfection. Here they shall find repose. They shall rest in His love, and with the eternal songs of heaven, they shall rejoice forever and forever!

I want tonight, to bring you, who are the people of God, to the bottom of the ladder; I want to encourage you to put your feet upon the first rung of it; and then, go step by step with you till, I hope, before we have done, if God the Holy Spirit is with us here, we shall have gotten very high up that ladder, and then, we shall go away hoping never to come down again, only wishing, with Peter, that we may tarry on the mountain, and build for us tabernacles that we may sit on the summit of the mountain with our Lord forever!

I. Well then, to come first of all to the bottom of the ladder. One of the lowest ways of knowing the love of Christ may be described as *the doctrinal method*—very useful one, but nothing to be compared to those that we shall have to mention afterwards. If a man would know the love of Christ, he should endeavor to study the Word of God with care, attention, constancy, and with dependence upon the Spirit's illumination, that he may be enabled to understand aright. It is well for a Christian to be thoroughly established in the faith once delivered to the saints. It is an ill day for a man when he ceases to hold fast to the form of sound words which was delivered to us by Christ Himself and His holy apostles. Depend upon it, doctrinal ignorance will always make churches weak! But where saints are fed upon the finest of the wheat, and are made to suck of the honey out of the rock, and to eat of the manna and fatness of gospel doctrine, they will, all other things being equal, become the strongest and most valiant believers on the face of the earth. There is a tendency in these times to depreciate the value of gospel doctrines. Oh, I beseech you, be not led astray by this error! There are in the Word of God certain things really taught. Do not believe that the Bible is a lump of wax to be shaped just as you please. Do not imagine that "Yes," is right, and that "No," which contradicts it, is right, too! The Lord has written this book intending to teach us something, and a moderate understanding, sanctified by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, will enable you to know what the Lord does mean to teach you, especially upon such a vital point as this. Do not, I beseech you, say, "Oh, it does not much matter what doctrines I hold." You are as much responsible for using your judgment as you are for using your hands and your feet! God never did free a conscience from His jurisdiction. Conscience is free, but not before God. You have a right to your convictions as far as *I* am concerned, but if your convictions are wrong, you have no right to them before *God!* There are certain things that are truths of God, and there are others that are contradictions; see that you get fast hold of wisdom, and that you do not let her go! There is a tendency, however, on the other hand in certain quarters, to make "doctrinal" knowledge *everything*. I have seen, to my inexpressible grief, the doctrines of grace made a huge stone to be rolled at the mouth of the sepulcher of a dead Christ, and I have seen sound doctrine, so called, made as a very seal to seal in the dead Christ, lest by any means the en-

ergy of His grace should come out for the Salvation of sinners! Oh, what is doctrine, after all, but a throne whereon Christ sits, and when that throne is vacant, what is the throne to us? It is the Monarch and not the throne who we reverence and esteem! Doctrines are but as the shovel and the tongs of the altar, while Christ is the smoking sacrifice. Doctrines are Christ's garments; verily, they all smell of myrrh, and cassia, and aloes out of ivory palaces, whereby they make us glad, but it is not the garments we care for so much as for the person, the very person of our Lord Jesus Christ! And therefore, while I entreat you, (and I hope not to be misunderstood here), while I entreat you to be very jealous and earnest in attaining unto a clear doctrinal knowledge of the love of Christ to His people, yet, when you have got it, do not say—"I am the man! I have attained to eminence; I may now sit still and be content." sirs, this is but the threshold; this is but one of the first arches of a long vista of glorious truths of God; this is but the lowest step of the ascent! You have but sat down on the lowest form in the school; you have much to learn! Oh, be not wise in your own conceits, lest you lose the blessed things which as yet have not been discovered by you! Verily, it is a sweet thing to know Christ's love in the doctrine, and to understand that it is without beginning; that it existed when as yet this world had not been made; when sun, and moon, and stars slept in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn cup; when as yet the solemnity of silence had never been startled by the songs of seraphs, and the wings of cherubs had never stirred the unnavigated ether! It is delightful to believe that—

"Before the daystar knew its place,
Or planets went their round,
The saints in bonds of sovereign grace,
Were one with Jesus found!"

Equally precious is it to know the doctrine that this love is without end. When all we see around us shall have passed away, as the foam dissolves into the waves that bear it, the love of Christ to His people shall be the same. And on, and on, and on throughout eternity He shall never cast them from His heart! Sweet, too, is it, passing sweet, to know that He loves them without change, and without limit; that He loves them because He will love them; that He loves them not for anything in them, but simply because He has so much love in His heart that He must let it out, and that He ordains to let it flow forth to them that they may rejoice in it.

All this is precious but, O brothers and sisters, if you only know these things as they stand in the creed book—if you only understand them as you find them in the catechism, I tell you that you know nothing yet as you ought to know! If this is all your knowledge, you have just begun to learn! May God help you to go further, and to mount to higher and clearer regions than these! It is a blessed privilege to know Christ doctrinally, but it is only the beginning, the steppingstone to something better, even as love longs for intimacy.

II. And what next? Let us lift our feet and take another step. True saints know Christ's love *gratefully and thankfully*, having experienced it. O dear friends, let me refresh your memories, and tell you what you do know, rather than attempt to say anything which might be new to you. Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where Jesus met with you? Some of us do. Oh, that day of days! That first day of our spiritual life! Other days have lost their freshness in our recollection, but this one is like a coin newly minted from time, though it is years ago with some of us. Oh, that day! That marriage day! That feast day! That day of heaven on earth! Our soul was burdened, and bowed down to the very dust, and we thought we would soon descend into the pit where despair would be our portion forever, but as we went mourning on our way, we heard a voice saying to us—

"Come here soul, I am the way."

We turned our eyes to see what way this could be, when lo, we saw one nailed to a cross! We marked the blood as it flowed from His hands and feet, and side; we saw His eyes as they looked on us with inexpressible compassion, and we heard Him as He opened His lips and said, "Come unto Me, you weary one, and I will give you rest." Oh, do you remember when you looked unto Him, and when you came to trust Him, just as you were, with your soul? You had been learning about Christ, perhaps, for years; you had been taught about Him; you had got some knowledge of Him, and some desire towards Him, but did you not learn more of Christ in five minutes then, than you could have learned in a whole course of college education in theology, in years before? And since that time, dear friends, have we not learned Christ's love thankfully to a very high degree? Day after day, He comes to us; night after night He draws the curtains of our bed; He is always with us, and all that He has is ours; He talks sweetly to us by the way, and He sits down by us in our afflictions

and comforts us, and makes our hearts to burn within us. And as we think of all that He has done for us, we feel we do know something of Him, for gratitude has been our schoolmaster.

I know some Christians say they do not feel the love of Christ as much now as they did at first. Oh, shame on you, brothers and sisters, shame on you, if this is true! What? When you owed Him for one mercy, did you love Him? And now when you owe Him for fifty thousand, do you love Him less? Why, if it is true that saints grow necessarily colder and colder, then it does not say much for their estimation of Christ! It would make Him out to be like some people we know, who are very agreeable to see once in a while, but we should not like to live with them long. Let me share my witness that my Lord and Master improves upon acquaintance. The more I know of Him, the more I wish to know, and I think I do but speak the mind of all the Lord's people when I declare that instead of having less love to Him, the more I experience of His favor, the more warm is my heart towards Him! "Alas," says one, "but I do not feel as I once did." Well, dear friend, it may be that you make some mistake in reference to your own experience. When the passion of love was first lighted in your breast, there was, as it were, a blaze of the match, the paper and the wood, although the coals had not yet ignited. Yours was then the flush of joy, but not the vehement heat. Now your heart is all on fire like a solid ruby. There is much more heat, though there is less blaze. So it is with some young converts. The first love they have is wildfire, and to tell you the truth, I would rather have wildfire than no fire at all. But as men grow older in divine grace, the fire will not diminish in intensity, if God has kindled it. But perhaps the flash and the flame, the glitter and the noise, may not be quite so palpable. Yet I fear that if you do not love Christ better than you did; if you do not feel that there are new tendrils which bind you to Him; if you do not feel that it would be harder now than ever to give up your hold on the Savior, you have not begun to learn the love of Christ. When we know *that* love, when we feel gratitude for mercies received, then, we see every mercy, temporal and spiritual, coming from that love! Ungrateful souls cannot learn this love. They have the book of mercy, but they are blind and cannot read it. Grateful souls, in every Letter from Jesus their absent friend, whom having not seen, they love, and in every second of daily fellowship, and of

daily mercy, read again that glittering sentence—"He loved me, and gave Himself for me."

III. Let us pass on to the third step, we have not got far yet. We are only as schoolboys at our first school, and we have now to go on to something higher. The true children of God know Christ's love in a way which I can only describe by the word *practically*. If any man would know His doctrine, let him keep His commandments. You know if a man is to be taught to swim, you could not teach him in Surrey chapel; you might get the most skillful master in the world, who would come and explain the way in which he should spread his hands, and move his feet, but he never can be taught to swim on dry land! And we cannot make Christians know Christ except by imitating Christ, and by obeying Christ. When soldiers are needed, the best place to make them is, doubtless, the battlefield. If we would have veterans, there must be the smoke and the smell of powder, for great commanders are not to be manufactured in Hyde Park; and we cannot expect to have men who shall win victories, drawn out from mere loungers at the clubs; they must attend the drills, and by practice become qualified for their duties. A young man cannot learn farming by the study of books. To read books may be useful, if he takes them as companions to the great book of nature. But he must be made apprentice to some farmer who sends him out into the fields to see how they plow, how they sow, how they mow, how they reap, and how they house their corn. By entering practically into the various toils and duties, he becomes skilled in them. Just so, if we would learn Christ, we must be practically engaged in His service! We must learn His love by keeping His commandments. You may sit in these pews and be preached to every Sunday; you may hear God's truth plainly and simply unfolded, but if you want to learn, and learn in such a way that you never will forget, it is the back streets that must teach you, the lodging houses, the haunts of poverty, and the dens of vice. If any man would know the love of Christ, let him go where Christ went, and to the place where a Savior is needed. Let him carry Christ's light to give light to others, and it shall enlighten himself; let him go forth to water other men's vineyards, and his own soul shall be watered, also. Whatever his Master bids him do, let him do it, and he shall *learn* his Master's will while he is *doing* his Master's will! But when men, at the very outset, make a profession of reli-

gion, and then disobey Christ—when they refuse to keep His commandments—when they say of this one, "It is non-essential," and of the next, "It is unnecessary," and of some duty, "Well, I can leave that to others," and of some sphere of action for which they are especially adapted, "I need not attend to that; others can do that quite as well"—when men, I say, enlist into Christ's army, and begin at once to refuse to march as they are told, and decline to go out to battle when the captain gives them the command—it is a sure sign that they never will learn much of their Master, their Captain, and their Lord!

If you had asked Whitefield in his day, how he came to know so much about Christ's love, I think he would have said that he learned more of it when he stood in Moorfields, or on Kennington Common, when the dead cats and filth were thrown at him as he preached Christ, than he ever learned in his bedchamber, or even in his closet! If you had asked Rowland Hill how it was that he had learned so much of the love of Christ, I think he would have told you that he learned it while he was speaking to the poor, and to the needy, and while he was condescending to men of low estate, that by any means he might win some! Why, if a man should want to know about slavery, he might go and hear a lecture by an escaped slave, and it would be very well for him to do so, but, if he could go to the place where the whip is cracking, and the back is bleeding, and see the thing for himself—then he would understand the cruelty of slavery, indeed! So, if a man would know the love of Christ, he must lay himself out to discover the deformity of sin, and the awful degradation into which crime casts mankind, and then he will know that love which stoops from the highest heaven, reaches down to the gates of the deepest hell, thrusts its arms up to the very elbows in the mire to pull these accursed ones out of the pit of destruction, and make them blessed forever among the shining ones before the throne of God! Strict and practical obedience to the Master's commands gives an amount of knowledge which is not to be attained by sentiments of gratitude, much less by systems of doctrine! This is a higher stage of divine grace, though not much higher. Yet, I would to God that more of us had even got here, for I fear there are many who have a name to live, but who do not obey Christ; many, perhaps, to whom the minister's command would be more potent than Christ's command, and upon whom the law of the land would have

far more influence than the law of Christ. A believer ought to be such an one that a mere word from Christ is enough for him; or, as a Quaker was likely to express it, his heart should be like a cork upon the waters, which every undulation of the waves would affect; thus should his heart float, as it were, in the Spirit's influences, till every motion of the Holy Spirit, every law and wish of Christ should affect him instantly! I would be passively active—if you can comprehend such a contradiction—I would be passive, so as never to have will or wish of my own, and active, so as to have the will and wish of Christ impelling me always to keep His commands. When a man comes here, he begins to show real progress in knowing "the love of Christ which passes knowledge."

IV. There is a fourth and higher stage, by far, than these. There is a way, not known to many moderns, but much practiced by the ancients, of knowing the love of Christ by *contemplation*. Do you know that in the early ages of the Church, they spoke more of Christ and of His person, and thought more of Him than we do? When I have sometimes read the fathers, and some of the devotional books of believers who are not much known, I have frequently had to say, "Well, I do not see much here about justification by faith, but I see a great deal about the efficacy of the precious blood." I do not read, perhaps, about the pardon of sin, but I read about the blood-shedding, and about being washed therein. The early preachers preached not so much of the atonement—though they preached it—it was the five wounds, the bloody sweat, the cross, and the passion. We talk of the fruits and the effects; they seem to speak of the first great cause—the man, the Christ, the cross, the vinegar, the nails, the spear, the cry of, "It is finished," the *"Lama sabacthani,"* the burial, and the resurrection. And in those times, whether or not it was that men had not so much to do as they have now, I cannot tell, but they found time to have long seasons of contemplation, and they would sit alone and worship, and draw near to Christ, and steadily fix their gaze upon His person. To them, He was a real person, whom the eyes of their faith could see as clearly as the eyes of sense can see outward objects, and they looked, and looked, and looked again, till the love of Christ grew brighter to them than the sun at his meridian, and for very dimness of mortal sight, they veiled their faces and paused their speech—while their souls were bathed in inward joy and unspeakable peace!

There have been some such in these later times, but not many. There was Isaac Ambrose, author of that book, *Looking Unto Jesus*. He was pastor of a church at Preston, in Lancashire, and, "It was his usual custom once a year," says Dr. Calumy, "for the space of a month to retire into a little hut in the woods, and avoiding all human converse, to devote himself to contemplation." It was true, he then only had 11 months in the year to preach, but those 11 were a great deal better than the 12 would otherwise have been, for there, alone with his Master, he received such riches from Him, that when he came back, he threw about jewels with both his hands, and scattered glorious thoughts and words broadcast in his ministry! That book, *Looking Unto Jesus,* is a blessed memorial of his quiet hours, and his secret communion with Jesus. Then, there was Rutherford, the man who has expounded the whole of Solomon's Song without knowing it, in his celebrated letters. When he was in the dungeon at Aberdeen, he exclaimed, first of all, "I had only one eye, and they put that out." It was the preaching of the gospel, and before long he had got both his eyes back again. Hear him writing in his letters, "My foes thought to punish me by casting me into a prison but lo, they have blessed me by taking me into Christ's withdrawing room, where I sit with Him, and am with Him both night and day without disturbance." The expressions he sometimes uses are so rapturous that I would not quote them here. love letters are not to be read in the streets, and the words which souls inflamed with heavenly fire sometimes use towards Christ are not fit for public repetition; for there are passages of love, there are sweet embraces of affection which we must not speak of, for this were to commit a treason such as Paul might have done if he had told on earth those words which he had heard in heaven, and which it would not be lawful for a man to utter here!

Do you know anything about this, dear friends? Oh, I pray you do not think I dream! These things are realities. I pray you think not that I am enthusiastic or fanatical. There are many believers who could tell you that it is their daily delight to be much with Christ. Oh, perhaps some of you know what it is to have Christ with you in your shop; your hands are busy weighing your goods or measuring out your wares, but Christ is with you, and your hearts are content. Or, as I remember hearing an old saint say one Sunday, when he was preaching from that text, he pro-

nounced so strangely, "When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead." "Ah," he said, "you do not know where I live. You think I live at so-and-so, on such-and-such a street, but I do not, for I am dead, and my life is hid with Christ in God." Now, there are some saints who, though they are in the world, are dead to it. It has no attractions for them; it cannot get their hearts; their hearts are with Jesus; they are not here; and they have sent their souls onward to that place where their bodies are one day to go, to the throne where Jesus sits and reigns!

I remember hearing these expressions once used at a prayer meeting; they struck my mind, and they still abide in my memory. A brother had been praying, and had asked a very great benefit. "O Lord," he said, "give me Mary's place—

'Oh, that I might forever sit
With Mary at the Master's feet,
Be this my happy choice.'

Lord, I would sit at Your feet and hear what You have to say, and receive it as a willing scholar receives his master's words." I thought he would stop there, but he said, "No, Lord, I have not asked enough; I have not asked according to the royalty of Your nature. Lift me higher! Lift me higher! Not at Your feet would I sit, but I would lean upon Your breast. Oh, put me where John was, so I may lean my head upon Your bosom. Let me not merely learn the truth You teach, but may I feel Your heart beat, and know Your love to me—

'Oh, that I might with holy John
Forever lean my head upon
The bosom of my Lord.'"

Well now, I thought that second prayer was a noble one; but he had yet a third one to offer and he said, "No, Lord, no; that is not enough; I have not asked yet according to the tenor of Your promise. You have lifted me from Your feet to your breast, now lift me higher, to your lips." And then he quoted the words of the Song—"Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine." And he very beautifully paraphrased it like this—"Lord, let me give to You the tokens of my love, and receive from You the present tokens of Your love to me; and not only know it, and feel Your heart beat, but receive the token of it as my lips of prayer meet Your lips of blessing, and my lips of thanksgiving touch Your lips of benediction." Oh, there are heights and depths in this blessed

contemplative life which I must not tell you here, and I thank God that there are some men who, though they go very far wrong in doctrine, are very right on this point; and if they are right here, verily, they are right in the essential! When a man can come right up to Christ and throw his arms around Him; when he can say, "That blood is mine; that Christ is my joy; His love is my love; His presence is my heaven; His character is my great example; I trust in Him, and I love Him"—that man may say 50 things that are not right, but he has said the things that are essentially right, and his soul is safe.

"Well," says one, "I shall never get to know Christ's love by *contemplation*; I have no time." Ah, you had better have an hour's less sleep than lose this blessed contemplation of Christ! "Oh, but I have so much to do." Dear friends, we can sometimes do more in one half an hour, than we can do at other times in hours, according to the tenor of our minds. Now, I think that contemplating Christ winds up the soul, and puts it into a right frame, so that when we come back, we can do more for the Master than we ever did before! Perhaps you have seen them driving piles in the marshes. There is a large piece of timber that has to be driven deep into the ground, and you have seen those pile-driving machines. There is an immense weight, and they pull it up, and up and up, before they let it fall. Now, if they only pull it up a little way and then let it drop, well it comes down with some force, but not a great deal; but when they lift it as high as they can draw it up, and then let it come down at once, why what a drive it gives the pile! It is the going up that gives it such force in coming down. And I believe that those are the best sermons for driving the truth of God into the sinner's heart that come from ministers who have been wound up very high before they come down in the sermon; and I think your usefulness will be sure to be powerful and mighty, if in private you are wound up to the very summit of contemplative delight by thinking of the work, the sufferings, and the triumphs of Christ! Certainly the sweetness of it alone is reward, and then, the benefit which follows will be a sevenfold recompense for a most pleasant exercise.

V. Well now, we have taken you up some height, but we must prepare for a flight which is higher, still. To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge by contemplation is very high, but there is a higher stage than this. There are times when I almost fear to speak of these things, but

there are some here, surely, who will understand me, some here who have passed through the same state, and will not think that I am dreaming. There are times when the soul has long contemplated Christ, and there are some who know not only to contemplate, but *to enjoy*. Even on earth, faith sometimes gives place to a present and conscious enjoyment. There are times with the believer when, whether he is in the body, or out of the body, he can scarcely tell; God knows, and though not caught up to the third heaven, he is brought to the very gates, and if not permitted to see Christ on His throne, he does so see Him on His cross, that if an infidel should say to him, "There is no Christ," he could say, "I have seen Him; my eyes have looked upon Him, and my hands have touched Him after a spiritual sort." There are many such rapturous seasons as this on record in the biographies of good men. I shall quote but one or two, and I hope there are some here who have known them in their own experience. In the life of Mr. Flavel, who was one of the most temperate of the Puritans, and one not at all given to anything like fanaticism, there is an event mentioned which once occurred to him. He said that being once on a journey alone on horseback, the thought of the love of Christ came upon him with great power, and as he rode gently along the road, the thought seemed to increase in force and strength, till at last he forgot all about earth, and even where he was. Somehow or other his horse stood still but he did not notice it; and when he came to himself, through some passerby observing him, he found that he had bled very copiously during the time. Getting off his horse, he washed his face at the brook, and he said, "I did verily think as I stood there, that if I was not in heaven, I could hardly hope to be more blessed in heaven than I was then." He mounted his horse and rode on to a place of lodging where he was to pass the night. Supper was brought in, but left untasted on the table. He sat all night long without sleep, enjoying the presence of Christ, and he says, "I was more rested that night than with any sleep I ever had, and I heard and saw in my soul, by faith, such things as I had never known before."

The like occurred to Mr. Tennant, who was a man who spent many hours in private, and sometimes, when it was time to preach, he was quite unable to stand unless first carried into his pulpit, when he would put his hands out and lean there, and say such glorious things of Christ,

that those who looked upon him verily thought that they looked upon the face of an angel. Rutherford, too, is another specimen. When he preached about Christ, he preached so wonderfully, that on any other subject he was not at all like himself; and the Duke of Argyle was once so warmed when Rutherford got upon that subject, that he cried out in church—"Now, man, you are on the right strain! Keep to it." And he did keep to it, and the little man's thin voice seemed to swell with supernatural grandeur when he began to talk of his precious, precious Lord Jesus, and to extol, and exalt Him who was the Bridegroom of his soul, his brother, and his blessed companion! "Oh, these are flights of the imagination," you say. Yes, they may be, indeed, beloved, but if you could get them some times, you would come back to the world's cares and troubles like giants refreshed with new wine, caring nothing for anything that might happen! Christ would be so sweetly and blessedly within you, that you could bear the burden, and think nothing of it, and though the grasshopper was a burden before, you could now carry it right readily.

Well, I have taken you up to where not many go in these times, but I hope there are some who will yet ascend there till they shall even embrace Christ, and who will sit down at His table till they shall know Ralph Erskine's blessed sickness of love and, in the conscious enjoyment of a precious Savior, shall say in the words of the spouse, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick with love; His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me."

VI. But I want to take you higher than this. Not higher in some senses, but higher, really, for these raptures are, of course, only like angels' visits, few and far between; but here is something which may be more lasting and which, certainly, is a higher state of mind as to the knowledge of Christ. To know Christ *sympathetically*, is a yet higher stage than any to which we have attained before. What do I mean by this? I will show you, first of all, what I do *not* mean. We will suppose ourselves standing on the brow of the hill with Jerusalem in the valley below. Jerusalem is to be destroyed by the Romans; the decree has gone forth that its sin must be punished. Now, here is a brother who holds very high doctrines in his head, but who has not much sympathy in his heart. Come up here, brother! Do you see that city there? That is all to be destroyed! Do you see its streets? They are all to be crimsoned with

blood! Do you see its temple? Not one stone of it is to be left upon another! What do you think of it? "Well," he says, "if they are to be saved, they will be saved; if it is in the purpose, and the decree, it will be so. I am sure I am very sorry if they should not be, but I do not see that it is any particular business of mine; the Lord will have His own, and it will all be well." Get down, sir! What do you know about the love of Christ? Nothing! Give such a man as you that text, "He beheld the city and wept over it," and you would not know how to preach from it, for you do not know the Savior's heart, and have not known His love!

But bring here another man. He holds the same doctrinal truths of God, but he looks down on the city and what does he say?—

"Oh, gladly my pity would reclaim
And snatch the firebrands from the flame."

"Lord, what must I do? Give me anything to do for them! My heart's desire and prayer for them is that they may be saved," and the tears begin to flow, and when he turns to the book and reads that Jesus beheld the city, and wept over it, and said, "If you at least in this, your day, had known the things which belong unto your peace," he says, "Well, I do not know how to explain that to my doctrinal friend; I do not know how to make these feelings quite square and tally with the doctrine; but somehow or other I know there is no disagreement, for I feel the one is true, and I also feel the sympathy in my heart; I know that God will have His own, but I hope He will have them through my instrumentality; I believe that His chosen will be brought in, but, O that it may be my happy lot to bring in some of them to the praise and the glory of His grace!" "Why," some professors say, "I am not my brother's keeper." No, but if you are not, I tell you what you are—you are your brother's killer! You are one of the two! If you say you are not your brother's keeper, rest assured that you are a Cain, and that you will be your brother's murderer—for we either do good or hate. It is impossible for us to be devoid of influence. If the brook runs through the marshes, it makes them fertile; if you dam it up and make it stagnant, you have not destroyed its influence. Ah, no, you have only changed it into a fetid pool and its influence shall curse the valley with disease. So with a good man, if he serves his Master, he is scattering mercy abroad; but let him, if it were possible for him to do so, let him cease to serve the Lord, and become idle, and then he scatters plague and death. Oh, do we know the love of Christ by feeling it in our

own hearts? There are some of us who can say that we have felt that we could do anything for souls; when we have heard it said of the Master, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save," we have felt that we would not spare ourselves if God would only spare them! And when Paul said he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren, while commentators have been thinking that over, and cannot make it out, we have had sympathy with it and have been able to say, "We have felt the same." We have felt that we could even be lost to save others. and we have said, "Let my name perish; let me be forgotten if my congregation may only be saved; if my children may be blessed; if my hearers may be converted to God." Men in this state know Christ's love after a wonderful and marvelous sort. May God teach you each this way; may He help you to weep like Christ, to work like Christ—yes, and to be ready to die like Christ—if it were necessary by such means to bring sinners to their Savior and their Lord! O that we could get here! I know my dear brother, the pastor of this church, would desire nothing more for you than that you might know Christ's love by feeling it in your hearts. O that Christ would come and look out of these eyes, and weep down these cheeks! O that He would speak through these lips, till it should not be the old self, man, that thought, and spoke, and acted—but the new-born Spirit of the Lord Jesus that had come into us and possessed us with a higher and a nobler life, that we might spend and be spent for Him!

I think I shall have but one step further to take you, though there are some which are still higher. Before I do so, I must tell you one anecdote to guard you against a possible mistake. There is a tendency, in the contemplative knowledge of Christ's love, to self-indulgence. I know at the present moment a dear servant of Christ; I shall always regard him as such; he may be known to some of you, though I would not like to mention his name. He was once a notable minister in this city, and was exceedingly useful. He began the contemplative life. He lived very near to Christ, and his preaching was exceedingly sweet to his hearers; there were many converts; he had a large church, and it exceedingly prospered. But so sweet were his private enjoyments that he began to relax in his public duties. He did preach, but he seldom allowed himself to see his hearers, and at last arrived at such a pitch of retirement, that he could walk into his pulpit without even speaking to his deacons, and

then deliver himself. But the man's usefulness ceased. Though still a gracious soul, yet he has missed his way, and ceased to be one of the honored leaders of Christ's Church. Now, there is a tendency, a wrong tendency, mark you, of getting so high, and not wanting to get any higher. Even the contemplative life, itself, ought only to be considered as a steppingstone to something beyond, and when we get to the very highest point, we are still to say with Paul, as we sit down upon the mile-stone, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, press forward to those which are before." It is related of a certain monk, who, having been long in his cell alone, thought while in his devotions that he saw the Lord Jesus. Of course the tale is a fable, but I relate it for the sake of its moral. He thought he saw the Lord before him as crucified, and he heard His voice speaking sweet and comfortable words to him. Just at that moment, when his soul was in a very flood of delight, he heard the convent bell ring, and he remembered it was his turn to go out to the gate and give away bread to the beggars who stood there. Oh, he had never heard that bell ring so dolefully before! It seemed to him like the knell of all his joys. The impulse of duty, however, was stronger than that of delight, and he went his way with a heavy heart to distribute the bread. As he came back to his cell, he thought, "Ah, I shall never see that again; Christ is gone from me, and I shall never know these enjoyments again!" When, to his surprise, the vision was still there. As he bowed before it with delight, he heard a voice which said, "If you had stayed I would have gone; but since you did My work I tarried to give you your reward."

Now, there is a tendency, when we have been alone and in private, and have had sweet fellowship with Christ, for us to feel—"I do not want to go out from this; I do not want to be disturbed just now; I would rather not do anything just now." I do not suppose there are very many of you who get into this state, but there may be some who think at such times, "I do not want to preach today; I would rather not do anything; It is best that I should be alone." Ah, it is a strong temptation, and you must strive against it and say, "No, I have enjoyments in my religion, but I did not seek my religion for the enjoyment it would give me. I must look higher than that, to the God I serve, and to the Lord and Master whose I am and whom I serve. I love the jewels He gives me to wear upon my fin-

gers, but I love Him better and I am not to look upon these rings, and forget to look into His eyes; I love the sweet couch that He makes for me at night, but I am not to lie there and forget the fields that are to be plowed, and the battles that are to be fought. I must be up and doing. The contemplative life must lead me to duty, and then shall I know Christ even as I am known.

VII. And now, the last and highest step of all, upon which we can only say a few words, is that which is called by deep writers and experienced believers on this point, the *absorbing* love of Christ. How shall I tell you what this is? I cannot, except I quote Wesley's words—

"Oh, love divine, how sweet you are!
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up with you?"

"I thirst"—can you get as far as that? "I faint"—that is a high state, indeed! *"I die"*—that is the top—

"I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The fullness of redeeming love,
The love of Christ to me."

"I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me," said the apostle Paul, and that is where we must get, when the man ceases to feel himself the "I"—and only recognizes himself as part of Christ. It is our individuality that we really have to get rid of in this matter; it is our selfish separateness, I mean. We need to feel that we are a part of Christ, a member of His body, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone; we have to get to where we have no more desire to act, or think, or feel according to anything that is here—but to send our hearts up to the great heart of Christ in heaven—only tarrying here while our souls are walking the golden streets with Christ. I do not know if I might be bold enough to say, "Blessed is the man who shall be able to attain to the state when that which thinks is the head of Christ, and that which feels is the heart of Christ, when the great seat of all the sensations, spiritually, is in Christ, and not in himself and he himself is—

Plunged into the Godhead's sea
And lost in its immensity!"

The Brahmins believe that the highest perfection is to be absorbed into God, and there is a certain truth in it, though not as they mean it. When we are lost in God, we are highest, and when it is not we, but Christ, and we have come to be with Him, and His heart is ours, and His love and

soul, and wish are ours, then it is that we comprehend the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

Now, I have not said much tonight to the ungodly. But if I could make any of you feel your mouths a-watering after Christ by what I have said, I would be pleased, indeed. Oh, if you did but know the sweetness of the love of Christ, you would not be careless about it—

"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him, too."

Blind bat's eyes are those that cannot see beauty in Christ! Hard, stony hearts that cannot feel any love to Him! What do you say, sinner? Do you say, "O that I knew Christ's love! O that I knew His love to me!" sinner, He has sent me to you tonight to preach to you His gospel; and this is His gospel, though not the gospel which some preach, for I have heard some finish their sermons thus—"Go home and pray; go home and do your best to find Christ." All this is good enough advice, but it is not the gospel! The gospel is—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. To believe in Christ is to trust in Him. That is all it is—to trust in Him. "But I must repent," one says. Repentance is a change of mind, and is a blessed *fruit* of faith, and comes *with* faith. That repentance which comes *before* faith is not true repentance, for it is a repentance that needs to be repented of! Where there is no *faith,* it is impossible to please God. That repentance which has no faith in it must be displeasing to God, and needs to be repented of! The first business you have, sinner, is not to *feel* anything, but to put your trust in Christ. Your business is not to try to make yourselves fit to come to Christ, but to come to Him just as you are! You are to trust Christ, and to trust Him now. "Oh, but I am black with sin!" Come and be washed! "Oh, but I am a naked sinner." Come and be clothed! "But I am lost." Oh, sirs, the Master has come to seek and to save that which is lost; you are not to find yourselves first, and then think He will come and find you. He is come to seek you. Listen! While the trumpet sounds in the street without meaning, I would sound the gospel trumpet here. Come and welcome! Come just as you are! To come is to trust, and simply to fall flat at the foot of the cross, and say, "Jesus, I trust You to save me."

That done, you are saved, and your sin is gone! He took it and was punished for it. You are righteous in God's sight, for His righteousness is

yours, and you are saved. Christ, the Head, is your Representative. You are delivered. Christ has broken the neck of your foe, and you are emancipated the very moment when you believe. Some persons dislike instantaneous conversions. Let them read the Bible and see what sorts of conversion there are. There is Saul of Tarsus, there is the Philippian jailer; there are the 3,000 on the day of Pentecost—these are *all* instantaneous conversions! There is a man over there, near the door, who came in here, perhaps he did not know what for, or to listen to some strange, out-of-the-way matter. That man, if Christ shall meet with him tonight, and lead him in the way of His grace, may go out of this chapel as much saved as if it were seven years ago when he first believed on Jesus, for—

"The moment a sinner believes
And trusts in a crucified God,"

he is saved; it is all done! The work is finished, and there is no need that anything else should be done. The robe of righteousness has been completed; there is not a stitch to be added to it. Sinner, this is the glory of the gospel! Trust Jesus, and you are saved and saved forever, beyond the reach of destruction. May God meet with some soul here tonight, and especially may He now stir up you, His people, to grow in divine grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen and Amen!

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

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THE STONY HEART REMOVED
NO. 456

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 25, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh,
and I will give you a heart of flesh."
Ezekiel 36:26.

THE fall of man was utter and entire. Some things, when they have become dilapidated, may be repaired; but the old house of mankind is so thoroughly decayed that it must be pulled down even to its foundation, and a new house must be erected. To attempt mere improvement is to anticipate a certain failure. Manhood is like an old garment that is torn and rotten; he who would mend it with new cloth does but make the tear worse. Manhood is like one of the old skin bottles of the Orientals; he who would put the new wine into it shall find that the bottle will burst, and his wine will be lost. Old shoes might be good enough for Gibeonites; but we are so thoroughly outworn that we must be made new, or thrown upon the dunghill. It is a wonder of wonders that such a thing is possible! If a tree loses its branch, a new branch may spring out; if you cut into the bark and mark the letters of your name, in process of time the bark may heal its own wound, and the marks may be erased. But who could give a new heart to the tree? Who could put new sap into it? By what possibility could you change its inner structure? If the core were smitten with death, what power but the divine could ever restore it to life? If a young man has injured his bones, the fractured parts soon send forth a healing liquid and the bone is by-and-by restored to its former strength; but if a man's heart were rotten, how could that be cured? If the heart were a putrid ulcer, if the very vitals of the man were rotten, what human surgery, what marvelous medicine could touch a defect so radical as this? Well did our hymn say—

"Can anything beneath a power divine
The stubborn will subdue?
It is Yours, eternal Spirit, Yours,
To form the heart anew!
To chase the shades of death away
And bid the sinner live!
A beam of heaven, a vital ray,
It is Yours alone to give."

But, while such a thing would be impossible apart from God, it is certain that God can do it. Oh, how the Master delights to undertake impossibilities! To do what others can do were but like unto man, but to accomplish that which is impossible to the creature is a mighty and noble proof of the dignity of the Creator. He delights to undertake strange things; to bring light out of darkness; order out of confusion; to send life into the dead; to heal the leprosy; to work marvels of divine grace and mercy, and wisdom, and peace—these, I say, God *delights* to do! And so, while the thing is impossible to us, it is possible to Him. And more, its

impossibility to us commends it to Him, and makes Him the more willing to undertake it, that He may thus glorify His great name!

According to the Word of God, man's heart is by nature like a stone; but God, through His grace, removes the stony heart and gives a heart of flesh. It is this miracle of love, this miracle of grace, which is to engage our attention tonight. I trust we shall speak now, not of something that has happened to others only, but of a great wonder which has been worked in ourselves! I trust we shall talk experientially, and hear personally, and feel that we have an interest in these splendid deeds of divine love!

Two things we shall talk of tonight; first, *the stony heart and its dangers;* secondly, *the heart of flesh and its privileges*.

I. Some few words upon THE STONY HEART AND ITS DANGERS. Why is the heart of man compared to a stone at all?

1. First, because, like a stone it is *cold*. Few persons like to be always treading upon cold stones in their houses, and hence we floor our habitations; and it is thought to be a part of the hardship of the prisoner if he has nothing to sit down or rest upon but the cold, cold stone. You may heat a stone for a little season if you thrust it into the fire, but how soon it loses its heat! And though it glowed just now, how very soon it loses all its warmth, and returns again to its native coldness. Such is the heart of man; it is warm enough towards sin; it grows hot as coals of juniper towards its own lusts; but naturally the heart is as cold as ice towards the things of God. You may think you have heated it for a little season under a powerful exhortation, or in presence of a solemn judgment, but how soon it returns to its natural state! We have heard of one who, seeing a large congregation all weeping under a sermon, said, "What a wonderful thing to see so many weeping under the truth of God!" And another added, "But there is a greater wonder than that—to see how they leave off weeping as soon as the sermon is over, concerning those things which ought to make them weep always and constantly." Ah, dear friends, no warmth of eloquence can ever warm the stony heart of man into a glow of love to Jesus! No, no force of entreaty can get so much as a spark of gratitude out of the flinty heart of man! Though your hearts renewed by divine grace should be like a flaming furnace, yet you cannot warm your neighbor's heart with the divine heat; he will think you are a fool for being so enthusiastic; he will turn upon his heels and think you are a madman to be so concerned about matters that seem so trivial to him—the warmth that is in your heart, you cannot communicate to him, for he is not, while unconverted, capable of receiving it! The heart of man, like marble, is cold as stone.

2. Then, again, like a stone, it is *hard*. You get the hard stone, especially some sorts of stone which have been hewn from granite, and you may hammer as you will, but you shall make no impression. The heart of man is compared in Scripture to the nether millstone, and in another place it is even compared to the adamant stone; it is harder than the diamond; it cannot be cut; it cannot be broken; it cannot be moved. I have seen the great hammer of the law, which is ten times more ponderous than Nasmyth's great steam hammer, come down upon a man's heart, and it has never shown the slightest signs of shrinking! We have seen a hundred powerful shots sent against it, we have marked the great battery of the law, with its ten great pieces of ordnance, all fired against the

heart of man, but man's heart has been harder, even, than the sheathing of the iron-clad ships. And the great shots of the law have dropped harmlessly against a man's conscience—he did not, he would not feel. What razor-edged sentence can cut your hearts? What warning needle can prick your consciences? Alas, all means are unavailing! No arguments have power to move a soul so steeled, so thoroughly stony, hard and impenetrable. Some of you now present, have given more than enough evidence of the hardness of your hearts. Sickness has befallen you, death has come in at your windows, affliction has come up against you—but like Pharaoh, you have said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice? I will not bow my neck; neither will I do His will. I am my own master, and I will have my own pleasure and my own way. I will not yield to God." O rocks of iron, and hills of brass, you are softer than the proud heart of man!

3. Again, a stone is *dead*. You can find no feeling in it. Talk to it; it will shed no tears of pity, though you recount to it the saddest tales; no smiles will gladden it, though you should tell it the happiest story. It is dead; there is no consciousness in it; prick it and it will not bleed; stab it and it cannot die, for it is dead already. You cannot make it wince, or start, or show any signs of sensibility. Now, though man's heart is not like this as to natural things, yet *spiritually* this is just its condition. You cannot make it show one spiritual emotion! "You are dead in trespasses and sins," powerless, lifeless, without feeling, without emotion. Transient emotions towards good, men have, even as the surface of a slab is wet after a shower, but real vital emotions of good they cannot know, for the showers of heaven reach not the interior of the stone. Melanchthon may preach, but old Adam is too dead for him to quicken him! You may go down into the grave where the long sleep has fallen on humanity, and you may seek to revive it, but there is no power in human tongue to revive the dead. Man is like the deaf adder which will not be charmed, charm we ever so wisely. Tears are lost on him; threats are but as the whistling of the wind; the preaching of the law, and even of Christ crucified—all these are null and void, and fall hopelessly to the ground, as long as the man's heart continues what it is by nature—dead, and hard, and cold.

4. Those three adjectives might be sufficient to give a full description, for if we add two more, we shall but in some degree repeat ourselves. Man's heart is like a stone because *it is not easily to be softened*. Lay a stone in water as long as you will, and you shall not find it readily subdued. There are some sorts of stone that yield to the stress of weather, especially in the smoky atmosphere, and the sulphurous vapors of London; certain stones crumble to decay, but the stone of a man's heart no climate can affect, no weathers can subdue; it grows harder whether it is the soft sunshine of love or the harsh tempest of judgment that falls upon it. Mercy and love alike make it more solid, and knit its particles closer together; and surely, until the omnipotent, Himself, speaks the word, the heart of man grows harder, and harder, and harder, and refuses to be broken! There is an invention, I believe, for liquefying flints, and then afterwards, they may be poured out in a solution, which is supposed to have the virtue of resisting the action of the atmosphere when put upon certain limestones; but you never can liquefy, except by a divine power, the flinty heart of man! Granite may be ground, may be broken into piec-

es, but unless God gets the hammer in His hand, and even He must put both hands to it, the great granite heart of man will not yield in any way! Certain stones have veins, and certain crystalloid stones may be so dexterously struck, that they will frequently break even with a slight blow; but you can never find a vein in man's heart by which the attempt to conquer it will be assisted from within. You may smite right and left with death, with judgment, with mercy, with privileges, with tears, with entreaties, with threats, and it will not break; no, even the fires of hell do not melt man's heart, for the damned in hell grow more hard by their agonies, and they hate God and blaspheme Him all the more because of the suffering they endure. Only omnipotence, Himself, I say, can ever soften this hard heart of man!

5. So then, man's heart is cold, and dead, and hard, and cannot be softened; and then, again—and this is but an enlargement of a former thought—*it is utterly senseless,* incapable of receiving impressions. Remember, again, I am not speaking of the heart of man physically, I am not speaking of it even as I would if I were teaching mental science; we are only now regarding it from a spiritual point of view. Men do receive mental impressions under the preaching of the Word; they often get so uneasy that they cannot shake off their thoughts; but, alas, their goodness is as the early cloud, and as the morning dew, and it vanishes as a dream. But, spiritually, you can no more impress the heart of man than you might leave a bruise upon a stone. Wax receives an impression from a seal, but not the stern, unyielding stone; if you have hot running wax, you may make what mark you please upon it, but when you have the cold, cold stone, though you bear ever so hard upon the stamp, there is no impression, the surface shows no trace of your labor. So is man's heart by nature. I know some who say it is not so, they do not like to hear human nature slandered, as they say. Well, friend, if you have not this hard heart, why is it you are not saved? I remember an anecdote of Dr. Gill which hits the nail on the head. It is said that a man came to him in the vestry of his chapel, and said, "Dr. Gill, you have been preaching the doctrine of human inability, I don't believe you. I believe that man can repent and can believe, and is not without spiritual power." "Well," said the doctor, have you repented and believed?" "No," said the other. "Very well, then," he said, "You deserve double damnation." And so I say to the man who boasts that he has not such a hard heart as this—have you laid hold of Christ? Have you come to Him? If you have not, then out of your own heart you are condemned, for you deserve double destruction from the presence of God for having resisted the influences of God's Spirit, and rejected His divine grace! I need not say more about the hardness of the human heart, as that will come up incidentally by-and-by, when we are speaking of the heart of flesh.

But now, let us notice the danger to which this hard heart is exposed. A hard heart is exposed to the danger of *final impenitence*. If all these years the processes of nature have been at work within your heart, and have not softened it, have you not reason to conclude that it may be so even to the end? And then you will certainly perish! Many of you are no strangers to the means of divine grace. I speak to some of you who have been hearing the gospel preached ever since you were little ones; you attended Sunday school; you were likely in your boy hood to listen to old Mr. So-and-So, who often brought tears to your eyes, and of late you

have been here, and there have been times with this congregation, when the Word seemed enough to melt the very rocks, and make the hard hearts of steel flow down in repentance! But you are still the same as ever. What does reason tell you to expect? Surely, the natural inference from the logic of facts, is you will continue as you are now, means of divine grace will be useless to you, privileges will become accumulated judgments, and you will go on till time is over and eternity approaches, unblessed, unsaved, and you will go down to the doom of the lost souls! "Oh," says one, "I hope not." And I add, I hope not, too; but I am solemnly afraid of it, especially with some of you. Some of you are growing old under the gospel, and you are getting so used to my voice that you could almost go to sleep under it! As Rowland Hill says of the blacksmith's dog, that at first he used to be afraid of the sparks, but afterwards, he got so used to it, that he could lie and sleep under the anvil; there are some of you who can sleep under the anvil, with the sparks of God's wrath flying about your nostrils, asleep under the most solemn discourse! I do not mean with your eyes shut, for I might then point to you, but asleep in your hearts, your souls being given to slumber while your eyes may regard the preacher and your ears may be listening to his voice.

And further, there is another danger, hearts that are not softened *grow harder and harder;* what little sensibility they seem to have, at last departs. Perhaps there are some of you, who can remember what you were when you were boys. There is a picture in the Royal Academy at this hour which teaches a good moral—there is a mother putting her children to bed, the father happens to be in just when they are going to their slumbers; the little ones are kneeling down saying their prayers; there is only a curtain between them and the room where the father is, and he is sitting down; he is putting his hand to his head, and the tears are flowing very freely, for somehow he cannot stand it; he recollects when he, too, was taught to pray at his mother's knee, and though he has grown up forgetful of God and the things of God, he remembers the time when it was not so with him. Take care, my dear hearers that you do not grow worse and worse; for it will be so; we either grow ripe or rotten, one of the two, as years pass over us. Which is it with you?

Then further, a man who has a hard heart is *Satan's throne*. There is a stone they tell us, in Scotland, at Scone, where they were likely to crown their old kings; the stone on which they crowned the old king of hell is a hard heart; it is his choicest throne; he reigns in hell, but he counts hard hearts to be his choicest dominions.

And then again, the hard heart is *ready for anything*. When Satan sits upon it, and makes it his throne, there is no wonder that from the seat of the scorner flow all manner of evil! And besides that, the hard heart is *impervious to all instrumentality*. John Bunyan, in his history of the *"Holy War,"* represents old Diabolus, the devil, as providing for the people of Mansoul a coat of armor, of which the breastplate was a hard heart. Oh, that is a strong breastplate! Sometimes when we preach the gospel, we wonder that there is not more good done. I wonder that there is so much! When men sit in the House of God armed up to their very chins in a coat of mail, it is not much wonder that the arrows do not pierce their hearts. If a man has an umbrella, it is no marvel if he does not get wet; and so when the showers of divine grace are falling, there are many of you who put up the umbrella of a hard heart, and it is no marvel if the dew of

grace, and the rain of grace do not drop into your souls! Hard hearts are the devil's lifeguards. When he once gets a man in an armor of proof—that of a hard heart—"Now," he says, "you may go anywhere." So he sends them to hear the minister, and they make fun of him; he lets them read religious books, and they can find something to mock there; he will then turn them even to the Bible, and with their hard heart they may read the Bible pretty safely, for even the Word of God, the hard heart can turn to mischief, and find something to find fault with even in the person of Christ, and in the glorious attributes of God, Himself! I shall not stay longer upon this very painful subject; but if you feel that your hearts are hard, may your prayer go up to God, "Lord, melt my heart! None but a bath of divine blood can take the flint away; but do it, Lord, and You shall have the praise."

II. Secondly and briefly, A HEART OF FLESH AND ITS PRIVILEGES. "I will take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." In many—very many who are present tonight, my text has been fulfilled. Let us join in praying for others whose hearts are still stony, that God would work this miracle in them, and turn their hearts to flesh.

What is meant by a heart of flesh? It means a heart that can feel on account of sin—a heart that can bleed when the arrows of God stick fast in it; it means a heart that can yield when the gospel makes its attacks—a heart that can be impressed when the seal of God's Word comes upon it; it means a heart that is warm, for life is warm—a heart that can think, a heart that can aspire, a heart that can love. Putting it all together, a heart of flesh means, that new heart and right spirit which God gives to the regenerate. But in what way does this heart of flesh consist? In what way does its tenderness consist? Well, its tenderness consists in three things. There is a *tenderness of conscience*. Men who have lost their stony hearts are afraid of sin; even *before sin* they are afraid of it. The very shadow of evil across their path frightens them. The temptation is enough for them, they flee from it as from a serpent; they would not dally and toy with it, lest they should be betrayed. Their conscience is alarmed even at the approach of evil, and away they fly; and in sin, for even tender hearts do sin, they are uneasy. As well might a man seek to obtain quiet rest on a pillow stuffed with thorns, as the tender conscience get any peace while a man is sinning; and then, *after* sin—here comes the pinch—the heart of flesh bleeds as though it were wounded to its very core! It hates, and loathes, and detests itself, that ever it should have gone astray. Ah, stony heart, you can think of sin with pleasure, you can live in sin and not care about it; and after sin you can roll the sweet morsel under your tongue and say, "Who is my master? I care for none; my conscience does not accuse me." But not so the tender broken heart; before sin, and in sin, and after sin, it smarts and cries out to God! So also *in duty* as well as in sin, the new heart is tender. Hard hearts care nothing for God's commandments; hearts of flesh wish to be obedient to every statute! "Only let me know my Master's will and I will do it." The hearts of flesh, when they feel that a commandment has been omitted, or that the commandment has been broken, mourn and lament before God. Oh, there are some hearts of flesh that cannot forgive themselves if they have been lax in prayer, if they have not enjoyed Sunday, if they feel that they have not given their hearts to God's praise as they should! Those duties which hearts of stone trifle with and despise, hearts of flesh value and

esteem! If the heart of flesh could have its way, it would never sin, it would be as perfect as its Father who is in heaven, and it would keep God's commandments without flaw of omission or of commission. Have you, dear friends, such a heart of flesh as this?

I believe a heart of flesh, again, is tender, not only with regard to sin and duty, but with regard to *suffering*. A heart of stone can hear God blasphemed and laugh at it. But our blood runs cold to hear God dishonored when we have a heart of flesh! A heart of stone can bear to see its fellow creatures perish and despise their destruction; but the heart of flesh is very tender over others. "Gladly its pity would reclaim and snatch the firebrand from the flame." A heart of flesh would give its very life-blood if it might but snatch others from going down to the pit of hell, for its heart yearns and its soul moves toward its fellow sinners who are on the broad road to destruction. Have you, oh, have you such a heart of flesh as this?

Then to put it in another light, the heart of flesh is tender in three ways! *It is tender in conscience*. Hearts of stone make no bones, as we say, about great mischiefs; but hearts of flesh repent even at the very thought of sin. To have indulged a foul imagination, to have flattered a lustful thought, and to have allowed it to tarry, even for a minute, is quite enough to make a heart of flesh grieved and torn before God with pain. The heart of stone says, when it has done a great iniquity, "Oh, it is nothing, it is nothing! Who am I that I should be afraid of God's law?" But not so the heart of flesh! Great sins are little to the stony heart; little sins are great to the heart of flesh—if there *are* little sins. Conscience in the heart of stone is seared as with a hot iron; conscience in the heart of flesh is raw and very tender; like the sensitive plant, it coils up its leaves at the slightest touch—it cannot bear the presence of evil. It is like a delicate consumptive, who feels every wind, and is affected by every change of atmosphere. God give us such a blessedly tender conscience as that! Then again, the heart of flesh grows *tender of God's will*. My Lord Will-be-Will is a great blusterer, and it is difficult to bring him down to subject himself to God's will. When you have a man's conscience on God's side, you have only half the battle if you cannot get his will. The old maxim—

"Convince a man against his will
He's of the same opinion still,"

is true with regard to this as well as regard to anything else. Oh, there are some of you who know the right, but you *will* do the wrong. You know what is evil, but you will to pursue it. Now, when the heart of flesh is given, the will bends like a willow, quivers like an aspen leaf in every breath of heaven, and bows like a twig in every breeze of God's Spirit. The natural will is stern and stubborn, and you must dig it up by the roots; but the renewed will is gentle and pliable, feels the divine Influence, and sweetly yields to it. To complete the picture, in the tender heart there is a *tenderness of the affections*. The hard heart does not love God, but the renewed heart does. The hard heart is selfish, cold, and stolid. "Why should I weep for sin? Why should I love the Lord? Why should I give my heart to Christ?" The heart of flesh says—

"You know I love You, dearest Lord,
But oh, I long to soar
Far from this world of sin and woe,
And learn to love You more!"

O may God give us a tenderness of affection that we may love God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves!

Now, the privileges of this renewed heart are these. "It is here the Spirit dwells, it is here that Jesus rests." The soft heart is ready, now, to receive every spiritual blessing. It is fitted to yield every heavenly fruit to the honor and praise of God. Oh, if we had none but tender hearts to preach to, what blessed work our ministry would be! What happy success! What sowings on earth! What harvests in heaven! We may, indeed, pray that God may work this change if it were only that our ministry might be more often a savor of life unto life, and not of death unto death. A soft heart is the best defense against sin, while it is the best preparative for heaven. A tender heart is the best means of watchfulness against evil, while it is also the best means of preparing us for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall shortly descend from heaven.

Now, my voice fails me, and in your hearts I certainly shall not be heard for my much speaking. Great complaints have been brought against somebody's sermons for being too long, though I hardly think they could have been mine! So let us be brief and let us conclude—only we must press this inquiry home! Has God taken away the heart of stone, and has He given you a heart of flesh? Dear friend, you cannot change your own heart. Your outward works will not change it; you may rub, as long as you like, the outside of a bottle, but you could not turn ditch water into wine! You may polish the exterior of your lantern, but it will not give you light until the candle burns within. The gardener may prune a crab tree, but all the pruning in the world won't turn it into an apricot; so you may attend to all the moralities in the world, but these won't change your heart. Polish your shilling, but it will not change into gold. Nor will your heart alter its own nature. What, then, is to be done? Christ is the great heart-changer. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The Holy Spirit gives faith, and then through faith, the nature is renewed. What do you say, sinner? Do you believe that Christ is able to save you? Oh, trust Him, then, to save you—and if you do that—you are saved! Your nature is renewed, and the work of sanctification which shall begin tonight, shall go on until it shall come to its perfection, and you, borne on angel's wings to heaven, "glad the summons to obey," shall enter into felicity and holiness, and be redeemed with the saints in white, made spotless through the righteousness of Jesus Christ!

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

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

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RELIGION—REALITY!
NO. 457

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 22, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life."
Deuteronomy 32:47.

IT appears from this closing remark of Moses that there were men in his time who thought religion to be vain, although, under the system which then existed, there were many plain proofs of its usefulness—for they who served God in those days prospered, and national advantages always followed national obedience to God. Under the theocratic government of the Israelites in the wilderness, and in their early history when established in Canaan, their offenses against God's law brought upon them famine, plague, or the scourge of marauding hosts—while repentance, and a return to allegiance always brought them a deliverer, and a restoration of peace and plenty. They had visibly before their eyes proofs that God did reward virtue! And yet, notwithstanding this, there were some so besotted against God, that they said, "It is a vain thing to serve the Lord." Do you wonder, therefore, that there should be many such under the gospel, today? It would, indeed, be marvelous if there were not many more, for the gospel is a far more spiritual system than the Jewish dispensation, and its blessings are not of a carnal order. No blessing apparent to carnal eyes rests upon the godly, but sometimes the case appears to be reversed—we see the wicked prosper, and the righteous are trod under foot! The Christian dispensation is one which requires much faith to receive it. We walk not by sight, but by faith alone; and it is little marvel that when ungodly men see the righteous afflicted, and discover that their comfort lies in matters which only faith can apprehend, they should cry out, "It is a vain thing," and should turn aside from the ordinances of God! Besides, to confess the truth of God, there have been so many counterfeits of true religion that it is not remarkable that unconverted men should consider even the genuine article to be but a vain thing. Men have made pretenses of wondrous sanctity, while inwardly full of rottenness; and sinners have learned to argue with terrible logic—"They are none of them good; they are all deceivers; the best of them are hypocrites, and religion, itself, is a vain thing." However false may be the conclusion here—and we believe it to be utterly so—yet, we do not wonder that men, desiring to believe religion to be a lie, have found some support for their unbelief in the hypocrisy of professors!

Now, we will grant you this morning that much of the religion which is abroad in the world is a vain thing. The religion of *ceremonies* is vain. If a man shall trust in the gorgeous pomp of uncommanded mysteries, if he shall consider that there resides some mystic efficacy in a priest, and

that by uttering certain words a blessing is infallibly received, we tell him that his religion is a vain thing! You might as well go to the Witch of Endor for divine grace as to a priest; and if you rely upon *words*, the *"Abracadabra"* of a magician will as certainly raise you to heaven, or rather sink you to hell, as the performances of the best ordained minister under heaven! Ceremonies in themselves are vain, futile, empty. There are but two of God's ordaining, they are most simple, and neither of them pretend to have any efficacy in themselves. They only set forth an inward and spiritual grace, not necessarily tied to them, but only given to those who by faith perceive their teachings. All ceremonial religion, no matter how sincere, if it consists in relying upon forms and observances, is a vain thing. So with *creed-religion*—by which I mean not to speak against creeds, for I love "the form of sound words," but that religion which lies in believing with the intellect, a set of dogmas, without partaking of the life of God; all this is a vain thing. Again, that religion *which only lies in making a profession of what one does not possess,* in wearing the Christian name, and observing the rituals of the church, but which does not so affect the character as to make a man holy, nor so touch the heart as to make a man God's true servant—such a religion is vain throughout. O my dear hearers, how much worthless religion may you see everywhere! So long as men get the name, they seem content without the substance. Everywhere, it matters not to what church you look, you see a vast host of hypocrites, numerous as flies about a dead carcass! On all sides, there are deceivers, and deceived; who write, "heaven" upon their brows, but have hell in their hearts; who hang out the sign of an angel over their doors, but have the devil for a host within. Take heed to yourselves; be not deceived, for He who tries the heart and searches the reins of the children of men is not mocked, and He will surely discern between him who fears God, and him who fears Him not!

But with all these allowances, we still this morning assert most positively that the religion of Christ Jesus which has been revealed to us of the Holy Spirit by the apostles and prophets, and especially by the Messiah Himself, when truly received into the heart, is no vain thing. We shall handle the text four ways, taking the word "vain" in different shades of meaning. *It is no fiction; it is no trifle; it is no folly; it is no speculation.* In each case we will prove our assertion by the second sentence—"Because it is your life."

I. First, then, the true religion of Christ, which consists in a vital faith in His person, His blood, His righteousness, and which produces obedience to His commands, and a love to God, IS NOT A FICTION.

I am not going to argue this morning. I was never sent to argue, but to teach and speak dogmatically. I assert, in the name of all those who have tried it, that true religion is not a fiction *to us.* It is to us the grandest of all realities, and we hope that our testimony and witness, if we are honest men, may prevail with others who may be skeptical upon this point. We say, then, that *the objectives* of true religion are, to those who believe in Jesus, no fiction! *God the Father* to whom we look with the spirit of adoption is no fiction to us. I know that to some men the divine being is

a mere abstraction. As to communing with Him, as to speaking to Him, they think such wonders may have occurred to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, but to them such things are impossible. Now, we do solemnly assure you, as men who would not lie in this matter, that God the Father is to us as real a person as the man from whose loins we sprang, and that we have as surely talked to Him, and He has as truly spoken to our hearts as ever we have spoken with a friend, and have been answered by him. We tell you that to us the being of God is a fact which influences our whole life, checks us when we would sin, forbids our weaker passions to rebel, and nerves our nobler powers to do or suffer. Our consciousness, our experience, our emotions, and our whole being tell us that there is a God! We have had personal dealings with Him; He has been with us in our chamber; we have seen His face in the sanctuary; we have cast our cares upon Him; and therefore, to us, the Eternal and indwelling Father is no fiction. So is it with *Christ Jesu*s. To mere professors, Christ Jesus is never anything but a myth. They believe there was such a man, but He is only a historical person to them. To true believers in Christ, however, He is a real person, now existing, and now dwelling in the hearts of His people. And oh, I bear my witness that, if there is anything which has ever been certified to my consciousness, it is the existence of Jesus, the man, and the Son of God!

Oh friends, have we not, when our soul has been in rapture, thrust our finger into the prints of the nails? Have we not been so drawn away from the outward world, that in spiritual communing we could say He was to us as our brother who sucked the breasts of our mother, and when we found Him without, we did embrace Him, and we would not let Him go? His left hand has been under our head, and His right hand has embraced us. I know this will sound like a legend even to men who profess to be Christ's followers, but I question the reality of your piety if Christ is not one for whom you live, and in whom you dwell; with whom you walk, and in whom you hope soon to sleep that you may wake up in His likeness. A real Christ and a real God—no man has real religion till he knows these. So again *the Holy Spirit*, who is with the Father and the Son, the one God of Israel; the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, indivisibly one and yet everlastingly Three—the Holy Spirit is also real, for—

"He, in our hearts of sin and woe
Makes living streams of divine grace arise,
Which into boundless glory flow."

Tell us there is no Spirit? Why, about this we can speak positively! A fool may say that there is no magnetic influence, and that no electric streams can flow along the wires—but they who have once been touched by that mysterious power know it; and the Holy Spirit's influence on men is quite as much within the sphere of our recognition, if we have ever felt it, as is the influence of galvanism or magnetism. Those who have once felt the spiritual life know when it is flowing in, when in strength it is withdrawn, and when it returns anew. They know that at times they can do all things; their heaviest trial is a joy, and their weightiest burden a delight; and at other times they can do nothing, being bowed down to the very

dust with weakness. They know that at times they enjoy peace with God through Jesus Christ, and that at other times they are disturbed in spirit. They have discovered, too, that these changes do not depend upon the weather, nor upon circumstances, nor upon any relation of one thought to another, but upon certain secret, mystic, and divine Impulses which come forth from the Spirit of God, which make a man more than man, for he is filled with Deity from head to foot, and whose withdrawal makes him feel less than man, for he is filled with sin and drenched with iniquity, till he loathes his own being. Tell us there is no Holy Spirit? We have seen His goings in the sanctuary, but as we shall have to mention these by-and-by, we pass on, and only now affirm that the Father, Son, and Spirit are to true Christians no fiction, no dream, no fancy, but as real and as true as persons whom we can see, things which we can handle, or food which we can taste.

But further, we can also say that *the experience* which true religion brings is no fiction. Believe me, sirs, it is no fiction *to repent;* for there is a bitterness in it which makes it all too real. Oh, the agony of sin lying on an awakened conscience! If you have ever felt it, it will seem to you as the ravings of a madman when any shall tell you that religion is not real! When the great hammer of the law broke our hearts in pieces, it was a stern reality. These eyes have sometimes, before I knew the Savior, been ready to start from my head with horror, and my soul has often been bowed down with a grief far too terrible ever to be told to my fellow man, when I have felt that I was guilty before God, that my Maker was angry with me, that He must punish me, and that I deserved, and must suffer His eternal Wrath. I assure you, there was no fiction there! And when the Spirit of God comes into the heart, and takes all our grief away, and gives us *joy and peace in believing in Christ,* there is no fiction then, either! Of course, to other men, this is no evidence, except they will believe our honesty; but to us it is the very best of evidence. We were bid to believe on Christ; it was all we were to do—to look to His cross, to believe Him to be the propitiation for sin, and to trust in Him to save us; we did so, and oh, the joy of that moment! In one instant we leaped from the depths of hell to the very heights of heaven in experience; dragged up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, our feet were set upon a rock, and we could sing for very joy. Oh, the mirth! Oh, the bliss! Oh, the ecstasy of the soul that can say—

"Happy, happy, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away,
Happy, happy, happy day!"

That was no fiction, surely. If it is so, I will continue to cry, "Blessed fiction! Blessed dream! May I contrive to believe You! May I always be so deluded if this is to be deluded and misled!"

Since then, look at the believer's experience. He has had as many troubles as other men have, but oh, what comforts he has had! He lost his wife, and as he stood there and thought his heart would break, he could still say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." child after child sickened before his loving gaze, and as they went one after the other to the tomb, where he often wished

he could have slept instead of them—while he mourned and wept as Jesus did, yet still he could say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." When the house was burned—when the property vanished—when trade ran ill—when character was slandered—when the soul was desponding and all but despairing, yet, there came in that one ray of light, "Christ is all, and all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." I can tell you that Christians have often had their brightest days when other people thought they were in their darkest nights; and they have often had the best of dainties when there was a famine abroad. Is this a fiction? O sirs, we challenge you to find so blessed a fiction as this elsewhere! I saw last Friday a sight, enough to make one weep, indeed—there in the back room of the house lay a fine youth, a member of this church, sickening and near to death of consumption, and he talked to me joyously of his prospect of entering into the rest which remains for the people of God! There in the front room, on the same floor, lay his sister, I suppose but some two years younger, withering under the same disease; and there sat the tender mother with her two children, thinking to lose them both within a few days, and though she said, it was natural to weep, yet she could say even under this sharp trial, "The Lord's name be magnified in it all!" I say, there was no fiction there! If you who think there is a fiction that such things could live among Christians—if you could see the poor cheerfully suffering—if you could mark the sick and how joyously they bear their pains—if you could see the dying and hear their shouts of triumph, you would say, "There *is* a reality here; there *is* something in true religion; let *me* die the death of the righteous; let my last end be like his!"

But further; as we are sure there is a reality in the objectives, and in the experience of true godliness, so are we quite clear that there is a reality in its *privileges*. One of the privileges of the Christian is *prayer*. It is the believer's privilege to go to God, and ask for what he needs, and have it. Now, sirs, I am absolutely certain that prayer is a reality. I shall not tell here my own experience. one reads not his love-letters in the streets; one tells not his own personal dealings with God in public; but, if there is a fact that can be proved by 10,000 instances, and which, therefore, no reasonable man has any right to doubt—if there is anything that is true under heaven, it is true that God hears prayer when it comes not out of feigned lips, and is offered through Jesus Christ. I know when we tell the story; men smile and say, "Ah, these were singular coincidences!" Why, I have seen, in my life, answers to prayer so remarkable that if God had torn the curtain of the heavens and thrust out His arm to work deliverance, it could not have been more decidedly and distinctly a divine Interposition than when He listened to my feeble cry for help. I speak not of myself as though I were different from other men in this, for it is so with all who have real godliness. They know that God hears then; they prove it today; they intend to prove it at this very hour!

Communion with Christ is another reality. The shadow of His cross is too refreshing to be a dream, and the sunlight of His face is too bright to be a delusion. Precious Jesus! You are a storehouse of substantial de-

lights and solid joy. Then, the privileges of *Christian love towards one another* are real. I know they are not with some men. Why, look at some of your fashionable churches. If the poor people were to speak to the richer ones, what would the rich ones think of them? Why, snap their heads half off, and send them about their business! But where there is true Christianity, we feel that the only place in the world where there can ever be liberty, equality, and fraternity, is in the Church of Christ! To attempt this politically is but to attempt impossibility—but to foster it in the Church of God, where we are all allied to God—is but to nourish the very spirit of the gospel! I say there is a reality in Christian love, for I have seen it among my flock; and though some do not show it as they should, yet my heart rejoices that there is so much hearty brotherly love among you, and thus your religion is not a vain thing!

Once more upon this point, for I am spending all my time here, while I need it for other points. The religion of Christ is evidently not a vain thing *if you look at its effects*. We will not take you abroad now to tell you of the effects of the gospel of Christ in the South Sea. We need not remind you of what it has done for the heathen, but let me tell you what it has done for men *here!* Ah, brothers and sisters, you will not mind my telling some of the secrets—secrets that bring the tears to my eyes as I reflect upon them—when I speak of the thief, the harlot, the drunkard, the Sabbath-breaker, the swearer, I may say, "Such were some of you, but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you rejoice in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." How many a man has been going by the door there, and has said, "I'll go in and hear Old Spurgeon." He came in to make merriment of the preacher, and very little that troubles *him*. But the man has stood there until the Word has gone home to him, and he who was likely to beat his wife, and to make his home a hell, has before long been to see me, and has given me a grip of the hand and said, "God Almighty bless you, sir. There is something in true religion!" "Well, let us hear your story." We have heard it, and delightful it has been in hundreds of instances! "Very well, send for your wife, and let us hear what she says about you." The woman has come, and we have said, "Well, what do you think of your husband now, ma'am?" "Oh, sir, such a change I never saw in my life! He is so kind to us; he is like an angel now, and he seemed like a fiend before. Oh, that cursed drink, sir! Everything went to the pubs; and then if I went up to the house of God, he did nothing but abuse me. Oh, to think that now he comes with me on Sunday! And the shop is shut up, sir; and the children, who used to be running about without a bit of shoe or stocking, he takes them on his knees, and prays with them so sweetly. Oh, there is such a change!"

Surly people ask, "Will it last? Will it last?" Well, I have seen it last the eight years of my pastorate, in many cases, and I know it will last forever, for I am persuaded that it is God's work! We will put it to all the Social Science Societies; we will put it to all the different religions under heaven, whether they know the art of turning sinners into saints; whether they can make lions into lambs, and ravens into doves! Why, I know a man who was as stingy a soul as could be, once, and now he is as gener-

ous a man as walks God's earth! There is another, he was not immoral, but he was passionate, and now he is as quiet as a lamb. It is divine grace that has altered these characters, and yet you tell me that this is a fiction! I have not patience to answer you. A fiction? If religion does not prove itself to be true by these facts, then do not believe it; if it does not, when it comes into a neighborhood, turn it upside down, sweep the cobwebs out of its sky, clean the houses, take the men out of the pubs; if it does not make swearers pray, and hard-hearted men tender and compassionate, then it is not worth a button! But our religion does do all this, and therefore we boldly say it is not a vain thing!

Besides, to the man who really possesses it, *it is his life*. He is not a man and a Christian, but he is all a Christian. He is not as some are, men and Members of Parliament, who have many things to attend to and attend Parliament, also; but the man who is thoroughly a Christian is a Christian every bit of him. He lives Christianity; he eats it; he drinks it; he sleeps it; he walks it. Wherever you see him, he has his religion. His religion is not like a man's uniforms which he can take off and go in and undress; it is inside of him; it is woven right through and through him. When the shuttle of his religion was thrown, it went right through the core of his heart, and you must kill that man to get his religion out of him. Racks may tear his nerves and sinews, but they cannot tear away his hope, for it is essentially and vitally part and parcel of him. Ah, ladies and gentlemen, you who think religion is no more real than the life of a butterfly, it is *you* who are unreal in your fancies and your follies! Religion is the substance, and your life is only the shadow! Oh, you working men, who think that to be godly is but to indulge a dream, you know not what you say! All else is fiction but this; all else is but a moonbeam phantom, but this is sun-lit reality! God give you grace to get it, and then you will feel we have not spoken too strongly, but rather have spoken too little of that which is essentially and really true.

II. Secondly, "It is not a vain thing"—that is, IT IS NO TRIFLE.

If religion is false, it is the basest imposition under heaven; but if the religion of Christ is true, it is the most solemn truth of God that was ever known! It is not a thing that a man dares to trifle with if it is true, for it is at his soul's peril to make a jest of it. If it is not true, it is detestable, but if it is true, it deserves all a man's faculties to consider it, and all his powers to obey it. It is not a trifle! Briefly consider why it is not. *It deals with your soul.* If it dealt with your body, it is no trifle, for it is well to have the limbs of the body sound, but it has to do with *your soul.* As much as a man is better than the garments that he wears, so much is the soul better than the body. It is your *immortal* soul it deals with! Your soul has to live forever, and the religion of Christ deals with its destiny. Can you laugh at such words as heaven and hell, at glory and at damnation? If you can, if you think these trifles, then is the faith of Christ to be trifled with. Consider also with whom it connects you—*with God;* before whom angels bow themselves and veil their faces. Is HE to be trifled with? Trifle with your monarch, if you will, but not with the King of kings, the Lord of lords! Remember that *those who have ever known any-*

thing of it tell you it is no child's play. The *saints* will tell you it is no trifle to be converted. They will never forget the pangs of conviction, or the joys of faith. They tell you it is no trifle to have religion, for it carries them through all their conflicts, bears them up under all distresses, cheers them under every gloom, and sustains them in all labor. They find it no mockery. The Christian life to them is something so solemn that when they think of it, they fall down before God, and say, "Hold You me up and I shall be safe." And *sinners,* too, when they are in their senses, find it no trifle. When they come to die they find it no little thing to die without Christ. When conscience gets the grip of them, and shakes them, they find it no small thing to be without a hope of pardon—with guilt upon the conscience and no means of getting rid of it. And, sirs, *true ministers of God* feel it to be no trifle. I do, myself, feel it to be such an awful thing to preach God's gospel, that if it were not, "Woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel," I would resign my charge this moment! I would not for the proudest consideration under heaven knows the agony of mind I felt but this morning before I ventured upon this platform! Nothing but the hope of winning souls from death and hell, and a stern conviction that we have to deal with the grandest of all realities, would bring me here.

A pastor's office is no free ride. A man that has the destinies of a kingdom under his control may well feel his responsibility; but he who has the destiny of souls laid instrumentally at his door must travail in birth, and know a mother's pangs; he must strive with God, and know an agony and yet a joy which no other man can meddle with. It is no trifle to us, we assure you. Oh, make it no trifle to yourselves! I know I speak to some triflers this morning, and perhaps to some trifling professors; oh, professors, do not live so as to make worldlings think that your religion is a trifling thing! Be cheerful but, oh, be holy! Be happy, for that is your privilege, but oh, be heavenly-minded, for that is your duty. Let men see that you are not flirting with Christ, but that you are married to Him! Let them see that you are not dabbling in this as in a little speculation, but that it is the business of your life, the stern business of all your powers, to live to Christ, Christ also living in you!

III. But next and very briefly, for time flies; the religion of Christ is no vain thing—that is, IT IS NO FOLLY.

Thinking men and women! Yes, by the way, we have had thinking men and women who have been able to think in so indirect a manner that they have thought it consistent with their consciences to profess to hold the doctrines of the Church of England, and to be Romanists or infidels! God deliver us from ever being able to think in their way! I always dislike the presence of a man who carries a gun with him which will discharge shot in a circle. Surely he is a very ill companion, and if he should become your enemy, how are you to escape from him? Give me a straightforward, downright man, who says what he means, and means what he says, and I would sooner have the most gross reprobate who will speak plainly what he means, than I would have the most dandy of gentlemen who would not hurt your feelings, but who will profess to believe as you do, while in his heart he rejects every sentiment, and abhors thought

which you entertain. I trust I do not speak to any persons here who can think as this. Still, you say, "Well, but the religion of Christ, why, you see, it is the poor who receive it." Bless God it is! "Well, but not many thinking people receive it." Now, that is not true, but at the same time, if they did not, we would not particularly mind, because all thinking people do not think aright and very many of them think very wrongly, indeed. But such a man as Newton could think, and yet receive the gospel; and masterminds, whom it is not mine just now to mention, have bowed down before the sublimity of the simple revelation of Christ, and they have felt it to be their honor to lay their wealth of intellect at the feet of Christ. But, sirs, where is the folly of true religion? Is it a folly to be providing for the world to come? "Oh, no!" Is it a folly to make the Author of your being its first end? "No, no!" Is it altogether a folly to believe that there is such a thing as justice? I think not. And that if there is such a thing as justice, does it involve punishment? There is no great folly there. Well, then, is it any folly to perceive that there is no way of escaping from the effects of our offenses except justice is satisfied? Is that folly? And if it is fact that Christ has satisfied justice for all who trust in Him, is it folly to trust Him? If it is a folly to escape from the flames of hell, then let us be fools! If it is folly to lay hold of Him who gives us eternal life—oh, blessed folly! Let us be more foolish, still! Let us take deep dives into the depths of this foolishness! God forbid that we should do anything else but glory in being such fools as this for Christ's sake! What, sirs, is your wisdom? Your wisdom dwells in denying what your eyes can see—a God; in denying what your consciences tell you—that you are guilty; in denying what should be your best hope, what your spirit really craves—redemption in Christ Jesus! Your folly lies in following a perverted nature instead of obeying the dictates of one who points you to the right path. You are wise and you drink poison; we are fools and we take the antidote. You are wise and you hunt the shadow; we are fools and we grasp the substance. You are wise, and you labor and put your money into a bag which is full of holes, and spend it for that which is not bread and which never gives you satisfaction; and we are fools enough to be satisfied, to be happy, to be perfectly content with heaven and God—

"I would not change my blessed estate
For all the world calls good or great!
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

Blessed folly! Oh, blessed folly! But it is not a foolish thing; for *it is your life*. Ah, sirs, if you would have philosophy, it is in Christ. If you would accomplish the proudest feats of human intellect, it is to attain to the knowledge of Christ crucified. Here, the man whose mind makes him elephantine may find depths in which he may swim. Here, the most profound learning shall find itself exhausted. Here, the most brilliant imagination shall find its highest flights exceeded. Here, the critic shall have enough to criticize throughout eternity. Here, the reviewer may review and review again, and never cease. Here, the man who understands history may crown his knowledge by the history of God in the world; here, men who would know the secret, the greatest secret which heaven, and

earth, and hell can tell, may find it out, for the secret of the Lord is with them who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant. All the learning of man is doubtless folly to the angels, but the foolishness of God in the gospel is wisdom to cherubim and seraphim, and by the Church shall be made known to them in ages to come the manifold wisdom of God!

IV. And now for the last point, hurriedly again—"It is not a vain thing"—that is, IT IS NO SPECULATION.

People sometimes ask us what we think about the heathen, whether they will be saved or not. Well, sirs, there is room for difference of opinion there; but I would like to know what you think about *yourselves*—will you be saved or not? For after all, that is a question of a great deal more importance to you! Now, the religion of Christ is not a thing that puts a man into a salvable state, but it saves him. It is not a religion which offers him something which *perhaps* may save him; no, it saves him out and out, on the spot. It is not a thing which says to a man, "Now, I have set you a-going, you must keep on yourself." No, it goes the whole way through, and saves him from beginning to end. He who says, "Alpha," never stops till He can say, "Omega," over every soul. I say the religion of Christ—I know there are certain shadows of it which do not carry such a reality as this with them, but I say that the religion of the Bible, the religion of Jesus Christ, is an absolute certainty. "Whoever believes on Him has eternal life, and he shall never perish, neither shall he come into condemnation." "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Well," says one, "I would like to know what this very sure religion is." Well, it is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Trust Christ with all that you have, and you shall be saved. "Well," says one, "but when?" Why, now, here, this morning, on the spot—you shall be saved NOW. It is not a vain thing; it is not a speculation, for it is true to you *now*. The Word is near you; on your lips, and in your heart. If you will, with your heart, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved, and saved now. "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This is a great and glorious truth of God, and it is true today—"Whoever believes in Him *has* everlasting life." "But is it true for me?" asks one. My text says, "It is not a vain thing for *you."* "Oh, it will suit other people. It will not do for me." It will suit you, sir—"It is not a vain thing *for you,* because it is your life." If you have come up from the country, it is no vain thing for you, my dear friends. If you reside in town, amidst its noise and occupations, it is not a vain thing for you, my dear hearers. It is not a vain thing for any. If you do but lay hold of it, and it lays hold of you—if you receive the reality and vitality of it into your soul, be you who you may, it will not be a vain thing to you. Not a "perhaps," or an "if," or a "but," or a "maybe," but a "shall," and a "will," a divine, an eternal, an everlasting and immutable certainty! Whoever believes in Christ—let the earth shake, let the mountains rock, let the sun grow old with age, and the moon quench her light—whoever believes in Christ shall be saved! Unless God can change His mind—and that is impossi-

ble;; unless God can break His word—and to say so is blasphemy; unless Christ's blood can lose its efficacy—and that can never be. Unless the Spirit can be anything but eternal and omnipotent—and to suppose so were ridiculous—he that believes on Christ, must at last, before the eternal throne, sing hallelujah to God and the Lamb

"Well," says one, "it is a vain thing, I'm sure, for *me*, for I'm only a poor working man. Religion, no doubt, is a very fine thing for gentlefolk but it doesn't do for a man as has to work hard, for he's something else to think on." Well, you are just the man that I should think it would do for. Why, it is little enough you have here, my dear friend, and that is the very reason why you should have eternal joys hereafter! If there is one man that religion can bless more than another—and I do not know that there is—it is the poor man in his humble cottage. Why, this will put sweets into your cup. This will make your little into enough, and sometimes into more than enough. You shall be rich while you are poor, and happy when others think you are miserable. "Well," says the rich man, "it is nothing to *me*. I do not see that it will suit me." Why, it is the very thing *for you,* sir. In fact, you are the man who *ought* to have it, because, see what you will have to lose when you die, unless you have religion to make up for it! What a loss it will be for you when you have to lose all your grandeur and substance! What a loss it will be for you to go from the table of Dives to the hell of Dives! Surely it is not a vain thing *for you*. "Well," says another, "but I am a moral and upright person. Indeed, I do not think anybody can pull my character to pieces." I hope nobody wants to. But this is not a vain thing for you because; let me tell you, that fine righteousness of yours is only fine in your own esteem! If you could only see it as God sees it, you would see it to be as full of holes as ever beggars' rags were when, at last, they were consigned to the dust heap. I say your fine righteousness, my lady, and yours, Sir Squire from the country, no matter though you have given to the poor and fed the hungry, and done a thousand good things—if you are relying on *them,* you are relying on rotten rags, in which God can no more accept you than He can accept the thief in his dishonesty. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we are all as an unclean thing." It is not a vain thing for you, then. "Oh but I am a young man just in my teens and growing up to manhood. I think I ought to have a little pleasure." So I think, friend, and if you want a great deal of it, be a Christian. "Oh, but I was thinking people should enjoy themselves." So do I. I never was an advocate for making sheep without their first being lambs, and I would let the lambs skip as much as they like. But if you want to lead a happy and a joyous life, give your young days to Jesus. Who says that a Christian is miserable? Sir, you lie! I tell you to your face that you know not what Christianity is, or else you would know that Christians are the most joyous people under heaven. Young man, I would like you to have a glorious youth. I would like you to have all the sparkle and the brilliance which your young life can give you. What have you better than to live and to enjoy yourself? But how are you to do it? Give your Creator your heart, and the thing is done! It is not a vain thing for you. "Ah," says the old man, "but it is a

vain thing for *me;* my time is over. If I had begun when I was a lad it might have done—but I am settled in my habits now. I feel sure, sir, it is too late for me. When I hear my grandchildren say their prayers as they are going to bed, pretty dears, when they are singing their evening hymn, I wish I was a child again; but my heart has gotten hard, and I cannot say, 'Our Father,' now. And when I do get to, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,' I get stuck there. I do not know how to get over that, for I have not forgiven old Jones yet who robbed me in that lawsuit. And then, you know, I am infirm and have rheumatism and a hundred other pains; I do not think religion will suit me." Well, it is just the very thing that will suit you, because it will make you young again. What? "Can a man be born-again when he is old?" That is what Nicodemus asked. Yes, a man can be born-again, so that the babe shall die a hundred years old. Oh, to make the autumn of your life and the coming winter of your last days into a new spring and a blessed summer—this is to be done by laying hold of Christ NOW! And then you shall feel in your old veins the young blood of the new spiritual life, and you will say, "I count the years I lived before *a death;* but *now* I begin to live!"

I do not know whether I have picked out every character. I am afraid I have not. But this thing I know, though you may be under there, or up in the corner yonder where my eyes cannot reach you, yet you may hear this voice and I hope you may hear it when you are gone from this house back to your country towns and to your houses—

"It is religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live!
It is religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die.
After death its joys will be
Lasting as eternity!
Be the living God my friend,
Then my bliss shall never end."

And this is the gospel which is preached unto you. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ"—that is, trust Him—"and you shall be saved." May God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE FRIEND OF SINNERS
NO. 458

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 29, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."
Isaiah 53:12.

A VAGUE notion is abroad in the world that the benefit of Christ's passion is intended only for good people. The preaching of some ministers, and the talk of some professors, would lead the uninstructed to imagine that Christ came into the world to save the righteous, to call the godly to repentance, and to heal those who never were sick. There is in most sinners' consciences, when they are awakened, a frightful fear that Christ could not have come to bless such as they are, but that He must have intended the merit of His blood, and the efficacy of His passion for those who possess good works or feelings to recommend them to Him. Dear friends, you will clearly see, if you will but open one eye, how inconsistent such a supposition is with the whole teaching of Scripture! Consider the *plan* itself. It was a plan of salvation and of necessity; it was intended to bless *sinners*. Why salvation if men are not lost? The plan was based in divine grace but how *"grace"* unless it was meant for persons who deserve nothing? If you have to deal with creatures that have not sinned, and have been obedient, what need of is there grace? Build then, on *justice;* let merit have its way. But as the whole covenant is a covenant of grace, and as in the whole matter it was ordained that grace should reign through righteousness unto eternal life, it is plain enough from the very plan itself that it must have to do with sinners, and not with the righteous! Moreover, think of the *work* itself. The work of Christ was to bring in a perfect righteousness. For whom, do you think? For those who had a righteousness? That would be a superfluity! Why should He weave a garment for those who were already clothed in scarlet and fine linen? He had, moreover, to shed His blood. For whom? Why the agony in the garden? Why the cry upon the cross? For the perfect? Surely not, beloved! What need had they of an atonement? Verily, brothers and sisters, the fact that Jesus Christ bled for sin upon the cross bears, on its very surface, evidence that He came into the world to save *sinners!*

And then, look at *God's end* in the whole work. It was to glorify Himself, but how could God be glorified by washing spotless souls, and by bringing to everlasting glory, by divine grace, those who could have entered heaven by merit? Inasmuch as the plan and design both aim at laying the greatness of human nature in the dust, and exalting God, and making His love and His mercy to be magnified, it is implied as a matter of necessity that it came to deal with undeserving, ill-deserving sinners—or else that end and aim never could be accomplished! Salvation needs a

sinner as the raw material upon which to exercise its workmanship; the precious blood that cleanses needs a filthy sinner upon whom to show its power to purge; the atonement of Christ needs guilt upon which to exercise itself in the taking of the guilt away! And it is absurd, it is ridiculous, it is unworthy of God, to suppose a scheme of salvation, a work so tremendous as the atonement of Christ, and an aim so splendid as the glorification of God, unless there are sinners to be the instruments of God's glory through being the partakers of God's grace! A moment's thought will be enough to convince us that the whole plan is made for sinners, and that "Jesus Christ died for the ungodly." Indeed dear friends, it is only when we get this view very clearly before us that we see Jesus in His glory. When does the shepherd appear most lovely? It is a fair picture to portray him in the midst of his flock, feeding them in the green pastures, and leading them beside the still waters. But if my heart is to leap for joy, give me the shepherd pursuing his stray sheep over the mountains! Let me see him bringing home that sheep upon his shoulders, rejoicing! Let me hear his song of mirth when he calls upon his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him because he has found the sheep which was lost! And when does our God look most like a loving and tender Father? Truly He looks blessed when He divides His inheritance among His sons, but I never saw Him so resplendent in His Fatherhood as when He runs out to meet the prodigal, throws His arms about his neck, and kisses him, crying—"My son who was dead is alive again." Indeed, for some offices of Christ, it is absolutely necessary that there should be a sinner for us to see any meaning in them at all. He is a Priest. What need of a priest except for the sins of the people? Why, I dare to say it, Christ's priesthood is a mockery, and Christ's sacrifice is ridiculous, unless there is sin in the world, and sinners whom Jesus came to save! Brothers and sisters, how is He a Savior except to the lost? How is He a physician but to the sick? How is He like the brazen serpent if He does not save the sin-bitten, or how the scapegoat if He does not bear the sin of transgressors?

Our text, in its threefold character, shows the intimate connection which exists between Jesus and sinners, for in none of its sentences is there meaning unless there is a sinner, and unless Christ has come into connection with him. It is this one point which I want to work out this morning, and may God bless it to many a sinner's troubled conscience. "He was numbered with the transgressors; He bore the sin of many, and He made intercession for the transgressors." It is for transgressors all the way through. Bring in a company of righteous people, who think they have no sin, and they cannot appreciate the text. In fact, it can have no meaning to them!

I. We shall begin then, by taking the first sentence. To the sinner, troubled and alarmed on account of guilt, there will be much comfort in the thought that CHRIST IS ENROLLED AMONG SINNERS. "He was numbered with the transgressors."

In what sense are we to understand this? "He was numbered with the transgressors."

He was numbered with them, first, *in the census of the Roman Empire*. There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that the entire world

should be taxed, and the espoused wife of Joseph, being great with child, must travel to Bethlehem that Christ may be born there, and that He may be numbered with the transgressing people who, for their sins, were subject to the Roman yoke.

Years rolled on, and that child who had been early numbered with transgressors and had received the seal of transgression in the circumcision, which represents the putting away of the flesh—that child, having come to manhood, goes forth into the world, and is numbered with transgressors *in the scroll of fame*. Ask public rumor, "What is the character of Jesus of Nazareth?" And it cannot find a word in its vocabulary foul enough for Him. "This . . ." they sometimes said; and our translators have inserted the word "fellow," because in the original there is an ellipsis, the evangelists, I suppose, hardly liking to write the word which had been cast upon Christ Jesus! Fame, with her lying tongue, said He was a drunk, and a winebibber, because He would not yield to the asceticism of the age; He would not, since He came to be a man among men, do other than eat and drink as other men did; He came not to set an example of asceticism but of temperance; He came both eating and drinking, and they said at once, "Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber." They called Him mad; His warm enthusiasm, His stern and unflinching rebukes of wickedness in high places, brought upon Him the accusation that He had a devil. "You have a devil and are mad," they said. They called Him the Master of the house Beelzebub! Even the drunks made Him their song, and the vilest thought Him viler than themselves, for He was, by current rumor, numbered with the transgressors.

But to make the matter still more forcible, "He was numbered with transgressors in the *courts of law."* The ecclesiastical court of Judaism—the Sanhedrin—said of Him, "You blaspheme!" And they smote Him on the cheek. Written down among the offenders against the dignity of God, and against the security of the Jewish Church, you find the name of Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified. The civil courts also asserted the same. Pilate may wash his hands in water, and say, "I find no fault in Him," but still, driven by the infernal clamors of an angry people, he is compelled to write, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." And he gives Him up to die as a malefactor who has rebelled against the sovereign law of the land! Herod, too, the Jewish tetrarch, confirms the sentence, and so, with two pens at once, Jesus Christ is written down by the civil leaders among transgressors.

Then, *the whole Jewish people* numbered Him with transgressors. No, they reprobated Him as a more abominable transgressor than a thief and a murderer who had excited sedition! Barabbas is put in competition with Christ, and they say, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" See, brothers and sisters, His being numbered with transgressors is no fiction! Lo, He bears the transgressor's scourging! He is tied to the whipping post; His back is marred and scarred; the plowers make deep furrows, and the blood flows in streams. He is numbered with transgressors, for He bears the felon's cross; He comes into the street bowed down with the weight of His own gallows, which He must carry upon His raw and bleeding shoulders; He goes along to the place of doom; He comes to Calvary—the place

of a skull—and there, hoisted upon the cross, hanging in mid-air, as if earth rejected Him, and heaven refused Him shelter, He dies the ignominious death of the cross, and is thus numbered with transgressors! But, will there be none to enter a protest? Will no eyes pity? Will no man declare His innocence? None! They are all silent! Silent, did I say? It is worse! All earth holds up its hands for His death! It is carried unanimously; Jew and Gentile, bond and free, they are all there! They thrust out the tongue; they hoot; they laugh. They cry, "Let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him." His name is written in the calendar of crime by the whole universe, for He is despised and rejected of men—*of all men* is He accounted to be the off-scouring of all things, and is put to grief! But will not heaven interfere? O God, upon Your throne, will You let the innocent suffer? He is fast nailed to the tree, and cries in agony, "I thirst." Will You permit this man to be numbered with transgressors? Is it rightly done? It is; heaven confirms it; He has no sin of His own, but He has the sin of His people upon His shoulders. And God, the Eternal Judge, shows that He, too, considers Him to be in the roll of transgressors, for He veils His face! And the Eternal Father goes to His hiding place, and Christ can neither see a smile nor a glance of His Father's face; He shrieks in agony so unutterable, that the words cannot express the meaning of the Redeemer's soul, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" The only answer from heaven being, "I must forsake transgressors; You are numbered with them, and therefore, I must forsake You." But surely the doom will not be fulfilled? Certainly, He will be taken down before He dies? Death is the curse for *sin;* it cannot come on any but transgressors! It is impossible for the innocent to die, as impossible as for immortality to be annihilated! Surely, then, the Lord will deliver His Son at the last moment, and having tried Him in the furnace, He will bring Him out? No, not so! He must become obedient to *death,* even the death of the cross; He dies without a protest on the part of earth, or heaven, or hell. He who was numbered with the transgressors, having worn the transgressor's crown of thorns, lies in the transgressor's grave. "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." It is an amazing thing, brothers and sisters, an amazing thing! Who ever heard of an angel being numbered with devils? Who ever heard of Gabriel being numbered with fiends? But this is more amazing than that would be; here is the Son of God numbered, not with the sons of *men* (that were a gracious act) but numbered with *transgressors;* numbered not with the faithful who struggle after purity; numbered not with those who repel temptation and resist sin; numbered not with those who earn unto themselves a good degree and much boldness in the faith—that were a marvelous condescension—but here it is written, "He was numbered *with the transgressors."*

I must pause here a moment, and get you to think this matter over a little. It is a strange and an amazing thing, and ought not to be passed by in silence. Why, do you think, was Christ numbered with transgressors? First, surely, because *He could the better become their advocate*. I believe, in legal phraseology, in civil cases, the advocate considers himself to be

part and partner with the person for whom he pleads. You hear the counselor continually using the word "we." He is considered by the judge to represent the person for whom he is an advocate. In some suits of law, there is, on the part of the bar and the bench, a perfect identification of the counselor with the client, nor can they be looked upon in the eyes of the law as apart from one another. Now Christ, when the sinner is brought to the bar, appears there Himself. The trumpet sounds; the great judgment is set. Come, come, you sinners, come to the bar to be tried! There stands the man whose hands are pierced; He stands numbered with transgressors. Let the trial proceed. What is the accusation? He stands to answer it; He points to His side, His hands, His feet, and challenges justice to bring anything against the sinners whom He represents! He pleads His blood and pleads so triumphantly, being numbered with them, and having a part with them, that the Judge proclaims, "Let them go their way! Deliver them from going down into the pit of hell, for He at their head has found a ransom."

But, there is another reason why Christ was numbered with transgressors, namely, *that He might plead with them*. Suppose a number of prisoners confined in one of our old jails, and there is a person desirous to do them good. Imagine that he cannot be admitted unless his name is put down in the calendar. Well, out of his abundant love to these prisoners, he consents to it, and when he enters to talk with them, they perhaps think that he will come in with cold dignity. But he says, "Now, let me say to you first of all that I am one of yourselves." "Well," they say, "but have you done anything that is wrong?" "I will not answer that," says he, "but if you will just refer to the calendar, you will find my name there; I am written down there among you as a criminal." Oh, how they now open their hearts! They opened their eyes with wonder, first, but now they open their hearts, and they say, "Have you become like one of *us?* Then we will talk with you." And he begins to plead with them. Sinner, do you see this? Christ puts Himself as near on a level with you as He can; He cannot be sinful as you are, for He is God and perfect man, but He so puts His name down in the list, that when the roll is called, His name is called over with yours! Oh, how near does He come to you in your ruined state!

Then, He does this that *sinners may feel their hearts drawn to Him*. What? Do You become poor as I am that I may be made rich? Jesus, Son of God, do You allow Yourself to be numbered among lost ones that You might find *me?* Oh, then my soul shall open itself to give You a hearty reception! Come in, You loving Savior; abide with me, and go no more out forever. There is a tendency in awakened sinners to be afraid of Christ. But who will be afraid of a man that is numbered with us, and put on the same list with us? Surely, now we may come boldly to Him and confess our guilt; He who is numbered with us cannot condemn us; He whose name is down in the same indictment with ours, comes not to condemn, but to absolve; not to curse, but to bless!

He was put down in the transgressors' list *that we might be written in the red roll of the saints*. He was holy and written among the holy; we were guilty and numbered among the guilty; He transfers His name from

yonder list to this black indictment, and ours are taken from the indictment, foul and filthy, and written in the roll which is fair and glorious. There is a transfer made between Christ and His people! All that we have, goes to Christ, sin and all; and all that Christ has, comes to us—His righteousness, His blood, and everything that He has, belongs to us!

Dear hearers, before I leave this point, I want to put this to you. Is this yours by faith? Remember, faith is needed here. Nothing else! "He was numbered with transgressors." Oh, soul, can your heart say, "Then if He was numbered with me; if He put His name down where mine stands in that terrible roll, then I will believe in Him, that He is able and willing to save me, and I will trust my soul in His hands"? I bid you by the living God, do it, man, and your soul is saved! Oh, by Him who from the highest throne in heaven stooped to the cross of deepest ignominy, trust your soul with Him! It is all He asks of you, and this He gives you! Blessed Master, would that You could stand here and say, "Sinners, full of iniquity, I stood with You; God accounted Me as if I had committed your sin, and visited Me as if I had been a transgressor. Trust Me! Cast your souls upon My perfect righteousness! Wash in My cleansing blood, and I will make you whole, and present you faultless before My Father's face."

II. We are taught in the next sentence, that Christ "BORE THE SINS OF MANY."

Here it is as clear as noonday that Christ dealt with *sinners*. Do not say Christ died for those who have done no wrong. That is not the description given. It is clear, I say, to everyone who chooses to look, that Christ could not bear the sins of those who had no sins, but could only bear the sins of men who were sinful and guilty. Briefly, then, but very plainly, to recount the old, old story over again—man stood with a load of sin upon his shoulders, so heavy that it would have crushed him lower than the lowest hell! Christ Jesus came into the world, stood in the place of His people. And He did, in the expressive words of the text, bear their sins—that is to say, their sins were really, not in a legal fiction—but *really* transferred from them to Him! You see, a man cannot bear a thing which is not on his back. It is impossible that he can bear it unless it is actually there. The word "bear," implies *weight*, and weight is the sure indicator of *reality*. Christ did bear sin in its fullness, vileness, and condemnation, upon His own shoulders! Comprehend this, then, and you have the marrow of the subject. Christ did really, literally, and truly, take the sins that belonged to all who do believe on Him; and those sins did actually and in very deed become His sins—not that He had committed them, nor that He had any part or lot in them, except through the imputation to which He had consented—and for which He came into the world—and there lay the sins of all His people upon Christ's shoulders!

Then notice, that as He did bear them, so other texts tell us that *He did bear them away*. "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes *away* the sin of the world." Sin being on His head, the scapegoat took it away, away, away. Where? Into the wilderness of forgetfulness! If it is sought for, it shall not be found; the Everlasting God sees it no more. It has ceased to be, for He has finished iniquity and made an end of sin. And when there is an end of it, what more can be said? Christ took our debts, but He was

not long before He paid them all. Where, then, are the debts? There are no debts now. There is not one in God's book against His chosen, for Jesus died. If Christ has paid the debt, then there is no debt left. It is gone. I can rejoice in its discharge, I can mourn that ever I cast myself into such a position, but the debt itself is gone. "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." "I will cast their sins into the midst of the sea." And yet again, "I will put away your sin like a cloud and your iniquity like a thick cloud." Now, there were some clouds during the last week, but where are they now? They have turned to rain. They are gone—no strong-winged angel could find those clouds again. There are no such things. They are gone. And so with believers' sins; they were black, thick, thick clouds—full of storms—big with lightning and with thunder, but they are gone. The drops have fallen upon Christ. The thunder and the lightning have spent their fury upon Him—and the clouds are gone—for Christ has taken them away. "He bore the sins of many," and He bore them away forever!

And then, beloved, you must understand, that if it is so, if Christ did really bear His people's sins, and did bear them away—and since a thing cannot be in two places at one time—*there is now no sin abiding upon those for whom Jesus died*. "And who are they?" you ask. Why, all those who trust Him! Any man, the wide world over, who shall ever trust Christ, may know that no sin can be with him because his sin was laid on Christ. Oh, I do delight in this precious doctrine! If anything could unloose my poor stammering tongue, this might, to see sin literally transferred so that there is none left! I cannot express the delight and joy of my soul at this moment, in contemplation of the blessed deliverance and release which Christ has given! I can only sing out again with Kent—

"Sons of God, redeemed by blood,
Raise your songs to Zion's God—
Made from condemnation free,
Grace triumphant, sing with me."

Now, do you not see that this must be for sinners? See, you filthy ones, you lost ones, you ruined ones, this is for sinners! You see it does not say it was for *sensible* sinners. No. No, but *sinners!* It does not say, "He was numbered with *awakened* transgressors." No, it is "transgressors." It does not say that He bore the sins of tender-hearted sinners. No, but, "He bore the sin of many." This is the only description I can find in my text. Jesus Christ came into the world to save SINNERS. And if, in very deed and truth, I know myself to be this day a sinner, I may trust Christ—and trusting Christ I may know, as surely as there is a God in heaven—that Jesus Christ took my sins and carried them all away! Now, I want to know whether you have got this by an act of faith this morning. "Oh," says one, "I am a sinner, but, but—." Well, but what? If you are a sinner, you are *commanded* to trust Christ this morning. "Oh, but." I will have no "Buts," sir, no "Buts" whatever! Are you a sinner? Yes or no? If you say "No," then I have nothing to say to you. Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; if you are a sinner, to you are the Words of this salvation sent. "But I have been a thief!" I suppose a thief is a sinner! "But I have been a drunkard!" A drunkard is a sinner.

"But I have led an unclean life!" You are a sinner, then. "But I have such a hard heart!" Well, to have a hard heart is one of the greatest sins in the world. "But I am unbelieving!" Well, that is a sin, too. You come in under the list of *sinners,* and I say that of such Christ contemplated, and the two sentences we have already considered prove this to a demonstration. He contemplated such as you are when He came to save, for, "He was numbered with transgressors," and "He bore"—not the *virtues* of many, not the *merits* of many, not the good works of many—but, "The sin of many." So, if you have any sin, here is Christ the sin-bearer! And if you are a sinner, here is Christ numbered with *you*. "Oh," says one, "but what is faith? I want to know at once." Faith, sinner, is to believe in Jesus, and to trust in Jesus, now. Saving faith can sing this verse—

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one foul blot,
To You whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

It is for SINNERS, not for sensible sinners, not for repenting sinners that Jesus died. Sinners as sinners, Jesus Christ has chosen, redeemed, and called; in fact, for them and for only such, Jesus Christ came into the world!

III. Our third sentence tells us that JESUS INTERCEDES FOR SINNERS. "And made intercession for the transgressors."

He prays for His saints, but, dear friends, remember that by nature they are transgressors, and nothing more.

What does our text say? He intercedes for *transgressors!* There is a transgressor here this morning; he has been hearing the gospel for many years—for many years—and he has heard it preached faithfully, too, by God's grace. He is growing gray now, but while his head is getting white, his heart is black; he is an old hard-hearted reprobate, and by-and-by, unless divine grace prevents—but I need not tell that story. What is that I hear? The feet of justice, slowly but surely coming! I hear a voice saying—"Lo, these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree, and found none. Cut it down! Why cumbers it the ground?" The woodman feels his axe; it is sharp and keen. "Now," says he, "I will lay to at this barren tree, and cut it down." But hark! There is one who makes intercession for transgressors! Hear Him, hear Him, "Spare it yet a little while, till I dig about it and fertilize it, and if it bears fruit *well;* but if not, after that you shall cut it down." You see there was nothing in that tree why He should plead for it, and there is nothing in you why He should plead for you, yet He does it. This very morning, perhaps, He is crying, "Spare him yet a little while; let him hear the gospel again; let him be entreated once more! Oh, let him have another sickness that it may make his conscience feel. Let Me have another endeavor with his hard heart. It may be, it may be that he will yield." O sinner, bless God that Jesus Christ pleads for you in that way!

But, that done, *He pleads for their forgiveness*. They are nailing Him to the cross! The wretches are driving iron through His hands, but even while they fasten Him to the tree, listen to Him—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, I spoke to a brother this week, whose heart all-conquering love has touched! He had been a great blas-

phemer, and when we were talking together about the fact that Jesus Christ loved him even when he was cursing, I saw how it broke his heart. And it broke mine, too, to think that I could rebel against Christ while He was loving me; that I could despise Him while He was putting Himself in my place in order to do me good. Oh, it is this that breaks a man's heart; to think that Christ should have been loving *me,* with the whole force of His soul, while I was despising Him—and would have nothing to do with Him! There is a man here who has been cursing, and swearing, and blaspheming—and the very man whom he has cursed has been crying—"Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he does." O sinner, I pray that this might break your heart, and bring you to the Savior!

Nor does He end there. He next prays *that those for whom He intercedes may be saved, and may have a new life given them.* "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive." Every soul that is quickened by the Holy Spirit is so quickened as the result of Christ's intercession for transgressors! His prayer brings down the life, and dead sinners live; when they live, He does not cease to pray for them, for by His intercession *they are preserved.* They are still tempted and tried, but hear what He says, "Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you, that your strength fail not." Yes, brothers and sisters, this is the reason *why we are not condemned.* As our apostle puts it—"Who is he that condemns?" And the answer he gives is, "Christ has died, yes, rather, has risen again, who always makes intercession for us." As if that intercession choked at once the advocate of hell and delivered us from condemnation. And more, *our coming to glory* is the result of the pleading of Christ for transgressors. "Father, I will that they also whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory."

There are a great many sermons preached that have not the gospel in them, especially those sermons the drift of which is to tell the sinners, "Go home and pray. Go home and pray." That is very good advice, but it is not the gospel! The sinner might answer me, "How can I come before God as I am? I cannot plead before Him, for I am a wretch undone. If I should stand in His presence, He would drive me from Him." Behold, Jesus Christ makes intercession for transgressors! It is a common saying in the world, that a man who pleads his own cause has a fool for his client; certainly it is so in heaven. But when Christ comes in—the Wonderful, the Counselor—He takes up the brief, and now the adversary trembles, for no sooner does he find that the suit is put into the hands of Him who is the advocate of His people, than he knows that his case is lost, and that the sinner will go free! So, sinner, you are safe if He pleads for you. "Ah," you say, "but if He asks me what He should plead, I have nothing to tell Him." You know the counselor goes into the cell, and he says to the prisoner—"Now, just tell me the case. What can I say in your favor?" The criminal replies, "Well, there is so-and-so, and so-and-so," and perhaps he is able to say, "Why, sir, I am as innocent as a new-born babe of the whole affair, and I can prove it; I have an *alibi,* or I can do this or that." Very well. The advocate, having grounds to go upon, pleads

the case in the court right confidently. But now I hear you say, "Ah, I cannot tell the Lord Jesus Christ what He is to plead, for I have nothing to plead; the fact is I am guilty and thoroughly guilty, too. I deserve to be punished and must be; I have nothing to plead." Now what does our blessed Advocate say? "Oh," says He, "but I have the plea in Myself." And up He rises in the court of law, and when the accusation is read, He puts in this to that accusation—"In the name of the sinner for whom I intercede, and with whom I am numbered, I plead absolution and forgiveness through punishment already borne." "How?" asks Justice. And Jesus Christ shows the nail prints in His hands, and lays bare His side, and says, "I suffered for that sinner; I was punished with the sinner's punishment, and therefore I claim, as the reward of My passion and My agony, that the sinner should go his way." Do you not see that Christ is a precious pleader because He can *appear* for us, and what is more, He can find a *plea* for us? "Ah," I hear you say, "but I have no means of getting such an advocate as that! I wish I had, but I have nothing to give Him. If He asks any fees, I have nothing. I do not deserve the love of Christ, I do not know why He should take up my cause; if He would, I would be saved, but I cannot think He will, for I cannot hope to pay Him." "No," says He, "but I will take up your cause freely, willingly, cheerfully; and I will make intercession for you, not because you deserve it, but because you *need* it; not because you are *not* a transgressor, but because you *are."* That very thing, sinner, that makes you think Christ will not look at you, is the very reason why He will! You are full of disease. "Ah," you say, "the physician will never look at such an arm as that." But because the ulcer is reeking, that is why he stops and says, "I will cure that." Your qualification is your disqualification! And what you think to be the reason why He never will look at you, is certainly the *only* reason you can plead why He should! You are nothing; you are utterly lost; you have no merit; you have nothing unless the Lord Jesus Christ makes prevalent, acceptable, and perpetual intercession for transgressors!

I come reluctantly to a conclusion; but I must say these few words. There are some of you who make very light of sinning. I pray you to be reasonable, and think this matter over. It was no light thing for God to save a sinner, for the Son of God, Himself, had to be numbered with sinners, and suffer, and DIE for sinners, or else they could not be saved! Touch not the unclean thing—hate it! If it is deadly to a holy Christ, it must be damnable to you! Oh, pass it by, and loathe it as the Egyptians loathed the water of the river when it was turned to blood in their sight!

To you who make but little of Christ, there is this word—you know what sin means; I do not think you can ever make too much of sin, but I pray you do not make too little of Christ. To you who think you have no qualifications for Christ, I say this closing sentence—I do beseech you get rid of that foul, that legal, that soul-destroying idea, that Christ needs any preparation *by* you, or *in* you before you come to Him! You may come to Him *now*. No, more—you are *commanded* to come to Him now, just as you are! And to every man among you today, and to every woman and child, I preach this gospel in the name of Jesus Christ—"Believe in the

Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Trust Him now—in your seat—standing in the aisles—crowded in these galleries—trust Him now! God commands you; "This is *the* commandment that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent." As Peter said, so say I, "Repent and be converted, every one of you." And as Paul said to the Philippian jailer, so say I, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." If you do not, this shall condemn you! Not your sin—but your unbelief, for they who believe not are condemned already! Why, why are such condemned? Because they *believe not!* That is the accusation; that is the damning crime and curse. "Well," says one," then if God commands me to trust Christ, though I certainly have no reason why I should, then I'll do it." Ah, soul, do it, then. Can you do it? Can you trust Him now? Is it a full trust? Are you leaning on your feelings? Give them up! Are you depending a little on what you mean to do? Give that up! Do you trust Him wholly? Can you say, "His blessed wounds, His flowing blood, His perfect righteousness—on these I rest. I do trust Him wholly"? Are you half afraid, you say, to do so? Do you think it is such a bold thing? Do it, then! Do a bold thing for once! Say, "Lord, I'll trust You, and if You cast me away, I'll still trust You. I bless You that You can save me, and that You *will* save me." Can you say that? I ask, have you believed in Him? You are saved, then! You are not in a salvable state, but you are SAVED! Not partly, but wholly saved. Not *some* of your sins blotted out, but ALL! Behold the whole list, and it is written at the bottom of them all—"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin."

But I hear one say, "It is too good to be true!" Soul, will you be lost through thinking little things of Christ? "Ah," says another, "it is too simple. If this is the gospel, we shall have all the ragamuffins in the streets believing in Christ, and being saved." And glory be to God if it is so! For my part, I am never afraid of big sinners being saved; I would have every harlot; I would have every whoremonger and adulterer to be saved; I would not be afraid that they would go on in their sins if they believed in Christ. Oh, no! Faith in Christ would change their nature. And it will change yours, too, for this is salvation—to have the *nature* changed—to be made a new creature in Christ, and to be made holy. Come, soul, will you trust Him? I do not want you all to go away after crowding in here without getting that blessing. Some of you have come up to the Handel Festival—but here is better music if you trust Christ—for you shall hear the bells of heaven ringing, and all the music of the angels as they rejoice over you as a redeemed brother or sister! Many of you have come up to see the Great Exhibition—but here is a greater wonder than that—you came into this place this morning in a state of nature, and go out in a state of divine grace! And, then, only to wait a little while, and reach a state of glory! Some of you have come up to see the great Cattle Show. But here is something better to see than ever was reared on English pasture. Here is food for your *souls!* Here is that whereof if a man eats, he shall live forever! And here it is held out to you; nothing can be plainer; trust Christ and you are saved! Outside in the street there is a drinking fountain. When you get there, if you are thirsty, go to it. You will find no policeman there to send you away. No one will

cry, "You must not drink because you do not wear a satin dress." "You must not drink because you wear a peasant's jacket." No, no, go and drink; and when you have hold of the ladle, and are putting it to your lips, if there should come a doubt—"I do not feel my thirst enough," still take a drink whether you do or not!

So I say to you, Jesus Christ stands like a great flowing fountain in the corners of the street, and He invites every thirsty soul to come and drink! You need not stop and say, "Am I thirsty enough? Am I black with sin enough?" It doesn't matter whether you think you are, or not; come as you are! Come as you are! Every fitness is legality; every preparation is a lie; every getting ready for Christ is coming the wrong way! You are only making yourselves worse while you think you are making yourselves better; you are like the boy at school who has made a little blot, and he gets out his knife to scratch it out, and makes it ten times worse than before! Leave the blots alone. Come as you are! If you are the foulest soul out of hell, trust Christ—and that act of trust shall make you clean! This seems a simple thing, and yet it is the hardest thing in the world to bring you to it; so hard a thing that all the preachers that ever preached cannot make a man believe in Christ! Though we put it as plainly as we can, and plead with you, you only go away and say, "It is too good to be true." Or else you despise it because it is so simple; for the gospel, like Christ, is despised and rejected of men, because it has no form and comeliness, and no beauty in it that they should desire it. Oh, may the Holy Spirit lay this home to you! May He make you willing in the day of His power! I hope He has! I trust He has, so that before we go we may all join in singing this one verse, and then separate—

"A guilty, weak and helpless worm
On Christ's kind arms I fall.
He is my strength! My righteousness!
My Jesus, and my all!"

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A SERMON FOR MEN OF TASTE
NO. 459

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 6, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"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, if, indeed, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious."
1 Peter 2:1-3.

"IF, indeed, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." *"If, If:"* then is not a thing to be taken for granted concerning the entire human race. "If"—then there is a possibility, and a *probability,* that some may *not* have tasted that the Lord is gracious. "If, if"—then this is not a general but a *special* mercy; and it becomes our business to inquire whether we are in that company, who know the grace of God by inward experience. There is no spiritual favor which may not be a matter for heart-searching. At the very summit of holy delight, we meet the challenge of sentinel "If"—"If you, then, are risen with Christ," and at the very bottom, even at repentance gate itself, He meets us with a warrant of arrest until He sees whether our sorrow is the godly sorrow that needs not to be repented of. "If you are the Son of God," is not always a temptation of the devil, but often a very healthy inquiry most fittingly suggested by holy anxiety to men who would build securely upon the Rock of Ages. If at the Lord's Table, itself, it is proper for us to say, "Lord, is it I?" when there is a Judas in the company, and if after the most intimate fellowship, Christ exclaimed, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?"—let no enjoyment of ordinances, let no high and rapt fellowship which we may have known, exempt us from the great duty of proving ourselves whether we are in the faith! But, beloved, albeit this should be a matter of heart-searching, I take it that no man ought to be content while there is any such thing as an "if" about his having tasted that the Lord is gracious. I can understand believers saying—

"It is a point I long to know,
Often it causes anxious thought—
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

But I do not understand their being comfortable while their souls are under such suspense. I can comprehend the doubts which arise from jealousy and holy distrust, but I cannot understand the continuance of those doubts, without a desperate struggle to clasp the Savior with the hands of faith, and say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him." Do not rest, O believer, till you have a full assurance of your interest in

Christ. Let nothing satisfy you till, by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with your spirit, you are certified that you are a child of God. Oh, trifle not here! Let no "perhaps," and "if," and "maybe," satisfy your soul. Build on eternal truths of God, and verily build upon them. Get the sure mercies of David, and surely get them. Let your anchor be cast into that which is within the vein, and see to it that your soul is linked to the anchor by a cable that will not break. Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus, I exhort and stir you up to get beyond these dreary "ifs." Abide no more in the howling wilderness of doubts and fears; cross the Jordan of distrust, and enter the Canaan of peace, where the Canaanite still lingers, but which ceases not to flow with milk and honey!

Our text mentions a *taste*—"If, indeed, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." And the Apostle speaks of *the duty* of those men of taste who have received this special favor. These two things shall take up our time this morning—*the taste,* and *the duties arising out of it.* And before we conclude, we shall go back to the Psalm with which we commenced this morning, and address those who as yet have never tasted that the Lord is gracious, in the words of David—"O taste and see that the Lord is good!"

I. First, then, TASTE is prominent in the text.

I scarcely need observe that in Scripture, the Holy Spirit uses natural things as figures by which to set forth spiritual mysteries. Inasmuch as our language was ordained to speak the thoughts of the mind, and to describe the things of the body, it is not fitted, in itself, for the utterance of the things of the spirit. As much as the soul is higher than the body, so much superior is the spirit (that is, the new principle implanted in regeneration) to the mere soul which every man possesses; and, as you will clearly see, if our speech had only been made for the body, and had not been adapted for a being that had a soul, we should have been strangely embarrassed for the expression of our mental emotions! And now, as our speech only reaches unto the natural soul, if we would speak of the higher thoughts and impulses of the inner and newborn spirit, we can only do so by using the words we employ concerning natural objects. In this way, we do not so much describe spiritual things as they are in themselves, but bring them down to our comprehension. When we shall become pure spirits, we may have a spiritual language; when we are caught up to the third heaven, we shall use those words which now are not lawful for a man to utter—*spiritual* words fitted for *spiritual* things!

1. *The taste here meant is doubtless faith.* Faith, in the Scripture, is all the senses. It is *sight.* "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." "They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." It is *hearing*—"Hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Faith hears the voice of the Spirit in effectual calling—for the dead hear the voice of God, and "They who hear shall live." Faith is also *smelling.* "All your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." "Your name is as ointment poured forth." "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto Me." Faith is also *touch.* By this faith the woman came be-

hind, and touched the hem of Christ's garment, and by this, we handle the things of the good Word of life. Faith is equally the spirit's taste. "How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my lips." "Except a man eat My flesh," says Christ, "and drink My blood, there is no life in him." We shall have an inward and spiritual apprehension of the sweetness and preciousness of Christ, as the result of living faith.

2. The taste here meant is faith *in one of its highest operation*s. One of the first performances of faith is hearing. We hear the voice of God, not with the outward ear alone, but with the inward ear. We hear it as God's Word, and we believe it to be so. That is the hearing of faith. Then our mind looks upon the truth of God as it is presented to us. That is to say, we understand it, we see what it means—that is the *seeing* of faith. Then we perceive its preciousness to others, if not to ourselves; we begin to admire it, and find how fragrant it is. That is faith in its *smell*. Then comes the appropriating act by which we lay hold of the mercies that are offered us in Christ. That is faith in its *touch*. Then come enjoyments, peace, delight, communion—which are faith in its *taste*. Any one of these acts of faith is saving. To hear Christ's voice, as the very voice of God in the soul, will save us; but that which gives the true enjoyment is the aspect of faith wherein Christ, by holy taste, becomes assimilated to us. We feed on Him! He comes into us, and becomes part of us. His living word sustains us, and His precious blood cheers us as generous wine. Do you ask, "In what respect does faith *taste* that the Lord is gracious?" It is faith operating by *experience!* Dear Christian friends, you remember the time, when laden with guilt and full of fears, you looked to Jesus Christ—it was the eye of faith which looked. After a while, Christ's sweet love assured you that your sins were forgiven, and you felt calm in your soul, such as you had never known before—that was *tasting* Christ! You knew His sweetness, you knew the power there was in Him to take the bitterness out of your mouth, and to put in sweetness instead. Since that time you have been in trouble, but you have tasted Christ, for He has comforted you and lifted up the light of His countenance upon you; you have been often greatly tried, but He has sustained you, and you have experienced that He is a very present help in time of trouble. Temptation has assailed you, but you have been able to meet it by, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." And perhaps, even today, your soul is as full as it can be, of delightful contemplations of the loveliness, the faithfulness, the affection, the power, and the glory of your precious Lord Jesus Christ! Now, this is what is meant by *tasting*. It is enjoying Christ by an act of faith and finding Him to be the altogether lovely, sweet, and precious one. It is something more than believing Christ to be precious. It is perceiving His worth, appreciating His sweetness, enjoying His loveliness; it is lying with His left hand under our head, while His right hand does embrace us. Thrice happy is the man who has thus tasted that the Lord is gracious! Follow me, while, by a figure, I make this point clear as noonday. There is a rumor running through the camp of Israel that God

on the morrow, at the rising of the sun, will feed His people. The rumor is believed—that is faith as *hearing;* Israel has heard that God will feed, and Israel believes. See now—before daybreak, the hosts of Israel hasten to the borders of the camp, and they see, lying upon the ground, certain grains like coriander seed. "This, this," they say, "is the food that God has sent to us." That is faith as *seeing;* they take it up in their hands. They examine it, and feel of what sort it is. That is faith as the *touch*. They put it to their nostrils. They ascertain somewhat of its character by the very smell. This is faith judging and discerning as *smell*. But lo! They place it in their mouths, and one of them says, "It tastes like wafers made with honey." And another says "It is as fresh oil." This is faith *enjoying,* for now they have come, not to hear of, nor see, nor smell, nor touch, alone, but as men to *eat* angel's food, and are fed even to the full! Here you see faith in its progressive works ending by the high degree of *tasting*.

3. Faith as exhibited to us under the aspect of tasting *is a sure and certain mark of divine grace in the heart. It is a sure sign of vitality*. man, by nature, is dead in trespasses and sins. See if the dead can taste. Bring the most pungent drugs—do these arouse the palate? Give them a foul draught, and see if nausea can be produced. Now, put sweets to the dead man's tongue—do the eyes glisten? It is long since that corpse has fed—does it show any satisfaction in the presence of food? No. It is dead and taste has fled with the once sentient soul! Verily, brothers and sisters, no man can taste of Christ in His natural estate, and if you or I know Christ to be precious, we may be sure that we are alive through the Holy Spirit! We may not be able to say when the Spirit of God came into us—perhaps this may be a trouble to us—that we do not know the day when we were quickened from our death in sin; but dear friend, the life itself is there. Do you enjoy Christ? Is His name sweet music to you? Oh, can you roll the doctrine of His atonement under your tongue as a sweet morsel? Say, is His flesh food to you? Do you rejoice in His redemption? Then you are alive, for no dead soul ever could taste heavenly things! To taste that the Lord is good is certain evidence that the quickening Spirit abides in you! Or, to put it in another light; if men have a taste of Christ, *it is certain evidence of a divine change*, for men by nature find no delight in Jesus. Books of surgery tell us of a few persons without taste, but the cure for such unfortunates is unknown; their infirmity is beyond the reach of drugs or surgery. If a man should be without hearing, the surgeon might, perhaps, effectually operate; or if blind, the film might be removed from the visual orb; but if without taste, the defect is beyond the range of mortal power. So, if any man has a taste for Christ, inasmuch as he had it not by nature, and he could not have obtained it of himself, his is a case out of the pale of human ability; that same Christ who raised the dead, must have given this holy taste to the tasteless palate and tongue of the sinner! I do not inquire what your experience may have been, or may not have been; if Christ is precious to you, there has been a work of divine grace in your heart; if you love Him, if His presence

is your joy, if His blood is your hope, if His glory is your objective and aim, and if His person is the constant love of your soul, you could not have had this taste by nature, for you were dead; you could not have acquired this taste by learning, for this is a miracle which none but the God who is supreme over nature could have worked in you! Let every tried and troubled Christian, who nevertheless does taste that the Lord is good, take consolation from this simple remark!

4. In the next place; this taste, where it has been bestowed by divine grace, *is a discerning faculty*. There have been instances of persons who could not discern between the various flavors. A man was well known to a certain surgeon, who could just detect the distinction between the smell of garlic, and the fragrance of a rose, but was quite incapable of knowing any difference between the perfume of a rose and of a lily; and the same person in feeding could never distinguish between different meats or drinks, except between the more pungent and rancid, and the more exquisitely sweet. Now, there are some Christians of that kind, who have some taste for Christ, but their taste is not very discerning. You may preach to them a doctrine of "ifs," and "ands," and "buts," and if it is warmly delivered and well disguised, they will hardly know what they are taking. Then, on another occasion, you may give them the sure mercies of David—"shalls," and "wills," and everlasting truths, and oaths, and covenants, and they like that, too, for they have not yet, by reason of use, become able to discern between the truth of God and error. Yet, mark you, there was never yet a Christian who did not know the difference between the Rose of Sharon and the garlic of Egypt; there was never yet a man renewed by divine grace who did not soon discover the difference between works and gospel, between law and grace; between the dead efforts of the flesh, and the living power of the quickening Spirit of the living God! I have noticed that some Christians, in these modern times, have but little taste, and do you know to what I have ascribed it? I think they have taken a cold, and have thus lost very much of their power of taste. Oh, how many believers there are who sit in the draught of worldliness till they get stiff-necks of carnal pride, and lose their taste for heavenly things! Besides, if a man will ruin his palate with the high-spiced food of earth, it is little marvel that when he comes back to his natural food, Christ Jesus, he would have lost some of his delight in divine things! Now, I know there are some professors who have such a taste for worldly joys that it is no marvel that they cannot so well discern the divine and exquisite pleasure that is in Christ Jesus, when they are fed upon by the Holy Spirit. Yet again, I say, though the degree of discernment may vary, there is a discerning power in faith as taste. If you can feed on a religion which gives you ceremonies to trust to, you have never tasted that the Lord is gracious! If, my hearer, you can live upon a gospel which leads you to depend upon yourself, you have no spiritual taste, or else you would loathe, as much as any Egyptian loathed drinking of the waters of the Nile when turned into blood! You would only desire to drink of the cool stream of the river of life which rises at the foot of

the throne of God, and flows around the base of Calvary, where Jesus shed His blood! Say, soul, do you love Jesus only? Is He all your salvation, and all your desire, and do you trust and repose wholly and solely in Him? If not, then you have no spiritual taste—and you have no reason to believe that you belong to Jesus Christ at all!

5. But, again, to pass on, having sufficiently enlarged upon that point; faith as a *taste is not simply a discerning but a delighting faculty*. Men derive much satisfaction from the organs of taste. We ought not to be as the glutton, whose only reason for living is that he may eat, but every one of us may be thankful that God has not made the repairing of our frame to be an obnoxious operation, and that He has given us a capacity for enjoying the flavors of food. Certain critics have a faith which is very good for discerning but never for enjoying; they have a fine nose for heresy—the moment it comes anywhere near them, they discover it! And if there is half a word in a sermon they do not like, how sure they will be to take it home; one bad fish in our basket and it will be cried all round the town before tomorrow; but let us offer ever so much that is good, we can scarcely win a notice! Dear friends, I would have God's people discern, but the *discerning* propensity ought not to destroy the *enjoying* faculty. I bless God I love the doctrines of grace, but I never considered the doctrines of grace to be like drawn swords with which to fight every man living. I know it is a good thing to be like the armed men about the bed of Solomon, each with his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night, but for my part, to recline upon that royal bed and sleep with Jesus' bosom for a pillow, is still better! I pray you, dear friends, delight yourselves in Christ! Let your faith so taste Jesus as to make you glad; let your joy be as the joy of harvest and sing with Zechariah, "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful and new wine the maids." Better is Christ to you than all earth's harvests! He is the cluster of Eshcol, so heavy that one man can never carry all of Christ! He is not one grape, but a cluster of sweetness is our beloved unto us! Feed to the full! Eat, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved! Be satiated with delight, and let your soul rejoice as with marrow and fatness—so shall you understand in the fullest degree what this taste is which so delights the soul of man!

King Solomon, during his lifetime, sat at a feast. The first rich course was one which he had asked for himself. It was *wisdom*. He tasted all its dainty morsels and he cried, "In much wisdom is much grief: and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow." Then, an attendant all bedecked with gold and silver, brought in the lordly dish of *riches*, and Solomon ate thereof till he cried out, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit, there is no profit under the sun." Then, there came in one who looked most bewitching, bearing the dish of carnal and fleshly *pleasure* and Solomon greedily sat down to eat—for this time, he thought—he had full sure obtained the honey that would enlighten his eyes! So Solomon feasted to the very full, and at the last he said, "Vanity of vanities. All is vanity!" But he never would have said this concerning the *true wisdom*, for at the last, when

the old man ceased to be a hunter of pleasure, he bore his willing testimony to the perfection of that love which is better than wine. Dearly beloved, you who know what it is to taste Christ can witness that Immanuel's love makes you like Jonathan in the woods, who did but dip the end of his spear into the honey, and his eyes were enlightened. Oh, what enlightenment, what joy, what consolation, what leaping of heart is there to that man who has learned to feed on Jesus and on Jesus Christ alone!

6. We must remark, dear friends that this taste of ours *is in this life imperfect*. As old master Durham says, "It is but a taste!" You have tasted that the Lord is gracious, but you do not know how good and how gracious He is. I am sure my soul was hot within me when you were singing that verse just now—

"But when I see You as You are,
I'll praise You as I ought."

There is another verse, too, which I may aptly quote—

"When I have tasted of the grapes,
I sometimes long to go
Where my dear Lord the vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow."

We have not yet rested beneath the vines of Canaan; we have only enjoyed the first fruits of the Spirit, and they have set us hungering and thirsting for the fullness of the heavenly heritage. We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption. We are like David; we have had a draught of water from the well of Bethlehem that is within the gate, brought to us through the valor of Christ Jesus; but we have not yet drunk the clear, cool stream, in all its perfection, at the fountainhead. We are but beginners in spiritual education; we have learned the first letters of the alphabet; we cannot read words yet, much less can we read sentences—we are but infants—we have not come to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. As one says, "He who has been in heaven but five minutes, knows more than all the general assembly on earth, though they were all learned divines." We shall know more of Christ by one glimpse of Him in heaven, than we shall know by all our learning here. It is but a taste here, and if a taste is so ravishing, what must it be to sit at the table and eat bread in the kingdom of God? And here, I must again remark that this imperfection of taste is in some Christians far more conspicuous than in others. There are some believers who seem to have no appreciating taste for Christ—they hardly know the savor of His blessed name! I declare to you all, if Christ were not better than the visible church, we might be weary of Him. His Church, alas, is but the blurred and blotted portrait of Himself—lovely she is; but sometimes those blots and blurs are so conspicuous to our anxious eyes, that we rather mourn her uncomeliness than rejoice over her beauty. Oh, how many there are among you, professors of Christ, who are none of His! What said the Apostle? "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame." Dear brothers and sisters, let us purge ourselves

from the corruptions of these pretenders; frivolity, pleasure, gain, worldliness, covetousness—what have these things to do with us? Get away from us! Get away from us! Be gone, you fiends! But how many open their hearts and say, "Come, hide here, you unclean spirits. Come and dwell with us!" Surely, surely, surely, you have but little taste, if any, for the manna of Christ, or you would never eat the dust which is the serpent's meat! God quicken His people! Wash their mouths out, if necessary, even with bitter medicine, till they desire Christ anew, and cleave to Him with full purpose of heart!

7. Though ours is an imperfect, we thank God, *it is a growing taste*. Old Barzillai told David that he was too old a man to enjoy dainties. Said he, "Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink?" We know that sometimes in the decline of life, the taste, like the other powers of manhood, decays. But glory be to God, a taste for Christ will never decay! The good bishop, when he was dying, was asked by his wife whether he knew her. But he shook his head, for memory had failed. His dearest friends and children, after repeating their names, asked whether their dear friend and father had not some recollection of them. But again he shook his head. "Do you remember Jesus?" asked one. And oh, how he clasped his hands together, for that was a name he never could forget!

Our venerable friends who are present with us this morning, find—I hope they do—that they have a loosened grip for the world, and a tighter grasp for Christ. While your eyes grow dim, and you need your glasses, I hope you can see Christ more clearly than ever. God grant that some of you may be called up to the top of Pisgah, and may have a view of the landscape; and there may you see your Master's love in all the length and breadth of its fullness and richness, before yet you are raised up to heaven by the kiss of the Most High! In dying moments, the Christian's taste gets quickened. And whereas before, he *thought* Christ sweet, now he *knows* He is! Where he once compared Him to honey, now He declares that honey from the honeycomb is sour compared with Christ! And he can cry out with Rutherford, "Black heavens, black moon, and black sun! But fair, fair, incomparably fair Lord Jesus!" He can now tread everything beneath his feet as he would a dead and corrupt thing; but his soul cries, "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! You are brighter, fairer and lovelier to me than You ever were before!" God give us grace that we may understand and know—*experientially*—what it is to taste that the Lord is gracious!

II. MEN WHO HAVE THUS TASTED OF CHRIST HAVE SPECIAL SINS TO AVOID AND OBJECTS TO DESIRE.

We first dwell upon evils to be avoided. *Malice*. "Revenge is sweet," is the proverb of the Italians, and many an Englishman has half learned it, if not wholly. "Revenge is sweet." But not to the man who has tasted Christ, for he says, "How can I have vengeance upon my fellow, when Christ has put away my sin?" Now, forgiveness is sweet, and he loathes malice, and turns aside from it as from venom itself! *Guile;* that is craftiness whereby men rob their fellow creatures. Some men think guile a very fine thing. "That's a sharp fellow," says one; and sage fathers pat

their boys on the back and say, "If you become a sharp fellow, you will be an alderman yet." See yonder trader, you must keep all your eyes open or he will take you in; he does not exactly tell lies but—well, he shaves very closely to the truth. It is guile; low craftiness and cunning. A man of God hates that thing. "What? I, I the servant of the God of truth, crouch, bend, fawn, do anything but what is upright, to gain wealth?" As surely as the Lord says concerning the Laodicean Church, "I will spew you out of My mouth," so the believer says concerning anything that is not true and straightforward, "I am sick of it. I loathe it, I abhor it. I turn from it." The next thing is *hypocrisy,* whereby men are not so much robbed and injured as deceived. A Christian can be no hypocrite. Hypocrisy, like all other sins, lurks in man till the very last. But a believer hates to pretend to be what he is not; a man who has once tasted that the Lord is gracious, is a true and transparent man in his profession; if any suppose him to be better than he is, he does not wish to wear feathers that are not his own; he would not be glorified by another man's labors, nor build upon another man's foundation. Hypocrisy he utterly detests and would sooner die a pauper than live a pretender. Any man among you who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, will, I am sure, without my exhortation this morning, loathe all malice, guile and hypocrisy!

Once more, put away *all evil speaking*. I am sorry to say that there are some, who I hope are Christians, who do not hate evil speaking. "Have you heard about Mrs. So-and-So?" I shall not mention names, but there are fifty, perhaps a hundred, here, to whom it will apply. There is a little mischief in the village about Miss A, or Mr. B; and Mrs. Tittle-Tattle is up as early as possible and calls on Mrs. Scandal, and says, "Have you heard the sad news? I hope it is not true." "No, I have not heard it." "Well, don't mention it to anybody else; I hope it is not correct; but I have heard such-and-such." And the two sit down and they make such a breakfast over it! And they both say they hope it is not true, while all the time they are as glad of it in their hearts as ever they can be. They go on telling others they hope it is not true—and telling them not to mention it to anybody else—until they do all the mischief before they have stopped to inquire whether or not they are telling lies! Then, there are the men. They like a bit of scandal in the newspapers every now and then. Public men have often to feel that evil speaking must be very sweet to the people, or surely it would never pay to print such barefaced lies! A Christian should have nothing to do with scandal, but should say in a company, "Stop! I cannot sit by and hear you say that of an absent person. If he were here, you might say what you liked, but as he is not, please hold your tongue, for I am here as a defender of those who are back-bitten." Every absent man should have an advocate in a Christian; more especially should this be true when the rumor injures a brother or Sister in Christ. "It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest." And he is an ill believer who tells tales about his fellow Christians! If you, as a church member, have anything against a brother, tell him alone. And then, if it should be some public and crying sin, tell it in an orderly manner to the church of-

ficers. But for you to go chattering about things you do not know to be true is such an offense against church order, that if you are expelled from church communion for it, the ejection will be justifiable! You certainly cannot expect to have fellowship with Christ if you mar the fellowship of Christ's Church by talking the one against the other.

See, now, among our different denominations, how pleased some ministers are if they can get a bone to pick against a brother in another denomination; if there is a fresh hitch in the machinery of the Church of England, how often the Dissenter feels devoutly glad that there is likely to be an upsetting of the Episcopal communion; and I know that some Episcopalians, when they hear that in a Dissenting Church there is something wrong, say, "Well, it is a great pity." But they think to themselves, "Well, they will eat one another up, and will be all the less trouble to us." Rinse your mouths! Rinse your mouths, all of you, who have said anything against your Brethren up to now; and from this time forth, "If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious," eschew all evil speaking against your fellow men! The apostle, having told us what to avoid, tells us what to eat and drink—"As newborn babes desire the *sincere* milk of the Word." A most unfortunate translation, for who ever heard of "sincere milk?" "Unadulterated milk" is a more sensible translation. The Christian man should desire pure doctrine. He should desire to hear the gospel plainly and truthfully preached. Not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but in the words which the Holy Spirit teaches. It is a sign of declining health in a Christian when he does not love the means of divine grace. "But how, sir, if I cannot get on with my minister?" Well, it may be your sin that makes him such a poor minister as you think him to be; no doubt, while the pew is to be supplied by the pulpit, the pulpit is acted upon very greatly by the chilliness and hardness of the pew! If you prayed more for your minister, you would feed better under him. But in London, you have not this excuse, for there is such a choice of preachers of the Word here, that if you had a desire for the pure milk, you might obtain it somewhere or other! Oh, what a good thing it is to have spiritual hunger and thirst! When people are not hungry, you may set a fine meal before them, but they will turn up their noses at it. But let a man come fresh from the field, hungry—down he sits—no matter how rough the fare, he only wants it to be sweet, wholesome and nutritious, and he cuts huge slices for himself and feeds to the full. Give me a congregation of hungry hearers, such as I usually see here on Sunday, with eyes that seldom turn from the preacher, and with ears that catch every word! I think any man could preach to my congregation, for you come up here hungry. A minister would wish to be like the mother bird which comes back with the worm to the nest and finds all the mouths open, everyone desiring to be fed! Now, this is just, I think, what the apostle meant—"As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word." You know babes do not have set times for desiring their food. When they want it, they *will* have it, and will cry till they get it! So should it be with believers. They should have such unceremonious longings to be fed from the breasts of

heaven's consolation, that they will cry till they get the heavenly food from God their Father—that living food by which they grow, and are made strong in Christ!

I have thus enlarged upon the first part of the text. And now, two or three minutes only, upon the next. "O taste and see that the Lord is good!"

Dear Christian friends, I have spoken to you of this taste; but among us this morning, in the galleries and down below here, there is a goodly sprinkle of men who do not know Christ. They have come up to this house of prayer, not that they might know Christ, but that they might see a vast congregation, and amuse themselves by novelty. Ah, how many come with this miserable objective! Well, let them come for whatever they like, we are glad to see them, for being in the way, God may meet with them! Now, to such of you who are not believers in Christ, and have never tasted that He is gracious, we say this— "O taste and see," by which we mean, *experience is necessary*. Taste and see! You cannot see without tasting; if you would know whether religion is a good and happy thing, try it! It is not rubbing the bread upon the cheek, it is *tasting*. You must have an inward sense of the things of God. "My son, give Me *your heart."* "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Let your heart believe in Jesus; be not content with ceremonies; rest not satisfied with outward morality! Only that which reaches the core will really affect the fruit of the tree. We must make the fountain pure, or else our filtering the stream is all in vain. "Taste and see." Dear hearers, I cannot insist too earnestly upon this. Get an inward religion; vital godliness; which goes into the secret parts of the heart, and dwells in the inner man; nothing but tasting can save your souls! And then, we say, "Taste *and* see," we are quite sure that if you will taste you shall *see* that the Lord is good. I bear my willing witness that Christ makes a man blessed, that religion is a happy thing, and that "Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." But you do not believe me. Then, taste and see for yourselves. "Seek the Lord while He may be found: call upon Him while He is near." May the Spirit of God lead you to give your heart to Jesus, and you will find that the true religion of Jesus is a good thing for you. A good thing for you, young woman; a good thing for you, young man; good for the trader; good for the gentleman; good for the artisan—good for all of you! We feel very earnest that you should do this, and therefore, we say, *"O* taste and see that the Lord is good!"

Do not despise our invitation! We beseech you, by the mercies of God, to give your hearts to Jesus! From our very souls, as though we pleaded for our own lives, we would beseech you. Give the things of God a patient consideration. Believe in Jesus; this is to taste. Trust Christ; this is to "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Yes, I know you will turn on your heels and say that religion is a good thing for Sundays, but you do not see anything in it for everyday life. Ah, sirs, it is for lack of knowing better! If you would but taste and see, you would regret that you had not tasted before—and you would rejoice and bless the Lord that you were

brought to taste at last. But you say, *"May I taste?"* Oh, yes! Divine grace is free! Christ is free! If you will come, poor sinner, there is none to push you back. If God has made you willing to take Christ, depend upon it, Christ was always willing to take you—for where God puts a renewed will into man, it is the image of His own eternal will! If you desire Christ, trust Him this morning; this is the way to escape from hell, and fly to heaven! Are you black with sin? The fountain is open—wash. Are you hungry? The door is not shut. It stands open all day—come, then, and eat. "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come you to the waters, and he who has no money, come you, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." If any of you should ever regret of trusting Christ, come and blame me. Find my Master in your hearts, and if He is not a good and precious Savior to you; if He does not feed your soul with gladness, keep you from sin and bring you at last to heaven—come and tell me I am found a false witness unto Christ! From the depths of my soul I say it, I would sooner be a Christian than an emperor; sooner have Christ than a crown; and sooner bear His cross than sit upon the throne of a Caesar!

Soul, taste and see that He is good! "But I am not fit to taste," says one. Well, but who is fit to eat? A hungry man? Are you hungry? Eat. "Oh, but my hands are black with sin." Never mind. It is not hand work here, it is mouth work. "Oh, but I am afraid I have no taste, and that if I did receive Christ into my heart, I would not taste His sweetness." Mark, the taste is *in Him* and not in your mouth. Come and take Him as He is. A little child, however weak, can be fed. Put up your mouth, you weak and foolish sinner, weary and heavy laden as you are, and by receiving Christ into your soul's mouth, you shall find Him good, and you shall go your way rejoicing! Listen diligently unto the Lord, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. It will be an awful thing to feed on the wind forever and roll the morsels of hell beneath your tongue to all eternity—but this *will* be your portion unless you taste of Christ.

May He add His own blessing to His own glory. Amen.

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FAITH AND REPENTANCE INSEPARABLE
NO. 460

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 13, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Repent and believe the gospel."
Mark 1:15.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ commences His ministry by announcing its leading commands. He comes up from the wilderness newly anointed, like the bridegroom from his chamber; His love notes are repentance and faith. He comes forth fully prepared for His office, having been in the desert, "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." His loins are girded like a strong man to run a race. He preaches with all the earnestness of a new zeal, combined with all the wisdom of a long preparation; in the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning He glitters with the dew of His youth. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Messiah speaks in the greatness of His strength! He cries unto the sons of men, "Repent and believe the gospel." Let us give our ears to these words which, like their Author, are full of divine grace, and the truth of God. Before us we have the sum and substance of Jesus Christ's whole teaching—the Alpha and Omega of His entire ministry; and coming from the lips of such a One, at such a time, with such peculiar power, let us give the most earnest attention and may God help us to obey them from our inmost hearts.

I. I shall commence by remarking that *the gospel which Christ preached was, very plainly, a command.* "Repent and believe the gospel." Our Lord does condescend to *reason.* Often His ministry graciously acted out the old text, "Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool." He does *persuade* men by telling and forcible arguments, which should lead them to seek the salvation of their souls. He does *invite* men and oh, how lovingly He woos them to be wise! "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He does *entreat* men. He condescends to become, as it were, a beggar to His own sinful creatures, beseeching them to come to Him. Indeed, He makes this to be the duty of His ministers, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's place, be you reconciled to God." Yet, remember, though He condescends to reason, to persuade, to invite, and to beseech, still His gospel has in it all the dignity and force of a command; and if we would preach it in these days as Christ did, we must proclaim it as a *command from God,* attended with a divine sanction, and not to be neglected except at the infinite peril of the soul! When the feast was spread upon the table for the marriage supper, there was an invitation—but it had all the obligation of a command—since those who rejected it were utterly destroyed as despisers of their

king! When the builders reject Christ, He becomes a stone of stumbling to "the disobedient." But how could they disobey if there were no command? The gospel contemplates, I say, invitations, entreaties, and beseeching—but it also takes the higher ground of authority. "Repent and believe," is as much a command of God as, "You shall not steal." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" has as fully a divine Authority as, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Think not, O man, that the gospel is a thing left to your option to choose or not! Dream not, O sinners that you may despise the Word from heaven and incur no guilt! Think not that you may neglect it, and no ill consequences shall follow! It is just this neglect and despising of yours which shall fill up the measure of your iniquity. It is this concern for which we cry aloud, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" God *commands* you to repent! The same God before whom Sinai was moved, and was altogether on a smoke—that same God who proclaimed the law with sound of trumpet, with lightning, and with thunder, speaks to us more gently, but still as divinely, through His only begotten Son, when He says to us, "Repent and believe the gospel."

Why is this, dear friends? Why has the Lord made it a command to us to believe in Christ? There is a blessed reason. Many souls would never venture to believe at all if it were not made a penal offense to refuse to do so, for this is the difficulty with many awakened sinners—*may I believe?* Have I a right to believe? Am I permitted to trust Christ? Now this question is put aside, once and for all, and should never irritate a broken heart again! You are *commanded* by God to do it, therefore you may do it! Every creature under heaven is commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus, and bow the knee at His name! Every creature, wherever the gospel comes, wherever the truth of God is preached, is commanded, then and there to believe the gospel! And it is put in that shape, I say, lest any conscience-stricken sinner should question whether he may do it. Surely, you *may* do what God *commands* you to do! You may throw this at the devil's lies—"I may do it. I am bid to do it by Him who has authority, and I am threatened if I do not, with eternal damnation from His presence, for 'He that believes not shall be damned.'" This gives the sinner such a blessed permit, that whatever he may be or may not be, whatever he may have felt or may not have felt, he has a warrant which he may use whenever he is led to approach the cross. However unenlightened and darkened you may be, however hard-hearted and callous you may be, you have still a warrant to look to Jesus in the words, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." He who commanded you to believe will justify you in believing. He cannot condemn you for that which He Himself bids you do! But, while there is this blessed reason for the gospel's being a command, there is yet another solemn and an awful one. It is that men may be without excuse in the Day of Judgment; no man may say at the last, "Lord, I did not know that I might believe in Christ; Lord, heaven's gate was shut in my face; I was told that I might not come, that I was not the man." "No," says the Lord, with tones of thunder, "the times of man's ignorance I winked at, but in the gospel I commanded all men

everywhere to repent. I sent My Son, and then I sent My Apostles, and afterwards My ministers, and I bade them all make this the burden of their cry, 'Repent and be converted, every one of you,' and as Peter preached at Pentecost, so I bade them preach to you. I bade them warn, exhort, and invite with all affection, but also to command with all authority, compelling you to come in, and inasmuch as you did not come at My command, you have added sin to sin; you have added the suicide of your own soul to all your other iniquities! And now, inasmuch as you did reject My Son, you shall have the portion of unbelievers, for 'he that believes not shall be damned.'"

To all the nations of the earth, then, let us sound forth this decree from God! O man, Jehovah who made you, He who gives you the breath of your nostrils, He against whom you have offended, commands you this day to repent and believe the gospel. He gives His promise—"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved," and He adds the solemn threat—"He who believes not shall be damned." I know some will not like this, but that I cannot help. The slave of systems I will never be, for the Lord has loosed that iron bondage from my neck, and now I am the joyful servant of the truth of God which makes men free! Offend or please, as God shall help me, I will preach every truth of God as I learn it from the Word; and I know if there is anything written in the Bible at all, it is written as with a sunbeam, that God in Christ commands men to repent and believe the gospel. It is one of the saddest proofs of man's utter depravity that he will not obey this command, but that he will despise Christ, and so make his doom worse than the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah. Without the regenerating work of God the Holy Spirit, no man will ever be obedient to this command; but still, it must be published for a witness against them if they reject it; and while publishing God's command with all simplicity, we may expect that He will divinely enforce it in the souls of those whom He has ordained unto eternal life!

II. While the gospel is a command, *it is a two-fold command explaining itself*. "Repent, and believe the gospel."

I know some very excellent brothers—would God there were more like them in zeal and love—who, in their zeal to preach up simple faith in Christ, have felt a little difficulty about the matter of repentance; and I have known some of them who have tried to get over the difficulty by softening down the apparent hardness of the word *repentance,* by expounding it according to its more usual Greek equivalent, a word which occurs in the original of my text, and signifies "to change one's mind." Apparently they interpret repentance to be a somewhat slighter thing than we usually conceive it to be—a mere change of mind, in fact. Now, allow me to suggest to those dear brothers that the Holy Spirit never preaches repentance as a trifle! And the change of mind, or understanding, of which the gospel speaks, is a very deep and solemn work—and must not on any account be depreciated. Moreover, there is another word which is also used in the original Greek for repentance—not so often, I admit—but still it is used, which signifies "an after-care," a word which has in it something more of sorrow and anxiety than that which signifies changing

one's mind. There must be *sorrow* for sin and *hatred* of it in true repentance, or else I have read my Bible to little purpose! In very truth, I think there is no necessity for any other definition than that of the children's hymn—

"Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more."

To repent does mean a change of mind; but then, it is a *thorough* change of the understanding, and all that is *in* the mind, so that it includes an illumination—an illumination of the Holy Spirit! And, I think it includes a discovery of iniquity and a hatred of it, without which there can hardly be a genuine repentance. We must not, I think, undervalue repentance. It is a blessed grace of God the Holy Spirit, and it is absolutely necessary unto salvation!

The command explains itself. We will take, first of all, *repentance*. It is quite certain that whatever the repentance here mentioned may be, it is repentance perfectly consistent with faith; and therefore we get the explanation of what repentance must be, from its being connected with the next command, "Believe in the gospel." Then, dear friends, we may be sure that that unbelief which *leads a man to think that his sin is too great for Christ to pardon it,* is not the repentance meant here! Many who truly repent are tempted to believe that they are too great sinners for Christ to pardon. That, however, is not a part of their repentance, it is a *sin*—a very great and grievous sin—for it is undervaluing the merit of Christ's blood; it is a denial of the truthfulness of God's promise; it is a detracting from the divine grace and favor of God who sent the gospel. Such a persuasion you must labor to get rid of, for it came from Satan, and not from the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit never teaches a man that his sins are too great to be forgiven, for that would mean God the Holy Spirit were teaching a lie! If any of you have a thought of that kind this morning, be rid of it! It comes from the powers of darkness and not from the Holy Spirit; and if some of you are troubled because you never were haunted by that fear, be glad instead of being troubled. He can save you; be your sin as black as coal, He can save you! And, it is a wicked falsehood, and a high insult against the majesty of divine love, when you are tempted to believe that you are past the mercy of God. That is not repentance, but a foul sin against the infinite mercy of God!

Then, there is another spurious repentance which makes the sinner dwell *upon the consequences of his sin, rather than upon the sin, itself, and so keeps him from believing*. I have known some sinners so distressed with fears of hell, and thoughts of death and eternal judgment, that to use the words of one terrible preacher, "They have been shaken over the mouth of hell by their collar," and have almost felt the torments of the pit of hell before they went there. Dear friends, this is not repentance! Many a man has felt all that, and has yet been lost. Look at many a dying man, tormented with remorse, which has had all its pangs and convictions, and yet, has gone down to the grave without Christ and without hope. These things may come with repentance, but they are not

an essential part of it. That which is called law-work, in which the sinner is terrified with horrible thoughts that God's mercy is gone forever, may be permitted by God for some special purpose, but it is not repentance. In fact, it may often be devilish rather than heavenly, for, as John Bunyan tells us, Diabolus does often beat the great hell drum in the ears of the men of Mansoul, to prevent their hearing the sweet trumpet of the gospel which proclaims pardon to them. I tell you, sinner, any repentance that keeps you from believing in Christ is a repentance that needs to be repented of! Any repentance that makes you think Christ will not save you, goes beyond the truth of God and against the truth of God, and the sooner you are rid of it, the better! God deliver you from it, for the repentance that will save you is quite consistent with faith in Christ!

There is, again, a *false repentance which leads men to hardness of heart and despair*. We have known some seared as with a hot iron by burning remorse. They have said, "I have done much evil. There is no hope for me. I will not hear the Word anymore." If they hear it, it is nothing to them; their hearts are hard as adamant. If they could once get the thought that God would forgive them, their hearts would flow in rivers of repentance. But no—they feel a kind of regret that they did wrong—but yet they go on in it all the same. They feel there is no hope, and that they may as well continue to live as they were likely to do, and get the pleasures of sin since they cannot, as they think, have the pleasures of divine grace. Now, that is not repentance! It is a fire which hardens, but not the Lord's fire which melts. It may be a hammer, but it is a hammer used to knit the particles of your soul together and not to break the heart. If, dear friends, you have never been the subject of these terrors, do not desire them; thank God if you have been brought to Jesus, but long not for needless horrors! Jesus saves you, not by what you *feel,* but by that finished work, that blood and righteousness which God accepted on your behalf. Remember that no repentance is worth the having which is not perfectly consistent with faith in Christ. An old saint, on his sickbed, once used this remarkable expression—"Lord, sink me low as hell in repentance, but"—and here is the beauty of it—"lift me high as heaven in faith." Now, the repentance that sinks a man low as hell is of no use except there is the faith, also, that lifts him as high as heaven! Then the two are perfectly consistent, the one with the other. A man may loathe and detest himself, and all the while he may know that Christ is able to save and has saved him! In fact, this is how true Christians live; they repent as bitterly for sin, as if they knew they should be damned for it; but they rejoice as much in Christ as if sin were nothing at all. Oh, how blessed it is to know where these two lines meet, the stripping of repentance, and the clothing of faith! The repentance that ejects sin as an evil tenant, and the faith which admits Christ to be the sole Master of the heart; the repentance which purges the soul from dead works, and the faith that fills the soul with living works, the repentance which pulls down and the faith which builds up. The repentance that scatters stones, and the faith which puts stones together; the repentance which ordains a time to weep, and the faith that gives a time to dance—these two things

together make up the work of divine grace within, whereby men's souls are saved. Be it, then, laid down as a great truth of God, most plainly written in our text, that the repentance we ought to preach is one connected with faith, and thus we may preach repentance and faith together without any difficulty whatever!

Having shown you what this repentance is not, *let us dwell for a moment upon what it is*. The repentance which is here commanded is the result of faith; it is born at the same time with faith—they are twins, and to say which is the elder is beyond my knowledge. It is a great mystery—faith is before repentance in some of its acts, and repentance before faith in another view of it; the fact is that they come into the soul together. Now, a repentance, which makes me weep and abhor my past life because of the love of Christ which has pardoned it, is the correct repentance. When I can say, "My sin is washed away by Jesus' blood," and then repent because I so sinned as to make it necessary that Christ should die—that dove-eyed repentance which looms at His bleeding wounds, and feels that her heart must bleed because she wounded Christ—that broken heart that breaks because Christ was nailed to the cross for it—*that* is the repentance which brings us salvation!

Again, the repentance which makes us avoid present sin because of the love of God who died for us, this also is saving repentance. If I avoid sin today because I am afraid of being lost if I commit it, I have not the repentance of a child of God; but when I avoid it, and seek to lead a holy life because Christ loved me and gave Himself for me, and because I am not my own but am bought with a price, this is the work of the Spirit of God!

And again, that change of mind, that carefulness which leads me to resolve that in the future I will live like Jesus, and will not live unto the lusts of the flesh, because He has redeemed me, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with His own precious blood—that is the repentance which will save me, and the repentance which He asks of me. O you nations of the earth, He asks not the repentance of Mount Sinai, while you fear and shake because His lightning is abroad; but He asks you to weep and wail because *of Him*—to look on *Him* whom you have pierced, and to mourn for Him as a man mourns for his only son! He bids you remember that you nailed the Savior to the tree, and asks that this argument may make you hate the murderous sins which fastened the Savior there, and put the Lord of glory to a humiliating and an accursed death. This is the only repentance we have to preach; not law and terrors; not despair; not driving men to self-murder—this is the terror of the world which works death; but godly sorrow is a sorrow unto salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord!

This brings me to the second half of the command, which is, "*Believe in the gospel.*" Faith means trust in Christ. Now I must again remark that some have preached this trust in Christ so well and so fully, that I can but admire their faithfulness and bless God for them. Yet there is a difficulty and a danger; it may be that in preaching simple trust in Christ as being the way of salvation, they may omit to remind the sinner that no

faith can be genuine but such as is perfectly consistent with *repentance for past sins.* My text seems to me to put it thus—no repentance is true but that which consorts with faith, and no faith is true but that which is linked with a hearty and sincere repentance on account of past sins. So then, dear friends, those people who have a faith which allows them to think lightly of past sins, have the faith of devils, and not the faith of God's elect! Those who say, "Oh, as for the past, that is nothing; Jesus Christ has washed all that away," and can talk about all the crimes of their youth, and the iniquities of their riper years, as if they were mere trifles, and never think of shedding a tear; never feel their souls ready to burst because they were such great offenders—such men who can trifle with the past, and even fight their battles over again when their passions are too cold for new rebellions—I say that such who think sin a trifle and have never sorrowed on account of it, may know that their faith is not genuine! Such men as have a faith which allows them to live carelessly in the present, who say, "Well, I am saved by a simple faith," and then sit on the ale-bench with the drunkard, or stand at the bar with the spirit-drinker, or go into worldly company, and enjoy the carnal pleasures, and the lusts of the flesh—such men are liars! They have not the faith which will save the soul. They have a deceitful hypocrisy! They have not the faith which will bring them to heaven!

And then, there are some other people who have a faith which leads them to no hatred of sin. They do not look upon sin in others with any kind of shame. It is true they would not do as others do, but then they can laugh at what others commit. They take pleasure in the vices of others—laugh at their profane jests, and smile at their loose speeches. They do not flee from sin as from a serpent, nor detest it as the murderer of their best friend. No, they dally with it! They make excuses for it; they commit in private what in public they condemn; they call grave offenses slight faults, and little defalcations. In business they wink at departures from uprightness, and consider them to be mere matters of trade. The fact being that they have a faith which will sit down arm-in-arm with sin, and eat and drink at the same table with unrighteousness! Oh, if any of you have such a faith as this, I pray God to turn it out bag and baggage. It is of no good to you. The sooner you are cleaned out of it, the better, for when this sandy foundation shall all be washed away, perhaps you may then begin to build upon the rock. My dear friends, I would be very faithful with your souls, and would lay the lancet at each man's heart. What is your repentance? Have you a repentance that leads you to look out of self to Christ, and to Christ only? On the other hand, have you that faith which leads you to true repentance? To hate the very thought of sin so that the dearest idol you have known, whatever it may be, you desire to tear from its throne, that you may worship Christ and Christ only? Be assured of this that nothing short of this will be of any use to you at the last! Repentance and a faith of any other sort may do to please you now, as children are pleased with fancies; but when you get on a deathbed and see the reality of things, you will be compelled to say that they are a falsehood and a refuge of lies! You will find that you have been

daubed with untempered mortar—that you have said, "Peace, peace," to yourselves, when there was no peace! Again, I say, in the words of Christ, "Repent and believe the gospel." Trust Christ to save you, and lament that you need to be saved, and mourn because this need of yours has put the Savior to open shame, to frightful sufferings, and to a terrible death.

III. But we must pass on to a third remark. *These commands of Christ are of the most reasonable character*.

Is it an unreasonable thing to demand of a man that he should *repent?* You have a person who has offended you; you are ready to forgive him—do you think it is at all exacting or overbearing if you ask him to apologize? If you merely ask him, as the very least thing he can do, to acknowledge that he has done wrong? "No," you say, "I should think I showed my kindness in accepting, rather than any harshness in demanding an apology from him." So God, against whom we have rebelled, who is our liege sovereign and monarch, sees it to be inconsistent with the dignity of His kingship to absolve an offender who expresses no contrition; and I say again, is this a harsh, exacting, unreasonable command? Does God in this mode act like Solomon, who made the taxes of his people heavy? Rather does He not ask of you that which your heart, if it were in a right state, would be but too willing to give, only too thankful that the Lord in His grace has said, "He who confesses his sin shall find mercy"? Why, dear friends, do you expect to be saved while you are in your sins? Are you to be allowed to love your iniquities, and yet go to heaven? What? Do you think to have poison in your veins, and yet be healthy? What, man? Keep the thief in doors and yet be acquitted of dishonesty? Be stained and yet be thought spotless? Harbor the disease, and yet be in health? Ridiculous! Absurd! Repentance is founded on the necessity of things. The demand for a change of heart is absolutely necessary; it is but a reasonable service. O, that men were reasonable, and they would repent! It is because they are not reasonable that it needs the Holy Spirit to teach their reason right reason before they will repent and believe the gospel.

And then, again, *believing;* is that an unreasonable thing to ask of you? For a creature to believe its Creator is but a duty; altogether apart from the promise of salvation, I say, God has a right to demand of the creature that He has made, that he should believe what He tells him. And, what is it He asks you to believe? Is it anything hideous, contradictory, irrational? It may be above reason, but it is not contrary to reason. He asks you to believe that through the blood of Jesus Christ, He can still be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. He asks you to trust in Christ to save you. Can you expect that He will save you if you will not trust Him? Have you really the hardihood to think that He will carry you to heaven while all the while you declare He cannot do it? Do you think it consistent with the dignity of a Savior to save you while you say, "I do not believe You are a Savior, and I will not trust You?" Is it consistent with His dignity for Him to save you, and allow you to remain an unbelieving sinner, doubting His grace, mistrusting His love, slandering His

character, doubting the efficacy of His blood and of His plea? Why, man, it is the most reasonable thing in the world that He should demand of you that you should believe in Christ! And this He demands of you this morning. "Repent and believe the gospel." O friends, O friends, how sad, how sad is the state of man's soul when he will not do this! We may preach to you, but you will never repent, and believe the gospel. We may lay God's commands, like an axe, to the root of the tree, but, reasonable as these commands are, you will still refuse to give God His due; you will go on in your sins; you will not come unto Him that you may have life; and it is here, the Spirit of God must come in to work in the souls of the elect, to make them willing in the day of His power. But oh, in God's name, I warn you, if, after hearing this command, you do, as I know you will do, without His Spirit, continue to refuse obedience to so reasonable a gospel, you shall find at the last it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you; for had the things which are preached in London been proclaimed in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and in ashes! Woe unto you, inhabitants of London! Woe unto you, subjects of the British Empire! For if the truths of God which have been declared in your streets had been preached to Tyre and Sidon, they would have continued even unto this day!

IV. But still, to pass on, I have yet a fourth remark to make and that is, *this is a command which demands immediate obedience*. I do not know how it is; let us preach as we may, we cannot lead others to think that there is any great alarm, that there is any reason why they should think about their souls *now*. Last night there was a review on Wimbledon Common, and living not very far away from it, I could hear in one perpetual roll the cracks of the rifles, and the thunder of the cannon. One remarked to me, "Supposing there really were war there, we would not sit quite so comfortably in our room with our window open listening to all this noise." No; and so when people come to chapel, they hear a sermon about repentance and faith; they listen to it. "What do you think of it?" "Oh—very well." But suppose it were real? Suppose they believed it to be real, would they sit quite so comfortably? Would they be quite so easy? Ah, no! But you do not think it is real. You do not think that the God who made you actually asks of you this day that you should repent and believe. But, sirs, *it is real,* and it is your procrastination, it is your self-confidence that is the sham, the bubble that is soon to burst! God's demand is the solemn reality, and if you could but hear it as it should be heard, you would escape for your lives and flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you in the gospel—and you would do this *today*. This is the command of Christ, I say, today. Today is *God's time*. "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation." "Today," the gospel always cries, for if it tolerated sin a single day, it would be an unholy gospel! If the gospel told men to repent of sin tomorrow, it would give them an allowance to continue in it today, and that would, indeed, be to pander to men's lusts! But the gospel makes a clean sweep of sin, and demands of man that he should throw down the weapons of *his* rebellion *now*. Down with them, man! Every single one of them!

Down, sirs, down with them and down with them *NOW!* You must not keep one of them! Throw them down at once! So long as you continue in unbelief, you continue in sin, and are increasing your sin; and to give you leave to be an unbeliever for an hour, were to pander to your lusts; therefore, the gospel demands of you faith and faith *now,* for this is God's time, and the time which holiness must demand of a sinner.

Besides, sinner, *it is your time*. This is the only time you can call your own. Tomorrow? Is there such a thing? In what calendar is it written except in the almanac of the fool? Tomorrow! Oh, how you have ruined multitudes! "Tomorrow," say men, but, like the back wheel of a chariot, they are always near to the front wheel, always near to their duty; they still go on and on but never get one whit the nearer, for, travel as they may, tomorrow is still a little beyond them—but a little, and so they never come to Christ at all. This is how they speak, as an ancient poet said—

"I will tomorrow, that I will, I will be sure to do it!
Tomorrow comes, tomorrow goes, and still you are to do it.
Thus, then, repentance is deferred from one day to another,
Until the day of death is one, and judgment is the other!"

O sons of men, always *to be* blessed, *to be* obedient but never obedient. When will you learn to be wise? This is your only time; it is God's time and *this is the best time*. You will never find it easier to repent than now; you will never find it easier to believe than now. It is impossible *now* except the Spirit of God is with you; it will be as impossible tomorrow; but if *now* you would believe and repent, the Spirit of God is in the gospel which I preach; and while I cry to you in God's name, "Repent and believe," He that bade me command you thus to do, gives power with the command! Even as Christ spoke to the waves and said, "Be still," and they were still, and to the winds, "Be calm," and they were quiet—so when we speak to your proud heart it will yield because of the divine grace that accompanies the Word; and you will repent and believe the gospel. So may it be, and may the message of this morning gather out the elect, and make them willing in the day of God's power!

But now, lastly, this command, while it has an immediate power, has also a *continual force*. "Repent and believe the gospel," is advice to the young beginner, and it is advice to the old gray-headed Christian, for this is our life all the way through—"Repent and believe the gospel." St. Anselm, who *was* a saint—and that is more than many of them were who were called so—St. Anselm once cried out, "Oh, sinner that I have been, I will spend all the rest of my life in repenting of my whole life!" And Rowland Hill, whom I think I might call St. Rowland, when he was near death, said he had one regret, and that was that a dear friend who had lived with him for 60 years would have to leave him at the gate of heaven. "That dear friend," he said, "is repentance; repentance has been with me all my life and I think I shall drop a tear," said the good man, "as I go through the gates, to think that I can repent no more." Repentance is the daily and hourly duty of a man who believes in Christ; and as we walk by faith from the wicket gate to the celestial city, so our right-hand companion all the journey through must be repentance. Why, dear friends, the Christian, after he is saved, repents more than he ever did

before, for now he repents not merely of overt deeds, but even of imaginations. He will take himself to task at night, and chide himself because he had tolerated one foul thought; because he has looked on vanity, though perhaps the heart had gone no further than the look of lust; because the thought of evil has flitted through his mind—for all this he will vex himself before God; and were it not that he still continues to believe the gospel, one foul imagination would be such a plague and sting to him, that he would have no peace and no rest! When temptation comes to him, the good man finds the use of repentance, for having hated sin and fled from it of old, he has ceased to be what he once was. One of the ancient fathers, we are told, had, before his conversion, lived with an evil woman, and some little time after, she accosted him as usual. Knowing how likely he was to fall into sin, he ran away with all his might and she ran after him, crying, "Why do you run away? It is I." He answered, "I run away because I am not I. I am a new man!"

Now, it is just that, "I am not I," which keeps the Christian out of sin; that hating of the former "I," that repenting of the old sin that makes him run from evil, abhor it, and look not upon it, lest by his eyes he should be led into sin. Dear friends, the more the Christian knows of Christ's love, the more will he hate himself to think that he has sinned against such love! Every doctrine of the gospel will make a Christian repent; election, for instance. "How could I sin," he says, "I who was God's favorite, chosen of Him from before the foundation of the world?" Final perseverance will make him repent. "How can I sin," he says, "who am loved so much and kept so surely? How can I be so villainous as to sin against everlasting mercy?" Take any doctrine you please, the Christian will make it a fountain for sacred woe; and there are times when his faith in Christ will be so strong that his repentance will burst its bonds, and will cry with George Herbert—

"Oh, who will give me tears?
Come, all you springs,
You clouds and rain dwell in my eyes,
My grief has need of all the watery things
That nature has produced. Let every vein
Suck up a river to supply my eyes,
My weary weeping eyes; too dry for me,
Unless they set new conduits, new supplies
To bear them out, and with my state agree."

And all this is because he murdered Christ; because his sin nailed the Savior to the tree; and therefore he weeps and mourns even to his life's end. Sinning, repenting and believing—these are three things that will stay with us till we die! Sinning will stop at the river Jordan; repentance will die triumphing over the dead body of sin; and faith itself, though perhaps it may cross the stream, will cease to be as necessary as it has been here, for there we shall see even as we are seen, and shall know even as we are known!

I send you away when I have once again solemnly declared my Master's will to you this morning, "Repent and believe the gospel." Here are some of you come from foreign countries, and many of you are from our provincial towns in England; you came here, perhaps, to hear the

preacher of whom many a strange thing has been said. Well and good, and may stranger things still be said if they will but bring men under the sound of the Word that they may be blessed! Now, this I have to say to you this morning. In that great day when a congregation ten thousand times thousands larger than this shall be assembled, and on the great white throne the Judge shall sit, there will be not a man, or woman, or child, who is here this morning, able to make excuse and say, "I did not hear the gospel; I did not know what I must do to be saved!" You *have* heard it—"Repent and believe the gospel." That is, trust Christ. Believe that He is able and willing to save you. But there is something better. In that great day, I say, there will be some of you present—oh, let us hope all of us—who will be able to say, "Thank God that by His grace I yielded up the weapons of my proud rebellion by repentance! Thank God that by His grace I looked to Christ, and took Him to be my Savior from first to last, for here am I, a monument of divine grace, a sinner saved by blood, to praise Him while time and eternity shall last!" God grant that we may meet each other at the last with joy and not with grief! I will be a swift witness against you to condemn you if you believe not this gospel; but if you repent and believe, then we shall praise that divine grace which turned our hearts, and so gave us the repentance which led us to trust Christ, and the faith which is the effectual gift of the Holy Spirit. What shall I say more unto you? Why? Why will you reject this? Have I have spoken to you of fables, of fictions, of dreams? Then turn on your heels and reject my discourse! If I have spoken in my own name, who am I that you should care one whit for me? But if I have preached that which Christ preached, "Repent and believe the gospel," I charge you by the living God, I charge you by the world's Redeemer, I charge you by the cross of Calvary, and by the blood which stained the dust at Golgotha—obey this divine message, and you shall have eternal life! But refuse it, and on your own heads be your blood forever and ever!

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AM I CLEAR OF HIS BLOOD?
NO. 461

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 20, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground."
Genesis 4:10.

CAIN was of the wicked one and slew his brother. "The way of Cain" is not hard to describe. He is too proud to offer atonement for his sin; he prefers his own way of sacrifice; he presents a bloodless oblation; he hates the obedience of faith; he smites the faithful Abel. Beware of the way of Cain, O proud self-righteous ones, lest you run therein, for the steps are few from self-righteous pride to hatred of true believers, and murder is not far thereafter! There is the seed of every infamy in the proud spirit of self-justification, and it is a great mercy that it does not more often show itself in all its terrific ripeness. Look, bold boasters of your own merits, at the mangled body of the first martyr, for this is the full-blown development of your rebellious self-conceit! From all pride and vainglory, from all self-righteousness and hatred of the cross of Christ, good Lord deliver us!

This is not, however, the drift of my discourse this morning. I have rather to indicate the method in which we also may be guilty of this sin of blood-guiltiness concerning our brother.

Dear friends, I feel assured that the text of this morning, terrible as it must have been in the ears of Cain, ought to ring in your ears, and mine; and it may be that while that cry is heard again, though at the distance of many thousand years, it may awaken some here present to a sense of guilt, and to a desire for amendment; and thus, the blood of Abel may speak good, though terrible things to them, and prepare their ears to listen to the voice of that other blood, "which speaks better things than that of Abel."

First, we shall this morning *inquire for the criminals whose brother's blood cries from the ground.* Next, we will endeavor *to show the hateful character of the crime*. Then, thirdly, *we will select the judgment*. And fourthly, *we will exhort the guilty ones to turn from their ways and to hear the voice of mercy*.

I. First, then, we are to MAKE A SEARCHING INQUIRY FOR THE CRIMINALS.

I do not intend to say much, this morning, about the act of actually slaying one's brother. The question of the rightness of war is a moot point even among moral men. Among those who read their Bibles, the allowance of defensive war may, perhaps, still be a question; but any other sort of war must certainly be condemned by the man who is a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall say nothing, however, or but very little, concerning the criminality of those ambitious and unscrupulous persons

who hurry nations into war without cause. Lust of dominion and a false pride are setting the United States on a blaze. I know at this time a tragic incident connected with the present war in America. Four brothers left one of our villages in Oxfordshire, two of whom, if now alive, are in one army and two of them in the other; and I doubt not, as desperately as any of their comrades, they are thirsting for each other's blood! What horrors cluster around the iniquity of civil war? On yonder soil, it is the blood of brothers that cries from the ground. Men are fighting, one against the other, in this lamentable conflict *for no justifiable cause*. The one cause which justified the war, as we thought—the snapping of the fetters of the slave—is gone, emancipation is not proclaimed, and the slave is forgotten. What might have been a struggle for the rights of man is now a shameful and abominable slaughter of brothers by brothers! And a cry is going up to heaven from those blood-red fields which God will hear, and will yet avenge on both sides. Oh, that they would sheathe their swords and end it once and for all! What does it matter if there are two nations or one? Better two in peace, than one divided with intestine strife! How much better to have even 20 nations of living men, than one nation of mangled corpses! What difference is it to the survivors if they have all the honor and dignity of conquerors, when they are stained up to their elbows in the blood of their fellow men? Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "Consider your ways." Arise, you who draw your sword against your fellows, and weep like the weeping of Ramah of old, and make your cities like Bochim, because of your iniquities! Go back to your homes in peace, beat your swords into plowshares, and your spears into pruning hooks, for Jehovah will have none of them; He casts out your armies like dung upon the field because every man of you smites his kinsman and his fellow! That, however, is not my subject this morning. May God grant that whatever may come of this terrible struggle, His name may be glorified; at present, I see nothing but a carnival of madmen—hell let loose; and I fear that an evil demon has deceived both nations, and made them like ravening wolves, and roaring lions!

I have to deal with *you*, however, and not with those across the ocean. Let us come, therefore, to the point. There are many persons whose brother's blood cries to God from the ground. *There is the seducer;* he spoke with honeyed words, and talked of love, but the poison of asps was under his tongue, for lust was in his heart. He came to a fair temple as a worshipper, but he committed infamous sacrilege, and left *that* to be the haunt of demons which once was the palace of purity. Such men are received into society; they are looked upon as gentlemen, while the fallen woman, the harlot sister—she has to hide herself beneath the shadow of night—none will make excuse for her sin; but the man, the criminal—he is called a respectable and reputable man—he may fill places of trust, and posts of honor, and there are none who point the finger of scorn at him. Sir, the voice of that poor fallen sister's blood cries to heaven against you! And in the day of judgment, her damnation shall be on your garments; all the infamy into which you have plunged her shall lie at your door; and among the dreadful sights of hell, two eyes shall glare at you through the murky darkness like the eyes of serpents, burning their

way into your inmost soul! "You did deceive and decoy me to the pit of hell," she says, "your arms dragged me down to hell, and here I lie to curse you forever and ever as the author of my eternal ruin." I know I address some such this morning; it were not possible that all men here were pure and spotless. Hear, while yet there is time for your repentance, for the voice of her blood cries unto God from the ground for vengeance!

Then, there are men *who educate youth in sin*. Satan's captains and marshals; strong men with corrupt hearts, who are never better pleased than when they see the buds of evil swelling and ripening into crime. We have known some such—men of an evil eye, who not only loved sin, themselves, but delighted in it in others. They pat the boy on his back when he utters his first oath; they reward him when he commits his first theft. Satan has his Sunday school teachers, hell has its missionaries who compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and make him tenfold more a child of hell than they are themselves. Most of our villages are cursed with one such wretch—and is there a street in London which is not the haunt of one such fiend, or more? Oh, do I speak to any here who have applauded and praised young persons when they have commenced walking in the paths of infamy? Wretch! Have you sought to entangle them in your net? Have you, like the spider, thrown first one film about them, and then another, till you have them safely in your coils to drag them down to the den of Beelzebub? Then, the voice of your brother's blood cries from the ground, and at the judgment will be a witness which you shall not be able to confute—the witness of the blood of souls ruined by your foul and evil training! Beware you who hunt for the precious life!

Yes, and I know some base men who, *if they see young converts, will take a pride in putting stumbling blocks in their way*. They no sooner discover that there is some little working of conscience, than they laugh, they sneer, they point the finger. How often have I seen this in the husband who seeks to prevent the wife's attendance at the house of God, and in the young man who jeers at his companion because he felt something of the power of religion! Is not this too frequent in our great establishments in London—where one young man kneels to pray, and many are found to laugh at him, and hurl some foul term at his head? Not content to perish; like dogs pursuing a rabbit, the wicked will haunt the godly! Oh, you who are the enlisting sergeants for the Black Prince of Darkness; you who seem never as happy as when you set your traps for souls to lure them to destruction—solemnly do I warn you—oh, take the warning, lest God's avenging angel, without earnest, should soon overtake you with the dividing sword which shall smite you even to the neck, and make you feel how terrible a thing it is to have tried to ruin the servants of the living God!

Then, *there is the infidel*, the man who is not content to keep his sin in his own breast but must publish his infamy. He ascends the platform and blasphemes the Almighty to His face! He defies the Eternal; he takes Scripture to make it the subject of unhallowed jest; he makes religion a theme for comedy. Take heed, sir, there will be a tragedy by-and-by, in which you shall be the chief sufferer! What shall I say of those men who are more diligent by far than half of God's ministers are? Whose names

we see plastered on every wall? They go from town to town, especially where in greatest numbers artisans are dwelling, and never seem content unless they are preaching against everything that is pure and lovely, and of good report. They utter things which would make your cheeks blush if you heard them, and, at the very reading of which, the marrow of your bones might melt—dreadful things against the Most High—such as David heard when he said, "Horror has taken hold of me because of the wicked that keep not Your law." Oh, sirs! Should I address such persons here, the voice of your brother's blood cries to Jehovah this day! The young men you have deluded, the working men you have led astray, the sinners whose lullaby you have sung, the souls that you have poisoned with your foul draughts, the multitudes—the multitudes that you have deceived—all these shall stand up at the last, an exceedingly great army, and pointing their fingers at you, shall demand your swift destruction because you decoyed them to their doom!

And *what shall I say of the unfaithful preacher?* The slumbering watchman of souls, the man who swore at God's altar that he was called of the Holy Spirit to preach the Word of God; the man upon whose lips men's ears waited with attention while he stood like a priest at God's altar to teach Israel God's law; the man who performed his duties half-asleep, in a dull and careless manner until men slept, too, and thought religion but a dream? What shall I say of *the minister of unholy life*, whose corrupt practice out of the pulpit has made the most telling things in the pulpit to be of no avail, has blunted the edge of the sword of the Spirit, and turned the back of God's army in the day of battle? Yes, what shall I say of the man who has amused his audience with pretty things when he ought to have awakened their consciences, who has been rounding periods when he ought to have announced the judgment of God; who has been preaching a dead morality when he ought to have lifted Christ on high as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness? What shall I say, brothers and sisters, of those who have dwindled away their congregations, who have sown strife and schism in Churches of Christ once happy, peaceful and prosperous? What shall I say of the men who, out of the pulpit, have made a jest of the most solemn things, whose life has been so devoid of holy passion and devout enthusiasm, that men have thought the truth of God to be fiction, religion a stage play, prayer a nullity, the Spirit of God a phantom, and eternity a joke? Among all who will need eternal compassion, surely the unfaithful, unholy, unearnest minister of Christ will be the most pitiable! What did I say? No, rather the most *contemptible*, the most *despicable*, the most *accursed!* Surely, every thunderbolt shall make his brow its target and every arrow of God shall seek his conscience as its mark! If I must perish, let me suffer any way but as a minister who has desecrated the pulpit by a slumbering style of ministry, by a lack of passion for souls. God knows how oftentimes this body trembles with horror at the thought the blood of souls should be required at my hands; and I cannot, and I hope I never may; I cannot understand that lifeless performance of duty, that cold and careless going through of services which, alas, is too common! How shall such men answer for it at the bar of God—the smooth things, the polite and honeyed words, the

daubing of men with the untempered mortar of peace, peace, when they should have dealt with them honestly as in God's name? Oh, sirs, if we ever play the Boanerges, we shall hear God's thunder in our ears, and that forever and ever and, cursed of men, and cursed of the Most High shall we be without end! In Tophet, we shall have this wail peculiar to ourselves, "We preached what we did not feel; we testified of what we did not know; men received not our witness, for we were hypocrites, and deceivers, and now we go down, richly deserving it, to the very lowest depths of hell!"

But, my hearers, think not when I thus speak of the ministry, that I am about to permit you to escape. The voice of your brother's blood cries to God from the ground, even though you are no infidel lecturer, though you have never been debauched, though you have taught no heresy, though you have spread no schism! *If your life is unholy, your brother's blood is on your garments*. "Oh," says one, "if I sin, I sin to myself." Impossible! As well might the gasses say, "I am deadly to myself alone"; as well might the cholera say, "My deadly breath is only for myself." Your example spreads; you, like the leper, leave uncleanliness on everything you touch. The very atmosphere which surrounds you breeds contagion. What others see you do, they learn to do. Some may rival you and exceed you, but if you taught them their letters, and they learn to read in hell's book better than you, all that they learn afterwards will come to your door, because of the *elements of sin* they learned from your practice. I am afraid many people never look at their transgressions in this light. Why, you cannot help being leaders and teachers. If in your own house you are a drunkard, your boys will be drunkards, too! I have heard of a man, who flogged his boy for swearing, swearing at him all the time he did it. We know instances of men who feel as if they would sooner bury their children than see them grow up such as they are themselves—but yet, how can it be helped? Your practice must, and will, influence your children. No, not your children only, but all with whom you come into connection in the mercantile world. Do not think, sir, if you are a great employer, that your men can know what your life is without being affected by that knowledge. There may be some among them who have an inward principle which will not yield to temptation, but I know of hardly anything more dangerous than for a number of operatives to come constantly into contact with one whom they look up to as a master—who is also a master of the arts of sin, and a doctor of damnation to their souls. Oh, take care, if not for yourselves, yet for others, or else, as sure as you live, the voice of your brother's blood will cry unto God from the ground!

To come yet closer home to this present audience; *how much of the blood of man will die at the door of careless professors?* You who make a profession of being Christians, and yet live in sin, you are the murderers of souls by the thousands! And you, too, who are moral enough in your conversation, and regular in your attendance on the outward forms of religion—you who never weep over sinners, you who never pray for them, you who never speak to them—you who leave all *that* to your minister, and think you have nothing to do with it—the voice of your brother's blood cries from the ground to heaven! There died a man on your street

the other day; you spoke not to him about his soul—his blood cries to heaven against you! You live in a villa in the country. There was a neighbor of yours—you were on speaking terms with him, but you talked not to him about his soul—he is dead; he is gone—his blood cries to God against you! You have relations, relations to whom you could speak with familiarity; you have talked to them of business; you have befriended them, perhaps, in their needs, but you have never said a word to them about escaping from hell and fleeing to heaven. When you shall hear the mournful news that they have departed this life—will not their blood cry against you from the ground where they are buried? You work, young man, in an establishment where you are somewhat respected, and, without intrusiveness, you might often say a good word for your Master, but you do not. The blood of your fellows shall cry against you if they perish! Do not think the minister is the only man who is responsible for souls; God has made you *all* watchmen! All of you, in your spheres, are to be watchers for the souls of men; and, "If the watchman warns them not," says the Lord, "they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands."

I know you do not think of this, and I am sorrowfully conscious that I do not feel it myself as much as I ought to do. Ah, the servants of Satan shame me! They shame me, they shame me! There comes at night a message to some of you who are the servants of Satan—"The master is come, and he calls for you." You leave your wife and your children without a tear. You go to your master's house, and there are cups, foul cups, passing round, and you will drink, and drink, and drink, and drink on—never denying your master, confessing him with many an oath—saying to your comrades many things which injure your poor souls, and yet, you do it so bravely, oh, so bravely! You hardly know how you get home at night, but when the morning comes, and you awake, there is the redness of the eyes, the headache, and the sickness. But the next night, when your master wants you, you go again! And so you will do, year after year, even though delirium tears you like a whirlwind. But here am I, a servant of God, and when my Master calls for me, and bids me go and confess Him, I am tempted to be still; and when He tells me to speak to yonder man, I would wickedly avoid the task! And whereas you confess your master and imprecate a curse upon your heads, how often do some of us confess our Master as timidly as if we feared a curse, when instead, it is by confession that the curse is turned away! Oh, it is enough to make us Christians ashamed to think how sinners will confess *their* god! Hear them at night, as they reel home through the streets! They are not ashamed of *their* lord and master! Hear how they swear and defy heaven! They are ashamed of nothing for their lord! And yet, we, who have heaven for our reward, and such a Christ to serve, and One so good and gracious to us—look at us—look at us! What poor lovers of our Savior are we! What poor lovers of the souls of men! I know this is not true of all of you, for there are some of you who love men's souls. I have delighted to see in many of you that deep earnestness which makes you yearn for the conversion of others. You will sometimes take your stand at the corner of the street, and though you cannot speak as you would, yet the tears running

down your cheeks prove your earnestness. There are many women among you, too, who have spoken a good word for Christ in strange places, and have never been ashamed of Him. But oh, there are some of you, the members of this church, over whom the angels of glory might weep, for what do you do for Christ? What do you give to Christ? You are content to go to heaven, yourselves, but you let your neighbors perish for lack of knowledge, and neither the Mission will you help, nor anything else besides! The blood, the blood of dying London cries from the ground against you before God! The perishing crowds of every street, and every court and every alley send up their wail to heaven—"O, God, Your professing people have forgotten us." The daughter of Zion is become like the ostrich of the desert; the tongue of the sucking child cleaves to the roof of its mouth for lack of moisture! O, God, will You not visit Your Church for this, and make these, Your people, who forget the souls of men, smart even to the quick?

I do not know whether I have seized hold of any of your consciences, but if I have, may God the Holy Spirit get such a grip of you that He may never let you rest till you say, "Great God, in Your name I will do something, that the next time I hear the bell toll I may be able to say, 'I did what I could for that man, and if his soul has perished, his blood does not lie at my door, for I did tell him the way of salvation; I did exhort him to flee from the wrath to come.'" I am afraid none of us are altogether guiltless here; we must all take some degree of sin to our own consciences. I fear against every one of us, to some extent, the voice of our brother's blood cries unto heaven because of our sloth.

II. But to pass on. I was, in the second place, to HOLD UP THIS CRIME TO SCORN—the chief point being whose blood it is; it is the blood of *our brethren*. "The voice of *your brother's* blood cries out to Me from the ground." All men are our brethren. If any of them perish, and if we have not done our best for their conversion, their blood has a fearful and telling cry against us when it reaches to heaven. But I shall rather dwell this morning upon certain special cases. Perhaps, young man, *it is your natural brother's blood* that cries against you. You have been converted to God, say, these three, four, ten, or 20 years. You have done nothing for your brother's conversion—never written him a letter begging him to think of his state; never spoken a kind and gentle word to him about Christ. No, you have been content to let him know you were a Christian, and were half afraid of that, but you have done nothing for him! Will not your brother, if he perishes, be well able to say, "My brother and I did hang at the same breast, and were rocked in the same cradle; we played together; we filled one home with glee—he professed to know the way of life, but he never told me the way; he professed to have pardon for his sins, but he never told me how I might find it, too; he allowed me to go unpitied to my doom without a tear"? Will not the voice of such blood as that cry against us if we have been guilty?

It may be, however, it is *the blood of your father or mother*. Some of you young people have come to London, and God has met with you in this house of prayer. You still have ungodly parents in the country—have you quite forgotten them? What if your gray-headed sire should die? You

know he never thinks of God; what if he should die before his son has talked to him! Oh, you have a strange power, you sons and daughters. If you will only pluck the old man by the sleeve and say, "Father, by the child's love I bear you, I would desire to see you saved!" And do you fling this power away? Would you see your father and mother sold to slavery, and if it were in your power to redeem them, would you keep the sordid ransom? Or if you saw them sick, would you spare your feet and not run for a physician? Or if you saw them sinking in the stream, would you not leap in, at the peril of your own life, and rescue them? And will you let them perish; perish forever, without a struggle on your part? Will you see them go down to the depths without stretching out a helping hand? I cannot think thus of you, if God has truly touched your hearts!

But what shall I say to those who are not only careless of parents, but are *neglecting their own children?* Mother, what if the voice of your child's blood should cry to God against you? You trained that child up without the fear of God; you sent your boy and girl to school on the Sunday, it is true, but that was only to get rid of them! What was your own example to them? Bad; what was the father's example? Vicious; when your boy grows up, he becomes reckless; you cannot get him to come to a place of worship with you *now*. No, but if you had brought him when he was a child, it may be he would have been here now; and, inasmuch as you have tutored him for Satan, if that boy of yours goes down to the pit, his soul shall cry against you! Up to heaven shall it send its shriek—"Oh God! The mother who did bear me, and the man who did beget me were as cruel to me as if I were not their child, for they allowed me to come here without weeping for me, without praying for me, without taking me in their arms of loving supplication, and pleading that I might be saved!"

Look at this again in the case of some of you against whom the indictment lies, that *you have done injury to your servants*. Oh, I know great cotton growers, builders and traders that have many men in their employment, and have much to answer for. Sirs, though it is your skill and your capital that brings in your wealth, have you no responsibility towards the men who day and night toil for you? You pay them their wages, but do you think your responsibility has ceased with that? Are they not the very bones and sinews of your establishment, and after taking everything into consideration, do you not owe far more to them than ever the best remuneration can pay? And what if you have left their spiritual state uncared for? Have you said, "Oh, it is no business of mine what they do with their Sundays; I do not care what they do when they are out of the mill, or away from the workshop"? What? Sirs, do you think that as those hundreds of souls go before God, they will lay no impeachment against you? Do you think they will not arraign you at God's bar? I tell you, and I think I speak in the Spirit of God when I say this, you shall find that the voices of your neglected workers, the voices of those whom you never sought to bless with spiritual instruction, shall cry against you from the ground! Would that I had an audience, for the moment, consisting more largely of such persons! There are some here who can, I think, plead exemption, for they have done much to spread spiritual light among those who toil for them; but I do fear they are ra-

ther the exception than the rule, and that there are many who think no more of the men who work for them than of their horses—and some not as much. They take as much interest in the spirit of the beast that goes downwards as in the soul of man that goes upwards. Let it be so no more! Employers, contractors, you who have great influence, I do entreat you—shall I fall upon my knees to do it? I could not then do it more earnestly—see to it that your brothers' blood lies not on your garments throughout eternity!

Oh, there is one sinner who can look upon this in a solemn light! Who is it who has gone down to the pit of hell? You, man, yonder—who is it who died but a few days ago? The woman who loved you as she loved her own soul; the woman who idolized you—who thought you an angel! Shall I say it before God and to your face?—you ruined her! And what next, sir? You cast her off as though she were but dirt, and threw her into the kennel with a broken heart. And being there, her god having cast her off—for you were her god—she fell into despair. And despair led to dreadful consequences, and to direr ruin, still. She has gone, and you are glad of it—*glad of it*—for you will hear no more of her now, you say. Sir, you *shall* hear of it! You *shall* hear of it. You *shall* hear of it! As long as you live, her spirit shall haunt you; track you to the filthy joy which you have planned for a future day. And on your death bed she shall be there to twist her fingers in your hair, to tear your soul out of your body, and drag it down to the hell appointed for such fiends as you—for you spilt her blood, the blood of her that trusted you—a fair, frail thing, worthy to be an angel's sister, and you pulled her down, and made her a devil's tool! God save you, for if He does not, your damnation shall be sevenfold! Oh, you son of Belial, what shall be your doom when God deals with you as you deserve? Are these hot words? Not half as hot as I would make them. I would send them hissing into your souls if I were able; not so much to condemn you, as with the hope that, though you cannot make good the mischief you have done, you may yet turn from the error of your ways to seek a Savior's blood, and find pardon for this great iniquity! Oh, dear friends, let us all take something of our text home. When we think of friends who are dead and gone, are there none over whose corpses we must say, "I did not do what I could for this man. I did not do what I could for this woman"? I know when I go down to the village where I used to preach, and as I look upon the houses, I am apt to question myself—Was I as earnest with the people as I used to be? I can say I hope I never flinched from telling them all the truth of God, though sometimes it had to be very rudely and roughly spoken. But yet God knows I do sometimes smite myself to think I did not weep over them more, and did not entreat them more to be won to Christ. And you, too, who sit in these pews so often—many of you are joyful converts to Christ—but numbers of you are still unsaved! What if any of you should say at the last, "We trusted our minister; we hung upon his lips; we were never absent; we loved the Sunday, but oh, he did not tell us of our sin; he did not plead with us to be saved; he left us to ourselves—he was cold when his heart should have been hot! He was a man without tears, and had a heart without sympathy for us"? Oh, sirs, God grant you may nev-

er be able to say that of me! God save you, for my soul longs for you! He is my witness how earnestly I long for you all to be in the heart of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Come unto Him! Come unto Him! I let not your blood cry out against me! Oh, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust Him! Trust Him now, that you may be saved, and that at last I may be able to say, "Here am I, and the children whom You have given me. You have kept them through Your power, and they are preserved even to the end. Unto You be glory forever and ever!"

III. We are in the third place and that only for a moment, TO EXPECT THE JUDGMENT. "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." It does not cry to a deaf ear, but to the ear of one who hears and feels the cry, and will certainly make bare His arm to smite the offender, and to avenge the wrong. Seducer, infidel, tempter of the young, God hears the cry that goes up against you, and this is its burden—it comes from souls damned through your influence, and they say—"Lord give him his portion with the tormentors. Let him suffer, for *we* suffer. He slew *us*, avenge our death!" He will do it, and the day shall come when swift destruction shall overtake you, and as with a rod of iron will He break you; as a potter's vessel, so will He dash you in pieces, and who shall deliver you out of His hands?

The cry goes up to heaven against barren, careless, cold-hearted professors, from many in London, untaught and untrained, who are on their beds today in the jaws of death. They cry out, I say, against you, careless Christians, and they say, "Lord, take away their privileges from them! Lord, take them away from the Church which they disfigure and dishonor! Lord, take away these trees that bear no leaves for the healing of the nations! Sweep away this salt which has lost its savor! Lord, cast these candles that give no light into the fire! O Lord, take away, take away, once and for all, these cities that are not set on hills, but are hidden from the sight of men." What would you say if God should visit this church, for instance, and take out of it all of you who are useless? How the catalog would be thinned! How would our lists show here and there the black mark of erasure! Unless you are doing something to win souls, the voice of your brother's blood cries to God from the ground—and it cries that your privileges may be taken away, and the candlestick moved out of its place! And it will be so, my hearers; it will be so unless all of us arise to serve our Master. We are happy when God prospers us, but if we get many in our midst who do nothing for Christ, we shall have "Ichabod" written on these walls! The walls that now ring with the song of the multitude, shall hear only the wail of a desolate few; the pulpit that now thunders out God's own voice will become a dead, dreary, and voiceless platform; the time will come when your deacons and your elders shall be no more men of earnest hearts—and when you shall grope as the blind in the midnight and say—"Oh, that God would give us back once more such times as we used to have, which we frittered away through our carelessness, and lost through our lukewarmness."

Further, *how awful must be the cry of this blood from the ground against a minister!* I think I hear it, a cry from earth, from heaven, from hell—"Hurl him from his pulpit! Tear away his vestments! Snatch the

book from his blood-stained hands! Smite upon the mouth the dog that will not bark! Let his corpse fall before men's eyes; let him be made a hissing and a byword, because, being made a winner of souls, he dared to trifle, and being made a watchman of a besieged city, he dared to lie down and slumber. Tear him down! Tear him down! Tear him down," a hundred voices cry! Though he is a bishop or a great man in the church; though his eloquence is unrivalled; though his power is matchless, pluck him down from his high places—degenerate that he is, to waste men's time—and ruin men's souls forever!"

And what shall the cry be against *you who still continue by your ill-example to lead others into sin—open sinners and infidels?* It would be an awful thing to pray for a man's damnation, but there are some people I know of who, while they live, do so much mischief, that if they were dead, men would breathe more freely. I know a village where there lives a man who contaminates half the population. There is a sneer upon his face at which virtue blushes; there is a sneer at which even courage quails. He is a wretch so well taught, and so deeply instructed in the highest science of iniquity, that wherever he may go, he finds none a match for him—either in his reasoning or in the infamous conclusions which he draws. He is a deadly upas tree, dropping black poison upon all beneath his shadow. I did think once I would half pray that the man might die and go to his doom, but one must not; and yet, were he gone, the saints might say, "It is well," and as over Babylon, when she is destroyed, and the smoke of her torment goes up forever, the saints will say, "Hallelujah." So have I thought that over these against whom the blood of many young people cries to God from the ground, when they go, at last, to their doom, men might almost say, "Hallelujah," for God has judged the great sinner who did make the people of the earth drunk with the wine of his fornication!

IV. I hope that these terrible things have prepared our minds to hear better THE VOICE OF EXHORTATION.

If there is the voice of blood crying against us today, and we affirm that none of us can altogether escape from it, what shall we do to be rid of the past? Can tears of repentance do it? No. Can promises of amendment make a blank page where there are so many blots and blurs? Ah, no! Nothing that *we* can do can put away our sin. But, may not the future atone? May not future zeal wipe out past carelessness? May not the endeavor of our life that is yet to come make amends for the indolence or vice of the life that is past? No. The blood of our brethren has been shed, and we cannot gather it up. The mischief we have done is not to be retrieved! O God, souls that are lost through us cannot be saved now; the gates of hell are so shut that they can never be opened. We can make no restitution. The redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceases forever; the sin is not to be washed away by repentance, nor retrieved by reformation. What then? Hopeless despair for you, and I, and everyone of us, were it not that there is *another* blood—the blood of one called Jesus—that cries from the ground, too, and the voice of that blood is, "Father, forgive them! Father, forgive them!" I hear a voice that says, "Vengeance, vengeance, vengeance," like the voice of Jonah in Nineveh, enough to

make every man clothe himself in sackcloth. But a sweeter and a louder cry comes up—"mercy, mercy, mercy." And the Father bows His head and says, "Whose blood is that?" And the voice replies, "It is the blood of Your only begotten, shed on Calvary for sin. The Father lays His thunders by, sheathes His sword, stretches out His hands, and cries to you, the sons of men, "Come unto Me, and I will have mercy upon you. Turn, turn; I will pour out My Spirit upon you, and you shall live." "Repent and believe the gospel." Hate the sin that is past, and trust in Jesus for the future. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him; for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin. Flee, sinner, flee! The avenger of the blood that you have shed pursues you with hot haste, with feet that are winged—with a heart that is athirst for blood, he pursues you! Run, man, run! The city of refuge is before you. It is there, along the narrow way of faith. Fly, man, fly, for unless you reach that city before he overtakes you, he shall smite you—one blow shall be your everlasting ruin. For God's sake, do not loiter, man! Those flowers on the left-hand side; care not for them, you will dye that field with your blood if you linger there! That ale house on the right hand? Stay for none of these things. He comes! Listen to his footsteps on the hard highway! He comes, he comes, he comes now! Oh, that *now* you may pass the portals of the city of refuge! Trust the Son of God, and sin is forgiven, and you have entered into everlasting life.

Good Lord, add Your blessing! We are powerless. We can say no more. For Christ's sake, "By His agony and bloody sweat, by His cross and passion, by His precious death and burial," bless these souls. Amen.

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CREATION—AN ARGUMENT FOR FAITH
NO. 462

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 27, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Ah, Lord God, behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm; there is nothing too hard for You." Jeremiah 32:17.

AT the very time when the Chaldeans had cast up mounds round about the city of Jerusalem, and when the sword and famine, and pestilence had desolated the whole land, Jeremiah, while in prison, was commanded by his God to purchase a field of Hanamel, his uncle's son at Anathoth. He was to subscribe the evidence of purchase by the usual witnesses, to seal the deed of transfer according to law and custom, and to do this *publicly* in the presence of all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. Now, this was a strange purchase for a rational man to make. Prudence could not justify it; it was purchasing an estate which was utterly valueless. Reason would repudiate the notion; it was buying with scarcely a probability that the person purchasing could ever enjoy the possession. But it was enough for Jeremiah that his God had bid him, for well he knew that God will be justified of all His children who act in faith. He bought the piece of land, and it was secured to him. He did as he was commanded, and returned to his dungeon. When he came into his chamber alone, it is possible that he began to question himself as to what he had been doing, and troubled thoughts rolled over his mind. "I have been purchasing a useless possession," said he. See how he refuses to indulge the thought. He gets as far as saying, "Ah, Lord God!" as if he were about to utter some unbelieving or rebellious sentence—but he stops himself, "You can make this plot of ground of use to me; You can rid this land of these oppressors; You can make me yet sit under my vine, and my fig tree in the heritage which I have bought; for You did make the heavens and the earth. There is nothing too hard for You." beloved, this gave a majesty to the early saints, that they dared to do at God's command, things which were unaccountable to sense, and which reason would condemn! They consulted not with flesh and blood; but whether it is a Noah who is to build a ship on dry land, an Abraham who is to offer up his only son, or a Moses who is to despise the treasures of Egypt, or a Joshua who is to besiege Jericho seven days using no weapons but the blasts of rams' horns—they all act upon God's command; they act contrary to all the dictates of carnal reason; and God, even the Lord God, gives a rich reward as the result of their obedient faith.

I would to God we had in the religion of these modern times, a more potent infusion of this heroic faith in God. But no; I see the Christian Church degenerating more and more into a society acting upon the same

principles as commercial companies. The Church, I fear, cannot now say, "We walk by faith and not by sight." When Edward Irving preached that memorable sermon concerning the missionary, who, he thought, was bound to go forth without purse or scrip, and trust in his God alone, to preach the Word, a howl went up to heaven against the man as a fanatic! They said he was visionary, unpractical, mad—and all because he dared to preach a sermon full of faith in God! I do avow myself fully in sympathy with the views which he then enunciated, and I think, if the power of God were once more to baptize the Church, we would have men who would dare to trust in God instead of putting confidence in men; men who would act once more as if God's bare arm were quite enough to lean on, as if faith were not fanaticism, as if confidence in an unseen Being were not an unjustifiable enthusiasm! I would to God the Church had once again a rich anointing of the supernatural, and I believe she would have, if she would again act by faith; and if you and I, brothers and sisters, would venture more upon the naked promises of God, we would enter a world of wonders to which as yet we are strangers! If we would but walk the waters of trouble by a living faith, we would find them solid as marble beneath our feet; if once again we could, like the world, be hung upon nothing but the simple power and providence of God, I am sure we would find it a blessed and a safe way of living—glorious to God, and honorable to ourselves. I would that once again the Master would raise up a race of heroes who would be ridiculed by the world and despised by mere professors; who would act by faith in the God who lives and abides forever; who venture on bold deeds where the weakness of the human arm would be manifest, and the might of Deity revealed. Then should we see the millennial age dawning upon us, and God, even our own God, would bless us, and all the ends of the earth would fear Him!

Dear friends, it is my business this morning to conduct you to Jeremiah's place of confidence. Seeing that his case is hopeless, knowing that man can do nothing at all for him, the prophet resorts at once to the God who created the heaven and the earth, and he exclaims, "Nothing is too hard for You." I shall use my text in addressing three characters—*to stimulate the evangelist; to encourage the inquirer*; and *to comfort the believer*.

I. TO STIMULATE THE EVANGELIST.

And who *is* the evangelist? Every man and woman who has tasted that the Lord is gracious should be an evangelist. We should, without exception, if we have been begotten again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, tell to all around us what they must do to be saved! There should be no dumb tongue in all our host; we should have no idle hand in the harvest field, but everyone in his measure, whether man or woman, should be doing something to extend the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And here, dear brother in Christ, my friend and fellow laborer, here is your encouragement—*the work is God's*—and your success is in the hand of Him who made the heavens and the earth. Let me refresh your memory with the old story of

creation, and I think you will perceive flashes of light upon your work which will greatly encourage you in it.

1. Remember, in the first place, that *the world was created from nothing*. You have often said, "Mine is a very hard task, for I address myself to men in whom I see nothing hopeful. I batter against a granite conscience, and it is not moved. I thunder forth the law, but the dead and callous heart has not been stirred; I talk of the love of Christ, but the eye is not suffused with tears; I point to hell, but no terror follows; and to heaven, but no holy desire is kindled! There is nothing in man that encourages me in my work, and I am ready to give up." Brother, come back with me to the world's creation. Of what did God make the world? Was there any substance available to His hand out of which to mold this round globe? What do the Scriptures say? Did He not make it of nothing? You have never yet grasped the idea of *nothing*. The eye cannot see it; it might peer into space, but space itself is nothing. We look up, and yonder is the blue ether, though we know not what it is. But the eye could not look on anything; it would be blinded. Nothing is a thing which the senses cannot grasp, and yet it is out of this awful nothing that God made the sun and moon, and stars, and all things that are. Had He spoke before creation, there would have been no voice to answer Him; had He cried, there would have been no echo to repeat His voice. Nothing was there anywhere, and yet He spoke and it was done! He commanded and it stood fast! The case of the sinner is a parallel one. You say there is nothing in the sinner? Yes, but there is room here for a recreating work. Inasmuch as that heart is now empty and void, there is space for the Eternal God to come, and with His outstretched arm, to create a new heart and a right spirit, and put His grace where there was none before. If *you* had to convert the sinner, then, indeed, your task were as hopeless as to create new orbs out of nothing! But, inasmuch as it is not *you,* but God who works all things, you may console yourselves with this thought—He who has created all this marvelous earth, and had nothing to begin with, can give life, and fear, and hope, and faith, and love, where there were no heavenly ingredients upon which He might work! Take that, then, for your joy.

2. But you tell me you have none to help you or go forth in your work, you have no patronage. "Ah, sir," says one, "if I had a *society* at my back; if I had at least a few warm-hearted friends who were banded with me, that would give me some encouragement; but I have to go forth alone, and of the people there are none with me. I stand up to preach in a village where all are cold and callous; where even my minister tells me I am a rash, bold young man, and had better hold my tongue. I look to the world and it hates me. I turn to the Church and it despises me. I am too enthusiastic for the Church; I am too fanatical for the world. What can I do? I am a man alone, and I have no helper!" Brother, when God made the world—and the same God is with you—*He worked alone!* With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him? When He balanced the clouds and laid the foundations for the earth, who taught Him the laws of gravity? Who has weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a

balance? Was He not alone? No parliament of angels bowed at His right hand, for He created even them; no archangel bowed his head and offered advice to the Most High, for the archangel, himself, is but a creature; cherubim and seraphim might sing when the work was over, but they could not help in the work. Look, now, what star did the angels make? What spot of earth is the creation of an archangel? Look to the heavens above or to the deeps beneath, where do you see the work of any hand but God's, and that hand a solitary one? The lonely worker out of emptiness creates fullness; out of non-existence calls all things, and out of Himself gets both the matter and the manner, the way and the how. His courts need no revenue from abroad to sustain them, for from Him, alone, He draws the force which is needed! Roll, then, your burden on your God if you are alone, for alone with Him you have the best of company. If you had the hosts of heaven with you, what were you without your God? If all the Church was at your back, terrible as an army with banners, your defeat were certain if the Holy Spirit did not dwell in you! I tell you, man, if all the saints and angels in earth and heaven should unite to help you in your pursuit, yet, if your God should stand aloof from you, you would labor in vain, and spend your strength for nothing! But with Him you shall prevail though all men forsake you—

"When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?
When He His people's cause defends,
Who, who shall stay His hand?"

Let not this, then trouble you, that you are alone! "Ah, Lord God, behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm; there is nothing too hard for You."

3. But, you will reply to me, "My sorrow lies not so much in that I am alone, as in the melancholy fact that I am very conscious of my own weakness and of my need of adaptation for my peculiar work. I come back from my Sunday's toil, saying, 'Who has believed my report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' It seems to me as though I plowed a rock, a rock so hard that it blunted the plowshare; I can make no impression upon it; I have beaten the air; I seem to have lashed the waters, and I fear that I have not the gifts which are necessary, nor have I the divine grace that I should have. Woe is me, for I am a man of uncircumcised lips! I am not qualified for these things; but rather I feel like Jonah, that I would flee into Tarshish, that I might escape from the burden of the Lord against this Nineveh." Yes. But brother, come, and cast your thoughts back again upon creation. *The Eternal needed no instruments in creation*. What tools did God use when He made the heavens and the earth? When the blacksmith brings forth his work, he fashions it with hammer and anvil—upon what anvil did God beat the red-hot matter of this earth when He formed it, and made it what it is? I know that the engraver needs a sharp tool, upon which he bears with all his might when he traces out the lines of beauty; but when God drew this fair picture—this wondrous landscape of the heavens and the earth—what engraving tools did He have? Where do you learn that He had any instruments in His mighty hands? The carpenter has his plane, and his hammer, and

his awl—what plane, what hammer, and what awl did the Eternal use? Had He anything beside His own hands?

Are not the heavens the works of His fingers, and the sun and the moon His handiwork? So then, if God can work without instruments in the creation of a world, He can surely work with a poor and a mean instrument in the conversion of a sinner! When I think of myself, it seems to me as if the Almighty Worker did take a straw into His hand with which to penetrate a granite rock. Yet, I know, though it is a straw, if it is in His hands, it would be able to pierce the globe and thread the spheres as on a string! I know that if the Lord takes in His hands but a smooth stone out of the current, yet when He hurls it from His sling, it shall pierce even a giant's brow. He saves not by *man's* strength, nor by *human* learning, and eloquence, and talent. It is *His strength* and not the strength or weakness of the instruments to which we must look! I pray you, turn your eyes away from yourself. What are you? A son of man, in whom is no strength! A man who is born of woman; unclean in your origin, and unhallowed in your actions; is there anything in you to give our God one reason to make you a winner of souls? But, inasmuch as you are nothing, you are all the better fitted to be used by Him! He shall have all the more glory because of your weakness. I pray you, therefore, say, with Paul, "I glory in infirmities that the power of God may rest on me." And let this be your song—"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." "Ah, Lord God, behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm; there is nothing too hard for You." You can do wonders even by the mean instrument of sinful man!

4. Do I hear you still complain and say—"Alas, alas! It is little I can say! When I speak, I can but give out the text, and utter a few plain words upon it—true and earnest, but not mighty. I cannot sound out the rolling periods of a Robert Hall, nor wing my flight to the majestic heights of a Chalmers. I have no power to plead with souls with the tears and the seraphic zeal of a Whitefield. I can only tell the tale of mercy simply, and leave it there"? Well, and *did not God create all things by His naked Word?* Was there any eloquence when God spoke, and it was done? "Let there be light," and there was light. Can you perceive any trappings of oratory here? At this day, is not the gospel in itself the rod of Jehovah's strength? Is it not the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes? And does not our beloved apostle constantly insist upon it, that it is not with wisdom of words, nor with fineness of speech, lest the excellence of the power should not be of God but of man, and lest man's faith should stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of the Most High? Go on, my brother evangelist, go on and speak God's Word still, for it *is* the Word which is mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds! 'Twas His naked Word, unadorned, simple and plain, which at the beginning made the heaven and the earth. What can be more sublimely simple than, "Let there be light"? Go and say in the same simplicity, "sinner, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," and your message shall be

the voice of God from heaven which shall not return unto Him void, but shall prosper in the thing whereunto He has sent it.

5. "Alas," I hear a brother crying from some corner of the building, "You are not aware of the darkness of the district in which I labor. I toil among an unenlightened, unintelligent, ignorant people. I cannot expect to see fruit there, toil as I may." Ah, brother, and while you talk so, you never will see any fruit, for God gives not great things to unbelieving men! For the encouragement of your faith, let me remind you that it is the God who made the heavens and the earth on whom you have to lean, and what is that which was written of old? "The earth was without form and void, and *darkness was upon the face of the deep*." How dense that darkness was, I cannot tell; that primeval darkness which had never been stirred by a single ray of light; that dense, thick seven-fold Egyptian darkness that had never known a sun or moon, and had never been pierced by light of star; and yet, primeval though it was—I was about to call it eternal darkness, but nothing can be eternal but the Most High—yet there was but a Word—"Light be," and light was! And do you think the darkness of your hearers is thicker than this ancient darkness of the everlasting night? Even were it so, still, God is Almighty; He has but to speak through *you;* has but to make *your* word *His* Word, and the films of blindness shall fall from the eyes, and he that was wrapped in midnight shall be brought out into marvelous day! I would like to know where the dark place on the earth is, for there it is that the missionaries should first be sent. O that we had faith to do and dare for God, and undertake the hardest tasks first! But alas! We are such cowards, we love fair fields of labor; we want promising prospects. We will plant a chapel where there is likelihood that the people will appreciate it; we send a missionary where we think there is a probability that they will receive His Word. But shall we send the man where, in our judgment, they will not receive Christ, and bid him go where they will cast out His name as evil? This is to act by *faith,* and this is what the heroism of the gospel demands. Gird up your loins, followers of Christ, seek for difficulties and overcome them! If you are not greater than other men, how are you the followers of the Divine Jesus? If you cannot go where others despair, how dwells the Holy Spirit in you? If you will not risk where others flee, where is the glorious majesty of your faith?

6. Further, and still to press the same blessed argument. "Yes," says one, "but the men among whom I labor are so confused in their notions; they put darkness for light, and light for darkness; their moral sense is blunted; if I try to teach them, their ears are dull of hearing, and their hearts are given to slumber. Besides, they are full of vain jangling and oppose themselves to the truth of God; I endure much contradiction of sinners, and they will not receive the truth of God in the love of it." Yes, then, I bid you go back to the old creation that you may be comforted concerning the new! *Did not the Holy Spirit brood with shadowing wings over the earth when it was chaos?* Did He not bring out order from confusion? Do you not remember how, on a certain day, the Lord divided the waters that were above the firmament from those that were under the

firmament? Do you not know how He rolled together the waters into their place, and called the dry land, earth, and the gathering together of the waters called He the seas? What greater confusion could there be? That incandescent mass which had once, perhaps, been gas, and afterwards condensed itself into a globe of liquid fire, was cooled with the blessed breath of God. And when its crust grew hard and the tumultuous waters threw their waves over the heads of alpine heights; when the winds came roaring forth and with carnival of hurricanes mingled sky and earth together; when cloud, and hill, and sea, and air, were all one seething mass, the blue sky appeared, and clouds rolled upwards to their place, and seas came downwards to their beds. He spoke, and lo, the obedient waters which had flung their white crests like the manes of wild horses tossing in the wind, hastened to their appointed stable in the deep! And there they remain, kept in check by no more mighty a bridle than a belt of sand. Then the earth stood out all fair and glittering, for God had done it. Disorder yielded to law; darkness gave place to light; chaos turned to glorious order in His sight. Well, now, the same marvels can be worked in your case, only take care that you act *for God and in God's strength*, or else you might as well bid a stormy sea be still, as you command the confused notions of men to find rest and peace in Christ! He who made the heavens and the earth, even the everlasting God, can move your difficulty away—only trust in *Him,* and He shall bring it to pass.

7. "Ah," you say, "they are all so dead, so dead!" Yes, sir, and do you not remember *how the waters brought forth* life abundantly—fish, and fowl that should fly in the midst of heaven? And how the earth—yes, this dull, dusky earth—brought forth the creeping things and the cattle after its kind? And how at last, man was made out of the very dust of the earth? O sir, God can readily give life to the dead nature of evil men! You have but to rely on Him, and the quickening influence shall descend, and you shall live.

8. *See how fair and glorious this earth is now!* Well might the morning stars shout together, and the sons of God shout for joy! And do you think that God cannot make as fair a heart in man, and make it bud and blossom, and teem with hallowed life? Do you think that Christ cannot make the angels sing even a nobler song of joy over a soul that is washed in blood, and a spirit robed in white, that shall praise God and the Lamb forever? And all this He can do through you and me, my brother! O, let us labor, then! Let us work and toil! Let us think difficulties, delights, and troubles, but trifles; let us lean upon Him who made the heavens and the earth, for there is nothing too hard for Him. Unbelief will make you unhappy; it will cause your service to be a stench in the nostrils of the Most High. Unbelief will prevent God from blessing you. "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." "If you will believe, all things are possible to him who believes." And if you will act as one who sees Him that is invisible, you shall see greater things than these, and God shall make your path to be as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day!

II. In this large assembly, there are no doubt, many to be found who are really desirous to be saved, but are full of doubts, and difficulties, and questions. I speak, then, TO THE ANXIOUS.

I will cut a knot in a moment by making one observation. Remember, my troubled friend, that the question about your salvation is not whether you can save yourself, for that is answered in a thundering negative from God's throne—*You cannot!* "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." The question is—*Can God save you?* And, if you will put it on that ground, I think your answer need not be a very difficult one.

Can God save you? That is the question. Now I know your unbelief will first suggest the difficulty that *your mind is so dark*. "I cannot see Christ," says one. "I am in such trouble of mind, I cannot understand as I would. I feel unenlightened. I am like the inhabitants of Zebulon and Napthali, a people that sat in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death. I cannot see—it is all darkness, thick as night with me." Yes, but then there is the question—Can God roll this night away? And the answer comes, He who said, "Let there be light," and there was light, can certainly repeat the miracle!

Another of your doubts will arise from the fact that *you feel so weak*—

"I would, but cannot sing.
I would, but cannot pray.
For Satan meets me when I try,
And frights my soul away!
I would, but can't repent,
Though I endeavor often.
This stony heart can never relent
Till Jesus makes it soft!
I would, but cannot love,
Though wooed by love divine.
No arguments have power to move
A soul so base as mine!
I would, but cannot rest
In God's most holy will.
I know what He appoints is best,
Yet murmur at it still.
O could I but believe!
Then all would easy be.
I would, but cannot—Lord, relieve—
My help must come from Thee!"

I cannot do what I would. I would leave sin, but still I fall into it. I would lay hold on Christ, but I cannot. Then comes the question—*can God do it?* And we answer, He who made the heavens and the earth without a helper, can certainly save you, when you cannot help yourself.

Let me remind you that no part of the world helped its own creation. It is absolutely certain that no mountain lifted up its own head; it is quite clear that no star appointed its own path of brightness; no flower can lift its head and say, "I created my own loveliness." No eagle that cuts the air can say, "I gave myself my soaring wings, and my piercing eyes." God has made them all. And so, sinner, you who are troubled because of your impotency—He wants nor needs, no power in you! He gives power to the

weak, and to them who have no might, He increases strength. Rest upon God in Christ, and cast yourself on Him, and He will do it all!

"Yes," you say again, "but I am in such an awful state of mind—*there is such a confusion within me;* hell is opened from beneath, and the sluices of my soul's sorrows are drawn up; grief streams forth in rivers from my eyes; I cannot tell what is the matter with me. My heart is like a battleground torn up with the prancing of the horses; I know not what I am; I cannot understand myself." Pause, I pray, and answer me, was not the world just so of old, and did not all the beauty of all lands rise out of this dire confusion? Cannot God, then, do this for *you,* and give you a peace that passes all understanding? I beseech you, my dear distressed friend, trust in Christ, for He can hush the hurricane to slumber, and lay the storm to sleep.

Let me remind you, O inquirer, that there is more hope in your case than there was in the creation of the world, for in the creation there was nothing done beforehand. The plan was drawn, no doubt, but no material was provided, no stores laid in to effect the purpose! We read not that God had piled up a mass of nebulae that He worked out into worlds. No, He began the work, and finished it without any previous preparations. But in *your* case the work is done already, *beforehand.* On the bloody tree Christ has carried sin; in the grave He has vanquished death; in His resurrection He has rent forever the bonds of the grave; in His Ascension He has opened heaven to all believers; and in His intercession He is still pleading for those who trust Him. It is finished, remember, so that it is easier to save you than to make a world, for the world had nothing prepared for it; there was nothing ready, but here everything is ready, and all you are bid to do is to come and sit at a feast that is already spread, to wear a garment that is already woven, to wash in a bath that is already filled with blood. Sinner, what do you say? Will you believe in God's Anointed or not?

Yet again, remember that God has done something more in you than there was done before He made the world. Emptiness did not cry, "Oh, God, create me." Darkness could not pray, "Oh, Lord, give me light." Confusion could not cry, "Oh, God, ordain me into order." But look what He has done for you! He has taught you to cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." He has made you plead, "Lighten my darkness, O Lord, lest I sleep the sleep of death." He has taught you to say, "I have gone astray, like a lost sheep, seek Your servant." See, friend, the grass cannot pray for dew, and yet dew falls, and shall *you* cry for it, and God withhold it? The thirsty earth has no voice to ask for showers, and yet they descend, and will God let you cry and not answer you? Look at the forests in winter, they cannot ask for leaves, and yet, the foliage comes in its season. Nor can the corn entreat for sunshine, and yet God gives good things to all in due season. And *you*, made in His image, will He let you cry and not hear you? When He has Himself said, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies, but would rather that he should turn unto Me and live"?

Yet once again, and here is a rich thought of comfort—it was in God's power to make the world or not, just as He pleased. No promise bound Him. No covenant made it imperative upon Him that His arm should be outstretched. Sinner, the Lord is not bound to save you except from His own promise—and that promise is—"He who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." He cannot, He *cannot* withhold saving you if you call upon Him! His covenant has bound Him to be merciful to those who confess their sins. He is merciful and just to forgive us our sins, and to save us from all unrighteousness. This, then, is a case that glistens with brighter light than did the case of the uncreated world! And as, of His own will, without pledge or covenant, He made the earth what it is—most surely now He has promised it—He will save you if you trust in Jesus!

Once more here. It is certain that there is more room in your case for God to glorify Himself, than there was in the making of the world. In making the world He glorified His wisdom, and He magnified His power, but He could not show His mercy. He could have no mercy upon floods and mountains, upon cattle and flying fowl. There was kindness, but no mercy, for they had not sinned. Now, here in your case, there is room for every attribute of God, for His loving-kindness, His faithfulness, His veracity, His power, His grace. Yours is a hopeful case, because it is hopeless to you; here is room for God, because, certainly, there is no space for you. You can do nothing; it is your extremity, and it is, therefore, God's opportunity! What would I give this morning if I could turn one tearful eye away from itself to Christ! I know how foolish we all are that we all look to flesh and blood. Turn your eyes, sinner, to the cross where the Savior bleeds. Rest on Him; He, without whom was not anything made that was made, died for you! He who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, works out your redemption! Trust *Him* and the work is done! Rest on *Him* and your soul is brought today into the realm of safety, and you have passed from death unto life!

I will tell you a little anecdote which will show how foolish we are, when we depend on self. I have heard that lately, a ship on her way to Australia met with a very terrible storm, and sprung a leak. And a little while after, a hurricane overtook her. There happened to be a gentleman on board, of the most nervous temperament that can be imagined, whose rambling tongue, and important air were calculated to alarm all the passengers. When the storm came on, the captain, who knew what damage had been done, managed to get near him; and the gentleman said to the captain, "What an awful storm! I am afraid we shall go to the bottom, for I hear the leak is very bad." "Well," said the captain, "as you seem to know it, and perhaps the others do not, you had better not tell them, lest you should dispirit my men. Perhaps, as it is a very bad case, you would lend us your valuable aid, and we may possibly get through it. Would you have the goodness to stand here and hold hard on this rope? Pray do not leave it, but pull as hard as ever you can till I tell you to let it go." So our friend clenched his fists, and put his feet stiff down, and kept on holding this rope with all his might for several hours. The storm abated; the ship was brought right, and our friend let go of his rope. He expected

a deputation would bring him the thanks of all the passengers, but they were unconscious of his merits. He thought at least there would be a contribution for a trophy or plaque for what he had done, but no plaque came. Even the captain did not seem very grateful, so he ventured, very distantly, and in a roundabout style to hint that such valuable services as his, having saved the vessel, ought to be rewarded with some few words of gratitude, at any rate. He was shocked to hear the captain say, "What? Do *you* think you saved the vessel? Why, I gave you that rope to hold to keep you out of the way! You did a world of mischief till I got you quiet." So now, mark you, there are some people who are wanting to do so much; they think they can certainly save themselves, and there they stand, holding the rope with their clenched fists, and their feet tightly fixed, while they are really doing no more than our poor friend! If ever you get to heaven, you will find that everything you did towards your own salvation was about as useful as what this man did when he was holding the rope—the safety of the vessel lies somewhere else, and not in you! And that what is needed with you is just to get you out of the way—and when you are out of the way, and are made a fool of, then Christ comes in and shows His wisdom—while, perhaps, all the while you are bemoaning yourself that you should be so badly treated, it would not have been possible for you to be saved unless you had been put out of the way, that Almighty God might do the work from first to last!

III. And now I have to conclude with one or two words of ENCOURAGEMENT TO BELIEVERS.

And so, my brothers in Christ, you are greatly troubled are you? It is a common lot with us all. And so you have nothing on earth to trust to now, and are going to be cast on your God alone? Your vessel is on her beam-ends, and now there is nothing for you but just to be rolled on the providence and care of God. What a blessed place to be rolled on! Happy storm that wrecks a man on such a rock as this! O blessed hurricane that drives the soul to God, and God alone! On some few occasions I have had troubles which I could not tell to any but my God, and I thank God that I have, for I learned more of my Lord, then, than at any other time. There is no getting at our God sometimes because of the multitude of our friends. But when a man is so poor, so friendless, so helpless that he has nothing, he flies into his Father's arms, and how blessedly he is clasped there! So that, I say again, happy trouble that drives you to your Father! Blessed storm that wrecks you on the rock of ages! Glorious billow that washes you upon this heavenly shore! And now you have nothing but your God to trust to, what are you going to do? To fret? To whine? O, I pray you do not thus dishonor your Lord and Master! Now, play the man, play the man of God! Show the world that your God is worth 10,000 worlds to you! Show rich men how rich you are in your poverty when the Lord God is your helper! Show the strong man how strong you are in your weakness when underneath you are the everlasting arms! Now man, now man, *now* is your time to glorify God! You know there was no room for your courage before, but now there is space for feats of faith, and valiant exploits. Our present mode of warfare bids fair to annihilate courage

altogether, for now men fight at such a distance that the hand-to-hand fight is impossible. But in those brave days of old, when the troops of Rupert, and of Cromwell met hand-to-hand, when uphill the Puritanical legions spurred their horses against the hosts of "the man of blood"—then there was room for bravery! Then men could fight not at two miles' distance but foot-to-foot! Then there was room for the solitary bravo to lead the way against a multitude; then the scaling ladder clicked on the top of the wall, and the brave man of the forlorn hope went up it, step by step, with his cutlass between his teeth, until he reached the top; then men could make themselves famous! But now, what with iron ships, and large Armstrong guns, there is hardly room for men to be courageous.

But, believer, you in your lonely distress have returned to "the brave days of old." When you had your regular income from the Consols, when your business prospered, when you had your children and your friends about you, why there was no room for you to perform heroic deeds of resignation and trust! But now you are stripped, now at it, for your foes are before you. When the Duke of Wellington asked a soldier what kind of armor he would like to wear if he had to fight another Waterloo—"Please, your grace," said the man, "I'd like to fight in my shirtsleeves." Well now, you have come to that! You have nothing now to encumber you; you can fight in your shirtsleeves, and now is the time to win the victory! Be strong and very courageous, and the Lord your God shall certainly, as surely as He built the heavens and the earth, glorify Himself in your weakness, and magnify His might in the midst of your distress! The Lord help us to lean wholly on Him, and never on ourselves, and let His name be had in remembrance while the earth endures. Amen, and Amen.

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CHRIST'S SERVANT—HIS DUTY AND REWARD
NO. 463

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 3, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor." John 12:26.

HOW many persons are of the religion of the Greeks who are mentioned in this Chapter! They would see Jesus, but they would not serve Him. Impelled by curiosity, they would know somewhat of this matter; they would investigate the claims of Christ to the Messiahship, and they would consider the special truths by which He professes to illuminate the world, but beyond this, they would not venture. They give their minds to criticize; they are not indifferent to the gospel, but they regard it with the same interest as that with which a naturalist would look upon a newly discovered insect, or a geologist would study a section of the earth's crust; but as to personally feeling the hallowed influence of the truth of God, they know not what it means. Many of these Greeks proceed much further; they feel an admiration for the character and teaching of Jesus, and they express that admiration in honest, warm praise; but see how hollow is their appreciation—they applaud the person whom they scorn to obey! They admire teachings which they will not practice; they listen to the divine Word, but they are hearers only, and not doers of the truth of God. Probably there are numbers in this assembly to whom the Christian religion has always been a subject of respectful interest; they have never blasphemed the name of Christ; they have not doubted the inspiration of Scripture; no, they have studied God's Word; they have given a degree of attention to its doctrines, and they intend yet more fully to examine its revelations. How pleasant and hopeful are such marks of interest, but how far are many of these inquirers from true discipleship, for their proud hearts are not obedient to the dictates of the gospel; the cross is to them too heavy a load to carry; they have not made up their minds to wear "Christ's yoke." They had rather see His holiness and see His disciples imitate Him, than take up the cross daily and follow Him. My hearers, allow me to remind you very solemnly that a speculative religion, which has curiosity as its impulse, a search after knowledge as its rule, and self-esteem as its root, can never save the soul! It is not for you to criticize, but to repent; it is not for you to judge, but to believe; it is not for you to admire, but to obey; it is not for you to praise and applaud, but cheerfully to bow your necks to imitate and follow Christ. Nothing short of a religion which subjects us to personal service of Christ, which gives us a new heart and a right spirit, and compels us to feel that we are not our own, but bought with a price—nothing short of this will ever give

lasting peace of mind, or bring us to the place where we shall see the face of God with delight!

Many proudly dream that to serve Christ would be dishonorable, and that they would demean themselves by becoming humble followers of the Lamb. Let me remind them that those whose opinions we esteem did not think that. Even a heathen could say, "To serve God is to reign." We know that most noble of men, Moses, before the coming of John the Baptist—the greatest who had ever been born of woman—Moses, the king in Jeshurun, and the leader of God's hosts, has as his highest title—"Moses, the servant of God." And even our Lord and Master, whose shoe laces we are not worthy to untie, took upon Himself the form of a servant, and though He were a Son, yet learned obedience by the things that He suffered. Since the days of our Redeemer, the greatest in the Church of Christ have been the servants of all, and those who have attained to the highest dignities and honors, which it is in the power of Christ's Church to confer, have been those who joyfully stooped to the most menial occupations. They were willing to be less than the least, and became the greatest of all! Let us imitate Him who was "King of kings," and yet a "Servant of servants." Let us follow Him who is girt about the paps with a golden girdle, and wraps the light of God about Him as a garment, and yet, He unrobed Himself, and took a towel, like a servant, that He might wash His disciples' feet. The motto of the Prince of Wales is "*Ich dien*"—"I serve." It should be the motto of every prince of the royal blood of heaven; let every Christian write this now upon his crest—"I serve," and, from this day forth, wherever he is, let him not seek lordship, let him leave that to the Gentiles, and to a carnal world, but let him seek ministry and service, being willing to do anything or to be anything by which he may profit the body of Christ, which is the Church.

We will now endeavor, as the Blessed Spirit shall aid us, to expound His three-fold teaching. You will mark, first of all, *plain directions for a very honorable office*—"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me." In the second place, *most generous stipulations from a noble Master*—"Where I am, there shall also My servant be." And thirdly, *most glorious rewards for imperfect services*—"If anyone serves Me, him will My Father honor."

I. We have here PLAIN DIRECTIONS FOR A VERY HONORABLE OFFICE. "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me." A golden precept, written on a tablet of ivory!

I speak the sentiments of the majority of those present when I say, *we would all of us like to minister to Christ*. We feel that if He were here now, there would be nothing which we would not do for Him. The word used in our text three times might very properly be translated thus—"If any man would act the part of a deacon towards Me, let him follow Me; and where I am there shall also My deacon be; and he who acts as a deacon towards Me shall be honored of My Father." The word "deacon" in the original Greek means nothing but a servant, and every deacon should be the cheerful, laborious, and faithful servant of the Church. Now, what was the part of a deacon in the early Church? It was service to the people of God of all sorts and kinds. Who among us would blush to be the deacons of Christ, His body servants, His attendants? Would we not wait upon Him? We would be His servants to the very fullest extent. I think we

would consider ourselves ennobled for life if we might cast our garments in His way that He might be saved from a muddy place in the road! Would we not feed Him? There would be such a feast in our house as never was before! We would submit to hunger ourselves, if we might but supply His needs. And I think if the 12 poor fishermen were with Him, we would not shut one of them out, but ask them all home; we ourselves would leave our houses, and stand in the street all night to let them have rest, for we feel that, if the blessed one were here, it were so high an honor to contribute in any degree to His comfort, or to show in any way our respect for Him, that nothing would be too difficult—nothing impossible for us to perform. Permit me to say, however, that very much of this is mere sentiment; in fact, we do not know ourselves; and, in the case of many here present, if Christ were here in the same guise in which He came the first time, they would not receive Him, but the reverse; their doors would be shut in His face, and perhaps, they might even join in the bloodthirsty cry of, "Let Him be crucified!" All this talk of generosity and homage to be offered to Jesus is to a great extent, mere sentiment—mere talk—and we would do no such thing when it came to the practical push. For, mark me, if we really would do these things, we can do them now. If it is true that we would minister to Christ, and be servants and deacons towards Him, it is in our power to do so now as much as if He were on earth; and, inasmuch as we live in the neglect of this duty, we must not delude ourselves into the notion that if such-and-such a thing should happen, we would act differently from what we do now! This sentimentalism about entertaining Christ has at the bottom of it the idea that we would be *honoring ourselves* by it. Now, this is not the spirit that gives a worthy friendship towards Christ. He who loves Christ really serves *Him,* not to be honored *by* Him, but to give Him honor! We, indeed, would gladly receive the Lord into our guest chamber, because men would say of us—*"He* entertained the Lord of glory! He was honored with His company!" But, oh, if, instead, men would say—"Yonder fool disgraced himself by harboring the vagrant impostor. He entertained the Man whom we call Beelzebub," I think there are many who now talk so well of Christ who would decline the privilege of entertaining Jesus if all the world were against Him.

But, dear friends, I say again, if any of you would serve Christ, it is now in your power, for the directions given are meant for all time, and may be carried out *today*. It seems from my text that to follow Christ, or to imitate Him, is really to serve Him. I think we can plainly see this. "Oh," says one, "I would like *to do something to prove that I really would obey my Lord;* I profess to be His servant, and I would show that I am not a servant in name, only, but that whatever my Master says to me, that I will do." Well, the opportunity is before you today; imitate Christ, and you then prove your obedience. This command may be summed up in this—"Be like I am." If you would know what He would have you do, see what He did Himself! His *life* is your law, written in living characters. No better proof can you give that you are not a lip server, but a real disciple, than by diligently and scrupulously copying Christ even to the least jot and tittle.

"Oh," says another, "I would joyfully *assist Him in His needs*. I would supply Him with bread; I would give Him the cup of cold water to drink; I would not let Him say again, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.' I would never let Him want." Imitate Him, then, and you can do it, for what did He do but distribute of His substance to the poor? Did He not care for the needs of all men? Is it not written of Him, "He went about doing good"? If you would supply *His* needs, behold Him in His poor saints; if you would feed *Him,* feed the mouths of His hungry children; if you would clothe *Him,* clothe the backs of His naked ones; if you would succor *Him,* relieve the poor, the widow, and the fatherless, and those who have no helper. Imitate Him in the generousness of His life; care for the needs of men; follow Him in this, and you will have served Him in supplying *His* needs—

"Lord, You have brethren here below,
Flesh of Your flesh through grace;
Teach us to see You in your saints,
Your sorrows in their face.
In them You may be clothed and fed,
And visited and cheered—
And in their accents of distress
My Savior's voice is heard.
Your face, with reverence and with love,
We in Your poor would see!
O let us rather beg our bread
Than keep it back from Thee."

"But," says another, "I would *do something to cheer Him;* I think if He were here, I would endeavor to smooth a few of the furrows from His marred brow; I would labor to make the heart of the Man of Sorrows rejoice in some measure, and be glad in some degree; I would lay down my life to give Him peace who is my soul's peace and rest." You can do it; you can do it. If you would serve Him thus, and cheer His heart, *follow Him*. This is the solace of His sorrow, the reward of His labors—the obedience of His children to His commands! This is the spoil which He divides with the mighty; this is the prey which He takes from the strong, that all His saints should be like He is in all righteousness and true holiness. This is the travail of His soul which He sees and is satisfied when you are conformed to His Image, and show forth His character among the sons of men! Oh, if you are Christ-like, you have done more to make Christ happy than all the songs of the angels! If men shall say of you, "That man has been with Jesus, and has learned of Him," you have given Jesus better music than cherubim and seraphim can yield!

"Yes," I hear another say, "but *I would honor Him*. If He were here I would climb the trees, and strew the branches in His way; how would I gladly run before Him and cry, 'Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" Would you thus serve Him, by honoring Him, and extolling His name? You can do it. Follow Him; live as He lived; act as He acted, and you have honored Him more completely than by strewing palm branches or throwing your clothes in the road. For when is Christ most honored? When His saints are most sanctified! When is His name the most esteemed? When the sons of God walk the most carefully, the most prayerfully, and the most closely with their God!

You *can* today serve Christ if you will today humbly take His plain directions, exactly imitate His Example, and closely follow in His steps!

Beloved friends, I think we have made it clear enough that there is a possibility of serving Christ, of deaconizing towards Christ by the imitation of His character. Now, I quoted the Greek word "deaconizing" because it was the means, when I was looking into the verse, of giving me an illustration of this subject. You remember that on the first Sunday of last month, we had in our midst, the venerable Mar Yohanan, a presbyter of the Nestorian Church at Oroomiah. And with him was a deacon whose name was Mar Isaak. These two men had performed an almost incredible journey. They had walked the entire distance from the borders of Persia; over the mountains of Armenia and Circassia; across the steppes of Russia; and from Russia right through Prussia, Germany and Holland, till at last they arrived in London. Now, I could not help but notice how the deacon, the servant, carefully attended in all things to the venerable presbyter whom we saw among us, how he marked his every look that he might not for a moment appear to neglect his reverend leader. Probably on that day when Yohanan the presbyter, first thought of this journey, he addressed Isaak thus—"Isaak, are you a true servant?" "Yes," he said, "ever since the church made me deacon, I have loved you as my own soul, and I would gladly do anything for your comfort." "Then," he said, "If you would serve me, *follow me."* "But must I leave my children and my household?" "Verily," says the presbyter; "it must even be so, for I, also, shall leave behind me my wife and children, and go forth on a long and weary journey; many a hundred miles, to Britain, where there are many who love our Lord, and who may help the persecuted saints in this region."

Now came the pinch, and Isaak, if he would serve the presbyter, must *follow* him. He does not decline the service. When he accepted the office of the deacon, he resolved to really be the servant of the Church and her minister, and he is now ready to undertake the journey with his presbyter. I think I see them venturing forth. They journey among the Kurds, a savage people always thirsting for the Christians' blood, with more than Mohammedan hatred of Christ. Perhaps Isaak is faint-hearted, and would like to turn back. "If any man would serve me, let him follow me," says the hoary presbyter, as he strikes his staff upon the ground and advances, fearless of the foe! They pass one danger, and encounter another. A mountain is in their way, lifting its snowy crest even to the sky; the gray-bearded preacher goes first, and he cries, "Isaak, if you would serve me, follow me!" And on they go, climbing from crag to crag, along the unfrequented path where scarcely the wild goat has found a footing; soon they travel through the valley, and across the barren, snowy, pathless wilderness, the presbyter saying continually, "Brother, if you would deaconize towards me, follow me, for now it is that it shall be proven to the world that you are a true servant of the church, and are willing to follow the presbyter to the world's end." He did follow him right faithfully, and they reached their journey's end together. Now, this is just what Jesus Christ says to us! We are all His deacons, His servants; we all became engaged, in the day when we gave ourselves to Him, that we would take up our cross and follow Him; and He points today to some high moun-

tain, saying, "If you would serve Me, follow Me." He does not ask you to *lead,* He Himself has gone before; He calls you to no labor which He has not Himself already accomplished! Oh, can you say in your heart today—

"Through floods and flames if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes.
'Hinder me not,' shall be my cry,
Though earth and hell oppose"?

This is true service, the best that can be rendered, to follow where He leads the way, let the way be ever so rough or arduous, to persevere to the end, even though the end is a martyr's death!

Come, brothers and sisters, and especially those who are beginners, and have but lately enlisted in Christ's cause, let me mark you out Christ's way, and then, if you would serve Him, follow Him! I know the proud flesh wants to serve Christ by striking out new paths; proud man has a desire to preach new doctrines, to set up a new church; to be an original thinker, to judge and consider; to do anything but obey! This is not service to Christ. He who would serve Christ must follow Him; he must be content to tread only in the old footsteps, and go only where Christ has led the way. It is not for you and me to be originals; we must be humble copies of Christ; there must be nothing about our religion of our own inventing; it is for us to lay thought, and judgment, and opinion at the feet of Christ, and do what He bids us, simply because He gives the command. Look, then, disciples, at your Lord! I think I see the Savior—oh, that you would follow Him today! I think I see Him coming. It is His first public entry in the world, and where does He go? It is the beginning of His manifest ministry among men, He is about to show you what should be the beginning of yours! He goes to the Jordan; there stands the Baptist, and the willing crowds are baptized with the baptism of repentance. As John stands there, lo, the Son of Man Himself appears, and John says, "I have need to be baptized of You, and come You to me?" But our Master, whom if we would serve, we must follow, says, "Allow it to be so now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." He descends into the stream; He is buried beneath the water; and as He comes up from that immersion, the heaven is opened, and the Spirit descends upon Him like a dove! If you would serve Him, follow Him!

"But…but…but!" Alas, my brothers and sisters, this is not a fitting word for a disciple, you forget your service when you begin to question. If you would serve Him, follow Him! Your business as a servant is not to object, but to obey! Imagine that you ask your servant to fill a bath with water. "But…" You say, "I must have it filled." But she questions again, and again, and again, and, at last, flatly refuses to do more than sprinkle it with a few drops! Do you call her a servant any longer? I think not! So there are some of you who see most clearly that your Master was baptized at the commencement of His public life, and yet you will be raising questions where there is no room for questions! You *will* neglect a duty which is as plain in Scripture as the very Deity of Christ! You will turn aside from a baptism which is as plainly taught in express Words of God as even the doctrine of justification by faith—you do not take up your service as you should. "But, it is not essential," you say. Is that a *servant's* business? "But what good will it do?" Is this a question for a servant? "If any man will serve Me"—Christ does not say—"Let him question

Me; let him be asking Me why I command him to do such a thing." No, no! He says, "Let him follow Me." "But I dread the publicity, I fear the ordinance." It is your proud flesh that fears it; subdue it under your feet, and take up your cross, for there are far heavier crosses than this to carry! Thus your Master puts it—"If any man will serve Me, let him follow Me."

He now comes from the Jordan, and the Spirit leads Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. You, too, must be tempted! Do not think when you are tempted that, therefore, you are out of Christ. No; if you would be His servant, you must follow Him, and must be tempted, too. You must be assailed in many points; the arrows must fly from above and from beneath; you must be tried in all hands, and in all ways. Run not from the conflict, for if any man would serve Christ, he must follow Him through the hottest temptations as well as through the brightest joys! Now, the Master comes forth boldly, and begins to preach and teach and labor. If you would serve Him, follow Him! Labor for Him! In some way or other, brothers, teach His gospel! If you cannot teach it to the thousands, teach it to the tens; it you cannot converse with multitudes, converse with one at the well, as Christ did at Sychar. If you would be His servant, let His life, written in large letters, be *your* life; and let your life be the miniature, the condensation of the life of Christ. —"If any man would serve Me, let him follow Me." You see the Master bears bold witness before His adversaries. He confronts the Pharisee to His face; He upbraids the hypocrites who oppose Him. Follow Him, if you would serve Him. Let there not be a single foe before whose face you would fear His cause to plead! Speak up for His name; let no blush be seen on your cheeks; speak His name before kings, and yield not to sinful shame. But look, the Master comes into the black cloud of reproach; they say He has a devil, and is mad. Follow Him there! Now, you servants of God, now is the trying hour; now follow Him; be rejected and despised, and hooted at with Him, and sing as you go through it all—

"If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If You'll remember me."

Look, He comes to die! If you would serve Him, follow Him. Be ready to be brought before the judgment seat for His name. Be ready to yield your life up at His command, and if the martyr days should ever return, give your blood as freely as you would give water from the well; or if they come not, spend that blood, and the life it gives them, devoting every hour of every day, and every moment of every hour, to His cause, whose you are, and whom you profess to serve. No new fashions, no new views and opinions—the imitation of Christ is the only mode of service, and the Master lays it down before each of you—ask your consciences whether you have ever really served Him—"If any man would serve Me, let him follow Me." Walk in the way of Christ, it is the King's highway! I pass the question round these galleries, and this vast area—are you serving Christ? "Well, I subscribe to a charity." Are you serving Christ? "I intend to build a row of almshouses." My dear brothers and sisters, you may do all this, and yet not be serving Christ, for your Master tells you that to serve Him is to *follow* Him. Have you *followed* Him? Have you believed in

Him? Is He all-in-all to you, and do you now make His life the guiding star of your life? And do you desire to be, and are you, as far as is possible to man—made like He in all things that you may be obedient to His will? God help us that desiring to serve Immanuel, we may do it by following Him!

II. We must come to our second point—GENEROUS STIPULATIONS FROM A NOBLE MASTER. "Where I am, there shall also My servant be."

Whoever heard of such conditions as these from an ordinary master? The master is in the drawing room, the servant is in the kitchen. The master is in the parlor, the servant is in the workshop. The master sits at the table with his friends; the servant girds himself to wait on them. What, I say, what generous stipulations does the master make—"Where I am, there shall also My servant be"! Well now, to return to the illustration we used before—"Where I am, there shall also my *deacon* be"—still using old Yohanan and Isaak as your pattern, you will remember that wherever the old presbyter went, there was Isaak at his side. I dare say many a night they slept under the broad shadow of a tree, and where Yohanan was; there the deacon was, too. Were they entertained by generous friends? They shared the same couch. At times they sat around the genial fire, but they sat together; other times they shivered in the winter's cold, but they shivered side by side! Their lot during the long journey was the same, and when they arrived here, they sat with us at the same table. We spoke to them as to those who were intimate friends, and I know that, throughout the whole of their voyage, where the presbyter was, there the deacon was, also.

Do you not see that this was the rule which Christ carried out all His life? He went to a wedding; is it not written, the disciples of Jesus were there? Jesus once rejoiced in spirit over the elect ones, the babes and sucklings to whom God had revealed Himself; yes, but His disciples shared the joy, because Satan fell like lightning from heaven, and even the devils were subject to them. The Master often went to the house of Lazarus; and Martha and Mary made a great feast, but the disciples were always there. Sometimes they went to a Pharisee's house—a very respectable gentleman—and if Christ had been an ordinary man, He might have said, "I cannot take those poor fishermen with Me; it will lower My character if they see what rag-tags follow at My heels." But no, where He was, there His servants were! And you know, beloved, one time He rode in triumph through the streets of Jerusalem, but He did not say to His disciples, "Now you had better stay out of the way; this is a day in which I am to be honored, and I think you will rather spoil the pageantry if they see you in your fishermen's clothes walking with Me." No—where He was, there were His servants, also! And when the multitudes cried, "Hosanna," and welcomed the Master, the welcome was shared by the disciples. Then there came His last great feast. "With desire," He said, "have I desired to eat this passover with you"—it was *"with you"*—He could not enjoy that last supper except with them! "Where I am, there shall also My servant be," share and share alike; their lot, My lot; My portion, their portion forever.

Mark, beloved, if the Lord thus shared His comforts among His disciples, He expected them to share His discomforts. He was in a boat in a

great storm, and the disciples must be with Him, though they are sorely afraid. He goes to Gethsemane; He sweats, as it were, great drops of blood; His disciples must be with Him there, even though they cannot bear it, and are asleep. And though in His last passion they could not be with Him, for He must tread the winepress alone, yet, mark you, His disciples were with Him afterwards, for if He were brought before kings, so were they! If He stood falsely accused, so, in later years, did they! If He died upon the cross a martyr, so did they! And so, for 300 years, where Christ was *in death,* there His Church was, too, for the gallows, and the cross, and the stake, and the block, and the bloody axe had stern work to do with Christ's Church, that it might be fulfilled—"Where I am, there shall also My servant be."

Beloved, this stands true to you and me this morning. Where Christ was, we must be. "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord." Blessed be His name, He has gone to heaven, now, and where He is, there shall His servants be, in the same heaven in His Father's house! Yes, He has mounted to His throne, and where He is, there shall His servants be. "To him who overcomes will I give to sit on My throne, even as I have overcome, and have sat down upon My Father's throne." He is in the joy of His Father; and where He is, there must His servants be! We also must be partakers of His joy, that His joy may be full. Lo, He comes! The trumpet sounds! Jesus comes! The Second Advent draws near; but when He comes, all His saints shall come with Him! My God shall come, and all His saints with Him! He reigns—kings and princes, your scepters are not your own; He comes to take them from your hands, and your crowns from your heads—Jesus comes to "reign from pole to pole with illimitable sway." And we shall reign with Him, for, "Where I am, there also shall My servant be." I think you understand, then, that the conditions of the service are these—fare ill or fare well—we are to have joint stock with Christ; we are to take Him for better or for worse, in shame and in honor, in reproach and in esteem, in riches and in poverty, in life and in death, in time and in eternity! "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." I love my Master's conditions! He is a noble Master! Shall I ever blush to go where He goes? God forbid, for if I do, I may be afraid lest, at the last, He should ignore me, and should not permit me to be where He is.

I have heard an old story, somewhat amusing, which will illustrate this point, and then I shall leave it. I have heard that a noted Methodist preacher, who commenced his ministry very early in life, suffered not a little at first because of his humble origin, and unpromising exterior. Being sent on the circuit to a certain house on a Saturday night, to be in readiness for preaching on the Sunday, the good woman of the house, who did not like the looks of him, sent him around to the kitchen. There was a manservant who served them at odd times, and also worked in the coal mine, or at the forge, who was surprised to see the minister in the kitchen with him when he came from labor. John, rough as he was, welcomed the despised preacher, and tried to cheer his heart. The minister shared John's meal of porridge, John's bed in the cockloft, and John's humble breakfast. He walked to the house of God with John in the morning. Now, the preacher was a notable man, though then unknown, and

he had not long opened his mouth before the congregation perceived that there was something in him, and the good hostess, who had so badly entertained him, began to feel a little uneasy. When the sermon was over, there were many invitations for the minister to come visit, and the hostess, fearful of losing her now honored guest, begged him to walk home with her. To her surprise, he said, "I supped with John, I slept with John, I breakfasted with John, I walked here with John, and I'll walk home with John." So when dinner came he was, of course, entreated to come into the chief room, for many friends wished to dine with this young minister, who was so much admired and esteemed. But no, he would dine in the kitchen; he had supped with John, he had breakfasted with John, and he would dine with John. They begged him to come into the parlor, and at last he consented on the condition that John should sit at the same table. "For," he said, very properly, "John was with me in my humiliation, and I will not sit down to dine unless he is with me in my exaltation." So on he went till the Monday morning, sleeping at night with John, and persevering in the same rule—"I supped with John, I slept with John, I breakfasted with John, I walked with John, I'll walk home with John, and I'll dine with John, for John was with me at the beginning, and he shall be with me to the end." Brethren, this story may be turned to account thus; our Master came into this world once, and they sent Him into the servants' place; they sent Him where the poor and despised ones were, and said, "Live with them; the manger and the cottage are good enough for You." He lived with poverty and supped with toil. Now the name of Christ is honored, and kings and cardinals, popes and bishops, say, "Master, come and dine with us." Yes, the proud emperor and philosopher would have Him sup with them, but still He says—"No, I was with the poor and afflicted when I was on earth, and I will be with them to the end, and when the great feast is made in heaven, the humble shall sit with Me, and the poor and despised, who were not ashamed of Me, of them will I not be ashamed when I come in the glory of My Father, and all My holy angels with Me."

III. We have, thirdly, A GLORIOUS REWARD FOR IMPERFECT SERVICES. "If anyone serves Me, him will My Father honor."

I am persuaded if any man will serve Christ in the way Christ bids him, that is, by following Him; if any man is content not to do as father or grandmother did, but will follow Christ and not man; if any man will break through all customs, all regulations, all rotten proprieties, and just do as Christ did, and imitate Him in all things—that man will have honor, first of all, *in his own soul*. He shall have such blessed peace of conscience, he shall have such sweet fellowship with Christ, he shall have such profound peace from the Father's right hand, that it shall be very apparent to him that the Father honors him. Look at John Knox, who never feared the face of man; he followed Christ as far as his light went, and how greatly the Father honored him with unruffled serenity of heart! What calm that gigantic spirit had; when the world was all in an uproar against him, how peacefully he smiled in the face of the roaring of the multitude, for God honored him with an indwelling consciousness of being right before the Lord.

Then, again, I am persuaded that God will honor such a man *by success, by prospering him in his ministry, and in whatever he may attempt for Christ*. Why is it that so little success rests on some who labor for God? Because they do not serve Christ in the way He would have them serve Him—by imitating Him! Ecclesiastical courts, decrees, rules, forms, liturgies, and such like, confine too many, who if they would snap the fetter, would be honored of the Lord! If there were in connection with this church anything which I thought to be unscriptural, I could not expect to have God's blessing in it; and I think if any man here is a member of a church of which he can say, "Well, there are many wrong things in it, but I do not think I ought to come out," you cannot expect God's blessing! He who would serve Christ, must follow Christ in little things as well as in great things! Whenever we say—"Well, there are some things wrong in my position, but I can do more good where I am," we set ourselves up as masters instead of servants. Our business is conscientiously to follow, as far as our light goes, the example of Christ in every respect and in all things, and if this should entail the giving up of our present position and usefulness, we must not consider results, but instantly obey imperative commands! I claim for my Master immediate, unquestioning, unqualified obedience to all His words; and I demand of you, in His name, that you renounce everything which prevents your rendering perfect, unhesitating service to His person and doctrine! Whether as members of a church, or a community, or in a trade, if you have anything that prevents your following Christ, leave everything and come right out—for you cannot expect great success from God till you have honored Christ by following Him in all things! If you think you know better than Christ, why then I have done with you! If you think that you can lead a better life, or set a better example, you are proud, indeed! Or, if you imagine that in your position you may tolerate yourselves in disobeying His commands, you talk as one of the foolish women talks, but not as a disciple of Christ! I say again, if you would be honored of God, you must serve Christ by following Him.

And lastly, such who thus serve Christ, by following Him, *shall have great honor at the last*. We will suppose that the Prince of Wales is wrecked on a certain voyage, and is cast on shore with only one companion. The prince falls into the hands of barbarians, and there is an opportunity for his companion to escape. But he says, "No, my prince, I will stay with you to the last, and if we die, we will die together." The prince is thrown into a dungeon; his companion is in the prison with him, and serves him, and waits upon him. The prince is sick—it is a contagious fever—his companion nurses him—puts the cooling liquid to his mouth—and waits on him with a mother's care. He recovers a little. The fond attendant carries the young prince, as he is getting better, into the open air, and tends him as a mother would her child. They are subject to deep poverty—they share their last crust together; they are hooted at as they go through the streets, and they are hooted at together. At last, by some turn in providence, it is discovered where the prince is, and he is brought home. Who is the man who the queen will delight to honor? "Make way for this man! He was with my son in prison—he was with my son when he was near death—he nursed him—he suffered with him—he was re-

proached for him." I fancy she would look with greater affection upon the poor servant than upon the greatest statesman; and I think that as long as she lived, she would remember him above all the rest, for she would say, "He was with my son in all his sorrow and affliction, and I will honor him above all the mighty ones in the land."

And now, dear brothers and sisters, if you and I shall be with Christ, the King's Son; if we shall suffer with Him, and be reproached with Him; if we shall follow Him anywhere and everywhere, making no choice about the way, whether it shall be rough or smooth, whether it shall be green grass or miry bog—if we can go with Him to prison and to death, if such times come—then we shall be the men whom heaven's King delights to honor! "Make room for him, you angels! Make room, you cherubim and seraphim! Stand back you peers of heaven's realm! Here comes the man; he was poor, mean and afflicted; but he was with My Son, and was like My Son. Come here, man! Here, take your crown, and sit with My Son in His glory, for you were with My Son in His shame!" Oh, that the Holy Spirit would teach us how to follow Jesus, and enable us to tread in His steps!

I conclude by again asking this important question—Are you with Christ today? Have you put your hand into Christ's hand to be Christ's forever? My hearers, the speaker wants to make this question ring in your ears—Are you with Christ today? For he who is not with Him is against Him! And he who follows not Christ scatters abroad. Do you trust Christ? Oh, sinner, if you do not, I beseech you trust Him now, and you are saved! If you have trusted Christ, is it the true trust? If it is, it will make you follow Him, and you will be obedient to His every wish and word! Faith, such as the Holy Spirit gives, always leads to obedience. Is it so? Is it so? If not, humble yourself before God. Believe in Him who is the only foundation upon which a sinner's hope can be built! Take up your cross daily, and through evil report and through good report, follow the Master even to the end, and the Lord God, the God of heaven and earth, the fountain of honor, shall glorify you when Christ comes in His kingdom.

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A SERMON FOR GLEANERS
NO. 464

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 10, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not. And let fall also some of the handfuls on purpose for her and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not."
Ruth 2:15, 16.

THE entire world depends upon the labor of the field, and the king himself is served of the plow and of the sickle. The dwellers in the country who watch the springing up of the blade through all its perils, who mark the ear as it bursts from its sheath, and who anxiously observe it until it hangs downward through ripeness and becomes yellow in the sun—these, being brought constantly into contact with clods and crops—are not able to forget their entire dependence upon "The staff of life." One can hardly live where the operations of farming are carried on, without often looking up to the God of providence in anxious prayer and later, lilting up the heart in grateful praise. But, the most of us are condemned to live in this huge wilderness of bricks, where scarcely a green thing salutes our eyes; if we try to rear a plant, it is but a sickly thing, neither tempting for beauty, nor fragrant with perfume; in the absence of the bright-eyed flowers, it is small wonder if we grow a little blind towards our mother earth. We are too apt to think that we are independent of the operations of the country; that our trade, our commerce, our manufactures, are sufficient to support us; forgetting all the while, that in vain is yonder forest of masts, unless the earth shall yield her fruit; in vain the emporium, the exchange, and the place of merchandise, unless the land is plowed and harrowed, and at last yields to the farmer his reward! I would that I could recall to your memories, O you dwellers in the city, how much you depend upon the Lord God of the earth for your daily bread! Does your food fall like manna from the skies? Do you create it at the forge, or fashion it in the loom or on the wheel? Comes it not of the earth, and is it not the Lord who gives to the fertile womb of earth the power to yield its harvests? Comes not the dew from heaven and the sunshine from above? And do not these bring to us our bread as well as to those who abide in the midst of the fields? Let us not forget this time of the harvest, nor be unthankful for the bounty of the wheat; let us not forget to plead with God that He would be pleased to give us suitable weather for the gathering in of the precious grain, and when it shall be gathered in, let us not sullenly keep silence, but with the toiling workers who, well-pleased, behold the waving yellow crop, let us lift up the shout

of "harvest home," and thank the God who covers the valleys with corn, and crowns the year with His goodness!

I would order my speech, this morning, so as to act in your ears as the harvest bell in our midland counties. I have there noticed a bell ringing early in the morning, and again towards the evening, which, I am told, is intended to tell the people the hour when they may go into the fields to glean, and when they must leave the field and go back to their homes. My sermon shall be as simple as the ringing of a bell; but if it suffices to remind you of the sheaves, and of the harvest; if it shall but make you thank our God who gives us the fruit of the earth, I shall be well content. Tell me not that this is not a proper theme for Sunday. I know you know not what you say. Did not the disciples of Jesus walk through the corn fields on a Sunday, and did not the Master make the fields themselves the subjects of His sermons? I fear not His disapproval when I say, on this hallowed day, "Lift up now your eyes and behold the fields are ripe already unto the harvest." Do you think that the outward creation is sinful, and that God would be worshipped on Sundays with closed eyes and vacant faces, which must not look on flowers and fields? There is no impurity in green grass, or flowers, or sailing clouds, or rippling waves, or ripening corn! To the believing ear, the footsteps of the Bountiful Father are everywhere audible, and the revolving seasons do but reveal the varied attributes of God! We may gather from every rustling ear a song, and listen in every harvest field to a sermon which angels might stoop to hear; it is no unhallowed theme! Come with me to the harvest field—may the Master come with us—and let us talk for a while of other things than harvests, though the harvest shall be the metaphor on which we will fashion our speech.

A word or two about the gleaning. Under the Jewish dispensation, gleaning was one of the rights of the people. The farmer was forbidden to reap the corners of the field, and if he should have left a sheaf by oversight in the field, he must not go back for it; it was to be left for the widow, and the fatherless, and the poor that dwelt in the land. No, the rights of gleaning went further than wheat and barley—the olive tree was to be beaten but once, and they were to leave the gleanings to the poor. So with the vintage; when they gathered the grapes, they were not utterly to clean the branches of the vines, but leave sufficient to give a taste of the delicious fruit to the poorest of the land. I would not have our Christian farmers less liberal under the gospel dispensation, than the farmers were under the Mosaic Law! As Boaz, in his generosity gave to Ruth more than she could legally claim, so let no possessor of the soil be questioning about the legal rights of the poor to gleaning! Let him open his gates sooner than the Jewish farmer would have done, and let him sometimes bid his men leave handfuls on purpose for the poor. Grieved am I to observe that the custom grows with many farmers nowadays to rake their fields, and get all they can from the poor of the village; and I believe some would rake the stubble seven times if they could but get one ear more, and leave less for gleaning! I would not gather into my barn, were I a farmer, a sheaf, every ear of which rustled with the cries of the poor; I

would not have the poor man's curse for all the rich man's field, nor make the poor dwellers in the village dissatisfied the whole year round because of a paltry handful of corn, which I had added to the stock of my bursting barns. Especially you who are Christians, I repeat it in your hearing—be not less liberal than was the Jew! And if of old, when there were types and shadows, they left good gleanings for the poor, scatter with a liberal hand now that we have come to the substance, and the fullness of the gospel! Rob not the poor man of his little, but earn his blessing by your abundant generosity in the time of reaping your fields.

I have now to invite you to other fields than these. I would bring you to the field of gospel truth. My Master is the Boaz. See here, in this precious book is a field full of truthful promises, of blessings rich and ripe! The Master stands at the gate, and affords us welcome; strong men, full of faith, like reapers, reap their sheaves, and gather in their armfuls. Would you were all reapers, for the harvest truly is plenteous. But if not reapers, may you be as the maidens of Boaz. I see some servants who do not so much reap themselves as partake of that which others have reaped; I know we have many in this Church who are glad to eat the sweets, and feed upon the fat things of the kingdom when they are brought forth each Sunday in the ministry of the Word. But I see trembling yonder, outside the gate, a little company to whom I am to address myself today; they are not reapers, they have not strength enough of faith to take the big sheaves; they are not as yet like household servants; they are not peaceful enough in their consciences to sit down and eat, and dip their morsel in the vinegar and be satisfied; but they are *gleaners,* and they are saying, as they stand at the gate, "Would that I might find favor in the sight of my Lord, that I might even glean in this field, for I should then be content if I might gather here and there an ear of gospel grace." I am sent to you! My Master sends me as one of His young men, and thus He bids me say to you, "Come into the field and glean wherever you will, and if in the gleaning you should grow strong and become reapers, reap and carry home the sheaves for yourselves."

I. First then, like Boaz, I shall ask the question, "WHO IS THIS DAMSEL?" in order that I may find out who these gleaners are who are invited into the fields of Christ, that they may glean the handfuls that are let fall on purpose for them.

"Who is this damsel?" The first answer is, *she is a Moabitess and a stranger*. Ah, I know you, poor timid heart! You say, "I am sprung of an evil stock, an heir of wrath even as others; my nature is depraved and vile; how can I hope, such a one as I am, that I should ever be allowed to go into the Master's field, and glean of His good corn of divine grace? Oh, sir, if you knew how I feel of my lost and helpless state! Could you but perceive how base I am in my own eyes because I have been so long a stranger to God, and an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, I think you would not invite me to glean in the field at all." Verily, my Sister, you are the very person to whom I am sent, for it was a Moabite damsel upon whom Boaz set his heart, and it was to her that he sent his message, "Abide you fast by my maidens; go not in any other field."

But, I ask again, who this damsel is, and she answers, "I am not only by nature a stranger, but *I must confess that I am now in my condition miserable and poor;* I cannot buy Christ's grace; I can do nothing to win His love. Once I thought I had some good works, but now I have none; once I relied upon ceremonies, but I have given them up, for I find no comfort in them; I am utterly poor—so poor, that I despair of ever in the future being richer than I am now. I am helpless; I am hopeless; I am nothing. Yes, I am less than nothing! Alas, I am such a miserable beggar, that I am not worthy of the least of all His mercies." Do you say this? Right glad am I, then, to hear you use such language, for unto you, again, am I sent, and unto you am I bid to give the gracious invitation—"Come into the field and glean even among the sheaves."

Now, the gleaner whom I describe is not only in her own experience an alien, and a stranger—and in her own present condition naked, and poor, and miserable—but *she has, despite all this, a decision for the Lord God of Israel*. I think I hear her say, "If I perish, I will perish looking to the cross of Christ! I have nothing of my own to bring, but I come just as I am. The Lord knows I have no other dependence but upon the blood and the finished righteousness of Jesus Christ. I forswear the gods of Moab in whom I once trusted; the world is now nothing to me; the pomp and vanities thereof have lost all their glory! As to myself, I abhor myself in dust and ashes; I would be Christ's, and if He will not have me, if I may not glean in His fields, I will never go elsewhere—

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

It is marvelous, the tenacity with which some of these timid souls will hold to Christ! Just as a man, the more fearful he is of sinking, clutches the plank with a more terrible earnestness, so have I seen some of these fearful souls lay hold on Jesus with a grip which neither death nor hell could unloosen! Were the times of burning to come back again, many a wavering soul that can scarcely say, "I know that my Redeemer lives," would go singing to the stake; while many of those who are bold in words would prove cowardly in acts, and withdraw from Christ when it came to burning for Him! Well, it is to you that I am sent, poor timid gleaner; come in, come into the field, and we will see if we cannot let fall some handfuls on purpose for you!

Our description, however, is far from being complete. *This gleaner is one who is exceedingly humble and self-emptied*. Just observe what she says when Boaz takes notice of her—"Who am I, that I should find grace in your sight, seeing that I am a stranger?" Ah, and the woman to whom I would speak this morning has such a low estimate of herself, that when she gets a grain of hope she thinks, "Ah, it is too good for me." When, sometimes, you half hope that Christ has loved you, and given Himself for you, a sight of your unworthiness comes in, and you say, "No, this can hardly be, that such a one so mean and so despicable as I, should ever be regarded by the lovely eyes of Christ my Lord." I know you think yourself not to be pure, or fair, or lovely; and when you read such a passage as that, where Christ says of His spouse, "You are all fair, My love,

there is no spot in you," tears come in your eyes, for you say, "Alas, He will never say that of *me,* for I am all defiled with sin, all unholy and unclean! Should He search the world through, He would not find a more worthless one than I; and should He turn the heap over again and again, he could not find one that less deserved to be the objective of His pity than I, poor unworthy I." Yes, but you are just the person to whom I am sent! Your Lord Jesus has heard of you, and He loves such as you are, for when you are little in your own eyes, then are you great in His! When you talk thus bashfully of yourself, then He loves to hear your words, for they are words of truth. In very deed, you are what you say you are, nothing but loathsomeness, and corruption, and depravity; and yet He who has loved you, notwithstanding all this, will never leave you till your corruption has been removed, till your loathsomeness has been washed away, till for deformity you have matchless beauty, and for unholiness His perfect righteousness! I say to you, even to you, we are sent today!

Once again, *these gleaners have a very high opinion of those who are true Christians*. You notice Ruth says, "I am not like unto one of the handmaidens." No, and my poor gleaner yonder, she thinks the saints of God are such a blessed people; she is not like one of them. When she gets into her sin experience she says, "If I were a child of God, I should never be like this." Knowing her vileness, and her imperfections she cries, "Ah, if I were one of Christ's chosen, I should be much holier than I am; though I love His saints, I cannot dare to hope that I shall ever be numbered with them; my goodness can never reach so high as to be joined with them in visible fellowship." Ah, I know some of you feel that if you ever did get to heaven, you would creep through some cranny in the door, and hide yourselves in some mouse hole far away, where none could see you; and today, though in truth you are the best of the saints, you think yourselves the vilest of the vile; for many there are, who are very rich in divine grace, who think themselves miserably poor. On the other hand, many who say, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," are naked, and poor, and miserable! Poor Moabitess, long an alien, having gone far into sin, and now decided for Christ, with a sort of despairing hope that maybe He will look upon you—today, even today, He speaks to you! Open your ears and hear Him; forget your kindred and your father's house, for He greatly desires you, and He would have you even now come to Him, and be espoused unto Him forever!

I need not prolong our description of the gleaners to whom I speak. The Holy Spirit, I hope, will find some of you, and may He press home the truth of God to your hearts!

II. Having beckoned to the gleaner, I shall now, like Boaz, ADDRESS THE REAPERS. The ministers are the reapers, and thus speaks Boaz to them—"Let her glean, even among the sheaves, and reproach her not; let fall some of the handfuls on purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not."

The first command Christ gives to His ministers is—"Rebuke her not." Ah, I fear, my brothers in the ministry that we have often rebuked where we ought to have comforted, and perhaps our unwise speeches, when we

did not mean to do it, have been very hard blows to the afflicted in Zion. It is an ill thing for the strong cattle to push with horn and shoulder. We are very apt, unless we have much trial and trouble ourselves, to lose the lady's hand which is so necessary for a physician of souls. We keep the lion's heart, but oh, the tender hand and the downy fingers, we are not so ready to keep these in dealing with sore consciences! I know some preachers who never went to Martin Luther's school; they may have prayer and meditation, but they have never been schooled by temptation; and if we are not much tempted ourselves, if we are not emptied from vessel to vessel ourselves, we are in very great danger when we are dealing with these Ruths, lest we are hard with them, and rebuke and reproach them, when instead we should hear the Master say—"Comfort you, comfort you My people; speak you comfortably unto Jerusalem." Now I take it that we do very much reproach these tender ones *when we set up standards in our ministry to which we tell them they must come or else perish*. Some do it in *experience*. I have heard old divines and, like Elihu, I have been ready to rebuke my seniors when they have taught their experience, in all its length and breadth, as necessary for all the people of God. The experience of the advanced saint must never be set up as a standard for the young beginner! There are mountains for us to climb when our bones are firm, but these mountains are not for babes; there are depths into which we are to dive when we have learned the art of plunging into them, but these are not for little children, who must be rocked on the knee, and comforted at the breast. When we describe some dark passage in our lives, and say to the young convert—"You must have felt all this or you are not a child of God," we are reproaching when we ought to have comforted, and rebuking where we ought to have consoled! So have I seen a standard of *divine grace* set up. Some Christians are eminent in their graces; their faith is valorous; their courage defies all danger; their hope is bright and sparkling like a diamond; but if in our preaching we tell young converts that their graces must be equal in luster to the fathers in the Church, what do we do but rebuke Ruth when we ought to have let fall handfuls of corn for her to gather?

And so, too, with regard to *doctrinal knowledge*. I have known some Christians well-schooled in these matters, and deeply read in theology who, when they meet with one who knows no more than this—that he is a sinner and that Christ came to save sinners—will ask hard, wrinkled questions, which are more fit for an assembly of divines than for a babe in Christ; and because, indeed, the little child cannot untie a Gordian knot, because the babe cannot crack the hard shells of these theological nuts, they send him away and say, "The root of the matter is not in you; you have not passed from death unto life." Oh, let us not do this, dear brother reapers! Let us sooner cut ourselves with our own sickle than cut Ruth with it! Let us rather be patient, and very tender, and receive the weak in the faith, as Christ has received them! Let us, like our Master, not overdrive the lambs, but carry them in our bosom, and gently lead them when they need our tenderness and our care. There is also another way in which some rebuke these gleaners, who should rather be invited

and comforted—that is, by denying their faith when it is mixed with unbelief! It is marvelous; it is miraculous, that a spark of faith can live in the midst of an ocean of unbelief! You will find men who, at times, fear that they believe nothing; in their own apprehension they are so beclouded and bemisted that they have lost their way, and do not know where they are; and yet they are true believers for all that. Some of us have passed through crises of our being in which, if we had been asked our very name, we could hardly have told it, for we were so utterly distressed, so lost and cast away by reason of overwhelming blasphemies, or incessant temptations, that we could scarcely tell our right hand from our left! And were we therefore without faith? No, there was still a little faith. There was an undying principle still within us when death had made us wretched men. So we must not talk to these young beginners as though the uprising of their corruption disproved the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we must comfort them. We may tell them of the dragons we have fought, and the giants we have slain, but we must use discretion even in this; and when they are in the Slough of Despond, we must not leave them to sink there up to their very necks, but go lend them our hand to pull them out, for they may be on the right road even in the slough, and they may still have their faces to Zion though those faces may be smeared with the mire and filth of that dreadful bog! Let us never rebuke or reproach these timid ones, but help and sustain them.

But further—Boaz gave another exhortation to the reapers—*"Let fall handfuls on purpose for her."* In our ministry there should always be a corner cupboard for the tried and timid saints. I think there should never be a sermon without a Benjamin's mess for the children. There should be strong meat for the men and women, but there should always be milk for the babes. Ready to adapt our ministry to all sorts of people, if we forget any, we should never forget these! My brothers, would you minister to these gleaners? Let me remind you, first, that our ministry must be *plain,* for these timid souls cannot feed on hard words. Dr. Manton once preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, and a great crowd went to listen to him. A poor man who had walked 50 miles to hear the good doctor, afterwards plucked him by the sleeve and said—"There was nothing for me this morning." The doctor had preached a very learned sermon, full of Greek and Latin quotations which the poor countryman could not understand; but the doctor had not expected him, and there was nothing for him. I think there should always be in our ministry some things for poor Ruth; something so plain, and so simple that the wiseacres will turn up their noses and say, "What platitudes!" Never mind, if Ruth gets a handful of corn, our Master at the last shall know who did His errand best, and served Him with a perfect heart! And then, if plain, we must remember, too, that it must be very *elementary*. We must be often laying again the foundation stone—teaching faith in Christ again and again! As Luther said, we must repeat justification by faith every Sunday, because men are so apt to forget it. Oh, you fine preachers who elaborate your learned essays, who work all the week long to addle your own brains, and then spend the Sunday in muddling your hearers—would that you would re-

member these poor gleaners, who want none of your fine stuff, none of your glorious flights, none of your rounded periods! They are far better off if you will tell them that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and point their eyes to Calvary, and bid them look and live! We must let fall handfuls on purpose for the weak and ignorant! And then again, our preaching must be *evangelical*. Weeping eyes need Christ to dry them; tender hearts need Jesus' wounds to make them whole. A man who lives without temptation may enjoy a Sunday's sermon without Christ in it—but give me a man who is tempted in the week, and I know he needs Christ! Give me a man who has lost money in the week, or that has been subjected to ridicule for Christ's sake, and I know that you might as well offer him the husks that swine eat as offer him anything but Christ crucified visibly set forth before his eyes! Oh, we must get back to this, all of us who are preachers! We must forget what we learned at college! We must leave behind what we pick up from learned books, and come out to tell Ruth just that which she most needs to hear—that Boaz welcomes her to the field, and bids her glean till her hands are full!

But then, brothers, you will notice that these reapers were to let handfuls fall *on purpose for her*. Well, then, you reapers in God's field, let your preaching be very personal! Oh, I love it, when I draw the bow, not to do it at random, but to single out some troubled heart, and speak to you all as though there were but one here; not pouring the oil over the wound, but coming up to the edge of the gaping sore to pour in the oil and wine. These poor Ruths will not dare to take the corn unless we put it right in their way! They are so fearful, so timorous, that though it seems to be scattered for everybody, they think it cannot be for them; but if it is there, *put* there so that they cannot mistake it, then they say—"Well, that is for me; yes, that is what *I* have felt; that is what *I* need." And they cannot, unbelieving though they are, they cannot help stooping down and picking up the handful that is let fall *on purpose* for them! Then, if it is so, our preaching must always be very *affectionate*, for if we let fall a handful with a scowling face, our Ruth will go to the other end of the field rather than pick it up. Oh, brothers in Christ, it is, after all, our sympathy with our fellow men which is the great engine the Holy Spirit uses in converting them! It is not merely telling out the truth of God which is the power—God, if He had willed it, might have made statues which could preach—and they could have preached as well as we do, and infinitely better if the Lord had poured the words out of their cold lips! But He made *men* preachers, that men might feel for men, and that our words might come out from our hearts, and so go glowing into the hearts of the afflicted. Oh, let *us*, then, who are reapers for Christ; be very tender with poor Ruth! And often when we forget the strong, and leave the mighty man to take care of himself, let us go to the gate to pull in the fainting mercy, and invite Christiana and her little children to sit down and rest. So would I do this morning, and therefore I pass on to our third point.

III. As myself a reaper for Christ, I must try to follow the example of the reapers of Boaz, and let fall handfuls on purpose for the gleaner. I am

afraid I shall not be able to give you such handfuls as I would, but they shall come out of the right field. Oh, you timid and troubled heart, let me drop before you now *a handful of precious promises*. "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." Does not that suit your case? A reed, helpless, insignificant, and weak; a bruised reed, out of which no music can come; weaker than weakness itself; a reed, and that reed bruised! He will not break you! He who broke Rahab by His right hand will not break you! You are like the smoking flax; no light, no warmth comes from you; you are, on the contrary, like flax that smokes, giving forth a foul, offensive smell. But He will not quench you! He will blow with His sweet breath of mercy till He fans you to a flame. Do you need another? "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls." What soft words! Your heart is tender, and the Master knows it; therefore He speaks so gently to you! Will you not listen, and obey Him, and come to Him, come to Him even now? Hear him again—"Fear not, you worm, Jacob, I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Or would you hear Jesus Christ speak to you again?—"Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me." Or, again, "He is able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God by Him." Do you not remember 10,000 such passages as these? "When you pass through the rivers, I will be with you, and the floods shall not overflow you; when you go through the fires you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." Or this, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, she may forget, yet will I not forget you." Or this, "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your transgressions." Or this, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter then snow." Or this, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him who is thirsty come, and whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." Or this, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and you who have no money, come and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Oh, my Master's field is very rich; behold the handfuls! Look, there they lie before you, poor timid soul! Gather them up, make them your own, for Jesus bids you take them! Be not too bashful; but take them, feed on them, and go on in the strength of this meat all your days!

Well, I have dropped a handful of promises; now let me try and scatter a *handful of doctrines of grace*. But Ruth starts back, for she is afraid to glean in the wheat fields of doctrine. No, but Ruth, here is the doctrine of election; come and glean that. Fear not, poor timid soul, it is a sweet and blessed truth of God. Hear it—"God has chosen the weak things of this world, and the things that are not has God chosen to bring to nothing the things that are." "I thank You, O Father of heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." Does not that suit you, timid soul? Are you not as a babe, as a weak thing, and as a foolish thing? Oh, there is a handful on

purpose for you, in the doctrine of electing love! Hear another, the doctrine of justification by faith—"not by works of righteousness which we have done He saves us, but through Christ Jesus; we are saved through what Jesus has done on our behalf." "He who believes on Him is not condemned, but has everlasting life." What do you say? Does not that suit you? You have no good works—can you not trust Christ, and *His* good works on your behalf? Is not this a handful on purpose for you? "Yes but I fear," says one, "that if I were saved, I would yet fall away, for I am so weak." Here is another handful for you—"I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus." Is not this a handful on purpose for you? "I have made and I will bear, even I will carry; even unto hoar hairs I am He, and unto old age will I carry you." What more do you need? I tell you, Ruth, there is not a single doctrine in Scripture which, if it is rightly understood, will not yield handfuls on purpose *for you!* Indeed, my Master's gospel, though it is a chariot in which a king may ride, is like an ambulance used on the field of battle, in which a man with broken limbs may ride comfortably! Oh, it is soft riding when Christ carries in His arms, and He does this for such as you are! Broken in pieces all asunder, with your thoughts like a case of knives cutting your soul and conscience through and through, Christ has made His gospel to suit *you!* The other day, when one of our brothers was sick of consumption, we sent him a waterbed to rest on, and the comfort it gave him was indeed delightful. But oh, Jesus Christ's bosom is something softer than that! Though you are ever so weak, though you are like a withered leaf driven in the wind and broken of the tempest, you shall yet find perfect peace and quiet in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is a gospel *on purpose for you!*

Once more, we have some handfuls to drop that we have gathered in another field. We have been to promise field and to doctrine field, *now let us go to the field of experience*. Do you not know, Ruth, that your experience is no exception to the rule? There are thousands such as you are; and I, too, who speak to you this morning, that you may know the truth of this matter, I tell you that once upon a time I stood like yourself shivering at the gate, and I said in my soul, "His mercy is clean gone forever; He will be mindful of His covenant no more." For years I cried for mercy but did not find it. I wrote my name among the damned, and said I must perish, for God had shut up the heart of His compassion. But He has never despised the cry of His prisoner. I looked unto Him and was lightened, and I am not ashamed to confess that there is light nowhere but in Him. "Oh," you say, "then your experience is something like mine!" Just so, it is; and so there is a handful on purpose *for you!* I know the devil tells you, you are lost in a road where Christ's mercy never travels; but it is a mistake. You are in the midst of the king's highway. I know Satan tells you that you have come to the ends of the earth, but my Lord puts

it—"Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." Oh, but you think you are the last man! Ah, but Christ loves to take the last, and make them first, while the first he often leaves to be last! Yes, but you have written bitter things against yourself! Never mind what *you* have written; what a mercy it is *Christ* did not write them, and that, on the contrary, He has written sweet things of you! And he has said, "Return unto Me, says the Lord, for I am reconciled unto you." soul, my Master—would that He were here to speak for Himself—for my poor words are so feeble compared with His—my Master woos you this morning! Instead of offering you a gleaning, He offers you Himself. You came to be a gleaner; He would make you His spouse! Look, Boaz comes to you. Will you have Him? The ring is in His hand; come, stretch out the finger of your little faith, and let the deed be done. Say, "Unworthy though I am, I hope, my Lord, I am Yours; no other would I have to serve, to love, to trust; Jesus, just as I am, take me, and make me what You would have me to be." It is done! The marriage is ratified, and by-and-by, it shall be consummated before the eternal throne in your everlasting bliss.

I have good reason for being earnest in trying to comfort this Ruth, because, though she is a stranger, she is a sister of mine. I am a stranger, too; we both come from the same land, and the same howling wilderness. She is in trouble, and my soul has known trouble, too—the same trouble–and I would desire to bring her to the port of peace. Besides, she is to be my Master's wife, and I would be on good terms with the mistress of the house! It is ill for the reaper to have an enemy in the mistress; and since I know that this Ruth shall by-and-by find Boaz to be her next of kin, I would desire to do her a good service, and bring her to her Master's house, if so my Lord would honor me.

IV. I close, then, my sermon of this morning, by stirring up timid and troubled ones to do what I know divine grace will make them do before long. I say, then, to you who are thus troubled in your consciences, since the field is open to you, and we bid you glean—since Boaz himself commands us to let fall handfuls on purpose for you—do *your* duty, and be bold to believe today! You have been afraid to trust Christ up to now; trust Him now; venture on Him. It is a poor word to use, but do it! Though something tells you you have no right to trust Christ, do it, right or not, right NOW, flat on your face before Him, with no confidence but in what He has done, and in what He is doing still. Be bold to believe in Him at this moment, and you shall live! And having believed in Him, be industrious every time the Word is preached to pick up every ear of comfort in the sermon. Ruth must bend her back, though it is but one ear at a time she gathers. Think it worth while to hear a sermon in ever such a crowd, if you may get but one ear of comfort—for one ear is a great thing for one who deserves none! And but one word of mercy from the lips of Christ should be accounted more precious than rubies to a soul that deserves to hear Him say, "Depart you cursed." And when you have gathered one grain and another seek a retentive memory to keep in your hand what you have gathered, or else you will be like a silly gleaner who stoops to glean one ear, and drops another at the same time! Carry home

what of the truth of God you can; take notes in your heart; and when you have gathered, and your hands are full, take care to discriminate! Ruth, we are told, threshed her corn and left the straw behind—she took home the good wheat! You do the same. There is much straw in all our sermons, much that our Master would not have us say—for we are poor, poor creatures, and but fallible like yourselves, but leave the straw behind, and take home the good wheat. And do us this service—do not take home the straw and leave the wheat, as some do. There are many foolish gleaners who, if there is one word of ours awry, will tell it to our discredit, but our Master's Words they will forget. And, lastly, while you are on your knees in prayer, beating out the sermon in meditation, turn your eye to my Master; go to Him and say to Him, "Lord, I am content to glean, though I get but one ear of mercy; but oh, that I had You! Oh, that You would give me Yourself! I have no beauty, but oh, You do not love us for *our* beauty but for *Your* beauty which You cast on us! Lord, look on me! All I can say is that if You will save me, I will praise You on earth, and I'll praise You in heaven, and there shall not be one before the throne more grateful than I, because there shall be none who shall owe so much to Your unmerited, rich, free, sovereign grace!"

Sinner, if you do that now, my Master will accept you. Trust Him *NOW*, poor hearts, trust Him now! Away, you devil of hell, away, away! Why will you molest these lambs? Timid and troubled consciences, hear not what your doubts, and fears, and hell, and the devil would say—come now to my Master! His wounds invite you—His tearful eyes invite you—His open heart bids you come! Come and trust Him; He cannot reject you if you trust Him just as you are! God help you to do it, and you shall see sin forgiven, your foes trampled under your feet, and you yourselves shall meet the great Boaz at the marriage supper, and to Him shall be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFYING CHRIST
NO. 465

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 17, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and shall declare it to you."
John 16:14.

WE always need the Spirit of God in our preaching; but I think we more especially require His divine direction, and instruction when the subject is *Himself*—for the Holy Spirit is so mysterious in His varied attributes and operations, that unless He Himself shall reveal Himself to us, and give us the words in which to speak of Him, we shall surely fail either to understand for ourselves, or to enlighten others. In *His* light we see light, but without Him we grope like blind men in the dark!

Certain sins against the Holy Spirit continually exist in a degree in the Christian Church. *Unholiness of life* grieves the Holy Spirit. When Christians walk not according to the gospel; when their conversation is not ordered according to the pattern of Christ, then the Holy Spirit, who has no fellowship with unholiness, withdraws Himself in a measure from the Church. *Discord*, too, strife among brethren, forgetfulness of the new commandment, that we love one another, grieves the sacred Dove—for as His nature is peaceable, as His office is to be the peace giver—so He tarries not where there is the din and noise of contending parties. So, also, when He perceives His saints to be diseased with *worldliness*, when we prefer the treasures of Egypt to the reproach of Christ, and seek rather the things which are seen, which are temporal, than the things which are not seen, which are eternal—then again is the Holy Spirit quenched and departs from our midst. Above all, *pride,* and that *murmuring, rebellion, unbelief, obstinacy,* and self-seeking, which pride leads to—all this grieves the Holy Spirit, for He dwells with those who are humble and of a contrite spirit! Where there is the voice of murmuring, where one man seeks to lift himself above another, and all to exalt themselves above their despised Lord, the Holy Spirit hides Himself, and suffers barrenness to take the place of plenty, and death to reign where once life triumphed. These are a few of the common, and the constant infirmities of the Church, by which the Holy Spirit is much hindered in those marvelous manifestations which otherwise would be common and usual in the midst of our Israel!

But there are two faults of the Church which appear to me periodically to manifest themselves. The one is when men ascribe wrong things to the Holy Spirit, and make Him the Author of human novelties and delusions. In seasons when the minds of good men were anxiously alive to spiritual operations, certain weak-headed or designing persons have grown fanatical, and bewildered by their own confused feelings, and puffed up by their fleshly minds, they have forsaken the true light of God, which is in

the Word, to follow after the will-o'-the-wisps of their own fancies, the absurdities of their own brains. Such vainglorious fools aspiring to be leaders, masters of sects, will boldly tell men of itching ears that fresh doctrines have been especially revealed to them! They prate much of what they call the inner light (which is often an inner darkness), which dim candle they exalt above the light of the Word of God, and tell you that marvelous things have been taught to them in dreams and visions. Ah, this is a high and crying crime! What? Will you lay at the door of the Holy Spirit a deed which God has solemnly cursed? Do you not start back at such a thought? Is it not almost blasphemy to imagine it? And yet remember, he who adds a single *word* to the canon of inspiration is cursed! Give ear to the very words of the Lord our God, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." And do you think the Holy Spirit would do that which involves a curse upon man? If I venture to add to God's Word, or to take from it, I do it with this as my penalty—that God shall blot my name out of the book of life, and out of the holy city! And yet these base pretenders, who would lay their foolish notions at the door of God the Holy Spirit, will have it that He has taught them more than is in the book, that He has removed that which God laid down as the grand landmark, and added to the finished testimony of God! Let none of you have any sort of patience with men who talk thus. Deny their very first principle. Tell them—whether it is the deceiver of Western America, or the false prophet of Arabia—tell them that they are all impostors, for they ascribe to the Holy Spirit that which is impossible for Him to commit—a violation of the revealed will of God in which it is declared that the canon of inspiration is shut up once and for all!

A little of this evil I detect among godly people. I find that sometimes even gracious men think they have had revelations. texts of Scripture are no doubt laid home by the Holy Spirit to the souls of men as much today as in Paul's time, and there can be no doubt whatever that the Spirit brings all things Christ has taught to our remembrance, and that He leads us into all truth; but when a man tells me that the Holy Spirit has revealed to him something that is not in the Bible, he lies! Is that a hard word? It does but express the truth of God! The man may have dreamed his revelation, he may have fancied it—but the Holy Spirit goes never beyond the written Word! "He will take of what is Mine and shall declare it to you." And beyond what Christ has spoken, and what Christ has taught, the Holy Spirit goes in no sense, and in no respect. You understand what Christ has taught through the Spirit's teaching, but anything beyond the teaching of Christ and His apostles must be not of God, but of man! This is a most important principle to be held fast by all godly people, for the day may come when false prophets shall arise, and delude the people, and by this shall we be able to discover them; if they claim anything beyond what Christ has taught, put them aside, for they are false prophets, wolves in sheep's clothing! The Spirit only teaches us that which Christ has taught beforehand either by Himself, or by the inspired

apostles. "He will take of what is Mine and shall declare it to you." Just now, we are in little danger from the excesses of fevered brains, for, as a rule, our sin is in being far too cold and dead to spiritual influences; I fear we are liable to another evil, and are apt to forget the person and work of the Comforter altogether! We fear some congregations might say, "We have not so much as heard whether there is any Holy Spirit." From how many modern sermons would you even know that there was a Holy Spirit? If it were not for the benediction, or the doxology, you might go in and out of many Churches and meeting houses in a year, and scarcely know that there was such a person as that blessed, blessed giver of all good, the Holy Spirit! Sometimes we hear a little about His *influences*, as if the Holy Spirit were not as truly a person as even Jesus Christ Himself, who in flesh and blood trod this earth. Oh, dear friends, I fear the first danger—that of running wild with whimsies and fancies about inner lights, and new revelations; but I equally dread this last, this putting the revelation above the revealer, this taking the book without the author, this preaching of the truth of God without the great truth applier—this going forth to work with the sword, forgetting that it is the sword of the Spirit, and only as mighty as the Holy Spirit makes it "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds." May this Church always continue to reverence the Holy Spirit without exaggerating His work! May we prize Him, love Him, and adore Him because He so wondrously glorifies our blessed Lord!

With this, by way of preface, I shall now come at once to our text, using it three ways—first, *as a test to try various things by;* secondly, *as a direction how to honor Jesus;* and thirdly, *as a stimulus, stirring us up to glorify Christ.*

I. First, then, we shall use our text AS A TEST.

There are a thousand things that claim to be of the Holy Spirit; how can we know whether they are or not? Here is a simple mode of discovering, "He shall glorify Me."

1. Let us, first of all, apply this test to *ministries*. There are crowds of preachers and reverend divines nowadays in the world; but all are not ministers of God. A true minister is a creation of the God of heaven. It is no more in the power of the Church than it is in the power of the bishops to make ministers! Independency is as weak as Episcopacy on this point. God, alone, ordains ministers! All that the Church can do is to recognize them; we cannot make them at our colleges; we cannot make them by the laying on of hands, or even by the choice of the Church. God must make them; God must ordain them! It is only for the Church to perceive God's work, and cheerfully to submit to His choice. Now, there are some ministries which clearly are not of the Holy Spirit, because they glorify ceremonies. We could take you into certain places of worship where the general strain of ministry is a glorification of baptism, the blessed Eucharist, confirmation, priesthood, and so on. There you hear much of the childish millinery with which they deck the altar, and much is said of those grotesque garments in which their priests disguise themselves! We could point to many places where the main objective of teaching seems to be to exalt a decree, to magnify a liturgy, to hold up a hierarchy, or to extol a ritual. All such ministries we may at once sweepingly and unerring-

ly condemn! They are not of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit teaches us not to magnify outward rites, but Christ; and that teaching is not of the Holy Spirit which does not glorify the Lord Jesus!

Into other places we might take you where very clearly the objective is the extolling of doctrine. From the first of January to the last of December, the minister bitterly contends for the favorite corners of his faith. Doctrine, with certain friends, is everything, and their rigid orthodoxy is the one care of their life. Now, against a sound creed and the doctrines of grace we have not a word to say. God be thanked that we love these things as much as those who exalt them above measure; and we are not a whit behind the chief of these champions in our zeal for orthodoxy; but still, our Lord is, and must be, the leading theme of our ministry! We must continue to exalt Him rather than Calvinism, or any other system of theology. We are bold to say it, much as we love the Master's throne, we still love the Master better; and dearly as we love battling for the walls of His vineyard, yet the clusters of His Eshcol are sweeter to our taste! We love Christ better than creed, and we think we would rather magnify our Master than any set of truths, however important they may be.

There are certain doctrinal brothers, good enough in their way, but still, you can evidently see that the doctrine of election is a thing that they contend more for than the doctrine of the redemption of Christ. Or, if it is redemption, it is the *specialty* of redemption rather than the divine sacrifice itself. I love to preach the distinguishing grace of God, but I am far from thinking that some four or five points comprise all the truths which God has revealed! Be it ours to preach the doctrines as Dr. Hawker preached them, with Christ as their sum and substance. "A full Christ for empty sinners"—may this be our theme! To a great extent, it is true of a Church that seeks only to exalt doctrines, that it has not the fullness of the Holy Spirit in it, for of the Holy Spirit it is written, "He shall glorify *Me."*

Another class of brethren are well known to those of us who have looked upon the Church of God at large, whose ministry tends mainly to magnify a certain experience. If you have felt thus and thus, and so and so, no words of praise can be too strong for you; but if you have been led in another way, in a different path, then depend on it, according to the judgment of these divines, you never knew vital godliness at all! They are as intimate with the secrets of heaven as the pope himself, and are quite as infallible as he, in their small dominions. Some of these brethren have, no doubt, gone through a very deep and awful experience—they have lived so much in sin, and have been so untrue to their Lord, that it is little marvel if they have to walk in darkness and see no light. These brethren hold up that experience as a model, and tell us that unless we know all they have learned, we are not Christ's. Now, I say not a word against experiential preaching; I believe it to be the most soul-fattening preaching in the world, but it must be experience about *Christ,* it must be an experience that leads me out of self to Jesus, and if any ministry is experiential, yet does not exalt Christ, I have cause to suspect whether the Holy Spirit is with it, for this stands as an unchanging rule—"He shall glorify *Me."*

And, dear brothers and sisters, once again, we are cursed with some few men—would to God they were fewer—whose teaching constantly is, "morality." If we will *do* this, and *do* that, and the other, we shall be saved—the old law of Moses is toned down, and then held up as the road to heaven! Now, at once, you may forsake the synagogues where such men are in the chief places; for if any man exalts the works of flesh, and not the finished work of Christ; if the *doings,* the *willings,* the *prayers,* the *feelings* of man, are put in the place of the blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, his ministry is not of the Holy Spirit. And what might I say of many who produce each Sunday their pretty little essays, their elaborate disquisitions, their high-sounding periods? What shall I say of all these, but that they are as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal," inasmuch as they forget Christ, the person of Christ—God and man; the work of Christ—His atonement and righteousness; the resurrection of Christ—the life and joy of the saints; the intercession of Christ—our hope and our strength; and the Second Advent of Christ, which is as the bright morning star to every weary watcher in this world's darkness? That ministry, and that ministry only, is of the Holy Spirit which magnifies Christ Jesus!

And here, dear brothers in the ministry—and there are some such present—how bitterly may you and I lament much of our ministry because it has not glorified Christ! When we shall lie stretched upon our dying beds, we shall look back with satisfaction to that poor stammering sermon in which we magnified the Master; we shall look with intense regret to that well-delivered oration in which we glorified a sect, or lifted up an ordinance at the expense of our Lord! Oh, what joy it shall be to remember that we did lift *Him* up, however feebly, yet we did extol *Him!* Though sometimes utterance would not come as our heart would have it, yet we did point to His flowing wounds, and said, "Behold the way to God." Oh, the sweet bliss of a Whitefield when he retires to his last couch, to feel that he did preach Jesus, whether it was at the market, or on the hillside, or in the Church, or in the barn! What a consolation to feel that he did cry faithfully, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid!" Oh, the curse on the other hand, that shall rest on a man who, in his last moments, shall have to reflect—"I preached other men's sermons, and talked of anything but Christ; I lifted up anything but the Lord"! Oh, how shall the howling of his eternal doom commence in his ear! How shall the judgments of God get hold upon him even before he passes to the dread tribunal of the Most High! We must, as preachers, come back more and more to this rule—to feel that if the Holy Spirit is in us, He will make us glorify Christ!

2. Having thus tried ministries, let us now take the same test with regard to *doctrine;* and very briefly here, lay it down as a self-evident truth of God that any teaching, whatever authority it may claim, which does not glorify Christ, is most assuredly false; and on the other hand, I think we shall seldom be wrong if we believe that when a teaching lifts Christ up, and puts many crowns upon His head, it must be a doctrine according to godliness.

Dear friends, Socinianism must be utterly abhorred of us, for it strikes at once at the Deity of our blessed Lord and Master. We cannot give to

such persons even the name of Christians! They may be Muslims—it were well if they would join with those men—they may be good men, they may be moral men, they may be excellent citizens, but Christians they cannot be, if they deny our Lord to be very God of very God, and worthy to be worshipped even as is the Father! I marvel that sundry Dissenters should have fraternized with Arians and Socinians in attacking the Church of England, in the present sorrowfully mistaken onslaught called the Bicentenary; and I can only pray that the Lord may not visit them for this shameful confederacy with His enemies. In Arminianism, which is a mixture of truth and error, there is the doctrine of the saints falling from divine grace—a doctrine which is more dishonorable to Christ than I can tell you—which to my mind, seems to put its black and sooty finger right down the escutcheon of my Lord and Master, setting Him as a laughingstock to the whole world! It says He is one who begins to build, and is not able to finish, there is a blot upon His *power!* He loves, and yet He loves not to the end, there is a blot upon His *faithfulness!* He says, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." And yet, according to the Arminian, they *do* perish, according to that doctrine which is a stain upon His *truthfulness!* In fact, the doctrine of final falling away impugns the whole character of Christ so much that it would render Him unworthy of our faith. When they shall prove that one, who was once in Christ, has fallen away and has been lost, I know not Christ, for He has violated His Word. He can no more be "the truth," when He has thus put His own promises into the background, and allowed His darlings to fall into the power of the dog. If there is anything in Scripture as plain as noonday, it is the doctrine that, "He who believes in Him *has everlasting life,* and shall never perish, neither shall he come into condemnation." If the child of God can be disinherited; if Christ can divorce His spouse; if the Good Shepherd shall lose His sheep; if the limbs of Christ's mystical body can be cut off, or can be allowed to rot, then I know not what Scripture teaches, nor do I understand how Christ can be worthy of the believer's trust! That doctrine, I think, must be reprobated, because it stains the honor and glory of Christ. Without alluding to others, let that suffice as an instance. Examine well all doctrines; look not at them with complacency because they are put in cunning language, or asserted in vigorous declamation; but if you perceive that any teaching dishonors Christ, and makes much of human ability; if it exalts man and derogates from the grace of God, it is false and dangerous! And if on the other hand, it lays man in the dust, and lifts up Christ as Savior, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of salvation, you may safely say that is the Holy Spirit's doctrine, for He shall glorify Christ.

3. Again, we may use our text as a means by which to try much of the *conviction* through which a sinner passes. In the first dawn of our spiritual life, a mighty tempest of spiritual influence sweeps over the heart. The Holy Spirit is active, and the prince of the power of the air is active, too! There is more of God, and more of Satan in a new convert, than perhaps in any other stage of human existence; for just then Satan rages with extraordinary fury to drag back the soul to destruction, and the Holy Spirit works in him mightily, with a power which only omnipotence

can wield. How, in this confusion, can a man know what part of his conviction is of God, and what part of the devil? Young man, listen to me. You have a thought in your head that you are too great a sinner to be saved. That is not of the Holy Spirit, clearly, because it detracts from the power of Christ as a Savior! That cannot be of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ. "Yes, sir, but I feel myself to be a great sinner, utterly lost and ruined." That is of the Holy Spirit, because it lays you low in order that the greatness of Christ's salvation may be the more apparent. "Oh but," you say, "I am not fit to come to Christ." Surely this feeling is not of the Holy Spirit, but of the devil, for it does not glorify Christ! What? Are you to make yourself *fit* to come to Christ? Why, that is making you a Christ; yes, it is making you an Antichrist, which is no work of heaven but a foul design of hell. "But I heard old Mr. So-and-So say the other day, sir, that when he was converted, he seemed to be dragged by the hair of his head to the very depths of hell, and his soul was full of blasphemy, and his heart was in such an awful state that he cursed the day of his birth, because he thought he was shut out of the covenant and was utterly lost beyond the reach of mercy!" Very well, no doubt what he has told you was his veritable experience; but do you want to experience every piece of devilry that a good man has known? Because a good man trips and falls into the gutter, must you trip and fall there, too? Because Jonah descends into the whale's belly, must we all dive into the sea? I tell you, soul that much of what your friend felt was not of God, but of his own corrupt heart, and of the devil, and he knows it, and he will confess the same to you. Why, therefore, should you pant after that which is sinful and satanic? Why should you desire to drink the poison of asps and sniff the fumes of Tophet? If the Lord brings you, this morning, to put your soul just as it is into the hands of the Redeemer, honoring Him by a childlike trust, you have an experience infinitely more precious than the howling of devils, and the ravings of your proud heart could ever yield you! To be *nothing,* and to accept Christ as *everything,* is worked in us of the Holy Spirit; but all the rest, those horrible insinuations, that terrible hell-shaking, may be all dispensed with; good men have felt these, but they are not good things; they come from Satan, and are to be avoided and prayed against—not to be sought after! I pray you, therefore, let the Holy Spirit lead you in His own way, and ask not to be led in a way of your own choice. Why long for darkness when the Master wills to let you walk in the light? Into these balances, then, put all your convictions, and discover how far they are of God, and how far of Satan. That which glorifies Christ is of the Holy Spirit; all the rest is of flesh, or of hell.

4. Thus, we may test what is called *experience*. Very much of the experience of a Christian is not Christian experience. If any person should mount the platform and say, "I will tell you the experience of a man," and then inform us that he had been five times tried at the Old Bailey, you would say, "Well, *you* may have experienced that disgrace, but it is not fair to call it human experience." So, a Christian may fall into great darkness, and into sin, too; let us mournfully confess it; but then, if he shall set up his darkness and his sin as being Christian experience, we say, "No. We do not judge *you, you* may be a Christian and know all this,

but we cannot allow *you* to judge us, and decide our spiritual state according to *your* peculiar method of *feeling!* I fear that many biographies have done as much mischief as service. While no doubt they comfort many who fall into the same state, yet a sufficient discrimination is not made between the man stirred by the powers of evil, and the same man when filled with the Holy Spirit. When we get to that which comes from beneath, we ought to write always in the spirit of our apostle who cannot describe himself without an agony—"Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." That which glorifies Christ is true Christian experience, and that which does anything but this, a Christian may experience—but it is not *Christian* experience!

5. Let us lift the scales of judgment once more. I think our text gives us an excellent test by which to *try ourselves*. My hearer, are you saved or not, this morning? If you are saved, the bent, the tenor, the bias of your life is to *glorify Christ!* What do you say in looking back? Does the past glorify Christ? "When I think of the love that cleansed me from such sin, of the divine grace that broke a heart as hard as mine, of the faithfulness that has kept me to this day, I can only glorify Christ." And what about the present? Can you say, "Oh, when I think of what I now am by the grace of God, and what I would have been now if the Holy Spirit had not prevented; when I look within and see so much blackness, I must magnify the grace that keeps me; and when I look without and see so many temptations, I must and will speak well of His dear name; I must glorify my Lord Jesus"? And what do you say about the future? Will you glorify Him *then?* I think I see even the timid ones with their eyes brightening up a little when they say, "Yes! If He will but once bring me across the river, if I ever get beyond gunshot of the devil, and behold the face of Christ in glory, I will sing loudest of the entire crowd! I will magnify Him with all my powers, for I shall owe more to Him than anyone else before the throne; I will never cease to sing with all the blood-washed throng—

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

Oh, if your heart is not so that Christ is ALL to you; and if your soul is not desiring this morning to honor Him, Him only, then indeed, I fear the Holy Spirit has had no dealing with your spirit, for where He has been at work, He *must,* He *shall* glorify Christ!

II. We are now to use our text as DIRECTION. How are we to glorify Christ?

The text tells us that we must have the Holy Spirit. Let our text, then, be sanctified to our *humiliation*. Here are we saved, by the rich love of Christ, delivered from our sins, and made alive unto God, and yet, we are such weak things that we cannot glorify Christ without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We may pant, and long, and pray that we may have helped to honor our Master, but we shall only dishonor Him, and disgrace His cause, unless the Holy Spirit holds us up, and strengthen us! Do you hear that, Christian man and woman? You have 10 talents, but those 10 talents shall make you 10 times a worse defaulter to your Master unless the Holy Spirit helps you. You have eloquence, you have wit, you have wealth; with none of these can you glorify Christ, unless the

Holy Spirit is with you; for, *"He* shall glorify Me." Man cannot, except as the Holy Spirit is with him! Bow your heads, then, O you saints of God, and ascribe glory unto the Holy Spirit, but unto yourselves shame and confusion! Let us employ this text as an excitement to *earnest prayer*. We as a Church and I may speak freely for my own flock, we long to see Christ glorified. It is to this end we seek to train up our sons, young men in our much-loved College that they may go forth as preachers of the Word. We have agencies by which we hope to do something in our generation for our Master, but what is everything we can do without the Holy Spirit? Let us, therefore, pray without ceasing! Oh, without prayer, what are the Church's agencies but the stretching out of a dead man's arm, or the lifting up of the lid of a blind man's eye? Only when the Holy Spirit comes is there any life and force and power. Cry then mightily unto God, O you who seek to glorify Christ, for without the Holy Spirit you utterly fail! And here what a lesson our text reads us of *entire dependence* upon the Holy Spirit. You can do *nothing,* you ministers of God! *Nothing,* you faithful watchmen of Jerusalem! You can do *nothing,* you teachers of youth, *nothing* you heralds of the cross in foreign fields, *nothing* you ten thousands who are willing to give all your substance, your time and your talents, absolutely *nothing* can you accomplish until God the Holy Spirit comes!

We are by the seaside. There are a number of ships left high and dry by the ebb of the tide. A long tract of mud stretches out before us. What is to be done? Call the king's horses, bring the king's men, gather together the wise and the mighty; what can they all do? Nothing; their learning can only avail to prove most clearly that they can do nothing! But look, the tide rolls in, wave after wave rises from the deep, and lo, every ship floats, and all the mud and sand is covered with the fullness of the sea. So is it with the Churches, we all lie high and dry upon the beach, and there is nothing but the rock and mud of our own inability that is visible, and we can do nothing, absolutely nothing, till the holy tide comes; the blessed spirit of revival, the Holy Spirit, is poured out, and now the heaviest Church is floating out to sea, and that which was most inactive begins to move! Oh, what can we *not* do if we have the Holy Spirit? What can we do if we have Him not? See our utter and entire dependence upon Him. When we, as a Church, first came out into broader light and more public notice, I bear my witness; we had an entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit. What prayers have I heard, what striving and what groans! We are now reaping the ripe fruits of the early sowing. Lo, your minister, but a stripling from the country all untrained in academic lore, knowing nothing but just the doctrine of the cross, came forth before the multitudes to proclaim simply the Word. How he felt his nothingness then, and how often he told you so! You cried to God, and the child, the lad, was helped; what mighty deeds were done in the conversion of hundreds! And now, we have a name, and there is a great temptation to rest upon our success, and for men to think there is something in the preacher, that he can gather the crowd, can preach the Word, and it is sure to be blessed when he preaches it. Brothers and sisters, again I say we are *nothing*—we are *less* than nothing! Your minister is a fool, and nothing beyond. Unless the Holy Spirit is with him, he is able to do nothing ex-

cept mischief; nothing that shall be profitable to you, or make any heart glad, but the heart of the evil one, unless the Holy Spirit is with us still. Joyously would I receive again the jeer, the sneer, the constant slander that was heaped upon my devoted head, if I might have back again your entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit! Oh, members of this Church, you who have been quickened under our word, let not your faith stand in the wisdom of man, but in the demonstration of the Spirit! And let us, one and all, feel that we are still as weak as water, and as vain as the whistling wind, unless He who was first with us is with us still. "He shall glorify Me." The Holy Spirit shall do it. None can do it if He is absent!

I know I am addressing some this morning who have seen the goings forth of the Holy One of Israel. In fact, we as a Church have had to rejoice these nearly nine years in a blessed revival, but how diligent should we be while we have that revival, in order that we may retain it! All the farmers in England cannot make it leave off raining, but when it does leave off and the sun shines, I know what they do—get their wheat in as quickly as they can! All the sailors on the ocean cannot make a capful of wind; when the sail flaps to and fro, they cannot make it swell out as in the gale—but what can they do when the wind does blow? They can crowd on every yard of canvas. So, all the Christians in the world cannot make the Holy Spirit work. "The wind blows where it lists, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell from where it comes nor where it goes," but what we can do is this, when we have the Holy Spirit, we can use Him; when He is with us, we can work. We must make hay while the sun shines; we must grind while the wind blows; we must be active and diligent for God when the visitation of the Holy Spirit is with us. The revival has, to a great extent, ceased in many places. I fear it is because they did not diligently use its influence. In Ireland, how much of revival there was, but the Holy Spirit withdrew necessarily, because it was held up as a curiosity. Every newspaper reeked with the news of the revival; people went from England to see it; it could not last, then. God never does His great works to be stared at, to be held up as curiosities! The thing was ruined the moment men began curiously to talk of it, and spread abroad the news as of a phenomenon worthy of philosophical investigation. These good things should never be made a subject of, "Come, and see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts." While the good work goes on, we should be so hard at work for the Master that we have not time to put into every penny newspaper the tale of what God is doing! Let us, then, be up while the Master is with us, and doing His work, doing it in the Spirit's own way, seeking to glorify Jesus, and seeking to retain the Spirit in our midst!

III. And now, lastly, I am to take my text by way of A STIMULUS. Does the Holy Spirit glorify Christ? Ah, then, how should we aim to do it! Let us make, then, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, let us make this the one object of our life—to glorify Christ. You have been a man in a large way of business. Could you say, while you were doing business so largely, that your objective was to honor Christ in it? Well, you have come down in the world; you have a smaller shop now. Yes, and suppose you can glorify God more? Then, you are in a better position than you used to be! I have seen many a man who prospered in his soul, and hon-

ored his Master much, who has made a wrong step and has injured his usefulness and happiness; wanting to get more business, he has launched into wide speculations, and has had less time for serving his Lord, and he has, thus, really been in a worse position, for spirituals were under a decay. You may have seen in the newspapers an instance of what sometimes comes from getting wealthy. A man and his wife were prospering in a little way of business, as hard-working people, near Birmingham. A friend died and left the wife some 1,300 pounds, no great sum, but quite enough to ruin a man! They at once took a public house, and you will remember that he now lies in prison on a charge of murdering his wife. Little marvel that when, tempted by what little they had, to seek after more, they entered upon an evil occupation in order to increase their wealth! That evil trade soon led to vicious habits and to death. Now, I have seen believers mournfully impoverish their souls by seeking after carnal wealth instead of seeking Christ; but, let a man's only objective be to glorify Christ, and he will feel very little concern where providence places him, as long as he may still promote his one objective, and put crowns on the Redeemer's head!

This brings me to say, brothers and sisters, while we make this our aim; let us take every opportunity of glorifying Christ. We throw thousands of opportunities away. Where we might do good, we neglect it. I chide myself here very bitterly, and very often, but I fear I might chide many of you, too. You had an opportunity yesterday, but you lost it. You might have spoken for Christ, but you did not. No one can tell the good you might have done, but you did not do it! You were backward. Oh, as the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ everywhere, so must you! I pray you do this always, not merely at particular times, but make your whole life a glorifying of Christ! As I sat on an omnibus yesterday, I heard a man saying behind me, how greatly he admired the continental way of keeping Sundays—going to Church in the morning, and going to the theater at night. "Don't you see," he said, "it is irrational to think that the Almighty expects us to spend the whole day in praying! There is no man living who can pray for six hours together, let alone twelve." That was just putting in broad language what most ungodly people feel, but then I wonder what they would make of the Apostle Paul's admonition, "Pray without ceasing"? Here was a man who thought that nobody could pray for six hours together, while the saints of God are to continue in prayer *always!* No man comes up to the stature of the Christian, or such a man as he should be, unless he cannot only pray for six hours together, but his whole life long! It was said of good old Rowland Hill that people did not so much notice his particular times of retirement, for he was a man who was always praying, wherever he might be. You would often find him alone talking to himself, and always in company his heart would be going away to the Object of his best love—he would still be in communion with Christ. Be always glorifying Christ, Christians, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Whether you work at a lap stone, or drive a plow, or lay the stones in a building—serve the Master in all these things! Whether you are diligent with the pen, or whether you buy and sell, or plow the sea—do all even to your eating or your drinking in the name of

the Lord Jesus—and so like the Holy Spirit let it be said of you, "He shall glorify Me."

We conclude by endeavoring to magnify our Master ourselves. I want to say just two or three things to glorify Him, and they shall be just these. I shall say this to the poor troubled doubting sinner, "sinner, my Master is able to save you!" "Oh, but I am the biggest sinner out of hell." Yes, and He is the greatest of all Saviors! "Yes, but I have gone over head and ears in iniquity." Yes, and He was baptized also in His agonies that He might save you! "Oh, but He *cannot* save me!" Yes! He can! And if I am now addressing the scum of the earth, one of the devil's sweepings, one who is hardly fit for decent company, my Master is able to save you! Unto the uttermost He saves, and your sin, though black, He can cleanse and make you whiter than snow!

I would say something else to glorify *Him*. He is *willing* to save you! His generous heart *desires* you. Your perishing will not make Him glad, but He will weep over you as He did over Jerusalem. But your being saved will give Him to see of the travail of His soul. "Do you know who you are speaking to, sir?" No I don't, but my Master does, for now He fixes His poor tearful eyes on you. Where is the sinner? Behind that pillar? In yonder corner? The Master looks at him, and He says, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls." What? Are you so far away? How loudly does He call you, "Come, sinner, repent and come!" Are you willing to come? Lo! He meets you! In the road, He meets you; embracing you, He falls upon your neck to kiss you. He says, even this morning, He says it, "Take off his rags and clothe him in fine apparel; wash him and make him clean, for I have put away his sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud his iniquities." That which glorifies Christ the most of all is the preaching of the gospel to sinners, and therefore have I glorified Him now, and would do so as long as I live! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, for he who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned. God give us to glorify Christ by trusting in Him! Amen.

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THE LOADED WAGON
NO. 466

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 24, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." Amos 2:13.

THE other Sunday morning we went into the corn fields to glean with Boaz and Ruth—(See Sermon #464, Volume 8—A SERMON FOR GLEANERS—read/download, by God's grace, all 63 volumes of CH Spurgeon sermons, and over 574 Spanish translations free of charge at www.spurgeongems.org) and I trust that many of the timid and faint-hearted were encouraged to partake of the handfuls which are let fall on purpose for them by the order of our generous Lord. We go, today, to the gate of the harvest field with another objective—to see the wagon piled up aloft with many sheaves, come creaking forth, making ruts as the toiling horses drag it from the field; we come with gratitude to God, thanking Him for the harvest, blessing Him for so much favorable weather, and praying Him to continue the same, till the last shock of corn shall be brought in, and the farmers everywhere shall shout the "Harvest Home."

What a picture is a wagon loaded with corn for you and for me, as loaded with God's mercies! From our cradle up till now, every day has added a sheaf. What more could He do for us than He has done? He has daily loaded us with benefits. Despite the sad affliction in the North, we are nationally a favored people. Both in providence and in gracious privilege, He has blessed us above all people that are upon the face of the earth! While other countries have been crushed by tyrants, ravaged by war, or left in the thick darkness of superstition, we are free—we are blessed with the light of heaven—we have the gospel in our streets, the Bible in our houses, and the Sunday as our choicest heritage. O England! You are like a farm wagon creaking under the mercies of God! Brothers and sisters, we are each of us like the cart that is pressed down because it is full of sheaves; for the innumerable mercies of God are piled upon us high as the mountains, nor can our memory recount the tokens of the tenderness, and loving-kindness of the Most High. Let us adore His goodness, and yield Him our cheerful gratitude.

Alas—and how many times shall I repeat that pathetic interjection—alas! Alas! Alas—that such a metaphor should be capable of another reading; that while God loads us with mercy, we should load Him with sin; while He continually heaps on sheaf after sheaf of favor, we also add iniquity unto iniquity, till the weight of our sin becomes intolerable to the

Most High, and He cries out by reason of the burden, saying, "I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves."

Our text begins with a *"Behold!"* and well it may. "Beholds" are put in the Bible as sometimes a hand is put in the margin of old books, to indicate to the reader something worthy of notice. Or, again, "Beholds" are put in the Scriptures as signs are put out in front of houses of business to attract attention. There is something new, something important, something deeply impressive and worthy of attention, wherever we see a "Behold" in Sacred Scripture. I see this "Behold" standing, as it were, like a maiden upon the steps of the house of wisdom, crying, "Turn in here, O you who are wise, and listen to the voice of God while He speaks to you." Let us open our eyes that we may see, let us fix both our eyes intently that we may "behold," and may God make a way through our eyes and ears to our heart, that deep repentance and self-abhorrence may take hold upon us, because of our evil conduct towards our gracious God.

Now, it is to be understood, dear friends, before we proceed farther, that our text is but a figure, since God is not to be oppressed by man; all the sin that man can commit can never disturb the serenity of His perfections, nor cause so much as a wave upon the sea of His everlasting calm! He does but speak to us after the manner of man, and bring down the sublimities and mysteries of heaven to the feebleness and ignorance of earth. He talks to us as a great father may talk to his little child, and He uses images which are rather adapted to human frailty than to divine infinity. Just, then, as a cart has the axles bent and—to use an old Saxon word—as the wheels "screak" under the excessive load, so the Lord says that under the load of human guilt He is pressed down, until He cries out, because He can no longer bear the iniquity of those who offend Him. We shall now turn to the first point, this morning. O that the Holy Spirit may make it pointed to our consciences!

I. The first and most apparent truth of God in the text is, that SIN IS VERY GRIEVOUS AND BURDENSOME TO GOD.

Be astonished, O heavens and be amazed, O earth that God should speak of being pressed and weighed down! I do not read anywhere as much as half a suggestion that the whole burden of *creation* is any weight to the Most High. "He takes up the isles as a very little thing." "He weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in balances." Neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, nor all the ponderous orbs which His omnipotence has created, cost Him any labor whatever in their sustenance. The heathens might picture Atlas as stooping beneath the tremendous load of the world—but the eternal God, who bears up the pillars of the universe, "faints not, neither is He weary." Nor do I find even the most distant approach to a suggestion, that *providence* fatigues its Lord. He watches both by night and day; His power goes forth every moment; it is He who brings forth Mazzaroth in his season, and guides Arcturus with his sons; He bears up the foundations of the earth! And, He holds the cornerstone

thereof. He causes the dayspring to know its place, and sets a boundary to darkness, and the shadow of death. All things are supported by the power of His hand, and there is nothing without Him. If He withdrew His might, back to annihilation must all things go. Just as in a moment, foam subsides into the wave that bears it, and is lost forever, so would the universe depart if the eternal God did not daily sustain it. Nor has this incessant working diminished His strength, nor is there any failing or thought of failing; He does all things, and when they are done, they are as nothing in His sight. But strange, oh, passing strange, marvelous, miraculous among miracles, *sin* burdens God, though the world cannot! And iniquity presses the Most High, though the whole tremendous load of providence is as the small dust of the balance. Ah, you careless men, sons of Adam, you think sin a trifle; and as for you, you sons of Belial, you count it sport, and say, "He regards not; He sees not; how does God know? And if He knows, He cares not for our sins." Learn from the Book of God that so far is this from being the truth, that your sins are a grief to Him, a burden and a load to Him, till, like a cart that is pressed down with sheaves, so is He pressed down by human guilt.

I think this will be very clear if we meditate for a moment upon what sin is, and what sin does. *Sin is the great despoiler of all God's works.* It was sin that turned an archangel into an archfiend, and angels of light into spirits of evil. It was sin that looked on Eden, and withered every leaf in its garden, and blasted all its flowers. Before sin had come, the Creator said of the newly made earth, "It is very good." But when sin had entered, it grieved God at His very heart that He had made such a creature as man. Nothing can despoil the beauty in which God delights so much as sin, for sin mars His image, and erases His superscription.

Moreover, *sin makes God's creatures unhappy,* and shall He not, therefore, abhor it? God never designed that any creature that He made should be miserable. He made the creatures on purpose that they should be glad; He gave the birds their songs, the flowers their perfume, the air its balm; He gave to nature the smiling sun, and even to night its coronet of stars, for He intended that smiles should be His perpetual worship, and that joy should be the atmosphere which His creatures breathed. But sin has made God's favorite creature a wretch, brought down His most glorious offspring, made in His own Image, to become naked and poor, and miserable and lost. Therefore God hates sin, and is pressed down under it, because it makes the objects of His love unhappy at their heart. All the unhappiness that we have this morning comes directly or indirectly from sin. Iniquity is the mother of every human pang. Oh, how well may God hate it when He sees His own dearly beloved children made to wear furrows on their brow, and tears in their eyes, because of this vile, this abominable thing called sin!

Moreover, remember, beloved, that *sin attacks God in all His attributes.* Sin attacks Him on His throne, and stabs at His existence. What is sin,

sinner? Is it not an insult to God's *wisdom?* God bids you do His will; when you do the contrary, it is because you do as much as say, "I know best what is good for me." You do in effect declare that infinite wisdom is in error, and that you, the creature of a day, can judge better then your God what shall be the path of happiness for you! Sin impugns His *goodness;* for by sin you actually declare that God has denied you that which would make you happy, which is not the part of a good, tender, and loving Father. A generous God denies nothing to His creatures but that which is harmful; but inasmuch as you think sin to be pleasant and profitable, you cast a slur upon the benevolence and loving-kindness of God! And when He is such a God, so full of tenderness that His very name is "love," this is no slight burden to His Holy soul, to feel when He perceives you think you could do better for yourself than He is willing to do—and that He has cruelly robbed you of pleasure, and denied you that which would be for your good. Sin cuts at the Lord's wisdom with one hand, and at His goodness with the other.

And see, sin also abuses the *mercy* of God. When you, as many of you have done, sin with the higher hand because of His long-suffering towards you—when, because you have no sickness, no losses, no crosses, therefore you spend your time in revelry and obstinate rebellion—what is this but taking the mercy which was meant for your good, and turning it into mischief? It is no small grief to the loving Father to see His substance spent with harlots in riotous living! I tell you, it is no slight thing to the Father of the prodigal to see him wish to fill his belly with the husks the swine eat. This touches Him at the very quick; He cannot endure it, that His children should be thus degraded as to turn even the mercy which would woo them to repentance, into a ground why they should sin the more against Him! Besides, let me remind the careless and impenitent this morning, that every sin is a defiance of divine *power*. In effect it is lifting your puny fists against the majesty of heaven, and daring God to destroy you! Every time you sin, you know that sin will lead to your soul's destruction, if, then, you oppose the omniscient One, even to His face, and while under the hand that can crush you, you dare to revolt and to transgress, you do as much as dare and defy the Lord to prove whether He can maintain His law or not. Is this a slight thing, that a worm, the creature of a day, should defy the God of ages, the God who fills and upholds all things by the word of His power? Well may He be weary when He has to bear with such provocations and insults as these! Mention what attribute you will, and sin has blotted it; speak of God in any relationship you choose, and sin has cast a slur upon Him. It is evil, only evil, and that continually, in every view of it, it must be offensive to the Most High. Sinner, do you know that every act of disobedience to God's law is virtually an act of *high treason?* What do you do but seek to be God yourself, your own master, your own lord? Every time you swerve from His will, it is to put *your* will into its place; it is to make *yourself* a

God, and to undeify the Most High. And, is this a little offense, to snatch from His brow the crown, and from His hand the scepter? I tell you, it is such an act, that heaven itself could not stand unless it were repented of; and if this crime were allowed to go unpunished, the wheels of heaven's commonwealth would be taken from their axles, and the whole frame of nature would be unhinged. Such treason against God shall certainly be punished!

And to crown all, *sin is an onslaught upon God Himself*, for every sinner is an atheist at heart. Let his religious profession be what it may, he has said in his heart, "No God." He wishes that there were no law, and no supreme ruler; he desires that God might be forgotten. God is not in all his thoughts. Is this a trifle? To be a deicide! To slay God! To desire to put Him out of His own world! For the creature to declare war against the God that made him, and to wish that God might cease to be—is this thing to be winked at? Can the Most High hear it, and not be pressed down beneath its weight? Ah, I pray you do not think that I would make a needless outcry against sin and disobedience. It is not in the power of human imagination to exaggerate the evil of sin, nor will it ever be possible for mortal lips, though they should be touched like those of Elijah, with a live coal from off the altar, to thunder out the ten-thousandth part of the enormity of the least sin against God! Think, dear friends! We are His creatures, and yet, we will not do His will! We are fed by Him; the breath in our nostrils He gives to us, and yet, we spend that breath in murmuring and in rebellion!

Once more, we are always *in the sight of our omniscient God,* and yet the presence of God is not enough to compel us to obedience. Surely, if a man should insult the law in the very presence of the lawgiver—if the king were insulted to his face—that were not to be tolerated; but this is your case and mine. We must confess, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." And, we must remember, that we are doing all this and we *know* what we are doing! We are not sinning like the African; we are not pulling God's law to pieces like some blind New Zealander; we in England sin against extraordinary light, and sevenfold knowledge; and is this a light thing? Can you expect that God shall wink at us, and pass by such offenses as these? Oh, that these lips had language, that this heart could burn for once! If I could declare the horrible infamy of sin, it would make the blood chill in even a haughty Pharaoh's veins, and proud Nebuchadnezzar might bow his head in fear. It is a horrible thing, indeed, to have rebelled against the Most High. God have mercy upon His servants and forgive them! This is our first point but *I* cannot teach it to you. Only God can teach it by His Spirit. O that the Holy Spirit may make you feel that sin is exceedingly sinful, because it is grievous and burdensome to God.

II. Secondly, SOME SINS ARE MORE ESPECIALLY GRIEVOUS TO GOD. The connection of our text will help you to see the force of this observation.

There is no such thing as a *little* sin, but still, there are degrees of guilt and it were folly to say that a sinful *thought* has in it the same extent of evil as a sinful *act*. A filthy imagination is sinful—wholly sinful, and greatly sinful—but still the *act* has attained a higher degree of provocation. Now, there are sins that especially provoke God. In the connection of the text we read that *licentiousness* does this. The people seem, from the 7th verse, to have gone to a very high degree of fornication and lecherousness. This sin is not uncommon in our day; let our midnight streets and our divorce courts be the witness. Perhaps the saddest proof that society is far from pure is found in the fact that seducers and fornicators, if they are but gentlemen, may enter respectable society. Brand the degenerates, I say! If the woman is shut out as a harlot, what shall be done unto the lustful maker and cherisher of harlots? If hell burns hotter at one time than another, it is for those who make what should have been a Temple of the Holy Spirit, into an instrument of rebellion against both man and God.

Oppression, too, according to the text, is another great sin. The prophet speaks of selling the poor for a pair of shoes; and there are such who would grind the widow and the orphan to the last extreme, and make their laborers toil for nothing. How many business men we have who never knew what "hearts of mercy" were? Men form themselves into societies, and then exact an outrageous usury upon loans from the unhappy men who fall into their hands! Cunning legal quibbles, and crafty evasions of just debts, often amount to heavy oppression, and are sure to bring down the anger of the Most High.

Then again, it seems that *idolatry* and *blasphemy* are most certainly offensive to Him, and have a high degree of heinousness. He says that they drank the wine of false gods, so if any man sets up his belly as his god, or his gold, or his wealth, and lives to these, instead of living to the Most High, he has offended by idolatry.

Especially is *blasphemy* a God-provoking sin. For blasphemy there is no excuse. As George Herbert says, "Lust and wine plead a pleasure." There is gain to be pleaded for avarice, "But the cheap swearer from his open sluice lets his soul run for nothing." There is nothing gained by it; there can be no pleasure in cursing—blasting one's limbs, and damning one's soul—this must be offending for offending's sake, and therefore, this is a high and crying sin. God does pardon it, He is willing to pardon it now—but it nevertheless weighs upon His heart, and He cannot allow it to go unpunished unless it is repented of. Some sins make the Lord very weary of man. Now, I do not know who you are, many of you this morning, but I have no doubt, there are some among you to whom this word may be a personal accusation. Do I address the lecherous, or the

oppressive, or the swearer? Do I address the profane? Ah, soul, what a mercy God has borne with you for so long! The time will come, however, when He will say, "Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries," and how easily will He cast you off, and appoint you an awful destruction!

Again, while some sins are thus grievous to God for their peculiar heinousness, many men are especially obnoxious to God because of the *length* of their sin. That gray-headed man—how many times has he provoked the Most High? Why, those who are but lads, have cause to count their years and apply their hearts unto wisdom, because of the length of time they have lived in rebellion; but what shall I say of you who have been half a century in open war against God—and some of you sixty, seventy—what if I said near upon 80 years? Ah, you have had 80 years of mercies, and 80 years of forgetfulness; 80 years of bounty, and 80 years of ingratitude and insult! O God, well may You be wearied by the length and number of man's sins!

Furthermore, God takes special note and feels a special weariness of sin that is mixed with *obstinacy.* Oh, how obstinate some men are! They *will* be damned; there is no helping them; they seem as if they would leap the Alps to reach perdition, and swim through seas of fire that they may destroy their own souls! I might tell you cases of men who have been sorely sick of fever, malaria, and cholera; they have recovered from all—but have only recovered their health to return to their wallowing in the mire! Some of them have had such troubles in business, thick and threefold. They were once in respectable circumstances, but they spent their living riotously, and they became poor. They still struggle on in sin. They are growing still poorer—most of their clothes have gone to the pawn shop—but they will not turn from the gin shop and the haunt of vice! Another child is dead; ah, has that man yonder a dead child at home? And the wife is sick, and nothing but starvation looks the family in the face! But they have still gone on with a high hand, and an outstretched arm! This is obstinacy, indeed. Sinner! God will let you have your own way one of these days, and that way will be your everlasting ruin! But, God is weary of all here who have thus set themselves to do mischief, and who against warnings, and invitations, and entreaties, and light, and knowledge, have determined to go on in sin.

The context seems to tell us that *ingratitude* is intensely burdensome to God. He tells the people how He brought them up out of Egypt; how He cast out the Amorites; how He raised up their sons for prophets, and their young men for Nazarites. And yet, they rebelled against Him! Oh, dear friends, this was one of the things that pricked my heart when I first came to God as a guilty sinner—not so much the peculiar heinousness of my outward life, as the peculiar mercies that I had enjoyed! How many of us have been detestably ungrateful! What a life has our life been! Oh, how generous God has been! Why, there are some of us who never had a need; all our needs have been supplied; God has never cast us into pov-

erty, nor left us to infamy, nor given us up to evil example; He has kept us moral, and made us love His House even when we did not love Him! And all this, He has done year after year—what poor returns have we made! To you, His people, what joy He has given, what deliverances, what love, what comfort, what bliss—and yet after all this, to think that we should sin to His very face! Oh, well may He be as a cart that is pressed down, that is full of sheaves! O, my hearers, I know I address some to whom this may come home very pointedly. What? When you were nearly drowned, were you snatched from the jaws of death? What? Were you rescued from sickness? Were you blessed with that godly mother, and did that companion plead with you? Have you a tender conscience? Do you feel that you cannot sin as others do, for something checks you? All this is God's love; but if you will still rebel against Him, despite all this, well may He arise in His wrath, and shake Himself in His hot displeasure! He will not always strive with man. Justice shall soon have its day.

Let me observe, before I leave this point, that it seems from our text that the Lord is so pressed, that He even cries out. Just as the cart, when laden with the sheaves, groans under the weight, so the Lord cries out under the load of sin. Have you ever heard those accents? "Hear O hearers and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." Hear again—"Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" Better still, hear it from the lips of Christ, softened down to our own ears—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!" sinner, God is cut to the heart by your sin! Your Creator grieves over that which you laugh at! Your Creator cries out in His Spirit concerning that which you think to be a trifle. "O, do not this abominable thing which I hate!" For God's sake do it not! We often say, "For God's sake," without knowing what we mean, but here, see what it means—for the sake of God—that you grieve not your Creator—that you cause not the Eternal One, Himself, to cry out against you! Cease you, cease you, "from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" I now leave those two points to pass on very briefly to the next.

III. While it is true that sin is grievous to the Lord, it magnifies His mercy when we see that HE BEARS THE LOAD. As the cart is not said to break, but is only pressed, so is He pressed, and yet He bears. That hymn we sung just before the sermon has more in it than hard hearts will feel—

"Lord, and am I yet afire,
Not in torments, not in hell?
Still does Your good Spirit strive—
With the chief of sinners dwell?
Tell it unto sinners, tell,

I am, I am out of hell."

If you and I were in God's place, should we have borne it? No, within a week we would have burned the universe with fire, or trod it to powder beneath our feet! If God were like modern lawgivers—and here I find no fault with them, for the law of a commonwealth must be unyielding—but if the law of heaven were as swift to punish as the law of man, where would we be? I do not find you rising up to plead for the man who murdered his children, and from some fancied injury shot his fellow man. We seem to say by a unanimous verdict, "The wretch is guilty, let him be punished." What a universal howl has been going up this week against an offender who once stood fair in the midst of us, but who turned aside long ago unto iniquity! What man pleads for him? Who stands up and says, "Let William Roupell go unpunished"? Yet, here is God, and here are we whose offenses are 10 times more heinous against God than any man's offenses can be against man—and yet, He spares us! Remember, He has all the while full power to punish; He has but to wish, and it is done—to lift His finger, and we are crushed before Him! How many servants wait around Him ready to do His bidding? As the Roman consul went out, attended by his lictors carrying the axe, so God is always attended by His executioners, who are ready to fulfill His sentence. A stone, a tile from the roof of the house, a thunderbolt, a puff of wind, a grain of dust, a broken blood vessel, and it is over—and you are dead, and in the hands of an angry God! Indeed, the Lord has to hold in the followers of His wrath, and restrain the servants of His anger, for the heavens cry, "Why should we cover that wretch's head?" earth asks, "Why should I yield a harvest to the sinner's plow?" The lightning and thunder say, "Let us smite the rebel," and the seas roar upon the sinner, desiring him as their prey. There is no greater proof of the omnipotence of God, than His long-suffering; for it shows the greatest possible power for God to be able to control Himself, to be able to keep in an anger which naturally must boil, and restrain a fury which otherwise must burn!

Sinner, He still bears with you. The angels have been astonished at it; they thought He would strike; but yet, He bears with you. Have you ever seen a patient man insulted? He has been met in the street by a villain who insults him before a mob of boys; he bears it; the fellow spits in his face; he bears it still. Now he strikes him! He endures it quietly. "Give him a charge," says one. "No," he says, "I forgive him all." The fellow knocks him down, and rolls him in the ditch, but he bears it still; yes, and when he rises, all covered with mire, he says, "If there is anything that I can do to befriend you, I will do it now." Just at that moment the wretch is arrested by a sheriff's officer for debt; the man who has been insulted takes out his purse and pays the debt, and says, "Now you may go free." Look! The wretch spits in his face again! Now, you say, "Let him feel what you can do; let the law have its way with him." Is there any

room for patience now? So would it have been with man, but it has not been so with God. We have done much worse than this, and He has acted much more nobly; and still, I say, He bears it all. Though like the cart, He is pressed under the load of sheaves, yet like the cart the axle does not break. He bears the load. He still bears with impenitent sinners!

IV. And this brings me now to pass over to the fourth head, on which I would have your deepest attention. Many here present, I fear, have never repented of sin; you have never seen it in the light of grieving God, or else I think you would not wish to grieve Him. But, perhaps some of you feel how evil a thing rebellion is, and you want to know how you can get rid of it. This is our fourth head. Not only does God still bear with sin, but GOD, IN THE PERSON OF HIS SON, DID BEAR AND TAKE AWAY SIN.

These words might have deep meaning if uttered by the lips of Jesus, "I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." Here stood the great problem. God must punish sin, and yet He would have mercy. How could it be? Lo! Jesus comes to be the substitute for all who trust Him. See how they pile on Him the sheaves of human sin! There are MY sheaves of sin—

"My soul looks back to see
The burden You did bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."

Here are *your* sheaves, my hearer—the sheaves of all His chosen; the sins of all who shall believe in Him! "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Yes, the Scripture has it, "He is the propitiation for our sin and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." There they lie, heaps on heaps, till He is pressed down like the wagon that groans as it moves along! He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Look at Him; He did "sweat as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground." "He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me." They sold Him for 30 pieces of silver, a goodly price did they value Him. Nevertheless, He is taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare His generation? Herod mocks Him and makes nothing of Him. Pilate jeers Him. They have smitten the Prince of Judah upon the cheek. "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them who plucked off the hair. I hid not My face from shame and spitting." They have tied Him to the pillar; they are beating Him with rods, not this time 40 stripes *save one*—there is no "save one" with Him, for the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and "with His stripes we are healed." Look at Him, like a cart pressed down with sheaves He goes through the streets of Jerusalem! Well may you weep, you daughters of Jerusalem, though He bids you dry your tears; they hoot Him as He walks along bowed beneath the load of His own cross, which was the emblem of your sin and mine; they have brought Him to Golgotha; they throw Him on His back, they stretch out His hands and His feet—the ac-

cursed iron penetrates the most tender parts of His body, where most of the nerves congregate—they lift up the cross. O, bleeding Savior! Your time of woe is come! They dash it into the socket with rough hands; the nails are tearing through His hands and feet; He hangs in extremity, for God has forsaken Him! His enemies persecute and take Him, for there is none to deliver Him! They mock His nakedness; they point at His agonies; they look and stare upon Him with vulgar jests; they insult His griefs, and make puns upon His prayers!

He is now, indeed, a worm and no man, crushed till you can scarcely think that there is divinity within. The fever gets hold upon Him; His tongue is dried up like a potsherd, and He cries, "I thirst!" Vinegar is all they yield Him. The sun refuses to shine, and the thick midnight darkness of that awful midday is a fitting emblem of the tenfold midnight of His soul. Out of that thick horror He cries, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Then, indeed, was He pressed down! Oh, there was never sorrow like unto His sorrow! All human griefs found a reservoir in His heart, and all the punishment of human guilt spent itself upon His body and His soul! Oh, shall sin always be a trifle to us? Shall I laugh at that which made Him groan? Shall I toy and dally with that which stabbed Him to the heart? Sinner, will you not give up your sins for the sake of Him who quivered for sin? "Oh," you say, "yes, if I could believe that He suffered for *my* sake." Will you trust your soul in His hands this morning? Do you do so? Then He died *for you,* and took *your* guilt, and carried all your sorrows, and you may go free, for God is satisfied, and you are absolved! Christ was burdened that you might be lightened! He was pressed with your sheaves, that you might find deliverance! I wish I could talk of my precious Master as He might speak of Himself, or as John might speak who saw Him and bore witness. He could tell in plaintive tones of the sorrows of the man of Calvary; but such as I have, I give you. O that God would give you with it the power, the divine grace, the blessed compulsion to *believe* on Jesus, to believe on Jesus NOW!

V. For if not, and here is our last point, God will bear the load for a little while; but if Christ has not borne it for you and for me, then THAT SAME LOAD WILL CRUSH US FOREVER AND EVER!

I find that my text is translated by many learned men in a different way from the version before us—"I will press you as a cart that is full of sheaves presses your place." That is, just as a heavily loaded wagon pressed into the poor Eastern roads, and left there deep furrows—furrows you would hardly think of in a land where we understand road making so well—just as deep ridges and ruts were cut into the Eastern roads by the loaded wagons, so will I crush you, says God, with the load of your sin. This is to be your doom, my hearer, if you are out of Christ. Does it need me to enlarge upon this terror? I think not. It only needs that you should make a personal application of the threat! Divide yourselves now. Divide yourselves, I say! Do you believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ? Then the threat is not yours; but if you believe not, whether you are standing in yonder aisle, or up there in those far-off galleries, I do advise you listen to me now, as if you were the only person here—a Christless soul must be a damned soul; a spirit that believes not in Christ is condemned already, because it believes not! How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation? Thus says the Lord unto you, "Consider your ways." By time, by eternity, by life, by death, by heaven, by hell, I plead with you, believe in Him who is able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto Him; but if you believe not that Christ is He, you shall die in your sins! After death, the judgment! Oh, the judgment, the thundering trumpet, the multitudes, the crowds, the books, the great white throne, the, "Come, you blessed," the "Depart, you cursed!" After judgment, to a soul that is out of Christ—hell! Who among us, who *among US* shall abide with the devouring flame? Who among *US*, who among *US* shall dwell with the everlasting burnings? I pray that none of us may. But, we *will* unless we fly to Christ! Oh, I beseech you, my dear hearer, fly to Jesus! I may never see your face again; your eyes may never look into mine, but I shake my garments of your blood, if you believe not in Christ this morning! My tears entreat you, my lips would woo you. There is mercy for you; God has had patience with you; let His long-suffering lead you to repentance. He wills not the death of any, but had rather that they should turn to Him and live; and this turning is simply this—to trust Jesus with your soul, and He shall take your sin, and you shall stand accepted in the beloved. Will you? No, I know you will not—unless the Spirit of God shall compel you; but at the least, if you will not, it shall not be for want of pleading and entreating. Come, it is mercy's welcome hour. I pray you, come! Jesus with pierced hands invites you, though you have rejected Him. You have stood against Him long—He knocks again—His undefeated, unconquerable love defies your wickedness and will have you! Sinner, will you have Him or not? "Whoever will let him come and take of the water of life freely." God help you to come, God *make* you come, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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FLESH AND SPIRIT—A RIDDLE
NO. 467

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 31, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"So foolish was I and ignorant: I was as a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand. You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You." Psalm 73:22-25.

OUR Lord Jesus was tempted in all points like we are. With some reserve we might almost say the same of David. Of all the worthies whose lives are written out at length in Holy Writ, David possesses an experience of the most striking, varied, and instructive character. In his history we meet with temptations, and complications of temptations not to be discovered, at least as a connected whole, in other saints of ancient times. Trials which stand out in the lives of other men as isolated hills, form whole chains and ranges of mountains in the case of the son of Jesse; David knew the trials of all ranks and conditions of men. Kings have their troubles, and David wore a crown—the peasant has his cares, and David handled the shepherd's crook. The wanderer has many hardships, and David abode in the caves of Engedi—the captain has his difficulties, and David found the sons of Zeruiah too hard for him. The psalmist of Israel was tried by his friends. His counselor, Ahithophel, forsook him. "He who eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me." His worst foes were of his own household. His children were his greatest afflictions. Amnon disgraces him, Absalom excites revolt, and Adonijah disturbs his dying bed. The temptations of poverty and wealth, of honor and reproach, of health and sickness, all tried their power upon him. He had tribulations from without; I need not remind you that during his long life they came from every quarter. He had temptations from within, for the man after God's own heart not only knew what it was to be assailed, but to be carried by storm, by fierce and terrible passions. I may grant, perhaps, that Job's trial was more severe than any *one* that fell to David; but yet I know not. Possibly the burning of Ziklag—when his wives were carried away captive, and all that he had was consumed, and his men spoke of stoning him, may have been even a severer trial than Job's when he sat upon a dunghill and scraped himself with a potsherd. And I am not sure, but I think that mournful procession over the brook Kidron in David's later life, when his own son thirsted for his blood, had in it a Gethsemane bitterness that is hardly to be found in the tribulation which fell to the patriarch of Uz. Job must fairly yield the palm in one respect, for his was no life-long siege, but only one sharp and furious attack.

David, however, no sooner escaped from one trial, than he fell into another! He no sooner emerged from one season of despondency and alarm,

than he was again brought into the lowest depths, and all God's waves and billows rolled over him. Now, it is from this cause, I take it, that David's Psalms are so universally the delight of experienced Christians. Into whatever frame of mind we may be cast, David seems to have described our emotions, whether they are of ecstasy or depression, to the very letter. He was an able master of the human heart, because he had been tutored in that best of all schools, the school of real, heartfelt, personal experience! You will find that as we grow matured in divine grace and in years, we love the Psalms more. Many young believers are most fond of the doctrinal parts of Scripture, and I admire that holy curiosity which leads them to desire to understand all the revelation of God in the doctrines of grace. Practical Christians are often more fond of studying the Evangelists and Proverbs, but I find that the gray-headed veterans, the sorely troubled Christians, those who have done business on great waters—while they love the doctrines, while they delight in the practices set forth in the life of Christ—yet somehow or other the Psalms of the sweet Singer of Israel yield them savory meat such as their soul loves! And they are made in the Psalms to "lie down in green pastures" of tender grass.

Probably the first remark which will be suggested by reading the Psalms will be this—how varied they are. What an extraordinary man David is, what changes there are in the weather of his soul, what bright sunlight days, what dark cloudy nights, what calms as though his life were a sea of glass, what terrible trials as if the glass were mingled with fire! One time we find him crying, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" And another he sings, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name." One hour we hear him sigh forth, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing," and then we find him exulting, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear: the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" How wondrously he rises to heaven, and how awfully he dives into the deeps! Surely, brothers and sisters, we who have known anything of spiritual and inner life do not marvel at this, for we also change. Alas, what a contrast between the sin that does so easily beset us, and the divine grace which gives us to reign in heavenly places! How different the sorrow of an abject distrust which breaks us in pieces as with a strong east wind, and the joy of a holy confidence which bears us on to heaven as with a propitious gale! What changes between walking with God today, and falling into the mire tomorrow, triumphing over sin, death, and hell yesterday, and today led captive by the lusts of the flesh and of the mind. Verily, we cannot understand ourselves, and a description which would suit us yesterday would be ill-adapted for today and quite out of place for tomorrow! Scarcely ever are we in the same mind even an hour. Great God, how infinitely glorious are You in Your immutability, when contrasted with Your fickle, frail, unstable creature—man.

It falls to my lot, this morning, to open up in some humble measure, the secrets of inward experience. I can but hope to do it in a very shallow measure, for I am but a youth, and am not worthy to instruct some of you who have been men of war from your youth up! Yet I may serve the weaklings of the flock, if I inform them of the strife they must expect from

the flesh, and comfort their hearts with a foretaste of the certain victory which the Lord has secured to them through the Holy Spirit. We shall *first listen to the confessions of the psalmist concerning the flesh;* then, *to his expressions with regard to the spirit;* then, *to his soul's exultation when looking to both flesh and spirit, he cries out, "Whom have I in heaven but You? There is none upon earth that I desire besides You."*

I. First, we are to listen to THE PSALMIST'S CONFESSION CONCERNING THE FLESH.

Remember, beloved, this is a saint of God. This is a highly advanced saint; this is the man after God's own heart; this is one of the special favorites of heaven—one of the men to whom God revealed Himself as He does not unto the world! And yet you hear him telling us his inner life, and he begins by saying, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You."

The word *"foolish,"* when it issues from David's mouth, means more than it signifies in ordinary language. To be called a fool is no great compliment to any man, but when that word means atheist, despiser of that which is good—when it means a forgetter of God, a lover of evil, a destroyer of one's own soul, then to be called a fool is something at which a man may take offense, indeed! David, in one of the former verses of the Psalm, writes, "I was envious of the *foolish* when I saw the prosperity of the wicked," which shows that the folly he intended had sin in it. Now he puts himself down as being one of these fools, and adds a little word which is to give intensity to the adjective—"SO foolish was I." How foolish he could not tell. It was a sinful folly, a folly which was not to be excused by frailty, but to be condemned because of its perverseness and willful ignorance. What? And do *we* call ourselves wise? Do we, followers of the lowly Savior, profess that we have attained perfection, or have been so chastened that the rod has whipped all our willfulness out of us? Ah, this is pride, indeed! If David was foolish, what fools should you and I be in our own esteem if we could but see ourselves. Look back, believer—think of your not trusting God when He has been so faithful to you—think of your foolish outcry of, "Not so, my Father," when He crossed His hands in affliction to give you the larger blessing. Think, I say, of the many times when you have read His providences in the dark, misinterpreting His dispensations, and groaning out, "All these things are against me," when they were all working together for your good! Think how often you have chosen sin because of its pleasure, when indeed, that pleasure was a root of pain and bitterness to you! How often you have forgotten to honor God when you had noble opportunities of serving Him. I for one must take my place at the bar and plead guilty to the indictment of a sinful folly; and I think everyone who knows his own heart, however far advanced in divine grace he may be, must do the same! In the present tense I put it sorrowfully, "So foolish am I."

Further, our psalmist adds, "and ignorant." A man who, after years of such experience as David, to say, "I am ignorant," must either be very humble, or else there must be such a force upon his conscience that he cannot resist the confession. And indeed, if you will read the Psalm, and see into what a mistake David had fallen—that of envying the present

prosperity of the ungodly—you may grant that he *was* ignorant, indeed, to forget the dreadful end of those who only prosper that they may be fattened like bullocks for the slaughter! But you and I have been quite as ignorant. We said yesterday, "Now I shall never doubt God again; he has helped me through this great trouble, and I know that I shall be able to trust Him, come what may." But this very morning you awoke with a distrustful thought! What ignorance is this, to forget the lesson which you learned but yesterday, and which you thought you knew by heart? Here you have been trying for months to resign yourself to God's will. He took away from you one very dear to you, and you longed to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And you did say it by an overwhelming effort, but you cannot say it now, for feeling has trod down faith; you are so foolish and so ignorant that you have forgotten what you vowed to learn! And what you meant to say perpetually, you have failed to say in this, perhaps the first great trial in your life! Some men think when they have learned six or seven doctrines, that now they know everything. And certain other folks I know of, when they pass through a few years of experience set themselves up for standards. Ah, beloved, when we think we know best, and fancy that we have grown wise, then we prove our folly! Our impudence is engraved on our foreheads, and FOOL is written there in capital letters, when we think we are wise! Oh, the depths of the wisdom of God! Who can understand the full meaning of the doctrines of grace? Oh, the depths of the experience of the believer who shall dare to profess that he has passed over all the seas, and has crossed all the mountains over which a believer must climb! If we could but see ourselves, we would consider our knowledge to be nothing, and our ignorance to be all. We are in the twilight, let us not call it noon! We are in the mists and fogs; let us not suppose that we are in an unclouded atmosphere! When we think we see all wisdom, it is because we are blind; and when we fancy we have discovered everything, it is because we are mocked by the illusions of our pride, and see nothing as yet aright!

I know I address some of you who, when you are alone, quietly engaged in meditation, think to yourselves "Well, if ever there was such a stupid saint as I am, I am much mistaken. I seem to have the least understanding of any man. I read the Scriptures, and by God's grace I sometimes get a hold of them, but at seasons I cannot for the life of me even believe them to be true! I know the power of prayer, but yet there are times when I could not pray if my soul depended on it, and can only groan. In fact, sometimes, 'if anything is felt, it is only pain to find I cannot feel.' Yet I have been fed under the ministry; I have had many troubles, and much communion with Christ, but yet here I am, knowing nothing, just a schoolboy, sitting on the lowest form, and trying to spell out his A, B, Cs—such a thorough fool that I often pride myself upon my knowledge, and condemn my brother for ignorance, not seeing the beam that is in my own eye, trying to pull the mote from his eye." Is this the soliloquy of your heart? I know it has often been mine. If it is yours, we have just hit the meaning of David when he uses this expression—"So foolish was I, and ignorant."

But now comes the crowning word, which you would think too degrading for David—"I was as a *beast* before You." Indeed, the original has in it no word of comparison. It ought to be translated, "I was a very beast before You," and we are told that the Hebrew word being in the plural number gives it a peculiar emphasis, indicating some monstrous or astonishing beast. It is the word used by Job which is interpreted "Behemoth"—"I was a very monster before You"—not only a beast but one of the most brutish of all beasts, one of the most stubborn and intractable of all beasts. I think no man can go much lower than this in humble confession. This is a description of human nature, and of the old man in the renewed saint which is not to be excelled. How far does this hold true in your experience and mine? Well, I think first we have often been made to compare ourselves to beasts because of our *worldly-mindedness*. There is the swine grubbing in the earth for its roots; what does it care about the stars? And even the fleet horse, as it crosses the meadow, what does it know about the angels and the harps of heaven? Educate the beast as you may, it has no care beyond its fleshly appetite! Oh, how much are we like this, even we who are renewed by divine grace! The last six days it has been, "Shop, shop, shop," with you from morning to night. You bowed at the family altar, and you tried to pray at eventide, but carking care depressed you till it was hard to offer real supplication. A thousand things have bewildered you! The cashbook, the daybook, those losses, those many workmen to be looked after, or the servants in the house have distracted your mind, and the world comes in till you feel, "O that I could get rid of these things for a moment! O that I had wings like a dove that I might fly away and be at rest!" But you cannot, for your soul lies cleaving to the dust. Perhaps there comes a knock at the door just when you *need* to be knocking at God's door, and someone wants to see *you* when you need to see your God! You cannot rest in Jesus as you would. You are called upon to look after accounts, shillings, five pound notes, creditors and debtors, until you cry, "O God, I am like a beast before You. How can I ever hope to enter heaven?" You remember that hymn of Dr. Watts, commencing—

"Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove."

What a sweet beginning, but how dolefully true are the middle verses. Surely they never ought to be sung, but to be sighed—

"Dear Lord, and shall we always live
At this poor dying rate—
Our love so faint, so cold to You,
And Yours to us so great?"

What is this but the same confession in different words, "I was as a beast before You"?

Let us add another shade of black to the picture. We might often compare ourselves to the beast from *our lack of any emotion towards heavenly things*. I am quite sure Rutherford was right when he said, "No devil in the world is as bad as having no devil." Not to be tempted is perhaps the worst temptation that can befall a man! There are times—I suppose it is so with you, it is with me—times when my soul is like a dead calm, and these seasons I dread—

"No stir in the air, no stir in the sea

The ship was as still as a ship could be."

What mariner likes these dead calms? I am sure I tremble to encounter more of them. Better the healthy hurricane than the pestilential quiet. You would pray, but you cannot command the earnestness and fervor you desire; you would repent, you *feel* that you would repent, but no tear will flow, for the heart is hard! You *would* praise God, and the lips can utter the words, but the soul cannot join the music; you *would* stir yourself to some lofty emotion, but you cannot. The heart *will* not feel, it has grown cold, and a sort of death-sleep has come over you like the sleep which is said to fall upon the wanderer in the snow when he comes near to death. Oh, to be awakened from this is a blessing sent from heaven, to be stirred even though it is by a hurricane of affliction, or a thunderclap of trouble! It is an awful thing to be in this apathetic state. Then it is that the believer cries, "I am as a beast before You." You are dead as the seat you sit on each Sunday; going to the ordinance itself, eating the bread, and drinking the wine, yet feeling no fellowship with Christ; joining in the song, and loving it, but singing with no feeling, no heart. Going to prayer meetings, feeling you would not stay away for the entire world, and yet no life, no power, no thought, no vigor! Does some young Christian look at me and say, "What? Do old Christians feel like that?" I say, "They do at times." Sad is it that we should have to confess man to be so vile, but such he is, and such each of us have found ourselves out to be! And let the believer live but a little while, and he will have to use David's language and cry, "I was as a beast before You."

See yet again, how often we have had to complain that we are like the beasts for our *short-sightedness!* The beast cannot look forward to eternity; it cannot cast its eye down the centuries, and look to the fulfillment of prophecy in the fullness of time. It has to be content with the things that are near, the things of the hour, and of the day. Even so short-sighted are you and I! We think we see the end when we are only viewing the beginning! We get our telescope out sometimes to look to the future, and we breathe on the glass with the hot breath of our anxiety; and then we think we see clouds and darkness before us if we are in trouble. We see every day new straits, attend and wonder where the scene will end; but we conclude that it must end in our destruction. "God has forgotten to be gracious," we think, "He has in anger shut up His heart of compassion." Oh this short-sightedness! When you and I ought to believe in God—when we ought to look at the heaven that awaits us, and the glory for which these light afflictions are preparing us—when we ought to be looking through the clouds to the Eternal Sun which never knows an eclipse—when we should be resting on the invisible arm of the Immortal God, and triumphing in His love, we are mourning and distrusting. God forgive us for this; in these things, verily, we have been as beasts before Him!

I might add again, how often believers have to complain that the *animal passions* will bestir themselves in them until they feel the beast within them. I shall not go deep into this path of painful experience; I only hint at it that some who may have been surprised at it as though it were a novelty, may know that it is common to man. He who has fellowship

with God will sometimes feel the devil within him till he thinks himself a devil, and sometimes, too, (the Lord have mercy upon His servants) when the temptation comes in an unguarded moment they may be betrayed, and Satan may triumph. If then, they can look back upon a burst of anger or sin, and not say after it, "I was as a beast before You, O God," then I despair of them! Other men commit these sins; other men fall into these iniquities, but it remains for the Christian, only, to abhor himself on account of them! To sin is no spot of God's children. But to *hate* sin, humbly to *confess* it, and to lay in the very dust with abasement on account of it—this is one of the choice requirements of the truly begotten sons of heaven! Oh, I know that many of you, with a groaning that could not be uttered, have been made to feel in your heart that though you are the elect of God, and bought with precious blood, and the Spirit of God dwells in you, yet still you are, when the flesh prevails, as beasts before God! Indeed, my text, as I have said, seems to make us even *worse* than the beasts, for the comparison which David uses is not to a common and ordinary creature, but to some dread monster, a Behemoth. When we look within, there is nothing lovely; we are all a mass of distorted parts wrongly joined together. There is much of pride, and lust, and anger—and what is there of good? Brothers and sisters, our apostle said in him there dwelt no good thing, and you and I are no better than he; nothing good, but everything that is evil! And all the evil put into the most exaggerated form and shape, until he that has seen himself, has been ready to go mad to think that he should ever be such a being as he is! O grace divine! O sovereign love! Were it not for these we would lie down in despair, when we think of the uncomeliness of our nature. More stubborn than Behemoth are we! God can tame the creatures; man can even put a bit into the mouth of the horse, and he has a bridle for the donkey. But we, more intractable than the brutes, are not to be restrained from sin! They are obstinate, but their obstinacy may be quelled and overcome. Sometimes harshness, and another kindness, can subdue the most stubborn brute, but our tongue and heart can no man tame! Evil, only evil, and that continually, still remains in our heart, kicking against the pricks even to the last; remaining even unto death like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. What shall I say of human nature as the Christian discovers it in himself? I will only say it is impossible to exaggerate its evil! You shall describe it in the blackest and foulest terms, and you shall find after all, believers who will say man is worse than your black portrait, for only David's language will suit us, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You."

I shall not dwell longer on this part. I have, indeed, only brought it out because I know there are so many young Christians who are dreadfully alarmed when they discover what they are by nature, and who, indeed, begin on a wrong theory by supposing that the grace of God comes to make old Adam new—whereas the grace of God does not change our *old* nature. It gives us a *new* nature, which subdues the old—but the old nature is there, still! Old Adam is old Adam even when the new Adam is in the heart! The flesh is evil, undiluted evil, and just as much as before Christ entered the soul. Therefore, divine grace struggles with the flesh,

good strives with evil, and the life of the believer becomes a constant and perpetual battle—the one principle striving against the other till divine grace, at last, gets the victory, and the saint is "afterwards received to glory."

II. We shall now turn to the faithful EXPRESSIONS OF THE SPIRIT, and God help us while we enlarge upon them! How changed the language now is! Nothing of the beast, here, but rather the spirit seems to grow angelic, and to borrow heaven's harps. Hear its first sweet word like music. *"Nevertheless."* As if, notwithstanding all, not one atom the less was it true and certain that David was saved, and accepted, and that the blessings he is now about to speak of were his by a perpetual entail—"Nevertheless I am continually with You." Here is *divine regard!* Fully conscious of his own lost estate, and of the deceitfulness and vileness of his nature, yet, by a glorious burst of faith, he says, "Nevertheless I am continually with You"! I shall not preach on that, but just let you think it over. Let each one soliloquize—"I today, a black and detestable sinner, am nevertheless, if I believe in Jesus, continually with God! Continually upon His *mind!* He is always thinking of me for my good! Continually before His *eyes;* the eyes of the Lord never sleep, but perpetually watch out for my good! Continually in His *hands*, so that none shall be able to pluck me from them until omnipotence itself shall be overcome! Continually on His *heart*, engraved there, worn there as a memorial, even as the high priest wore the names of the twelve tribes upon his heart forever. Tried and afflicted soul, vexed with the tempest within, look at the calm without. "Nevertheless"—O say it in your heart, and suck the comfort from it, "I am continually with You." You always think of me, O God; the heart of Your love continually yearn towards *me! You are always making providence work for my good!* You never pluck me from Your heart; You have set me as a signet upon Your arm; Your love is strong as death—many waters cannot quench it. Your affection is hot as coals of juniper, and yet, yet it is true, I am as a beast before You, and when You look at me You can see nothing in me, apart from Christ, but what is debased and beast-like! Surprising grace, You see me in Christ, and though in myself, abhorred, You behold me as wearing Christ's garments, and washed in His blood—

"With the Savior's garments on
Holy as the Holy One."

And I am thus continually in Your favor—"continually with You." Oh, it is a child's faith—an infant faith, to be able to say, "I am with God," when I have the light of His favor shining on me. But oh, when I see the blackness of my heart, still to believe that I am continually with Him—this is a man's faith, what if I say, brothers and sisters—a *giant's* faith? It is so easy when you have many graces and many virtues to say, "Christ can save me." Yes, but when your follies stare you in the face; when your sins rebuke you, still to say, "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean," this is faith, indeed! Blessed faith is that that does not shut its eyes to the disease, but seeing it, and knowing all its venom and deadly power, still trusts it to the Balm of Gilead, and believes that it can heal!

But you will notice next that our psalmist is not content with claiming divine regard, he goes on to speak of *divine help and gracious operation*. "You hold me by the right hand." Here is a recognition of *the past*. I am black, and full of sin and treachery, why have I not fallen more? Because Your hand has held me up! O God, if You had not kept Your saints, they would have been the vilest of transgressors! Oh, what should any of us have been, though we may be as stars now, if it had not been for God's right hand? What should we have been but black blots forever, if God had left us? Look back, beloved, at the temptations from which you have been delivered, and the trials from which you have escaped—to what do you owe all these? Why, to the fact that He has held you by your right hand, and is holding you by your right hand now! Let *the present* be a theme for gratitude. At this hour your feet are almost gone, but not quite, for He holds you! At this moment you are ready to say, "The Lord has forgotten me; God will be gracious no more." But He has as firm a grip of you today as ever He had! Oh, what joy it is to feel that God has a firm hold of us! If we only feel that *we* have a hold of Him, then *our* hand may fail, but if He has a hold of us, then neither death nor hell shall ever triumph in casting us down! And this is true of *the future*. He will hold us with His right hand. If we believe on Christ today, we shall certainly be kept till we see the face of Christ in glory everlasting! Here am I but a stripling, fresh come to the battle, and there may be many years of wars and fighting for me but, "I know that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Here are some of you whose hair has turned gray with many years of trial in the wilderness. What do you say, has God forgotten you? Veterans in God's army, has He forsaken you? Has He deserted any of you in the moment of trial? No! Then let us, together, young and old, bless His name, that He holds us with His right hand!

But what next? We must not tarry long on any one sentence. Our psalmist goes on to speak of *divine guidance*. "You shall guide me with Your counsel," he says. "I am foolish, I shall be sure to choose the wrong way. I am ignorant; I do not even know the right way. I am a beast and those beastly instincts of mine will constantly lead me astray. But You shall guide me by Your counsel." See, brothers and sisters, how he throws himself on his God—he will have nothing to do with himself. "YOU *shall"* is his confidence. He is completely weaned from looking within. He casts himself flat on his God. "You shall guide me *with Your counsel."* That *counsel* I take it, means first, *God's decrees*—

"He who formed in the womb,
He shall guide me to the tomb.
All my times shall ever be
Ordered by His wise decree."

Graciously has He ordained every step of our way from this time till we arrive in heaven! Graciously has He ordained every temptation and trial—

"Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit."

I shall do, after all, what He decrees, have nothing but what He ordains, suffer nothing but what He thinks fit. I shall do nothing without His

permission or aid. I *must* prevail, for thus His counsel runs to bring His many sons to glory—"You shall guide me by Your counsel." Many people do not like *predestination,* but I think when they get washed up on a rock in some dark troublous day, they will be glad to cling to this truth of God! Brothers and sisters, I thank God that I know there is as much in the decrees of God for a grain of dust that pains my eye, as there is in the cloud and tempest. The chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses. In the great, and in the little, Jehovah reigns! Standing in the chariot of providence He holds the reins, and when the horses seem to be wild, and to know no bit or bridle, He guides them according to His will. O rest in this, believer—He shall guide you with His counsel! But this counsel also represents *the written Word*—His decree is *His* counsel, His written Word is *our* counsel, *His* counsel *to us*. Happy is the man who has God's Word always to direct him! What was the mariner without his compass? What were the Christian without the Bible? This is the unerring chart, the map in which every shoal is described, and all the channels from the port of destruction to the haven of salvation mapped, and marked by one who has sailed along the sea. Blessed, blessed be You, O God, that we may trust You to guide us now, and guide us even to the end! And all this is to us who are like brutes before Him! O my soul, have you ever known what it is to be thoroughly cast down till there was no hope left for you, and yet to be carried up till there was no doubt left? 'Twas but yesterday I knew the whole of this experience in my own heart! A more wretched miserable being than I, hell could scarcely produce, and yet a happier joyful-hearted creature heaven could hardly find! How, you say, how was this? When I looked within, and marked depravity and death everywhere, my soul was troubled almost unto death; but when I looked to Christ, and saw the fullness of the covenant, and the complete way in which He covered all my sins, and blotted out all my iniquity, my spirit was like a bird that had escaped from the fowler and soared singing up to heaven with joy and gratitude. "You shall guide me with Your counsel."

Then comes the last, *divine reception*. "And afterward receive me to glory." Oh, how sweet is this—"receive me to glory." Catch it, Christian? I do not want you to think of what I say this morning! I want you to think of what you have felt, and what your Lord is doing for you! *He* will receive *you* to glory—*you*! Why, if it had been said, "He shall damn you to all eternity," your heart would have said, "Ah, that I richly deserve." But He says, "I will receive you to glory." Slipping, sliding, falling, and yet I will bring you safe at last! Wandering, erring, straying, yet I will receive you to glory! Full of sin, even to the last; full of sin, haunted with unbelief even to your dying hour—tempted, perhaps on your deathbed—your very couch a part of the battlefield, and your pillow a castle to be stormed or to be defended—yet I will receive you to glory! Beloved, that moment when you and I shall be received into glory—can we conceive it? You are gone, frail body, no more pain from you; but still better, you are gone, vile flesh—no more temptation, no more *sin!* Old Adam, you shall rot. Let the worms devour you—glad am I to be rid of you—

"Far from a world of grief and sin,

With God eternally shut in."

And this is your portion and my portion, though doubts and fears prevail, and we hardly dare to say that Christ is ours. Yet, resting on Him, on Him only, having nothing of our own, looking to His flowing wounds, covered with His matchless righteousness, saved at last we shall be, and we will sing forever to that matchless divine grace which saved us even to the end!

III. To conclude, the psalmist has been looking at his complex self—at the flesh and groaning over it and then at his spirit, confident in its God, and he winds up the whole story thus—"WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT YOU?" I have known men lose their property, and yet they did not say, "Whom have I in heaven but You?" I have known a man lose his wife, and yet look to earth to find some comfort. I have known him lose child after child, and yet he still thought the world had many charms. I have known him sick, yet he has had pleasure in vanity. But there is one thing which cannot happen—a man cannot know himself so as to feel his folly, and his ignorance, to feel the beast-like character of his nature, without at once turning his eyes to Christ! There is nothing that makes one love Christ, I think, as much as a sense of His love balanced with a sense of our unworthiness of it. It is sweet to think that Christ loves us. But oh, to remember that we are black as the tents of Kedar, and yet He loves us! This is a thought which may well wean us from everything else besides. That He should love me when I have some graces and some virtues is not a great marvel; but that He should love me, when in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good thing? When I have no charms, no beauties, not one attractive attribute, not one trait of character that is worthy of His regard—that He should love me then—oh, if this does not make me swear a divorce to the world, what can? I think, believer, you will come to Jesus and put your hand in His, and say, "You, You alone are mine; no other love can I have but this. I cannot love the world, when I have known such affection as Yours; and when I see how little I deserve it, I must love You." Then, the spirit flies to heaven, thinking of all that joy and rapture which is to come, but remembering, as it enters paradise, that it was on earth but as a beast before God. It looks all round through heaven, and says to angels, "I cannot think of you, I can only think of Him who could love so base, so vile a creature as I am." Surely, passing by principalities and powers, forgetting for a while the blood-washed company, the sacramental host of God's elect, we shall look for the throne where Jesus sits, and we shall sing to Him, and this shall be the song, "Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever." Contemplate much, believer, your own sad state. Contemplate yet more your own safety and perfection in Christ! And these two things together shall make you despise the world and its joys, make you tread on the world and its trials, and make you feel such a knitting and union of heart to Christ, to Christ Jesus only, that you may say, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You."

I thought I saw just now before my eyes a dark and horrible pit, and down deep below, where the eyes could not reach, lay a being broken in

pieces, whose groans and howling pierced the awful darkness, and amazed my ears. I thought I saw a bright one fly from the highest heaven, and in an instant dive into that black darkness till He was lost and buried in it! I waited for a moment, and to my mind's eye I saw two spirits rising from the horrid deep, with arms entwined, as though one was bearing up the other. I saw them emerge from the gloom. I heard the fairest of them say, as He mounted into light, "I have loved you, and given Myself for you." And I heard the other say, who was that poor broken one just now, "I was foolish and ignorant, I was as a beast before You." Before I could write the words, both spirits had risen into midair, and I heard one of them say. "You shall be with Me in Paradise," and the other whispered, "Nevertheless I am continually with You." As they mounted higher, I heard one say, "None shall pluck you out of My hand," and I heard the other say "You hold me by my right hand." As still they rose, they continued the loving dialogue. "I will guide you with My eyes," said the bright one. The other answered, "You shall guide me with Your counsel." They reached the bright clouds that separate earth from heaven, and as they parted to make way for the glorious one, He said, "I will give you to sit upon My throne even as I have overcome, and sit upon My Father's throne," and the other answered, "And You shall afterward receive me to glory." Lo, the clouds closed their doors, and they were gone! I thought again they opened, and I saw those two spirits soaring onward beyond stars, and sun, and moon—right up beyond principalities and powers—on, beyond cherubim and seraphim; right on beyond every name that is named, until in that ineffable brightness, dark with insufferable light, the awful glory of the Deity whom eyes cannot see, both those spirits were lost, and there came the sound of joyous hallelujahs from the spirits which are before the throne of God!

May it be your lot and mine thus to be brought up, for we are thus fallen. May it be ours to be thus caught up to the third heaven, for we are thus broken, and cast down into the lowest hell by nature. God give us faith in Christ! Faith in Christ—that is the link, the bond, the tie! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief."

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EZEKIEL'S DESERTED INFANT
NO. 468

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"No eye pitied you, to do any of these unto you, to have compassion upon you. But you were cast out into the open field to the loathing of your person, in the day that you were born. And when I passed by you and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live; yes, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live."
Ezekiel 16:5, 6.

DOUBTLESS the Lord here describes the Jewish people when they began to multiply in the land of Egypt, and were grievously oppressed by Pharaoh. Pharaoh had commanded them to cast out the male children that they might perish. Hence, the figure of an infant deserted, cast out into the open field to perish by wild beasts, by starvation, or exposure, was a very apt portrait of the youthful state of Israel, when God looked upon her in love, and brought her out of Egypt to set her in a goodly land. But all the best divines and expositors concur in the belief that we have here also a most extraordinarily apt, and significant description of the human race by nature, and of the way in which God in divine mercy passes by the sinner when utterly lost and helpless, and by the power of the Spirit, bids him "Live." At any rate, we intend to consider it so this morning. Without any preface, for we need none, we shall, first of all, bid you *look at the misery of man's estate as set before us in the present verses.* Then, next, we shall *search for motives which could urge the Lord to have pity upon this miserable one.* And then, thirdly, we shall pause a little while *to listen to the divine mandate by which this unhappy being is delivered from his lost estate.* "I said unto you, Live; yes, I said unto you, Live."

I. At the outset, I shall direct your contemplations to a survey of THE MISERY OF MAN'S ESTATE.

The verse presents to us an infant exposed to die. All the common offices that were necessary for its life and health have been forgotten. Its heartless parents have laid it out in the open field, having no regard whatever for it! There it lies before our eyes, covered with blood, exposed to wild beasts, famishing, ready to perish. Among many heathen nations there existed the barbarous custom of leaving deformed children to perish in the woods or fields. Among the Spartans it was an established regulation to abandon their weaker offspring to perish at the foot of Mount Taygetus; and in these times there are dark places of the earth which are full of this unnatural cruelty. The Jews were certainly free from this sin, but it was a practice of their near neighbors, and therefore well known to them; and moreover, the remembrance of Egypt and their great lawgiver

among the crocodiles of the Nile, and all the males murdered by royal decree, would make the metaphor very simple to them.

1. At the very first glance, we remark, here is an *early ruin*. It is an infant. A thousand sorrows that one so young should be so deeply taught in misery's school! It is an infant. It has not yet tasted joy, but yet it knows pain and sorrow to the fullest! How early are you blasted, O sweet flower! How soon are your young dawnings quenched in darkness, O rising sun! A ruin so terrible and so early has fallen upon each of us. Let proud man kick against the doctrine as he may, Scripture tells us assuredly that we are "born in sin and shaped in iniquity." We came not into this world as Adam came into the garden, without flaw, without condemnation, without evil propensities; but lo, by one man's offense we are all made sinners, and through his desperate fall our blood is tainted, and our nature is corrupt! From the very birth we go astray, speaking lies, and in the very birth we lie under the condemnation of the law of God. It is not mine to defend this doctrine, to answer objections to it, or to bring arguments for it—I simply announce what God has Himself revealed by the mouth of His servant David, and also more fully by the tongue of the Apostle Paul. Man, unless God has mercy on you, you are lost, and lost from your very beginning! You did not come into this world as one who might stand or fall, you were already fallen; an original and birth-sin had seized upon you in the womb, and you were even then as an infant cast out to perish and to die. There is hardly any doctrine more humbling than that of natural depravity or original sin; it has been the main point of attack for all those who hate the gospel, and it must be maintained and valiantly vindicated by those who would exalt Christ, since the greatness and glory of His salvation lies mainly in the desperateness of the ruin from which He has redeemed us! Man, think not to save yourself by your works! Boast not of the excellence of your character, and of your nature; you are a traitor's son, you are a felon's child! An act of dishonor was passed upon your father's house, and you were born under the law and under the curse—obnoxious to divine wrath in the very moment when your first breath was drawn. Sad heritage of sin! Miserable estate of sorrow! How deep the ruin of the fall! Oh, to divine grace what debtors we are that out of this ruin it can lift us up to heights of glory!

2. The next very apparent teaching of the text is *utter inability*. It is an infant—what can it do for itself? If it were a child of some few years, it might be able, with tottering feet, to find its way to some shelter. If it had the gift of articulate speech, it might sob out its needs and tell to the passerby what it needed. But it is an infant—it cannot speak. It knows sin, but it has not mind enough to know why the pain is there. It is ignorant, and although conscious of its ills, its untutored, undeveloped intellect can neither describe the evil, nor prescribe the remedy. Though it may cast its little eyes around, even if help were there, it was not in its power to avail itself of the offered aid. It is impotent, helpless, and utterly powerless! If anything is to be done for it, it must all be done by another's hand. Not even clay on the potter's wheel is more helpless than this infant as it now lies cast out in the open field. Such is human nature; it can by no means help towards its own restoration. "Dead," says our

apostle, "dead in trespasses and sins," and what shall the dead in their graves do towards resurrection? Shall the worm become mother of life, or shall corruption be the father of immortality? No, trumpet of God, there is no life in the dull, cold ear of death, and no hearing in the hollow skull of the skeleton. If the graves open, a divine hand must break the seal, heave up the mold, and uplift the moldering corpse. If there is resurrection, it must come from God and from God alone. It must be a miracle in the beginning, and a miracle even to the end! My hearers, I am not the author of this doctrine, but simply the declarer of what God reveals. You are so lost that you cannot by the most desperate efforts of your own save yourselves; no, worse, so lost that by nature you have no *wish* to be saved, and will not make the efforts or *desire* to make them. You hate God. It is a cutting accusation, but it is true, and may God the Holy Spirit make you feel its truth! Naturally, I say, you hate the Lord; by nature you love vanity, and not God's truth. You love sin, and do not wish to be delivered from it. Holiness you choose not—God's commandments you abhor! Your nature has become so evil that the Ethiopian may sooner change his skin, and the leopard his spots, than you of yourself learn to do well.

But, mark you—and this is a thought that may crush our boasts, and make us hang our heads like a bulrush forevermore—this inability is our *own sin!* This is laid at our door—not as an excuse for our sinfulness, but as a frightful aggravation of our guilt—that we have become so bad that we cannot make ourselves good! Our nature is now so desperately evil, both by its native depravity, and by our continual practice of sin, that iniquity has become our *nature*. It is as natural to us to sin as for water to descend, or sparks to fly upward—

"Where vice has held its empire long,
It will not endure the least control.
None but a power divinely strong
Can turn the current of the soul!"

You cannot, souls, you *cannot* save yourselves! You are as helpless as the infant cast out; your inability is utter and entire.

3. Apparent, too, is yet a third misfortune—we are *utterly friendless*. "No eye pitied you to do any of these things unto you." We have no friend in heaven or in earth that can do anything for us, unless God shall interpose. Grant you that a tender parent may pity, but no parent can change his child's nature or cleanse away the sin of his offspring. Let it be granted that there are ministers of Christ whose tearful eyes would woo you to Christ, but the most earnest evangelist cannot quicken your soul! The most thundering of all God's Boanerges cannot awake the dead! Let it be considered that angels are anxious for your conversion, that were you saved, they would clap their wings with joy, and make glad holiday in heaven. But an angel's power cannot snatch you from the grave of your sin, nor could the whole host of seraphs, with their kindred cherubs combined, do anything to deliver you from the ruin into which by Adam's sin, and your own, you have been brought. Your kinsfolk may weep and lament for you, but no lamentation can make atonement for your sin, no human tears can cleanse your filthiness, no Christian zeal can clothe you with righteousness, no yearning love can sanctify your nature!

Friendless, helpless and ruined from our earliest state—good God, what creatures are men! Sinai thunders at us, the law condemns us, justice bares its sword, holiness is incensed, and truth is sworn to destroy. Where, where shall we fly, if You refuse us, O God?

4. Furthermore, our text very clearly reveals to us that we are by nature in a sad state of *exposure*. Cast out into the open field, left in a wilderness where it is not likely that any should pass by, thrown where the cold can smite by night, and the heat can blast by day, left where the wild beast goes about, seeking whom he may devour—such is the estate of human nature—unclothed, unarmed, helpless, exposed to all manner of ravenous destroyers. Little do any of us know how exposed by nature we are to sloth, to drunkenness, to lust, and pride, and unbelief—to all those young lions which hunt in company with the great lion of the pit of hell, who seeks whom he may devour! O Lord God, You alone know the awful dangers which prowl around an unregenerate man. What mischiefs waylay him! What crimes beset him! What follies haunt him! God only knows the fullness of the guilt of even *one* sin, so His infinite mind, alone, can grasp the number of those tremendous temptations which are planted like snares of death in the path of an unconverted soul. Death is after you, O you helpless one! Hell yawns for you, sin longs to devour you! Friend, you have none but foes, and they are many. Armed and mighty are those who would destroy you, and you have no power nor will to resist them! You are as a helpless infant in a tiger's jaws. Fascinated by the serpent eyes of sin, you are paralyzed by its witcheries, and so rendered an easy prey for the destroyer.

5. It seems that this child, besides being in this exposed state, was *loathsome*. "You were cast out to the loathing of your person." It was in such a condition that the sight of it was disgusting, and its person was so destitute of all comeliness that it was absolutely loathed. Such is man by nature, but he will not believe it. He still flatters himself that he is comely as the curtains of Solomon, while he is black as the tents of Kedar! We think ourselves angels, when we are nearest akin to devils; but, when we get akin to angels, then we mourn the devil that is still within us! I know this, that when God the Holy Spirit gives a man a view of himself, he is utterly loathsome in his own esteem. One of the cardinals of the olden times—when cardinals were sometimes saints—happened to pass by a meadow where he saw a shepherd leaning on his crook, weeping. He stopped to ask the lad what made him weep. The lad replied by pointing to the ground, for just at his feet there was a toad. "I was weeping," said he, "to think that God should have made me, a creature so infinitely superior to this loathsome reptile at my feet, and that I should have made myself such a creature, that this loathsome thing is superior to me, because it has never sinned." As the cardinal went his way, he said, "Verily, has it happened, that the foolish and unlearned enter into the kingdom of heaven before us, for this peasant has found out the truth of God." Neither vipers nor toads are more venomous or more loathsome to men than man must be to God, or would be to himself, if he could see himself with the eyes of truth, and if the veil of pride were once lifted from his eyes! The image of God in man is all obliterated; we have

ashes for beauty, shame for glory, rottenness for health, and hell for heaven!

6. We close this fearful description by observing *the certain ruin to which this infant was exposed,* as setting forth the sure destruction of every man if divine grace prevents not. It is not a question whether man will be lost or not. As to whether man shall enter into the flames of hell or not, is no query; man MUST perish unless God saves! Every one of us *must* be lost to all eternity, unless the strong arm of the divine One interferes. There is no one else to nurture this helpless infant; this infant cannot rescue itself. Lost, lost, and lost! Howl its requiem, you lost ones who have gone before, for help or hope there is none, unless the Eternal One shall interpose!

I would, dear hearers that this strong language, as you may think it, might be felt to be pertinent to your own case, if you are unconverted. I am not selecting special characters, and impeaching certain offenders who have been outrageously wicked. I am not now describing only the harlot, or the burglar, or the murderer—I am speaking of *everyone of you* by nature, of everyone of you who have not been born-again! This is not complimentary language, but it ill becomes God's minister to compliment any man! We must tell you plainly the truth of God! You may have been moral, sober, generous, honest—philanthropy may have been as the air you breathe—there may be many good traits in your character that render you amiable to your relatives and friends—but, by nature you are not one whit better than the vilest of the vile! And were your nature permitted to show itself in all its foulness, the black fountain is in your heart as much as in those who are banished from their country for their country's good. It is only providence, or the check of society, that keeps it under. You are as much lost and ruined as they. I know I address many of you who have never fled to Christ for refuge, but are on very good terms with yourselves, because in comparison with others, your character is blameless. Let me entreat you by the living God who searches all hearts, to look at yourselves, this morning, in your fallen state! If you live and die as you now are, there can be nothing for your portion but the flames of hell! God grant that you may be snatched from so terrible a doom; but I see not how this can be, unless you first are led to see that you *deserve* this doom, and are made to tremble at the evil of sin, and the wrath of the Lord. No doubt, Noah, when he told men they would all be drowned unless they fled to the ark, was thought to be very uncharitable; but it was the true charity which made him warn them! You *will* perish unless you find shelter in Jesus Christ! Your state is so terrible and damnable, that lost you *must be,* unless you fly to God's plan of salvation which He has laid down for lost, ruined, helpless sinners! "Micaiah, spoke not good but evil," said the king, but he learned afterwards that Micaiah's hardness and boldness came of *God,* while the smooth things of the false prophets came from the devil! I do again, then, beseech and entreat you, to lay these things to heart! Ruined souls, you are self-destroyed, ready to perish, without help, without power! You are cast out, and exposed to evils of which you, as yet, are not aware, but ultimately certain to make your bed in hell, unless God delivers you. Humble yourselves under the

mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. Confess your sins before Him with broken hearts; weep before Him the tears of penitence; and He can, yes, He *will* deliver and bring up His chosen from the depths of destruction, and His elect ones from the jaws of hell! Thus mournfully have we rehearsed the story of human ruin; let us bless God that we do not end here.

II. We are now to search for MOTIVES FOR GOD'S GRACE. Brothers and sisters, we have a very difficult search before us when we look to this infant which is cast out. Its loathsomeness, and its being covered with its own blood forbid us at once to hope that there can be anything in it which can merit the esteem of the merciful One. Let us think of some of the motives which may urge men to assist the undeserving.

1. One of the first would be *necessity*. Some men, I do not doubt, are generous from necessity, that is to say they feel it necessary to maintain their reputation, and therefore they are generous before men, or they gain so much self-esteem—and there is a necessity in man's nature to make him seek after that—that they are willing to be kind that they may be approved within. Not a few are placed in such a position that they could not well refuse to give their help when it is asked of them. But no necessity can ever effect the Most High! The *first* of all causes must be absolutely independent of every other cause. He acts voluntarily. It belongs to God to say absolutely, "I will." Man may say, "I will," but it must always be with bated breath, for the sovereign decree of God may contradict him! But God is under no necessity. Has He a superior? Who is king over Him? Who dictates counsel to the Most High? Who sits at His bar and gives Him advice and warning, and makes Him do according to his pleasure?

Nor had God any necessity in order to make Himself happy or to increase His glory. The praises of angels were enough for Him. No, even the praise of angels is as nothing in His awful sight! His joy is in Himself. He finds within His own infinite essence a sufficiency of delight. He needs go abroad for nothing, for He fills all things, and He is all-in-all. If it had been God's will to leave the human race to perish, He might have done it, and there was none to say to Him, "What are You doing?" And when He does save man, it is not because there is any compulsion—moral, physical, or spiritual upon Him—He has done as He wills in this great matter of the redemption and salvation of men! O soul, God is not bound to save you! Man, you are lost, and there is nothing that can compel the Almighty to deliver you! If He does it, it must be according to His own good pleasure, to the praise of the glory of His grace!

2. In this case, there was nothing in the *birth* of this child, in its original parentage that could move the passerby. We are told in some former verses, "Your birth and your nativity is of the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite, and your mother an Hittite," both of them belonging to an accursed race. Look into the hole of the pit from where you were dug. There was nothing in your birth or mine why He should have pity on us! Kings, princes, mighty men boast much of their pedigrees, but the Lord knows nothing of the glory of these family trees and ancestries. No, rather, He leaves the mighty man in the dust, cutting down the high tree,

that He may cause the low tree to flourish! He pours contempt upon princes, and knows no respect of persons; all spring from the common race of man, and what is there in our corrupt nature, what is there in us to move the heart of God? Nothing, absolutely nothing! Young man, it is not because your father was godly, that God should be compelled to save you; it is not because your mother was a lady of rank that therefore the Almighty should stretch out His arm to you. You were conceived in sin, and stained in your very birth! There is, therefore, nothing here that could move the heart of Deity.

3. Nor was there anything in this child's *beauty*, for it was loathsome. Men are often affected by beauty. Doubtless Pharaoh's daughter saved Moses because he was a comely child. We know that Ahasuerus chose Esther because of her beauty. And there have been many who have been exalted in the world for their personal attractions; but it was not so with man in God's sight. "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." We are not only sinners, but *sin* itself! How then can sin attract the regard and love of a perfectly holy God? There may be much in us that can make our fellow creatures esteem us—there can be nothing in us as fallen, condemned, and ungodly—that can make God esteem us! I know that you, who are spiritually taught, will join with me in singing—

"What was there in us to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
It was even so, Father, we always must sing,
For so it seemed good in Your sight."

See then, sinner, you are without form or comeliness, and you have no beauty that He should desire you! What can there be in a worm to gratify the Almighty? The heavens are not pure in His sight, and He charged His angels with folly. How much less, then, should there be any beauty in man, who is but a worm, or in the son of man, that is crushed before the moth? Think not that He needs your beauty to excite His Love! He can love you though deformed, and love you till He has made you comely by His comeliness, which He shall put upon you.

4. Furthermore, as we have found no motive yet, either in necessity or the child's birth or beauty, so we find none in any *entreaties* that were uttered by this child. It does not seem that it pleaded with the passerby to save it, for it could not as yet speak. So, though sinners do pray, yet when a sinner prays, it is because God has begun to save him! A sinner's prayers can never be the cause of his salvation, for, mark you, the truth of God is that no man ever seeks God first—God has first sought him, and began a good work in his soul, before he ever turns to God. In some cases, this is very extraordinarily proved. The old writers used to quote the instance of a man who went into a forest, having been an outrageous sinner, with the determination of destroying himself. While he adjusted the rope, some passerby, hearing a sound, came and expostulated with him, and the words were blessed to his salvation. Is there any preparation or preparatory process in a man who has come to such a pitch of sin, that he is about to take away his own life, to wash his hands in his own blood? Surely this was divine grace! There were one or two cases in

Whitefield's history, of men who came into places where he was preaching, with stones in their pockets to pelt him with, but who became themselves converted. Was there anything there for the grace of God to get a hold of, anything to foster, to favor, to nourish the grace, the sovereign grace of the Most High? No, rather, while they were yet without anything whatever that could have cried after God, He was found of them who sought Him not; He called them a people who were not a people! I know some think that the sinner takes the first step, but we know better. If he did, it were like the old Romish miracle of St. Dennis, where we are told that after his head was cut off, he picked it up, and walked two thousand miles with it in his hand! Whereupon, some wit observed that he did not see any wonder in the man's walking two thousand miles—for all the difficulty lay in the *first step*. Just so, I see no difficulty in a man's getting all the way to heaven, if he can but take the *first step!* For all the miracle lies in that first step, the making the *dead soul live,* the melting of the adamantine heart, the thawing of the northern ice, the bringing down of the proud look. This is the work, this is the difficulty; and if man can do that himself, verily, he can do the whole work! But when God looks upon men to save them, it is not *because* they cry to Him, for they never do, and never will cry until the work of salvation is *begun*. They are unwilling and unable to use any entreaty or persuasion that could be cogent to the heart of God; rather, they abhor His mercy; they run away from the divine grace which is offered to them; they reject the gospel when it is preached; they will not come to Christ that they may have life, but they willfully and wickedly turn their backs upon the Most High! Until He by His strong hand brings them to Christ, they will never be saved! O divine grace, O divine grace, how wide Your sphere! How glorious are You in meeting the degradation, and the sin of man! You show the splendor of Your power in beginning, carrying on, and finishing the work!

5. Yet, further, brothers and sisters—it does not appear that the pity of the passerby was shown upon this child because of any *future service* which was expected of it. This child, it seems, was nourished, clothed, luxuriously decorated, and yet, after all that, if you read the chapter through, you will find it went astray from Him who had set His heart upon it! The Lord foresaw this, and yet loved that child notwithstanding. God knew that you and I, though He loved us when there was nothing good in us, after we were saved would still rebel. He knew that we had backsliding hearts. He knew that we would be unbelieving even to the end—but He loved us notwithstanding all this! He did not love *you* because He foresaw you would be a preacher; nor *you* because He knew you would be a tract distributor; nor *you* because He knew that you would be an indefatigable Sunday school teacher. He loved you although He knew that you would be as you are today, ungrateful and unkind to Him—cold in your soul, worldly in your spirit! You can today, rehearse experientially, our last Sunday's text, "I was as a beast before You: nevertheless I am continually with You." [See Sermon #467, Volume 8—FLESH AND SPIRIT—A RIDDLE—read/download, by God's grace, all 63 volumes of CH Spurgeon sermons, and 574 Spanish translations free of charge at www.spurgeongems.org.]

There was, then, no motive of future service why this child should be blessed, or why God should save man. I do not know—I want to say what

I cannot say this morning; I want to exhibit to you *man,* standing as a criminal at the bar, guilty, proved to be guilty even to his very face, yet proudly saying that he is not guilty! A traitor at heart, a base rebel, an ungrateful wretch! I want you to think of him as one upon who pity seems as if it would be thrown away—not an object for mercy! One of whom the universe cries, "Away with him, away with him, it is not fit that he should live!" And then, I want to show you God in the sovereignty of His divine grace, saying, "I *will* spare that traitor; he deserves to die, but I will spare him; I have no motive for it, except such as is in My own will. There is nothing in him, no reason in him why I should spare him, but I *will* spare him; I *will* prove that I am king forever and ever, and the God and Lord of mercy."

The only answer that we can give to the question, "Why then, does God spare this outcast infant?" is this, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." How is Jehovah exalted in our midst this morning! My spirit trembles while it labors to exalt the Lord alone. The Lord is King forever and ever, hallelujah! Bow your heads, both saints and sinners, and adore Him as King of kings, and Lord of lords! Ask not questions, for He gives no account of His matters! Quarrel not with His dominion, for His answer is to you, "No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him who formed it, Why have You made me thus?" Impeach not His justice, or His justice you shall feel in smiting you! Entreat His mercy, but entreat it as those who have no claim upon Him. Ask Him for it as knowing that if He gives it to you, He has a right to give it or to withhold it if He will. Sinners, behold yourselves this morning, in the hand of an angry God! There you lie before God, like a moth beneath your own fingers. It is as He wills—to save or to destroy you! Are you at ease? Will you mock Him? Will you boast and glorify yourselves? Rather, as creatures who are now absolutely under His control, and deservedly subject to His rod, bow your heads and cry, "God, be merciful to us, sinners! You can save, do it for Your own Will and glory's sake, that Your mercy may be magnified, and Your sovereignty may be clearly seen."

We have found no motive in the creature, and therefore, we refrain from further search, believing that the fountain and wellspring of mercy is in God Himself. Into *His* reasons we cannot search, lest like Job, we should hear the rebuke of the Lord, "Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in search of the depth?"

III. But now, we turn to consider THE MANDATE OF HIS MERCY. "I said unto you, Live."

First, I want you to notice that this decree of God is *majestic*. "I said unto you when you were in your blood, *Live;* yes, I said unto you when you were in your blood, *Live."* Darkness was upon the face of the earth, and thus the Almighty spoke, "Let there be light!" And light was. Sublime because simple; without any oratorical embellishments, magnificently stern—God speaks and it is done! So, in our text, we perceive a sinner with nothing in him but sin, expecting nothing but wrath; but the Majes-

tic One passes by; He is making a tour of His dominions, splendidly arrayed, with ten thousand times ten thousand angels at His beck and call. He looks, and there lies an infant, loathsome, in its blood. He stops and He pronounces the word, the royal word, "Live." There speaks a God. Who but He could venture thus to deal with life, and dispense it with a single syllable? It is majestic, it is divine! And mark you, brothers and sisters, though the word preached by us may be very rough and rugged—as we confess to you it is—though we know but little of the graces of oratory, yet when God speaks by a minister, there is nothing more divine under heaven, nor in heaven, than the gospel! When the Lord speaks, even though it is by the unlettered and the ignorant, when through the gospel He says, "Live," to a sinner—not even the angels who bow before the throne of God ever heard a more divine sound! Thus says the Lord, you dead sinner, *"Live!"*

Again, this decree is *manifold* as well as majestic. When He says, "Live," it includes many things. Here is *judicial* life. The sinner is ready to be condemned and executed; his neck is on the block, and the axe is gleaming in the sunlight; but the mighty One says, "Live," and he rises pardoned and absolved. The execution is not only stayed, that were but respite; the crime is forgiven; the man is to live forever!

It is, moreover, *spiritual* life. The man knew nothing of God, his eyes could not see Christ, and his ears could not hear His voice. Jehovah said, "Live," and spiritual life was given, and we were quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. Moreover, it includes glory-life, which is the perfection of spiritual life. "I said unto you, *Live,"* and that word rolls on through all the years of life till death comes, and in the midst of the shadows of death, the Lord's voice is still heard, "I say unto you, Live!" In the morning of the resurrection it is that same voice which is echoed by the archangel, "Live," and as the spirits rise to heaven to be blessed *forever* in the glory of their God, it is in the power of this same voice, "I say unto you, Live."

Note again, that it is an *irresistible* voice. When God says to a sinner, "Live," all the devils in hell cannot keep him in the grave! If the Lord should say to a blasphemer here today, "Live," that blasphemer *must* become a saint! Saul of Tarsus is on the road to Damascus to arrest the saints of the living God. A strong hand might seize the bridle of his charger, and throw him to the ground; but Saul is not to be stopped like that. He will rise from the ground the same Saul, to go to Damascus as blood-thirsty as ever. But see what divine grace can do! A voice from heaven, and a light brighter than the brightness of the sun, and Saul is crying out, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" Within three days he is baptized; he becomes a preacher; and Saul who was called Paul becomes a leader in the hosts of the Most High! My Master can do the same today. Mighty to save is He—

"Tell what His arm has done,
What spoils from death He won,
Praise His dear name alone.
Worthy the Lamb."

We remark again, that it is *all-sufficient*. "Live," do You say, great God? Why, the man is dead! There is life—not in him, but in the *voice* that bids

him live! "Live," do You say? "By this time he stinks, for he has been dead four days!" There is power—not in his corruption, but in the *voice* that cries, "Come forth!" When we preach to sinners, and tell them to believe in Christ, do not fancy it is because we think we have any power! No, but because when in God's name we say, "Believe," the power is in the mandate as it comes from our lips, uttered by the Most High. If a minister is not filled with God's Spirit, then His ministry is an empty dream; but if a minister is, as I conceive him to be, a man who speaks in God's name, and for the time being is the very mouth of God to men's soul's, then there is power in the gospel as it is preached, attended with the demonstration of the Spirit, to do for the sinner what he can by no means do for himself! I cry today in my Master's name, "Thus says the Lord, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall live." Trust my Master bleeding on the tree, and you shall be delivered! Rest on the merit of His blood, and of His glorious righteousness! Trust in the power of His intercession before the throne, and despite your lost estate, you shall be this morning saved forever and ever!

We close when we shall have repeated ourselves once more by saying—this mandate was a mandate of *free grace*. I want to lay that down again, and again, and again—that there was nothing in this infant, nothing but loathsomeness; nothing therefore, to merit esteem; nothing in the infant but inability; nothing therefore, by which it could help itself. Nothing in it but infancy! Nothing therefore, by which it could plead for itself, and yet divine grace said, "Live"—freely, without any bribe, without any entreaty, said—"Live." And so when sinners are saved, it is only and solely because God *wills* to do it, to magnify His free, unpurchased, unsought divine grace! Surely this is a subject which will suit some here, though it will not please others. Proud Pharisees will turn on their heels. "That is very high Calvinistic doctrine," says one. My dear friends, I do not care what it is! I know it is written in the Word of God! I preach very often sermons which get me the title of Arminian, and just as often I am charged with hyperism! I am simply one who seeks honestly to tell you what he believes to be in Scripture, and what he believes to be true. And therefore, whether it is high or low is nothing to me. Is it true? I know the proud Pharisee will say, "No. Why," he says, "there must be some merit in what we do! Surely we do something! Perseverance in well-doing and so on, surely this will effect much!" You are under the law, and not under grace; you have not yet learned the A B Cs of the gospel; you want to be a saint by the merit of what *you* do, and you will be lost as sure as you are a man unless you look at things in a different light! But I know that the doctrine will be acceptable to those condemned ones here this morning, who have written their own sentence out, who say, "I must perish, I have nothing to bring you, O Lord! I have not even a tender heart; I have not even such a sense of need as I want. Lord, I am empty, except that I am full of evil, and full of sin; I have nothing that I could put before Your eyes, except that which would excite Your wrath and Your disgust. Great God, if You will not save me, I cannot blame You; I lay hold of nothing in myself. But You have said, 'He who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, has everlasting life.' Lord, I venture to believe on Him! You will be true,

You will save even me!" Soul, soul, you may go out of this house light of heart and foot, for "Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you!" In God's name I pronounce the sentence of absolution on you, if you have thus come to Christ, and trusted in the Lord Jesus. There is not a sentence left in God's Book against you! By His grace, you are no more dead but you live; no more accursed but beloved! You are no more loathsome but beautiful—covered with Christ's righteousness, and filled with the Spirit of the living God!

What shall I say to you who are Christians but this—do for the sake of this divine grace—show your gratitude, live more like your Master, and live more in God's service! Seek to spend and be spent in Him. Nothing can make a man work for Christ like free grace! And those who believe the doctrine of free grace, and yet are idle, you must surely hold the truth of God in unrighteousness, for there is no principle so active, so impulsive as this—

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

Finally, Christian, never give up on any sinner. Never think that *any man* is beyond salvation! I charge you by the solemn thought that God looks for *nothing* in man, and saves only according to the sweet counsels of His own will, bring every man you meet with before God in prayer! Plead with every man, preach Christ to every man, tell every man that Christ can save! Tell every sinner that whatever there is not in him, Christ's power is still the same, that *His* arm is not shortened, neither is *His* ear heavy! And spread the glad news that it is not of the will of man, nor of his blood, nor birth, but by the power of the Spirit of God according to the will of the Most High that men are saved! May the Lord add His blessing, and do some of His mighty works this morning through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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WHAT DO YOU MEAN, O SLEEPER?
NO. 469

[The original title of this sermon was "What Meanest Thou, O Sleeper?]

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had laid down, and was fast asleep. So the captain came to him, and said to him, What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call upon your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."
Jonah 1:5, 6. (NKJV)

OF all the men in the ship, Jonah was the person who ought most to have been awake; but nevertheless, he was not only asleep but *fast* asleep; all the creaking of the cordage, the dashing of the waves, the howling of the winds, the straining of the timbers, and the shouting of the mariners, did not awaken him! He was fast locked in the arms of sleep. See here, in Jonah's heavy slumber, the effect of sin. No noxious drug can give such deadly sleep as sin. The body never knows so dread a sleep when under the influence of opiates, as the soul does when sin has cast it into a slumber. If men could be awake to the evils, to the danger, to the desperate punishment of sin, sin were not half as deadly as it is; but when it puts its sweet cup of nightshade to the lips, that cup soon blinds the eyes, and "steeps the senses in forgetfulness and man knows not what or where he is. Nor is sin the only cradle in which evil rocks the soul—the world, too, casts men into slumber. I do not know that Jonah ever slept so soundly anywhere as when he had gotten into the midst of busy mariners who were going to Tarshish. Ah, it is comparatively easy for us to keep awake in the midst of God's Church; it is easy for us to maintain our steadfastness and integrity when we meet with those who rejoice in His name; but the world is an enchanted ground, and happy is that Christian who is able to survive the deadening influence of business, the tranquilizing influence which creeps over the minds of men whose merchandise increases, whose houses are filled with the riches of nations. What downy pillows does the world sew to all armholes! What beds of ease she spreads for those whom she entraps!

See also, the slumbering effects of the flesh. It was to spare him a little toil, it was to avoid personal dishonor that Jonah fled. Ah, flesh! When you are yielded to, into what follies will you not drive us, into what pros-

tration of strength do you not hurl us? Pleasures and comforts, if sought as ends, are desperate drains upon the vigor of the spirit. When the body is indulged, then the soul lies cleaving to the dust! It is not possible for us to pamper the flesh without, at the same time, starving the soul. If we sacrifice unto our own lusts, we are quite certain to get the sacrifices by robbing God's altar. The body shall not have pleasure in sin unless the soul shall soon be in a state of misery and decay!

See also, in our text, one of the devices of Satan. He seeks to lull God's prophets into slumber, for he knows that dumb dogs that are given to sleep will never do any very great injury to his cause. The wakeful watchman he always fears, for then he cannot take the city by surprise; but if he can cast God's watchman into slumber, then he is well content, and thinks it almost as well to have a Christian asleep as to have him dead—he would certainly sooner see him in hell—but next to that, he is most glad to see him rocked in the cradle of presumption, fast asleep! May we be delivered from Jonah's condition; but since like Jonah, we are infested by sin, encumbered by the flesh, surrounded by the world, and tempted by the devil, we occasionally have good cause that the captain should come round and shake us by the shoulders, or even roughly strike us with a rope, lest we should sleep as do others, and so fall into spiritual decay.

I shall, this morning, act the captain's part, and as captain of this vessel, I will cry both to *slumbering saints,* and to *sleepy sinners,* "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise and call upon your God."

I. First of all, we will deal with the SLEEPING SAINTS, those poor Jonahs who are God's true servants but are yet asleep.

To break their bands of sleep asunder, let me remind them, first, that *the ship is in danger*. It was ill for Jonah to sleep when all hands were at the pumps; when every other man was doing his best to lighten the ship, and save her, if possible, from the terrific tempest, it was a shame that he should be asleep. The peril of human life demanded of every generous spirit prompt and earnest action; every groaning timber would upbraid the lazy, sleepy prophet. Members of this church, professed Christians, is it not a shame to be slumbering, to be sluggish, in your Master's service when the souls of men are in danger? It is marvelous to me how men can be so careless about the ruin of men's souls! Let us hear the cry of "Fire! Fire!" in the streets and our heart is all in trepidation lest some poor creature should be burned alive; but we read of hell, and of the wrath to come, and seldom do our hearts palpitate with any compassionate trembling and fear! If we are on board a vessel, and the shrill cry is heard, "A man overboard!" who has ever heard of a passenger wrapping his plaid around him, and lying down upon a seat to contemplate the ex-

ertions of others? But in the church, when we hear of thousands of sinners sinking in the floods of ruin, we behold professed Christians wrapping themselves up in their own security, and calmly looking on upon the labors of others, wishing them, no doubt, all success, but not even lifting a finger to do any part of the work themselves! If we heard tomorrow in our streets the awful cry—more terrible than fire—the cry of, "Bread! Bread! Bread!" and saw starving women lifting up their perishing children, or hungry men imprecating curses upon those who would keep back their necessary food from them, would we not empty out our stores? Who among us would not spend our substance to let the poor ravenous creatures satisfy the pangs of hunger? And yet, here is the world perishing for lack of knowledge! Here we have them at our doors crying for the bread of heaven, and how many there are who hoard their substance for avarice, give their time to vanity, devote their talents to self-aggrandizement—and center their thoughts only on the world or the flesh? Oh, could you once see with your eyes a soul sinking into hell, it were such a spectacle that you would work night and day, and count your life too short, and your hours too few for the plucking of brands from the burning!

I suppose if we had once seen a drowning man, or a wretch borne over the rapids of Niagara, or if we had seen a person stabbed in the street, we would never forget it. Death's doings are painted in very red colors upon the memory. O that God would give some of you the sight of a lost soul! O that you could see it in its naked condition when it steps behind the curtain into the world unknown! O that you could behold its first horrors, when it discovers itself exposed to the anger of Almighty God! Would that you could see that soul when the awful hell-sweat stands upon its brow as God proclaims—"Depart, you cursed one!" O if only the vision of hell were sometimes before our eyes—that some few of the sighs of a damned soul were ringing in our ears! Would God we had a vision of the Judgment, the tremendous crowd, the flaming heavens, and the rocking earth, the open book, the eyes that flash with lightning, and the voice that speaks with thunder! Would that we could see the crowds as they descend into the pit of hell that has no bottom; for then, starting up like men that have long been given to a foolish slumber, we would gird up our loins, and using both our hands, we would seek to pluck men from the burning, and deliver them from going down into the pit of hell. Men are dying! Men are perishing! Hell is filling! Satan is triumphing! Poor souls are howling in their agonies, and you sleep? I, as the captain of the ship, shake you yet again. O that the Holy Spirit may quicken, and awaken you! Perhaps He may do it through my voice, while again I en-

treat you. "What do you mean sleeper? Arise and call upon your God," that the multitudes perish not!

A second time I would awaken you, by reminding you that in the peaceful times in which we live, men are earnestly craving for our prayers—*men are longing for deliverance*. In Jonah's ship every man was a pleader; every person was praying! And though I cannot say this of the world that lies in the wicked one, yet, to a very great extent, it is true that the masses are longing to hear the words of this life. There was never an age like this for hearing sermons! I marvel, every Sunday, as I see the crowd willing to stand outside waiting by the hour, and then rustling in like a mountain torrent, even treading upon one another to hear the Word of God! Is not this an encouragement to labor? See the theater on a Sunday—no actors could attract greater multitudes! How they throng the doors to listen to some simple-minded man, who is going to tell the story of the cross! I have seen this thirst for the Word all over England; but this present week, I have seen in a village, thinly populated, some 10,000 people crowding the cliffs, drinking in every word from the preacher's lips—earnest to listen to the message of mercy. By God's grace, we have not now to stir up the people to attend the means, for there is all around us a desire to hear! This is a hearing age. This is a time when men are *willing* to listen—when they are only too glad to hear the Word faithfully preached. I say not that it is so in every place, but certainly it is in London; and a man with but very moderate gifts, if his tongue is but on fire, will soon command an audience! If there is an empty place of worship in London, it is generally the preacher's fault, and, in nine cases out of ten, you will find that empty benches are evidences that the man does not preach the gospel, for, if he preached the gospel, the people would soon throng to listen to him. What? Shall we sleep NOW? What? Shall we be idle *now?* Ministers of Christ, shall we relax our efforts, or shall we be dull and cold about immortal souls when every omen urges us to zealous labor? My fellow workers—deacons and elders, honored church officers—will you draw back in this day of hopefulness, and refrain to sow the seed, when the field is plowed, and ready for the grain? Church members—you young men who can speak in public—you women who can in your households talk of Christ—will any of you be dull and lethargic *now?* Now is the moment when we may carry the fortress by storm, and if armed and carrying bows, we turn our backs in the moment of victory, when triumph trembles in the scales—how we shall throughout life regret our wicked folly and idleness! What do you mean, sleeper, to sleep *now?* Arise, for it is a happy and auspicious hour—"Arise, and call upon your God."

Yet further, let us remember that as Jonah was the only man in the ship whose prayer could be of any use, so *the children of God are the only men who can do any real spiritual service to the perishing world!* All the cries of the captain and his crew were addressed to the gods of their various countries, who had ears which could not ear, and hands which could afford no aid. Jonah was the only man who worshipped the Lord who made the sea and the dry land; hence, *his prayers,* alone could save the ship. Now, the salvation of the world under God lies with the *Church.* Christ has finished the atonement; it is for the Church to finish the ingathering! Christ has paid the purchase-price, and completed redemption by His blood; it is for the Church to seek the Holy Spirit, and fully to redeem the world by power. Suppose, then, that you who fear God say, "This is no case of mine; I am not my brother's keeper"? Suppose that you waste opportunities, and throw precious time to the dogs—then, the world must go down to its awful doom! But, mark you; its blood shall be upon your hands! This generation, under God, must have salvation given to it through our ministry, through our evangelists, through our Sunday schools, through our Missionaries, through our preaching and teachings; and if we do it not, the world will not stop from perishing while we are not laboring! Men will not live on until another generation, worthier than we are, shall have taken our places, but this generation must go down to the tomb, muttering curses between its lips against the faithless, wicked, unbelieving, inactive Church! And we must go down, too, to meet the doom of those who had no real faith in Christ, or else they would have had a love for the souls of men; to meet those who had not the spirit of Jesus, or else they would with wooing entreaties, and with earnest efforts have brought men to the cross of Christ.

Ah, beloved! I know that we have some in the church who are but a drag to it. There are some in all churches who are of this kind, but let me solemnly remind you—we must address the Church as a body—let me again remind the Church that it is with *her,* and with no one else, that the world has to deal as to its conversion. We must never think of leaving Christ's work to societies! They have had their day, and have supplied a great lack created by the loss of the apostolic spirit; but it is now time that the awakened and revived Church should assume her true position, and do her own work. Fifty years or more, Missionary Societies have been trying to convert the world, and albeit that many souls have been saved, and therefore, the effort has been far from useless, yet, compared with apostolic success, they have been a miserable failure! All these years, we have spent 10 times the money with not a tenth of the success of early evangelistic effort. In my inmost soul, I believe that the Lord is not with the most of our foreign missions. And why? Because *God* never called the

Missionary Societies to the work! He never bade the Missionary Society become the spouse of Christ, and bring forth sons unto Him. His offspring, His seed which shall reward Him for His soul's travail, must spring from His own well-beloved bride! Much as I value all good societies, I cannot hesitate to declare that the Church is the ordained agent, and that all beside is human, and derives authority only from man. Hence I say of a society for the conversion of the heathen—it is a man-constituted body, and not of God! The Lord will work, not by committees, but by His Churches! The Church must do her own work, and when all our churches are thoroughly awakened to this fact, and every congregation shall send out its own men, pray for their own men, and support their own men, we shall see greater things than we have ever dreamed of, and "The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ!" But it lies with the Church. O you that are in the Church and sleep, what do you mean? Rise and call upon your God!

Further, and here I more especially address such members of this church as may have been up to now careless about the good work. Remember, sleeper, that *you are in the ship yourself,* that you enjoy its privileges, and therefore you ought to take your quota of the work. It is said of Lepidus, a Roman officer, that one day, when all the soldiers were at drill, he laid down out of the sunshine, and said he wished it were all the duty of a soldier to lay under a tree forever. We have some such soldiers! The breed is not extinct. The enlisting officer, however exact he may be, cannot help it, there will lie some such introduced into all our little armies, who like to lie in the shade and take matters easy, and wish this were all that ever a Christian soldier had to do! Oh, rise, man! For if the battle is to be won, it must not be fought by soldiers lying in the shade, but by men who can bear the heat of the sun, wear their heavy armor without weariness, and rush to battle against the foe for God, and for the truth—fearless and dauntless—in the face of leaguered hosts! There is an old story told of Philip, last king of Macedon. Before the last disastrous battle by which his monarchy was destroyed, it is said that he stood up to speak to his soldiers upon a sepulcher. It was interpreted by the soothsayers to be a sign of sure defeat, because he stood upon a *tomb* to speak! And I, your minister, if it should ever be my unhappy lot to stand upon a dead church to preach the Word, cannot expect anything but the most disastrous defeat! Let but the minister of God be supported by a living church; let him be borne up in the arms of a loving and a praying people; and who can stand against his word? Nothing but victory must follow! But let us have dead, careless deacons and elders, let us have idle church members, and the omens are against us, and the result of our

battle must be a terrible calamity! There is more mischief done by the presence of one unconverted person in a church than we think.

We are told by anatomists, that there is no part of the body which is dead. Even the bones are alive. Life abhors alliance with death! And if a dead substance once gets into the body, all the efforts of Nature are directed to the one point where the foreign body is found, to drive it out; and often ulcers and running sores, and such like things, are but the effects of nature seeking to expel the dead substance from the body. Now, there is nothing in Christ's real Church that is dead; and if ever dead substances get into the Church, they will not lie there still and quiet, but the Church shall be aware of it in her every nerve and pore, and she shall soon begin to exert her strength and vitality to expel the foreign substance from her living body—would that this energy could be spared for other works, for the saving of souls for Jesus!

Now, I address some pretended Christians here who are not alive to God. Let me beg of them to relinquish their profession, or if not, to make it real. Either be what you profess to be, or drop your profession! Lie not unto God, for in so doing, you injure the church of which you are a part and, since you are a part of it, it is your duty to serve! I would not expect, if I were a member of a commercial firm, to take half the profits, and to do nothing; it is evil to the very last degree to share the benefits without uniting in the toil! And yet some professors are guilty of this miserable conduct. As it was in the days of Job, so it is even until now—"The oxen were plowing, and the asses were feeding beside them." There is always a large proportion of the latter class in the churches—too glad to feed, but quite unwilling to work! To every Jonah, then, I say, "Either arise and pray with us, or get out of the ship, for sooner or later we shall be compelled to throw you out if you do not!"

Furthermore and here let me conclude this point, *the honor of our God is mightily concerned in every Jonah being awakened.* How could Jehovah be glorified, if the only worshipper of Jehovah in the vessel should sleep? If *he* did not cry to God, how could the mariners know whether Jehovah did hear prayer or not? Now, mark you, the honor of Christ—of His Doctrines, of His blood, of His person, the dignity of everything that we hold sacred—rests, in the eyes of the sons of men, in the keeping of the Church. When a church grows proud, worldly, and idle, what does the world say? "That's your religion!" says the world. And then, "Aha! Aha! Aha!" It says, "What a lie religion is!" But let the world see a really earnest Church, it grows very angry, it finds all the fault it can! But down deep in its heart, it reverences those it hates, and it secretly confesses, "There is a power here." They gaze and admire, even though they hate the might with which God surrounds such a church as this! The Chris-

tian religion was at one time looked up to by the heathens with awe, and reverence, for they saw its martyrs dying without a tear! They saw in astonishment its poor content in their poverty, without murmuring—its great men humble, not giving way either to lust or covetousness. They saw the purity and chastity of Christian matrons; they beheld the diligent industry of Christian bishops; they saw as though they beheld the face of an angel, when they looked upon Christ's fair Church on earth**!** But she became degenerate—she committed fornication by being allied with the State! She lost her dignity, and turned aside from her high position as Queen of the Lord, and a spiritual body quickened by a Spirit from above. What, then, did the world do? It mocked and jeered! And while it paid an outward homage to a bejeweled church glittering with gold and silver, yet in its soul it loathed and despised her! Men no longer needed to dread the omnipotence of Christian zeal! An excellent historian thus speaks of believers in the martyr age—hear it and judge whether men have such reasons to fear us now! He describes the common opinion of the Roman pagans concerning the followers of Jesus—"They were intensely propagandist. While ever unseen they were at work. Every member was a missionary of the sect, and lived mainly to propagate a doctrine for which they were ever ready to die! Thus the infection spread by a thousand unsuspected channels. Like a contagion propagated in the air, it could penetrate, as it seemed, anywhere, everywhere! The meek and gentle slave who tends your children, or attends you at table, may be a Christian! The favorite daughter of your house, who has endeared herself to you by a tenderness and grace peculiarly her own, and which seems to you as strange as it is captivating, turns out to be a Christian! The captain of the guards, the legislator in the senate-house, may be a Christian! In these circumstances, who or what is safe? What power can defend the laws and majesty of Rome, and the peace of domestic life, against an enemy like this? Then, it was often as hateful for its absence as for its presence. With sullen moroseness, this strange people studiously absented themselves from all places, and scenes of public entertainment and festivity. Games, shows, gladiatorial contests, public fetes of every kind, military or civil, they eschewed as they would have done the plague! Such scenes, indeed, were so mixed up with idolatry, and so steeped in licentiousness and sin, that though consecrated by the presence and express sanction of their country's gods, they were not good enough for them!" O my brothers and sisters, how I wish that *we* could be thus happily reviled! If we cannot reach so high, at least let us keep our garments spotless.

Would you make this church, my fellow members, to become a stink in the nostrils of the wicked? We have, brethren, a power among men.

When they have followed us with their hoots and their jeers, we have borne patiently, and have been too glad to bear every slander if we might awaken a lazy generation from their lethargy. We have seen success follow our efforts; we have beheld the opening of places for the preaching of the gospel which had been closed for centuries! We have seen the theater devoted to God on the Sunday—and *now, now,* shall we stay our course? God forbid! For, if we do, what shall the enemy say but, "Lo! God has forsaken them; the gospel can but create a *temporary* excitement; truth is vanishing in its influence." Instead thereof, let us hold hard to God, and to His Word, for the glory of the truth of God, and for the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ!

But, I hear some self-satisfied people say, *"We* do not want this sermon this morning; *we* are not asleep. The members of this church are not a slothful people." Well, dear friends, I cheerfully admit that, as a body, we are not given to slumber, but I am not so sure that this is true of you all. At any rate, those who are awake will find it a good thing to have a jog, lest they should fall like Eutychus into a sleep. But I am sure that some of you *are* asleep, and I shall not hesitate to treat you as such! But you will reply to me, "Why, sir, we *talk* about religion." Many people talk in their sleep! I have heard of a man who preached an excellent sermon when he was asleep. "Well, but is not our *walk* consistent?" Yes, but when I was a small boy, I used to walk in my sleep, and then I could venture in my sleep where I would not have wandered when I was awake, and I would not wonder but this may be your case. "Yes, but do we not feel religious influences? Do we not *weep* under a sermon?" Yes, and I have heard people cry in their sleep! Such things are quite possible. "But do we not *rejoice* very much when we hear the gospel?" Yes, and some folks will laugh in their sleep! John Bunyan tells of Mercy, who laughed because of the beauty of her dream. And your dreams may be so pleasant that they make you laugh. "Ah, well," says one, "but I do not see that we are so very sound asleep, for we *think* a great deal about religion." Yes, and people think when they are asleep; for what are their dreams but unconnected thoughts? And so you may have some straying thoughts of God, and of right, and yet, after all, you may be fast asleep! "Then, what do you mean by a man's being really awake?" I mean two or three things. I mean, first, his having a thorough consciousness of the reality of spiritual things. When I speak of a wakeful man, I mean one who does not take the soul to be a fancy, nor heaven to be a fiction, nor hell to be a tale, but who acts among the sons of men as though these were the only substances, and all other things the shadows. I want men of stern resolution, for no Christian is awake unless he steadfastly determines to serve his God, come fair, and come foul! I would have you,

young Christians, dedicated to God's service! Just as Hamilcar led his two children to the altar, and made them swear by the gods that they would never cease their enmity to Rome while they lived; I want you to feel that the vows of God are upon you, so that you cannot cease from attacking sin, and winning souls as long as *you* live!

And I do not think you are awake, moreover, unless you are moved by a passionate earnestness to *win souls for Christ*. A man who labors and sees no success attending his efforts, may be awake if he mourns and groans, and sighs before God; but an idle preacher, a preacher without converts—a Sunday school teacher in whose class there is no conversion—a man who never saw a sinner brought to Christ by his means, and yet is happy and content—such a man is asleep! Let him take heed that he sleep not the sleep of death! I had sooner the Lord would send claps of thunder to this church, in the form of heavy trials and troubles—the removal of your pastor, the taking away of our best men, the riot of mobs, or the slander of the press—than that we should continue to multiply and increase, and should make this place a huge dormitory wherein we snored out God's praises in our sleep, instead of an armory where we sharpen our swords on the Sunday to go out the whole week long, contending for God, and for the good of men! Never may these benches be beds, or these seats couches for sluggards to recline upon! "What do you mean sleeper? Arise and call upon your God."

I have now said enough, I hope, to the slumbering Christians, only that there are some who are asleep who will not hear what I say. I do not mean that there are any in the congregation asleep with their eyes shut, but if they are asleep with their hearts, it is probable that what I say may do good to those who are awake. But those who are asleep, and given to slumber, will say, "A little more rest, and a little more folding of arms; we are saved ourselves, let us sleep on." May the Lord grant you a better mind, and compel you to act as holy gratitude and love demand of you!

II. Very solemnly and earnestly would I now address myself to SLUMBERING *SINNERS*.

What crowds are there, this morning, of these careless ones, who are at ease on the brink of ruin! Unconverted and yet unconcerned—exposed to the wrath of God but fearless—as though all were peace! They are on the edge of perdition, but merry as a marriage bell—condemned already—but mirthful as revelers at a feast!

Let me attempt to disturb your quiet, by remarking, *first,* that *your sleep is utterly incomprehensible to those who are awake!* Convicted souls, who feel the danger of their own state, cannot understand how you can be so careless. We were once as foolish as you are, but when we first began to perceive things in their true light, it was the wonder of

wonders to us how we could have been so much at ease in so perilous a position! The man who sports upon the gallows, or laughs when consuming in the fire, or jests with his head upon the block, is not more a marvel than you are!

You are a *sinner*—a sinner! You can hear that title applied to you without any sort of fear, whereas a sinner is a thing abhorred of God! The God who made you loathes you! The sinner is one whom God *must* smite; He bears with you long, but He *must* smite you soon; the sword may sleep in its scabbard, but it *must* leap forth to smite you even to the death. A *sinner!* Why, you are one whose life is a continued miracle, for the heavens would fall upon you, if long-suffering did not restrain them! The very stones of the field would smite you, if God did not bind them over to keep the peace; and the beasts of the field are in league against you, and would devour you, if He did not hold them in from you! Why, you are one who has no friends anywhere! You are a blot upon nature. You are a dishonor to creation. You are loathsome in yourself; you are contagious to others; you are grievous to the best of men; you are harmful even to the bad! You are a weed ripening for the burning, a pool of foul waters breeding a foul gas, a monster to be hunted out of the universe of God! You are a felon, a criminal, a traitor, a *sinner,* which is all these things in one, and yet, under such an accusation, you are at ease! Man, remember again, you are *a mortal!* Time eats away your life, and hurries you to your grave. The sun does not stand still for you—speeding on his everlasting course, day after day—he bears you to the tomb! Every tick of yonder clock sounds as the footfall of approaching Death; the rider upon the pale horse is pursuing you, his charger is foaming with speed! Perhaps you may never see another day; the light of 1863 may never shine into your eyes; or, if you should not yet expire, how short is the longest life! How certain is your death! A mortal man, and yet you sleep! Think, man, of that upper chamber where you shall play the leading part, pale and languid, stretched out upon the bed; the curtains shall be drawn about you, and every voice shall be hushed in sad anxiety; weeping relatives shall gaze upon your brow, clammy with the death-sweat, and life shall be a thing of seconds with you! Heavily heave the lungs, languidly beats the pulse; the awful moment is at hand. It is yourself, you strong man, grappling with a stronger than you are! Those are your *eyes* which shall be glazed in the darkness of death, and those are *your* limbs which shall be gathered up in the last mortal agony! And do you, knowing, feeling that you must die, and having the sentence of death in your members already—do you still sleep? Alas, alas! How dire the stupor which death cannot startle!

But, man, remember you are *an immortal,* and this makes it the more grievous that you should sleep. You shall not die when you die—you shall live again forever! Forever! Forever! Oh, eternity! Eternity! A deep without a bottom, and without a shore! My hearer, you must sail over it forever and forever never reaching a port—and that eternity will be to you, if unsaved, a sea of fire, lashed to eternal storm! Eternity, eternity—mountain without a summit! Up its sides you must climb, O sinner, and find it an ever-burning volcano! On, on, on, must you ascend, for summit there is none—forever! Forever! Forever! Forever! And yet, do you sleep on, sinner? What madness do I see in you? It is madness without method, insanity exaggerated, to despise the warnings of eternity! Remember, man, as you are immortal, there is a *heaven,* and dying, as you are living, you will lose it; for you no harps of angels, no songs of saints, no melodies of joy; for you no face of Christ to be seen with rapture, no embraces of the ever-loving husband! For you no sunshine of the Father's face, no ineffable bliss, no rivers of pleasure at His right hand. You are losing all these! Eternal and exceeding weights of glory you are spurning, and yet you sleep! O sleeper, what do you mean? If this bestirs you not, I would have you remember, man, as surely as you lose heaven, so certainly you are gaining *hell.* For you the flames that never can be quenched, the thirst without a drop of water; for you an angry God, a fiery law, a flaming Tophet; for you the company of blaspheming fiends, and despairing spirits; for you unutterable agony, "Where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." "What do you mean, sleeper," when this must be your doom if you sleep on? Were it not that we know that man is dead in trespasses and sins, this sleeping would be utterly incomprehensible to those who have once been awakened! I marvel that I can preach about these awful themes without an agony of earnestness! These are no trifles, no themes for an orator's idle hour, or a hearer's curious ear; these matters may well make both the ears of him who hears to tingle. O that they might make your hearts tremble before the Lord, that with contrition you might seek His face! Further would I press this matter home, but I am sure that *you* frivolous, thoughtless men and women *can give no justifiable cause for carelessness.* Sinner, why do you sleep? Perhaps you tell me you do not believe there is any danger. I reply to you, you *do* believe it, you know you do! I reason not with you if you pretend to be infidels. There is that in you which makes you know that there is a God, and that He must punish sin. You may boast that you have no fears of the hereafter, but when you are alone, or sick, or in your sober senses, you tremble at the Judgment to come. You *know* it, man, and at the bayonet point, I charge home upon you! O that I could carry your heart as readily as your conscience! You know that these things are

not fictions, nor falsehoods; if you should have some honest doubts, you have but to open your eyes to see, and use your common sense to be convinced. Do but listen to the utterances of your fellow sinners, as they have passed from time into eternity, and have felt the foretaste of eternal wrath, and surely you must confess that there is a God who visits transgression, and sin upon the ungodly! But, you will tell me, perhaps, there is time enough, and therefore, you may sleep. But there is no time, man; there is no time to spare! If I were in a fever, I would not say, "There is time enough to be healed," but I would say, "Let me be delivered from this consuming heat." If I stood just now upon the edge of a burning mountain, and felt the lava giving way beneath my feet, I would not say, "There is time enough yet," but I would long *now* to make my escape! Sinner, you stand today over the mouth of hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten! You are swinging over the jaws of perdition by a solitary rope, and the strands of that rope are snapping now. *Now! Now!* You are in danger! You may die this morning! Many places of worship have been made places of death. God save you that this may not happen to you, but still, this is your time of danger, and there is no time to spare!

Do you say, "Well, we may as well sleep, for *there's no hope for us."* No! Sinner, no! Blessed be God, you cannot say that! You who sit under my ministry constantly know I never taught you that! I never said of anyone of you that you could not be saved. I have not preached to you an impossible gospel! I have not shut the gates of mercy on mankind in proclaiming Christ! Have I not rather told you that, "He is willing to save unto the uttermost those who come to God by Him?" I have set the door open before you, and I have entreated you to come in; no, I have labored to *compel* you to come in that His house may be filled! And now, again, I utter the same message, "Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." Trust in Jesus! Trust in Jesus, and you shall be saved! Your despair is wicked, for it gives God the lie! Your despondency is sinful, for it doubts the truth of Him who cannot be false to Himself or to you! Sinner, trust Him, and you shall be saved this morning! God help you to throw yourself flat today upon the covenant promises of God in Christ, and trusting His precious blood, He will save you now, and save you forever! O why, why do you sleep? If you can cite no good cause, if you can offer no convincing reason, what do you mean, then, sleeper? Arise and call upon your God!

But soul, soul, we remind you yet again, as we cannot understand your sleep, and you can not justify it—we would solemnly beg you to consider that *your sleep will soon end in ruin!* Ah, there are some of you whose hearts I shall never reach; let me live as long as I may, I shall never see you saved! There are some of you—I have often made you weep,

but the Lord has not made you hate your sins; some of you love drunkenness, and though you leave it for a little season, yet all the entreaties of the minister, and all the pleadings of your conscience, cannot keep you from returning like a dog to his vomit, and like a sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire. Oh, my hearers, there are some of you—I have not quite despaired of you—but I tell you solemnly it has almost come to that! O that you would know, even now in this your day, the things which make for your peace! Oh, how I fear, and think I have just cause to fear, that there are some of you who will sit in this Tabernacle till you die, and you will go from this place to hell with my voice of entreaty ringing in your ears! I have prayed for you, and you are not saved. I have leveled sermons at you, and you have not been moved. I have preached plainly to your face against your iniquity, and laid your sins before your eyes, and you have not repented. I have held up my Master's bleeding body, and you have not been wooed to love; you have been convicted for a season, and you have hushed the voice of conscience; you have vowed, and you have broken your vows! You have turned again to your folly, and you are still what you were—senseless, apathetic, hardened—dead in sin! I shall not forever hammer at this granite! Not always shall the horses run upon the rock, nor shall we plow there with oxen, for God shall lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and *where are you then?* Oh, if we knew by express revelations, concerning any man here present that he would be one day in hell, if looking into his eyes we could read there, "That man will dwell forever in torments," should we not weep over him? Yet I fear there are such here. I fear—may God remove the fear by His grace—I fear there are such! "Lord, is it I?" Let each one say—"Lord, is it I?" Well, sinner, you shall go sleeping on; you will go home to your house today, and forget all that I have said. You will come again tonight, but the result will be the same. Like the door on its hinges, you will turn in and out without a change all your days. See man, you will listen to my voice; it will be to you as a pleasing song, but nothing more. You will be all your life as the deaf adder which cannot be charmed; you will now and then murmur in your sleep, "The preacher is too earnest, and makes too much noise about these melancholy matters," or "He is too prone to dwell on these hard threats." You will return to a deeper sleep, and so continue year by year! How do you approve of the prospect?

But stay, let me finish the story! One day there will run a rumor among us, "So-and-So, who sat in that pew, is dead." "Did he die in the Lord?" will be our solemn question. And the answer will be, "We fear not. He showed no signs of repentance or of faith in Christ." Ah, then, what must our conclusion be? Well sinner, well, do me this one favor. If you

will be damned, let me be clear of your blood! Do me but this one service—if you will perish, let it not be laid to the door of my unfaithfulness! If there is anyone here present, stranger or regular attendant, who will choose his own perdition, I charge you, pay some regard to my earnest protest, for I enter it now before the Lord! Be damned if you will, but do let me first of all stand before you and tell you what damnation means, and tell you that there is a way of salvation! Let me stretch out these hands again and plead with you that you would come to Christ, that you might live. "What do you mean sleeper? Arise, call upon your God," for it may soon be too late for you to arise! Soon, none will be able to warn you; soon, none will weep for you; soon, none will entreat you. When once the iron gates are shut, and the brazen bolts are drawn, all the friendship of earth or the fury of hell cannot unlock them! The awful gratings of those bolts that shut in souls forever in fell despair shall be always in your ears, covering you with hopeless dismay! Now, I pray you, while yet there is hope. "Awake! Arise, or be forever fallen!"

Lastly, I think I may call upon those present here, who know what it is to be fully awakened, to do their best to awaken others. We read in ancient history of the Sybarites, who were a people so given to slumber, that they killed their dogs lest their barking should awaken them. They would have no crowing of the cock to awake them at morn. There are some sinners who would desire to banish every warning friend and faithful minister far away from them. But I pray you, even though it should be unpleasant, do your best to keep your friends from ruin! We know that when persons are likely to perish through opiates, and they are falling to sleep, the physician does not hesitate to thrust pins into the flesh, or walk them up and down even though they cry and long to go to sleep. So with you, be not too careful about wounding the feelings or shocking the nerves if you may but win the soul! Better that you should get into discredit for being impertinent with your friends, than let their souls perish through your politeness! Be you not like Agag, who comes delicately, with "Surely the bitterness of death is past." Like the old Puritans, who availed themselves of every opportunity to rebuke sin and uphold righteousness, so be you instant in season and out of season! If you should save a soul through being too zealous, neither your Master nor the saved one will blame you for it, and at least, in heaven, it will never be a source of regret to you that you were too active and too diligent! You may have an opportunity today. Who can tell whether God may not bless you in it, if you use it? But I pray you, use it whether He blesses you or not, lest the neglect of that opportunity should leave blood upon your garments! By Him who bought you with His blood, live to His service! By Him who called you unto a holy calling, give yourselves wholly to the winning of

souls! By Him who from the beginning has chosen you unto salvation, live as the elect of God, having hearts of compassion! By your life for which you are responsible—by your death which may be so near—by Jesus whose face you hope to see—by hell into which lost souls are sinking—by heaven to which the penitent shall rise, which is your hope and your joy—proclaim the Word of God everywhere to men! Tell it; tell it till the skies shall echo it: *"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved."* "Cast your bread upon the waters"—labor, toil, seek, strive, agonize—and God give you His own blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT
NO. 470

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight."
Malachi 3:1.

THE LORD'S people delight in the everlasting covenant itself. It is an unfailing source of consolation to them as often as the Holy Spirit leads them to its green pastures, and makes them to lie down beside its still waters. They can sweetly sing of it from youth even to gray hairs, from childhood even to the tomb, for this theme is inexhaustible—

"Your covenant the last accent claims
Of this poor faltering tongue;
And that shall the first notes employ
Of my celestial song."

They delight to contemplate *the antiquity* of that covenant, remembering that before the daystar knew its place, or planets ran their round, the interests of the saints were made secure in Christ Jesus. It is peculiarly pleasing to them to remember *the sureness* of the covenant. They love to meditate upon "the sure mercies of David." They delight to celebrate the covenant in their songs of praise, as "signed and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well." It often makes their hearts dilate with joy to think of its *immutability* as a covenant which neither time nor eternity, life nor death, things present, nor things to come, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, shall ever be able to violate—a covenant as old as eternity, and as everlasting as the Rock of ages! They rejoice also to feast upon *the fullness* of this covenant, for they see in it all things provided for them—God is their portion, Christ their companion, the Spirit their Comforter, earth their lodge, and heaven their home! They see in it not only some things, but all things; not only a help to obtain some desirable possessions, but an inheritance reserved and entailed to every soul that has an interest in this ancient and eternal deed of gift. Their eyes sparkled when they saw it as a treasure-trove in the Bible; but O how their souls were gladdened when they saw in the last will and testament of their divine kinsman that it was bequeathed to them! More especially it is the pleasure of God's people to contemplate *the graciousness* of this cov-

enant. They see that the law was made void because it was a covenant of works and depended upon merit, but this they perceive to be enduring because divine grace is the basis, divine grace the condition, divine grace the strain, divine grace the bulwark, divine grace the foundation, divine grace the top stone! From the beginning even to the end, it is all of grace! They see that the covenant runs on this wise, not, "I will if you will," but "I will and you shall." Not, "I will reward if you deserve," but "I will forgive even if you sin." Not, "I will cleanse if you are clean," but, "I will cleanse if you are filthy." Not, "I will keep if you assist," but, "I will bring you back even if you are lost, I will surely save you and preserve you even to the end."

I know some Christians—bleary-eyed, like Leah—who cannot see afar off, and hence the councils of eternity they cannot behold; I know some believers of weak knees, and feeble joints who are afraid of that strong word, "covenant." But they who are men in Christ Jesus, who by reason of years have had their senses exercised, know that the covenant is a treasury of wealth, a granary of food, a fountain of life, a storehouse of salvation, a charter of peace, and a haven of joy! The everlasting covenant! Let my soul but anchor here, then howl, winds and roar, hurricanes! I will not fear. The everlasting covenant! Let my soul but cast its anchor here, and come life with all its tribulations, and death with all its pains and terrors, my soul laughs them all to scorn—

"The gospel bears my spirit up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope,
In oaths and promises and blood."

We advance a step further towards our text, and remark that the "messenger of the covenant" is a welcome ambassador to those who are interested in those exceedingly great and precious promises which pertain to life and godliness. But, waiving further preface, let us notice, first, *that we delight in the office of Christ as the messenger of the covenant.* Next*, that we delight in the way in which He fulfils that office*. And then, we shall conclude by noticing *some ways in which we show our delight*.

I. First, then, WE DELIGHT IN CHRIST IN HIS OFFICE OF MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.

What is that office? I shall need two or three words to explain it. When we read of Christ as messenger of the covenant, I think we may understand Him to be a *covenanted messenger*. Now, God has sent many messengers, whose words, when they have been spoken in His name, He has not allowed to fall to the ground. So far they were covenanted messengers; but these persons sometimes spoke of themselves, and then God had not bound Himself by promise to keep their words. Sometimes, even

like the apostle Paul, they would have to pause and say, "I think I have the Spirit of God," but they might not be certain. But Christ is a covenanted messenger. God has sworn to Him to do for us whatever He may promise to us, so that if we believe in God, we may believe also in Him, since He speaks for God, and His every Word is settled in heaven —

"Arrayed in mortal flesh
He like an angel stands,
And holds the promises
And pardons in His hands—
Commissioned from His Father's throne
To make His grace to mortals known."

Again, He is the covenanted messenger—on our behalf Christ swore to God to carry out that part of the covenant which was left for man, and so He stood as a covenanted messenger between God and man. The word "plenipotentiary" just hits my thought. You know kings sometimes send out ambassadors to try and negotiate peace, but they have limited powers. On other occasions ambassadors are sent with unlimited, unrestricted power, to make peace or not, and to make it just as they will. Now Christ comes as the covenanted Ambassador of God, as the plenipotentiary of heaven! Let Him do what He will, God is with Him! Let Him promise what He may, God ratifies it! Let Him speak what He will to our souls, His Word shall certainly be fulfilled! Now do you not rejoice in Christ in this office? He has said to us, "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Rest," says the eternal Father, as He confirms Jesus' Word. "Go in peace, your sins which are many are forgiven you." "They *are* forgiven you," says the court of heaven, "go in peace!" "He who believes on Me is not condemned," says Christ. And the Father says Himself, "He is not condemned." There is not a Word of the gospel which the Father has left unsanctioned! You need not, therefore, when you venture upon Christ's Word and Christ's merit, think you are resting on something which God will not accept. He is God's covenanted messenger. He is sworn to accept whom Christ accepts, and since Christ saves all that trust in Him, the Father accepts them likewise! He will certainly save all whom Christ has declared shall be saved.

This, however, does not exhaust the meaning. Christ is the messenger of the covenant, in the next place, *as the messenger of the Father to us*. Moses was messenger of the covenant of Works, and his face shone, for the ministration of death was glorious. But Christ is the messenger of the covenant of grace. O let His face shine in your esteem; saints of the Lord, the ministration of life must be more glorious, far! Christ comes to us to tell us all that God will tell. The revelation of God *is* Christ! If you would

know God, he who has seen Christ has seen the Father. God's *Word* is Jesus, He speaks fully by Him! Would you know the Father's decree? "I will declare the decree," says Christ. Would you know His character? See every attribute of God in the man, Christ. Would you know His designs? See the designs of God effected in the works of Jesus. Would you know in fact all that is knowable of God? Understand that you can see it, not in nature, nor in providence, but in Jesus—

"God in the person of His Son,
Has all His mightiest works outdone."

And will you not delight in Him as such—as God's messenger to you? If the very ministers of Christ are delightful to you, if their feet are beautiful upon the tops of the mountains when they bring glad tidings, how much more beautiful is He who comes from God to man, with messages of peace, declaring to us that God is reconciled to us, and accepts us in the beloved? Sing His praises, O you who have heard His voice! Glory in His holy name, O you who have received His report, unto whom the arm of the Lord has been revealed, for as God's messenger to you, you should delight in Him!

But then, He is, as the messenger of the covenant, *our messenger and mediator with the Father*. You need to tell your Father something—Jesus stands to carry the message for you! George Herbert, in one of his poems, pictures Christ as using the hole in His side as a bag to carry our letters to glory—

"If you have anything to send or write,
(I have no bag but here is room)
Unto My Father's hands and sight
(Believe Me) it shall safely come.
That I shall mind, what you impart;
Look, you may put it very near My heart."

In the wounds of Christ we put our messages to God, and they go up to heaven with something more added to them. The blots and blurs of our petition Christ wipes out, and then He savors our prayers, and incenses them by putting with them the costly mixture of His own precious righteousness. Look! In His golden censer yonder, smokes the incense of your prayers, accepted for the sake of the incense, and for the sake of Him who swings it to and fro as it smokes before the Most High! "The messenger of the covenant"—this name is peculiar to our Lord. Let not any man arrogate this office to himself, for it is Christ's, alone! God never did hear a message from man that He accepted, except through this messenger! I cannot get to God directly, I must have a mediator. Well said Luther, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God; for our God is a consuming fire." No sigh ever reached the Most High, except through Christ—I mean

so as to move His heart to pour out His grace. Prayers, groans, tears—all these are like arrows without a bow—till Christ comes and fits them to the string, and shoots them home for you and me! All our prayers are like a victim, with the wood and altar—Christ must bring the fire, and then the sacrifice smokes to heaven. He is the messenger! Oh Christian, do you not rejoice in Him then as the messenger of the covenant? He is doing your errands before the throne tonight, pleading for me, pleading for you. "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." You came to this house tonight, you offered prayer—Christ is offering it now, as an offering most divinely sweet! As you are sitting here, you are breathing a vow, or a desire to heaven. Christ presents it, for He stands at the golden altar, having a censer full of the prayers and vows of saints. Give Him an errand now. Try Him at this moment; entreat Him to plead on your behalf. Thus view Him; thus exercise your faith upon Him as the plenipotentiary from God to man, as the revealer of God to man, and as spokesman from man to God—

"Look up, my soul, with cheerful eyes,
See where the great Redeemer stands—
The glorious Advocate on high,
With precious incense in His hands!
He sweetens every humble groan,
He recommends each broken prayer;
Recline your hope on Him alone,
Whose power and love forbid despair."

II. But briefly on the second point. WE DELIGHT IN THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST HAS CARRIED OUT THIS OFFICE AS MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.

And here let us dwell on that part of the office which relates to *the revelation of God to man*. Oh, what a full messenger He has been! He has not dropped half the message; He has not told us a *part* of God, but all that His heavenly Father bade Him declare, He has revealed to us as we could bear it. And He has given us this day the Holy Spirit who leads us into all the truths of God, who shall take of the things of Christ which the Father gave Him, and reveal them unto us. What a full messenger and how faithful! Surely the Master could say, "I have kept back nothing that is profitable for you." With greater emphasis than ever Paul could say it, He might have declared, "I am clear from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." We poor messengers mar the Master's message in the telling of it, but "Never man spoke like this man." So full and faithful is He who speaks with Jehovah's bidding to His chosen people, that He can say, "All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you."

Then, *how willingly He does it!* "I delight to do Your will, O God." How sweet it seemed to Him to show God to us! Even His tears, though bitterly they flowed, were cheerfully bestowed; and His very death, though it was an awful Baptism, yet was one for which He longed! How was He straitened until it was accomplished! I hate a man to be a messenger who goes unwillingly, and who mumbles out the message as if he had no interest in it. But oh, our sweet Lord Jesus tells God's message to us as though He were more interested in it than we were! He tells it so lovingly, so affectionately, so tenderly, with all His heart, turning His soul out that we may see it, writing His very nature out in streams of blood, that we might see in crimson lines what otherwise we might not have been able to perceive. Oh, how much better than ministers, better than prophets, better than apostles, better than angels, Christ has performed the office of messenger from God! Solomon's proverb is all outdone in our Redeemer's case. "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them who send him: for he refreshes the soul of his masters."

Beloved, let us delight equally as much in *the way in which He has performed our message from ourselves to God.* Ah, I have been to my advocate a thousand times, but I never found Him a weary messenger! You have a servant, and you give him many things to do. But towards nightfall it may be that you give him one thing too many, and the poor man's weary feet and languid looks chide you when you give him the errand. But I have been to my Master, and so have you, in the dead of night and I never found Him asleep! I have been to Him in the heat of summer, but I never found Him point to His bloody sweat and say He could not go. I have been to Him a thousand times, and yet I have never, never heard Him say, "I have served you enough, I will not be your messenger again." But cheerfully, willingly, has He taken our request to God, again, and again, and again, and presented it there. And how full of sweet powers of memory and generous recollections He has been! We have often failed to tell Him the message aright, and sometimes there was a part of it that we could not tell Him—groaning that could not be uttered—but He read the message, and then told it perfectly out in the other place, within the veil, never forgetting one desire nor one faint wish; sometimes erasing one that was evil, and putting in another that was right—but He has never forgotten us! The blessed Master has a thousand souls to plead for—no, what if I say millions? But never has He forgotten one. The meanest lamb in His flock He has tended; the poorest subject in His dominions has been the object of His advocacy. And then, brothers and sisters, with what passionate love has He pleaded for us in heaven! Oh, you cannot conceive Him, for He is high above us, but if we could see Him tonight,

standing before the throne, we would say, "I never thought I had such an advocate as this!" Not with sighs and tears, for they are over now, but with authority He pleads, points to His wounded hands, and to His side, and urges the case of His people as though it were His own case, and so indeed, it is, for He may well say—

"I feel at My heart all your sighs and your groans,
For you are most near Me—My flesh and My bones."

Never such an advocate as this! Fathers might plead for sons, and a wife might throw herself on the ground to plead with a judge for her husband, but never such a pleader as this! You messenger of the covenant, none can plead as You do!

And then, dear friends, I think we ought to delight in Him, when we think how unflaggingly He perseveres in His intercession, though we are continually forgetful and ungrateful for His kindness. I am sure if we had a friend's cause to plead, and he were as unworthy and forgetful as we are, we would tell him to suit himself, and find some other advocate. But He, for Zion's sake, does not hold His peace, for Jerusalem's sake He does not rest. Going to and fro from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven, He speaks messages of love from God to our souls, bearing messages of pleading and of intercession from our souls to God. Take, beloved, a sweet delight in Jesus, for He does His errand well! He is a choice messenger, one among a thousand, yes, and the chief among ten thousand!

III. But time flies, and therefore we hurry onward to carry out our third proposal. HOW ARE WE TO SHOW THAT WE DO REALLY DELIGHT IN CHRIST? Well, there is one way of doing it, and that is by again *employing Him tonight*. You have been upon my errands so many times, my sweet Lord, that You shall even go again. I ask you, brothers and sisters, to let me speak to you a moment. I know you have some very heavy matters on your mind tonight, some very heavy trial awaits you tomorrow, and you have been troubled about it all the week. Do you delight in the messenger of the covenant? Ah, then send your Jesus with it as a message to the throne of God tonight. Say to Jesus, "I pray You tell the Father that one of His adopted who can say, 'Abba,' is in deep and sore trouble. Send from heaven and deliver me, and pluck me out of the deep waters." You will show your delight in Him by trusting Him in your great matters. Oh, but you mean to do it yourself? You have all your wits about you, and mean to get through it yourself, do you? You shall flounder in the mire! But give the matter up to *Him,* and let Him take it to your God, and see whether prayer does not more often prevail in trial than all the energies and wits of man! And sister over yonder, you have a secret, one you would not tell to me, no, nor to your dearest friend, but it

rankles and it makes your heart bleed in secret till sometimes you are weary of your life! Do you love the messenger of the covenant? Whisper into His ear what you can tell to none beside, and ask Him to speak for you to the king, to the captain of the host. Say unto Him, "Jesus, lover of my soul, I'll trust You with this most secret grief. That which no creature can meddle with, You shall know. Behold I bare the wound before Your tender eyes. Go, tell the Father that a child of His is weeping in secret, walking in darkness, and seeing no light." You will show your delight in Him by trusting Him now! Minister, send a messenger by Him tonight for your flock! Sunday school teacher, give Him a missive from your heart for your class! Mother, the messenger waits for you, ask Him to plead for your sons and daughters! Father, the messenger is ready to bear your wish to heaven! Tell Him you would have no greater joy than this, to see your children walk in the truth of God! Jesus, say to Your Father that *my* prayer tonight is that I would have this congregation saved. Oh speak, my Master! Bear the ponderous message! Ask that not one within these walls may perish! Lift up Your hands and plead for every man, woman, and child beneath this tabernacle's dome tonight, and ask that everyone may be a partaker of the divine grace that saves! I know that You will prevail if You will ask, for if You should ask *anything* of Your Father, He will do it for You. You have but to will it, and it is done! Behold, by faith I would lay hold upon the hem of Your garment, You great High Priest, the sweetly sounding bells of Your ephod I hear tonight; upon Your glittering breast-plate the eyes of my faith are fixed. Take my request, and plead it solemnly before the awful throne of heaven, and let the answer come to this entire multitude—an answer of grace and peace! Thus, my beloved, we must show our delight in Him—by bidding Him plead for us!

Leaving for a moment the thought of messenger, I want to add some other things, not quite, perhaps, in keeping with our text, but quite in harmony with our delight in Jesus. You are coming round the table, brothers and sisters, and you delight in Christ. Shall I tell you how it is that we show that we delight in Him?

One way is by *waiting* for Him. There is the wife at evening. It is past the proper hour for her husband to return. She goes to the window and looks out into the cold dark night, and then she goes back to the chair, and to the little one, and takes her needle and whiles away the time. But soon she is up again looking out of the window once more, and listening to every footstep in the street, or looking out from the open door. Why is not her spouse at home? How is it that he is away? She sits down again; she tries to ease her mind with household business, but every ticking of the clock, and every striking of the hour suggests to her, "Why is he so

long in coming?" Look, she is again drawing back the curtains and looking out into the black night for the hundredth time, longing for her husband, and why? Because she takes delight in him, and needs to see his face. So when Christians look out into the dark world and say, "When will He come?" And when they go to their labor, and say, "Why are His chariot wheels so long in coming?" And when they can cry with John, "Come quickly, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus," and are waiting for, and hasting unto the coming of the Son of man, then they prove that they have intense delight in Him! Do you show this, Christian? Are you waiting for Him? Are you getting ready for the time when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel, and the voice of God?—

"Come, my beloved, haste away,
Cut short the hours of Your delay—
Fly like a youthful hart or roe,
Over the hills where spices grow."

We prove our delight in Him in another way, by working for Him. There is a woman there; she is working hard at her embroidery needle; she is making a little coat; it is a linen ephod. I wonder why that woman smiles so, while she works with her needle? There, she must put it away, for there is other work to do. I wonder why the next day she goes to the drawer, so pleased to get that work out and continue it? I will tell you her name. Her name is Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, and she is making a little coat for her son, Samuel, whom she has left with Eli at the Tabernacle. Now you perceive why she is so pleased in making this ephod? Because she delights in Samuel! So I see the Sunday school teacher pleased to meet his children; I see the minister go to the pulpit with beaming eyes, and I see the Missionary leaving house and home, kindred and cherished associations, joyfully giving up everything for Christ, and I ask, why? Because he delights in Christ, and therefore he can work for Him! Is it so with you, friends? Are you working for Christ? Yes, I think you are, or else I fear you are not delighting in Him!

And then, another thing. I have seen the boy at school—I knew such a boy myself—and one day that child was at play, and merry was he at his games, but some lad ran across the ground and said, "Your father's come to see you," and he laid aside his playthings, and his games, and ran at once into his father's arms because he delighted in his parent! And I have seen the Christian when he is delighting in his God, when lecture, or prayer meeting night came, say, "Well, I will gladly lose a little of my business, that I may run into my Father's arms in the hour of worship." There has been a saint to be visited, or a sinner to be warned, and I have seen the lovers of Jesus leave their nets, that they may follow Christ, and

forsake the world, that they might serve Him! Beloved, if He were to come tonight and bid us choose whether we would be in heaven or here, I think we would not long delay, but say to Him, "You leave me no choice; to be with You is so much better than anything beside, that I embrace You now. Oh take me up to You!"

Further, we may show our delight in Christ by *searching after Him when we lose His presence*. There is the spouse in the Canticles. She is going about in the city in the dark night—"Have you seen Him whom my soul loves?" The watchmen meet her, and rudely pluck away her veil, and they smite her. Why is not that delicate woman at home at rest? See, she wanders on, cold and weary, with tears rolling down her cheeks, and hanging like pearls from her eyes. Why is this woman weeping and searching like that? The answer is—"Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where do You feed?" She has such a delight in Him that she will search a thousand nights! Yes, a believing soul would search hell through to find Christ, if He were to be found nowhere else! And I know what Rutherford said was no great exaggeration, when he said, "If there were 50 hells between my soul and Christ, and He bade me wade through them, and He would come and meet me, I would gladly dash through them all to reach His fond embrace." Jesus, our thirst for You is insatiable! We must have You, and thus we prove our delight in You.

Lastly, we may prove our delight in Christ by *being very happy, ourselves, and trying to make others partakers of our joy.* Do not go to the Lord's table tonight, if you can help it, burdened with your groans and moans. If you cannot come without bringing them, then come, come anyhow; but I would have you tonight, if you could, delight yourselves in the Lord! You are very poor. Ah, but you are very rich in Him! You are sick, you say. Yes, but remember what He suffered for you! Oh, but you are a sinner. Yes, but remember His precious blood! Fix your eyes on Him tonight, and on nothing else, and oh, be glad! Come to His table with delight! I often say I know the people who come here—our regular people who come here—because they have a way of walking, and a look on the Sunday that is different from most people that go to other places of worship. Other folks are so solemn, as if they were going to an execution! They look so grave, as if it were an awful work to serve God, as bad as going to prison, to attend a service, and as disagreeable as the stock, to stand up and praise the Lord! But I notice that you come here with joy, looking upon the Sunday as a joyous day, not a time to pull the blinds down, and shut out the light, but a day to feast yourselves in God! Now I think ordinance days are especially times of rejoicing. You and I have been all the week up to our elbows in work. By-and-by we shall

have to go back to that dingy workroom among those persecuting worldlings. Never mind—Lord make this as a sanctuary to us tonight! Shut us in, and shut the world out, and let us rejoice ourselves in our God—

"As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,
Such is a dying Christ to me!
And while He makes my soul His guest,
Your bosom, Lord, shall be my rest!
No beams of cedar, or of fir,
Can with Your courts on earth compare;
And here we wait, until Your love
Raise us to nobler seats above."

Beloved brothers and sisters, if you have this delight *tell it to others!* Do not be tongue-tied, and dumb, any of you. Speak out what God has done for you. Tell! Tell!—

"Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior you have found!"

If you should have any enjoyment tonight, let others partake of the honey which you have discovered. God help you thus to live to His praise!

I am about to retire a few moments, while our friends get to their seats for the communion. Before I retire, I have a message to tell from the messenger of the covenant. He is willing to take a message from any poor, troubled, sin-burdened, conscience-stricken sinner in this Tabernacle. Has any one of you a message for Him? The Lord Jesus Christ is willing to receive and stamp with His own blood-marked hands any earnest, heart-written message you are willing to send to God tonight! Is there anyone who has this to send—"God be merciful to me a sinner"? What? Not one of you? Is there not a heart here that would say, "Lord save or I perish"? Surely there are some! Breathe your desire out now silently. Jesus hears it—trust Him to carry it to God! Believe that His blood can cleanse you. Trust Him, trust His merits to clothe you. Trust especially His intercession to prevail for you as the messenger of the covenant! Do it, soul! "Oh but," you say, "my hands are black with sin." Never mind, He will touch them and make them clean! "Oh but I cannot pray." He can pray for you! "Oh but I cannot plead." He can plead in your place! Tell Him your needs! As Rowland Hill once did, so would I do with you; it is said that Rowland once had to put up in a village where there was no other house to put up at but a tavern. And having a pair of horses to feed, and going into the best room of the inn, he was considered to be a valuable guest for the night. So the host came in, and he said, "Glad to see you Mr. Hill." "I am going," was the reply, "to stay with you tonight. Will you let me have family prayer tonight in this house?" "I never had such a thing as family prayer here," said the landlord, "and I don't want to have it now." "Very well, then, just fetch my horses out. I can't stop in

a house where they won't pray to God. Take the horses out." Now being too good a guest to lose, the man thinks better of it, and promises to have family prayer. "Ah but," said Hill, "I'm not in the habit of conducting prayer in other people's houses; you must conduct it yourself." The man said he could not pray. "But you must," said Rowland Hill. "Oh but I never did pray," the man said. "Then, my dear man, you will begin tonight," was the answer!

The time came, and the family were on their knees, "Now," said Rowland Hill, "every man prays in his own house. You must offer prayer tonight." "I can't pray, I *can't,"* said the landlord. "What? Man, you have had all these mercies today, and are you so ungrateful that you cannot thank God for them? Besides, what a wicked sinner you have been. Can't you tell God what a sinner you've been and ask for pardon?" The man began to cry, "I can't pray, Mr. Hill, I can't, indeed I can't!" "Then tell the Lord, man, you can tell Him you can't pray," said Mr. Hill, "and ask Him to help you." Down went the poor landlord on his knees. "O Lord, I can't pray. I wish I could." "Ah, you have begun to pray," said Rowland Hill, "you have begun to pray, and you will never leave off. As soon as God has once set you to pray, faint though it is, you will never leave off! Now I'll pray for you." And so he did, and it was not long before the Lord was pleased, through that strange instrumentality, to break the landlord's hard heart, and to bring him to Christ!

Now I say, if any of you can't pray, tell the Lord you can't. Ask Him to help you to pray. Ask Him to show you your need to be saved. And if you can't pray, ask Him to give you everything that you need. Christ will *make* as well as *take* the message! He will put His own blood upon your prayer, and the Father will send down the Holy Spirit to you to give you more faith and more trust in Christ!

May the Lord send you away with His blessing tonight. Amen.

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"ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED"
NO. 471

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 21, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He has made us accepted in the beloved."
Ephesians 1:6.

"THE beloved!" This was a golden name which the ancient Church, in her most joyous moments, was known to give to the Anointed of the Lord. When the time of the singing of birds was come, and the voice of the turtle was heard in her land, *her* love note was sweeter than either bird or turtle, as she sung, "My beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies." Ever in her song of songs does she call Him by that delightful name, "My beloved!" Even in the long winter, when idolatry had withered the garden of the Lord, her prophets found space to cease from uttering the thunders of judgment, to lay aside the burden of the Lord for a little season, and to say, as Isaiah did, "Now will I sing to my Well-beloved a song of my beloved touching His vineyard." Though the saints had never seen His face, though as yet He was not made flesh, nor had dwelt among us, nor had man beheld His glory—the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of divine grace and truth, yet, He was the consolation of Israel, the hope and joy of all the chosen, the beloved of all those who were upright before the Most high! Brothers and sisters, in the summer days of the Church, let us not fail to call Christ our Beloved! Both in our prayers, and public songs, and in those nearer and dearer approaches which we make to Him in private—when we may use more tender epithets than we would venture to do in a mixed assembly, we are likely to speak of Christ as the best Beloved of our soul—and to feel that He is to us very precious, the "chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." So true is it that the Church loves Christ, and claims Him as her beloved, that the apostle dares to defy the whole universe to separate her from the love of Christ, and declares that neither persecutions, distress, affliction, peril, or the sword, have been able to do it. No, he joyously boasts, "In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who has loved us." And he concludes his bold utterance by declaring that he is persuaded that "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." We think we should not be trespassing into the realms of imagination if we ventured to say that Christ is also the beloved of the angels! To Him, cherubim and seraphim continually cry, for in that thrice-repeated strain, there is a word for the second person of the Trinity, as well as for the first and the third—"Holy, *holy*, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." And, certainly, the blood-bought call Him their beloved, for their incessant strain is, "Unto

Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever."

Yet, my dear friends the main reason why Christ is thus styled by the Holy Spirit, "the beloved," doubtless is because He is the beloved of the Father's heart. "This," said the mysterious voice from heaven in the midst of the waters of Jordan, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased." And again, at the resurrection of Lazarus, there came the same voice from heaven, announcing the everlasting nature of the Father's love! None of us can tell how dear Jesus must be to His Father. We have, however, abundant proofs of the fact that He is very near unto Him, for He is privy to all His Father's counsels. From the counsels of the Most high, Christ was never absent. "When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, was I brought forth: while as yet He had not made the earth, the fields, or the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His command: when He appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." "Let us make man," said God, "in our own image"—calling Christ into creation's work! "Without Him was not anything made that was made," is the declaration of John the divine. Besides this, we know that everything which is done of the Father, by His divine decree, is that He may glorify His Son; while, on the other hand, the Son lived and died, and lives again that He may glorify the Father! Such is their mutual interest in one another, that we cannot suppose a relationship closer, nor a love more intense than that which exists between the Father and the Son. It would be foolish and ridiculous of me to attempt to dive into the awful depths of the divine unity. We know that the Father is one with the Son, and that Jesus is one with Jehovah. The unity of essence is a well so deep, that I cannot expect to find its bottom! And the love which springs up from this essential Unity must be more deep and profound than the wit of man can guess, or than the language of man can utter. I repeat the confession of our ignorance—it is impossible for us to form even a *guess* of the intensity of the affection that must exist between the eternal Father and Jesus Christ, His Son—since their essential union, from which this affection springs, is a doctrine beyond our comprehension—and is meekly to be received of our faith. Certainly we know that never was the term "beloved" so full of meaning! Never did human words become as divinely rich as when God Himself, by the Holy Spirit, applied it to Jesus, *the beloved* of the Father.

No more, however, concerning this word, "the beloved," except that I trust there are many of us here who can thus salute our covenant Head. Yes, He is very dear to us. We love Him because He first loved us. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and it has kindled in our poor souls an undying flame, which neither life nor death shall quench, but which shall burn brighter and brighter till it consumes flesh and self, and we shall be all on flame with love for Christ!

Now, dear friends, having thus brought forward the title of Christ, I shall, in dependence upon the Eternal Spirit, call your attention, first of all, to the words, *"in the beloved,"* or *positive union.* Secondly, to the words, *"accepted in the beloved,"* or *glorious condition;* and then, to the whole text, *"He has made us accepted in the beloved,"* or *divine operation.*

I. First then, here is a matter most worthy of your best and most profound thoughts—"IN THE BELOVED," or POSITIVE UNION.

A thousand sermons would never exhaust the theme of the union of the Church with Christ. No theology is sound which does not recognize this; no experience can be very profound which does not lead the soul more clearly and more fully to rejoice in this most glorious truth of God! Probably, it is a doctrine more suitable to advanced Christians than to young believers; but where the Lord enables the heart to feed upon it, it will be found to be food at once nourishing, delicious, satisfying, and strengthening! They who feed upon it will be found like Daniel and his companions, to be fairer in countenance, and fatter in flesh than any others!

1. In explaining this positive union, let us begin by saying, *"in Christ"*—that is, *in His heart,* and in His heart from all eternity. With prophetic eye, Christ beheld His people before they were yet formed. He looked forward through eternity and the rolling years of time, and He foresaw that God would make man, and that man in Adam would fall, and be ruined. His eyes looked over all the sons of Adam, and selected those whom He saw fit according to the counsel of His will—and these, at once, were put into His heart to be His darlings, His favorites forever and ever! It was not in time that Christ first wrote the names of His people upon His heart—it was a *time before all times,* when there was no day, but the ancient of days; when creation's first year had not commenced; when all things slept in the mind of God as a thought, but had not come forth from His hands as a deed! We look upon the rocks with their long deposits of sand and shells—we go deeper down and see the long ages that must have passed while the stony strata were being formed. We wonder at the period that the aqueous and igneous rocks must have occupied in their formation; and sometimes, we are staggered at the thought of what a great thing time is. We find we cannot grasp the idea of, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." It is so far back that the wings of our imagination flag before they reach it as a resting place! But, there was an eternity before all this; and all these ages are but as the drop in a bucket compared with the deep and bottomless sea of the eternity of God! Yet, when we fly back into the dread eternity, where thought is lost, and mind fails, we discover, in the breast of Christ, eternal thoughts of love towards His children. Is it not a joy that can make your spirits dance, like David before the ark, that we were always Jesus' beloved ones, always in the heart of Him whose heart was afterwards, in the fullness of time, pierced for us? Has He not said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you"? "As the Father has loved Me, even so have I loved you"? That is, without beginning—ever since there was a Father and a Christ!

It would be blasphemy to suppose that God's love to Jesus was not always existent, or that Christ had a beginning in the Father's affections.

Even from that time, Jesus had chosen His people, and they were in His heart. Beloved, as they *were* in His heart, so they have been in His heart ever since! When they fell *in* Adam, they did not fall *out of* Christ! When they lived in this world a life of iniquity, yet still, there was His great love with which He loved them, even when they were dead in trespasses and sins! When they scorned His grace, defied His love, trampled on His cross, and despised His blood, yet still, never from His heart were they erased, for they had been engraved there too deeply by the nails for sin to destroy the remembrance! And now, today, now that we are continually backsliding, nothing has been as yet able to tear us from His heart. We are there, and we shall be there, in death's dark gloom, and in eternity's mysterious splendor—still near to Jesus, for is it not written—"He hates putting away"? "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." So, then, beloved, we are in Christ in the sense that we are in Christ's heart, and we always were so if we are His people!

2. But, secondly, we are also *in Christ's book*. Having loved us, we were chosen in Him and elected by His Father. We were not chosen separately and distinctly, and as individuals alone and apart—we were chosen *in Christ*. As Watts well puts it—

"Christ, is My first elect, He said;
Then chose our souls in Christ, our head."

By Christ's love, we were one with Him. The Father's election chose the whole Christ, both the head and the members, too. Christ can well say, "In Your book all My members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." We all know that Christ is elect and precious. God singled out the humanity of Christ from many thousands of forms that He might have created. He ordained that the seed of the woman—the child that was born in Bethlehem, and laid in the manger—should become the Body and the human soul which should be taken into union with divinity. Here was election; and as Christ was thus chosen both in the divine and human natures, so are all His people chosen—chosen in Him. Blessed fact! The same register which includes Christ as first-born includes all the brothers and sisters! And until the flames of hell can consume the record which certifies Christ as the Son of God, our sonship in Christ towards God must remain safe from all the attacks of satanic craft. Disprove Christ's Sonship, and you disprove ours! Prove the union of Christ with God as His Son; and since Christ's people are in Him, you prove their sonship, too! Look down the red roll which God wrote with His eternal finger, according to the counsel of His will, and you see the names of all who will enter into eternal life! They are all there secure, because the first one is secure; and until the pen of hell can run through the first one in the catalog, it shall never be able to run through any of the others—for there stand the names of all the elect, covered, protected, and defended, by the name of Christ, which stands at the head. We are in that book which is sealed with seven seals, which none but the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to open!

3. Thirdly, we are *in Christ's hands*. We are in Christ's heart as our heavenly lover. We are in Christ's book as the medium of our election. We are in Christ's hands as our surety. You will remember, beloved, that when Laban gave up his flock to Jacob, Jacob took them upon the condi-

tion of suretyship. Jacob said unto Laban, "That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto you; I bore the loss of it; of my hands did you require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night." Now, all those who the Father gave to Christ were bestowed upon Christ as surety, and at the last great day, at the Redeemer's hands will God require the souls of all that were given to Him! He is the great Shepherd of the sheep, responsible as the Mediator, responsible to Him who possesses all. Sponsor for His people, surety for all the chosen, He stands at this hour before the eternal throne. And do you think, beloved, He will lose us? Never! He has made us the choicest objects of His care. Shall His eyes sleep? Shall His heart forget? Shall His hands grow weary? Shall He lose the force and strength which anciently He possessed? He has sworn by Himself that He will bring us safely to the Father—will He be defeated? He has said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hands." And shall the infernal lion rend that which He has deigned to keep? What? Shall He put His hands upon His people and shelter them there, and clutch them as the choicest treasure and the rarest jewel that He ever had, and shall death or hell unlock His fingers or wrench His chosen from His mighty grasp? Who shall defeat Omnipotence, or pluck the sinner from the Almighty grasp? Rejoice, believers, you are saved just because you are in the hands of Christ! I marvel at those who try to slip from that text, "None shall pluck them out of My hand," and think that souls can be lost after that—for the text does not admit of any other meaning than their safety! "They shall never perish," and "I give unto them *eternal life,"* are plain, literal, positive statements, which none can misunderstand. Happy are the men who are thus *in Christ!*

4. But, fourthly, we are *in Christ's loins*. This may convey a thought somewhat different from being in Christ's hands. We were all of us in the loins of Adam, and have all sprung from him by natural generation. Adam was our federal head. All his acts were *representative* acts. While he was obedient, we were obedient in him; had he continued obedient, we, his descendants, would have been partakers of the privileges which accrue to obedience. Adam offended; we offended in him. Being the inheritors of his nature, we have partaken of his original corruption; and being moreover in him, as our representative, we became partakers of his condemnation. In Adam all die! "By the offense of one man, condemnation came upon all men." As being, then, in the loins of Adam, we fell—and we would have fallen into everlasting hell, if we, as God's chosen, had not been also in the loins of Christ. But all the chosen were in the loins of Christ from all eternity, so that what was done, He did for them! When He obeyed the law and made it honorable, they are regarded before God as having kept the law, and having honored it in every jot and tittle. When He did hang upon the cross, the chosen, who were in Him, were virtually suffering the wrath of God. Justice looks upon the chosen as though they themselves had suffered all that Christ suffered, as though they had drunk the wormwood and the gall, and had descended into the lowest depths! When He was buried, we were buried with Him; for we are dead with Christ unto the world, and buried in baptism with Him unto death. When Christ ascended from the tomb, we rose in Him; He rose

again, not as a private individual, but for our justification! Virtually every elect soul rose from the eternal death of its deserved perdition in the day when Christ startled the keepers, and rolled away the stone! And when Christ ascended up on high, we ascended in Him. Up with Him, we entered into the spheres; and with Him, today; we are risen in Christ, and made with Him to sit in heavenly places, even in Christ Jesus! Today, beloved, the language of the psalmist is truer than he thought concerning man, "You made Him to have dominion over the works of Your hands, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the seas." We see not all things yet put under man on earth, but we see Jesus, who as the representative man sits in heaven, triumphant over all things, having all things put forever under His feet; and representatively under our feet, too, since we are in Christ! Just as the apostle Paul argues concerning Levi, that Levi is inferior to Christ, for, he says, Abraham was less than Melchisedek, for without doubt the less is blessed of the greater, so also Levi was less than Melchisedek, for he was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedek met him. So beloved, as Levi was in the loins of Abraham, who paid tithes to Melchisedek, so we were in the loins of Christ and paid the debt due to divine justice, gave to the law its fulfillment, and to wrath its satisfaction! In the loins of Christ, we have already passed through the tomb, and have entered into that which is within the veil, and are made to sit down in heavenly places, even in Him. This day, the chosen of God are one with Christ and in the loins of Christ!

5. As we are in the heart of Christ, in the book of Christ, in the hands of Christ, and in the loins of Christ, there is yet another thought still dearer and sweeter! We are *in the person of Christ*, for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. When the Spirit of God comes into the sinner and convicts him of sin, that sinner is led to look to Christ, only, for his salvation. Christ then becomes unto him the Way and the life. By the mysterious operations of the quickening Spirit, the sinner begins to live a spiritual life. Now, in the moment when the spiritual life was first given, there commenced in that soul a vital and personal union with the person of Christ Jesus. There had always been in that soul a secret mystical union *in the divine purpose;* but now, there comes to be a union *in effect,* and the soul is in Christ from that hour, in a sense in which it never was before. Oh, do you understand what it is to be vitally in Christ? Beloved, no explanations can set this forth! "The natural man discerns not the things which are of the Spirit of God." These are things which must be known experientially by each man for himself. Have you felt a life in you that is far superior to the vital principle which you inherit from your parents? Have you known that regeneration has given you another existence which generation did not confer upon you? Have you felt principles alive within which no education could have developed, and which no persuasion could have implanted? Have you within you the living and incorruptible seed of God, which abides forever? Have you been made partakers of the divine nature, having "escaped that corruption which is in the world through lust"? Have you been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? If so, the life in you is Christ in you, the hope of

glory; and your life is sustained by the fact that you are one with Christ. Suck the nourishment of your life from Him just as the branch draws from the trunk the sap whereby it is invigorated and made to live—

"I can do nothing without Thee,
My strength is wholly Thine.
Withered and barren should I be
If severed from the vine."

I trust, brethren, that we are in union with Christ, not in theory, but in fact—not as a matter of doctrine, but as a matter of experience, till we can say, "Christ is in me, and I am in Him; the life that I live in the flesh is no more I, but Christ who lives in me."

"In the beloved," then, is a thought which is not very easy for us to bring out in so short a space of time. Now, I want to put you to the test, this morning, by appealing to you all whether you know anything about this. A great many will say, "Well, it is a very odd thing, we do not understand it." Take heed to yourselves, then; deal honestly with your spirits; inasmuch as you do not know what it is to be in Christ, then you are without Christ! And then, you are without hope, and there remains nothing for you but a fearful looking for judgment, and of fiery indignation. No man out of Christ can be saved! In Christ, the branch lives; but divided from Christ, men gather up the useless branches and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. Come, now, I want to try you! The first question I ask you, to ascertain whether you are in Christ, is this—is He all your *dependence?* For the union of the saint with Christ is set forth by the union of the stone with the building. Now, the stone in the building lies upon the foundation; there it rests and abides, being cemented fast to it. Do you rest upon Christ? I ask you, is He all your trust? There is a blessed text in one of the prophets, "I will fasten him as a peg in a sure place, and they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, as well the cups as the flagons, they shall all hang on him." Do you so hang on Him? Can you feel today that, without a falsehood, all your trust on Him is set, that you bring from Him all your standing, all your confidence, all your peace? If so, let us hope that your union is a true one. And if it is so, then, as I have sometimes seen stones in the old walls of Roman castles which could scarcely have been separated from the fabric, even by gunpowder itself, without the blasting of the fabric, too; so is it with you, unless the foundations can be removed, you cannot be moved, for if you depend on Him by a living faith, you are so a part of Christ that the living stone has grown into the living foundation, and separated from Him, you never can be in time or in eternity! I have another question. If you are today in Christ, then do you bring forth some *fruit* unto Him; for Christians are represented as being in Christ, as the branch is in the vine. "Every branch in Me," said Christ, "that bears fruit, He purges it that it may bring forth more fruit." What do you say? What are your fruits? Is there humility of mind? Holiness? Do you seek to walk like Jesus did? My dear hearers, this is a very sharp question to put to you, but I put it to each of you personally, for by your works you must be judged at the last great day. His servants you are, whom you obey; if you give yourselves up to the pleasures of this world, to the lusts of the flesh, to your own selfishness—then, you are the servants of sin. "Be not de-

ceived, God is not mocked." "Whatever a man sows that shall he also reap." Do you of the Spirit bring forth fruits of the Spirit? Do you walk and act as the elect of God, putting on a heart of mercy and compassion? Have you a single eye to Christ's glory, and do you live to His service? If so, then thanks to God, no pruning knife shall cut away the branch that brings forth fruit! It is the branch which brings forth no fruit, which is not vitally in Christ that is to be severed, cast away! But if you are in Him so as to bring forth fruit unto Him, then fruit to eternal life shall you bear evermore!

Another question—do you *love* Christ? Does your heart go out after Him? Do you pant to be in His arms? Is His company your heaven? Is His absence your hell? Remember, another figure which is used, is the union of the husband with the wife. Marriages that are made in heaven are cemented not by gold or beauty, but by love. In Christ, there is an infinite love towards His people, insomuch that He left His Father and did cleave unto His wife, and they two became one flesh. "This is a great mystery," said Paul, when he spoke concerning Christ and His Church. Are you wedded to Him by an affection which no time can alter except it is to deepen it? Are there ties which bind your heart to Him which torture and racks cannot separate? If there are, then you are married to one who will never put you away, one who will never leave you a widow, for your Maker is your husband, and He loves faithfully. He is one who calls you His Hephzibah, His soul delights in you! And your land, He calls Beulah, for He has married it. Is there such a union? Are you thus in Christ? Then a last question and I will leave this point. Is there a *life* in you? Is Christ the life of your spirit? If you tell me you have nothing more in you than what nature gave you, then, you are in nature's death! There is a supernatural life which is imparted by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we read in Scripture that believers are one with Christ as the members are one with the head. They are one in living union. If you cut away the head, the whole dies. Yes, and mark you, the head dies, too. So Christ is one with us if we are really His. Because He lives, we shall live also; if we die, Christ dies, and if Christ lives, we live! And since He ever lives to make intercession for us, our eternal life is sure! But, oh, we must have this life! "Except a man eats My flesh," says He, "and drinks My blood, there is no life in him," as if there could not be spiritual life till Christ Himself were there, and Christ not there without becoming life to our souls.

II. I now turn very briefly to our second point. The text tells us we are "ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED."

To be brief and yet explicit, let me notice that I think the acceptance here meant, includes first of all, *justification before God.* We stand on trial. When we stand in Christ, we are acquitted; while standing in ourselves, the only verdict must be condemnation! The term "acceptance," in the Greek, means more than that. It signifies that we are the objects of *divine satisfaction.* When God looked upon the world of old, He said it was "Very good"—and when the Lord looks upon His people in Christ, He says the same. But, I think if there could be anything better than "Very good," He would say His people in Christ were better than the work of His own hands, since they wear not a created righteousness, but the right-

eousness of the Creator, Jesus Christ Himself! They are, then, accepted by His justice, and they are viewed with satisfaction by His holiness. But this is not all. When it is written, "Accepted in the beloved," it means that those accepted are the objects of the *divine delight*. Friends, whenever I get to this thought, (and many a time in this house of prayer I have got to it), I always feel inclined to sit down and let you think it over, for it is such an extravaganza of divine grace that we—worms, mortals, sinners—should be the objects of divine love! When princes wed with beggars, the world marvels; but when God sets His affections upon sinful men and women in Christ, oh, this is the wonder of wonders! Even the angels might desire to look into it! I believe that when we have been in heaven 10,000 years, this will still be a subject of rapture and surprise—that He should ever have found anything in us in which He could take delight! To pity us, to show mercy to us—that I can understand. But to *love* us! The big heart of God to love a creeping thing like man! The infinite soul of the Most high to pour itself out on such a mean, worthless creature as man! The everlasting God who fills all in all—to concentrate as it were, the powers of His Spirit, and set the whole upon a creature that His own hands have made—a creature that had revolted and rebelled, and at the best is still worthless! Oh, sing of this, you spirits before the throne; we cannot speak of it today as we should. All this is, "in the beloved." We are not accepted any way else but, "in the beloved." Let me show you that this is the best way in the world to be accepted. Each of us knows it is the only way; but even if there were another, it is the best way. Suppose we could be accepted in ourselves. Adam was, while he was obedient—he was accepted in his own works. Yes, but how soon he fell! And then, his acceptance fell, too. He stood on his own feet, and therefore, he soon fell to the ground. Suppose you and I had kept the law up till now. I think I hear you say, "Oh, I wish I had! I wish I could come before God as a perfectly righteous man." O soul! You would not be half as safe as you are now in Christ! But if I had no sin, yet I would ask that I might be in Christ—for I might have sin some day—and then down would go the goodly structure! That which is built upon a fallible creature is built upon the sand; and if the structure had up to now been without one rotten timber, yet, since the basis is the will of man—and that might change—damnation might shortly overtake us. After all, we had done better, surely, to stand in Christ, who cannot fall. Now, I know some professors who seem to me to stand in their own experience, to be accepted in their own experience. At least, that is their apprehension. Just now, they had such visits from Christ's faith, such gleams of His love; and now, they think God accepts them, for they feel so high, so heavenly-minded, so drawn above the earth! I have seen these same persons, the next day, feel their souls cleave to the earth, and they have said, "Now, I am not accepted." O that these beloved ones would but know that God never did accept them in *their* experience—He accepted them in Christ! And He can never reject them till He rejects them in Christ, which cannot be, since He cannot reject Christ! I would that they would see that their "ups" make them no higher before God, and their "downs" make them no lower—that all their high joys do not exalt them, and all their low despondencies do not really depress them in their Father's sight. They stand accepted in one

who never changes, in one who is always the beloved of God, always perfect, always complete, always without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing! Blessed faith, that walks above experience! Joyous trust that, in the dark nights, still sings of heaven's unclouded noon, and in the midst of blackness and vileness consciously felt, still boasts of pardon bought with blood, of righteousness complete and without flaw!

The Arminians say our being accepted before God, if I understand it correctly, is also an acceptance in *our* graces. This is the English of their doctrine of falling away—while a man walks worthily, God accepts him; if he walks sinfully, then God accepts him no more. Those of you who like this way of being accepted, may choose it! For my part, I feel there is nothing can ever satisfy the craving of my spirit but an acceptance which lies utterly and wholly *out of me* and only and entirely in *Christ Jesus!* Why, brothers and sisters, we would be accepted one day and rejected the next! No, more—we might be accepted one *minute* and rejected the next! If it lay in anything whatever in *our* walk, or in *our* work, we would be in the covenant and out of the covenant 50 times a day. But I suppose the Arminians have a difference between sin and sin. Surely, they must have the old Romish distinction between venial and mortal sin; for if sin puts a man out of Christ, I wonder when he is in—since we are sinning day by day! Perhaps there is a certain quantity of sin required to do it; then that is only the old Romish dogma revived; some sins, mortal on the Arminian theory, so as to put a man out of divine grace, and other sins venial, so that they can keep in grace and sin, too! I glory in my God that I know—

"Once in Christ in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever."

If my good works had put me into Christ, then my bad works might turn me out of Him; but since He put me in when I was a sinner, vile and worthless—He will never take me out, though I am still a vile and worthless sinner —

"Unchangeable His will,
Though dark may be my frame;
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same—
My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."

Now, Christian, I want you this morning, to rejoice in this—you are accepted "in the beloved." You look within, and you say, "There is nothing acceptable here!" man, look at Christ, and see if there is not *everything* acceptable *there!* Your frame depresses you; but look to Jesus and hear Him cry, "It is finished!" Will not that death-note reassure you? Your sins trouble you, but remember, they were laid upon the scapegoat's head of old, and they no more exist, for He has cast your sins behind His back, and thrown them into the depths of the sea—

"In your surety you are free! His dear blood was shed for thee!
With your Savior's garments on, holy as the Holy One."

While you have still to bear groans, and doubts, and fears, to fight with corruption, and to wrestle with temptation, you are *still* accepted in the beloved! You are never accepted in yourself—you are but a condemned

sinner in yourself; you are never anything but accursed, both of God and of the law, out of Jesus! But in Christ, you are never accursed; in Christ, never condemned; for he who believes in Him is not condemned, and he who believes not is condemned already, because he believes not on the Son of God! "Accepted in the beloved!" This sentence seems to me to be such a mouthful; it is a dainty all your own. Let it lie in your mouth like a wafer made with honey! "Accepted in the beloved!" How I pity you who cannot say this. How I rejoice with you who can! You have troubles, you say—what are your troubles? You are accepted in the beloved! You tell me you have to fight with flesh and blood—what of it—as long as you are accepted in the beloved? But you are so poor, you say, and you have to go home to a miserable meal today—but then, how rich you are—you are accepted in the beloved! The devil is tempting you—never mind, he cannot destroy you, for you are accepted in the beloved! Even the glorified souls are no more accepted than we are! They are only accepted in heaven in the beloved, but so are we! I have often thought that if the children of God could fall from grace on earth, they could certainly fall from glory in heaven. What is there that keeps them holy in heaven? Is it their own will? If so, the heavenly saints may become hellish fiends! Brothers and sisters, it is *Christ* who keeps them! They are in Christ, therefore, they cannot fall—so are we in Christ—therefore, shall we never fail nor fall away, but unto the end shall we endure.

III. Now, one minute upon the last point. That is, DIVINE OPERATIONS. *"He has made us* accepted in the beloved."

Do not you see, beloved, the whole way through, it is *all* of God and not of man? It was Christ who at first put us in His heart to be accepted there. It was the Father who put us in His book, according to the good pleasure of His own will to be accepted there. It was Christ who took us into His hands, according to His suretyship engagement, that we might be accepted there. It is Christ who took us into His loins, begetting us again unto a lively hope that we might be accepted there. And it is grace that has united us with the person of Christ that we may stand accepted there. You see, it is all of God from first to last! Jonah learned sound divinity when he went into the whale's belly, for he said, "salvation is of the Lord." And before the throne of God in heaven, they always sing sound theology, for a part of the song is, "salvation unto God and unto the Lamb." Not *of* man, neither *by* man—not of the will of man, nor blood, nor birth; but according to the counsel of Him who works all things according to the good pleasure of His will! Sinner, does that suit you? You who are not in Christ in your own experience, does that suit you? It ought to. If you had to put yourself into Christ, you could not do it! Men and women, if God asked anything of you to qualify you for Christ, you could not do it! But He asks nothing of you whatever. His mercy comes to you, not when you have made yourselves alive, but while you are yet dead! It comes to you, not merely when you seek it, but it first *seeks you* and then makes you seek it—

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee—
Your grace is most sovereign, most rich and most free."

This is the good point about it, that it is most free. And this is the gospel I am sent to preach to you, this morning—"He who believes on the

Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life." Sinner, if you trust in Christ, this morning, that act of faith shall be a point of union between you and Christ, and you shall be vitally in Him! Trust Christ, then, soul! "Well," you say, "I have nothing; I have no reason to be satisfied, for I have no good works; but here, evidently, is a plan of salvation that does not need anything from me. I accept it." Say in your heart, this morning, "If the Lord had asked any doings, or willings, or feelings of me, in order that I might be in Christ, such a lost soul as I am, I could do none of these things; but when He tells me to believe in Christ, my soul perceives that He is able to save, and I know Christ is willing, and therefore, I will trust Him this day." Soul, if you have done this, you are in Christ! You are accepted in the beloved this morning! There may be a man that came in here a drunk, or a thief that may yet go out of this place accepted in the beloved! There may have come in here a woman of evil name, but if she believes in Christ, she shall go out accepted in the beloved! She came in here condemned in her own conscience; she shall go out justified, if she believes in Christ! If you can see Christ die and trust Him, and if you can see Christ risen and trust Him; if you can see Him pleading and can trust Him, then, you are one with Him—God has made you accepted in the beloved! Oh, precious salvation that comes all the way to where you are! Let you be where you may, so long as you are not in torments and not in hell, this salvation comes to your door. God give you grace to lay hold of it now, or rather, that it may lay hold of you—and then, you may say—

"I do believe, I will believe
That Jesus died for me!
That on the cross He shed His blood
From sin to set me free."

And if you believe in Him, by His grace, your eternal life is sure, because you are one in Him, and "accepted in the beloved."

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BELIEVERS—LIGHTS IN THE WORLD
NO. 472

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 28, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Do all things without murmurings and disputing, that you may be blameless and harmless, children of God, without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world; holding fast the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain or labored in vain."
Philippians 2:14-16.

WE shall be very far from the truth if we suppose that Christian precepts have suffered any degeneration of meaning. If we imagine that the precepts of the gospel were sterner in apostolic times than in these later ages, we labor under a very gross and dangerous delusion! Fresh from the abominations of heathenism, the early converts would naturally be placed under the mildest rules, rather than the more severe. If the gospel could have known a change, the apostle would have given its easiest precepts at the first, and then in these better days, the whole revelation would have been brought out, and more stringent precepts would have been proclaimed. Since, however, it is contrary to the genius of the gospel to be progressive in its revelation, since it was all revealed at once, we must never imagine that the precepts given by Paul may be toned down and diluted to suit the present age. I say again, brothers and sisters, if these men fresh from the foul Stygian ditch of heathen abomination and lasciviousness, were nevertheless exhorted to the greatest sublimity of Holiness, much more is it incumbent upon us to arrive at a very high state of Christian perfection, and walk very near to God, and be very close imitators of Christ! May God help us to hear, this morning, the address which Paul gave to the Church in Philippi! May we feel its full force in our consciences, and embody its full meaning in our lives.

The apostle says, *"Do all things"*—by which he seems to teach the activity of the Christian Church, for the Christian religion is not mere thinking or feeling, but *doing* and working for God. *"Do all things without murmurings,"* without murmuring at *God's providence*—which was a common vice of the heathen, who, on their tombstones often recorded their protest against God for having removed their darlings, and upbraided Him as cruel and unkind for taking away their relatives! "Do all things without murmurings *against one another."* Let your love be so hearty and sincere that you do not envy your richer or more talented brothers and sisters. Let there be no low whispers traveling through your assemblies against those who ought to be esteemed among you. Whatever you do, let no murmuring be mixed with it, but labor with delight, and suffer with patience. Let there be no murmurings even against *the ungodly world.* If they are unjust, bear their injustice in silence! Be not always offering

complaints; there are a thousand things which you might speak of, but it is better that, like Aaron, you should hold your peace. To suffer in silence shall dignify you, and make you greater than ordinary manhood—for then you shall become like He, who before His accusers opened not His mouth.

The apostle continues, do all things without *"disputing."* Dispute not with God; let Him do what seems good to Him. Dispute not with your fellow Christians, raise not railing accusations against them. When Calvin was told that Luther had spoken ill of him, he said, "Let Luther call me a devil if he pleases, I will never say of him but that he is a most dear and valiant servant of the Lord." Raise not intricate and knotty points by way of controversy; remember, you have adversaries upon whom to use your swords, and therefore there is little need that you should blunt their edges by dashing at the armor of your fellows; dispute not even with the world. The heathen philosophers always sought occasions for debate; be it yours to testify what God has told you, but court not controversy. Be not ashamed to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, but never do it in a spirit of mere debating—never because you wish to gain a victory, but only because you would tell what God has bid you reveal.

"That you may be blameless." Men *will* blame you, but you must seek, as Christians, to lead lives that give no occasion for blame. Like Daniel, compel them to say of you, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Erasmus writes of his great adversary, Luther, "Even Luther's enemies cannot deny but that he is a good man." Brothers and sisters force this tribute from an unwilling world; live so that as in Tertullian's age, men may say as they did in his time, "Such-and-such a man is a good man, even though he is a Christian." The heathens thought the Christians the worst of men, but were compelled to confess them to be the best, even though they were Christians! "Be you blameless *and harmless,"* says the apostle. The Greek word might be translated "hornless," as if you were to be creatures not only that do no harm, but *could not* do any; like sheep that not only *will not* devour, but *cannot* devour, for it were contrary to their nature, for they have no teeth with which to bite, no fangs with which to sting, no poison with which to slay. If you carry arrows, let them be dipped in love; if you bear a sword, let it be the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God! But otherwise, be everywhere, even among those who would harm you, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." *"As children of God,"* the apostle goes on to say—as if the dignity of our relationship should beget in us an equally dignified deportment. "Remember," says the old philosopher—"Remember, O Antigonus, that you are a king's son!" Remember, O Christian, that you are a son of the King of kings—even God Himself! Soil not the fingers which are soon to sweep celestial strings; let not those eyes become the windows of lust which are soon to see the King in His beauty; let not those feet be defiled in miry places, which are soon to walk the golden streets; let not those hearts be filled with pride and bitterness which are soon to be filled with heaven, and to overflow with ecstatic joy. As "children of

God," remember that the eyes of all are upon you! More is expected from you than from other men, because you have a higher pedigree, for you are descended from the very highest, Himself, and therefore you should be the highest and best in the world. The apostle then adds, *"Without fault."* We are to be men whom the world cannot rebuke; men who can stand right straight up and defy their enemies to find any real fault in them; men who can say without any Phariseeism, as Job did, "Lord, You know that I am not wicked." My brothers and sisters, I would you were such that men must lie before they can revile you! I would have you men upon whose snow-white garments filth will not stick—who may be, and must be slandered, but cannot be really rebuked. O beloved, to use Paul's own words, "Be you sons of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation."

I have expounded the address of Paul; permit me to remind you that all the while he is telling us to do this as the means to an end—and what is the end? Why, that we may, "Shine as lights in the world in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." The means themselves are precious; to be "holy, harmless and undefiled," is a glorious matter of it. But when such a bright thing becomes but a *means,* how excellent must the end be! How desirable that you and I, and each one of us who has named the name of Jesus, should "shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life"!

This brings me to the subject which I want to impress upon your hearts this morning. I would that every believer here, whether member of this Church or of any of the part of Christ's family, might see to it, that from now on, he should shine as a light in the midst of the darkness of this world, giving light to those who come within the range of his influence. There seems to me to be four things about which I may well speak. First, here is *publicity required*—they cannot shine without it. Here is, secondly, *usefulness intended.* Here is thirdly, *position indicated*—they are "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." And here is, fourthly, *an argument suggested,* that in the day of Christ I may rejoice that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

I. First then, here is A MEASURE OF PUBLICITY REQUIRED.

You will note the text says they are to be *lights.* Now, how can they be lights without being seen, and of what use would they be if they could be unseen lights? I cannot tell! But then, they are to *shine,* and how can they shine unless there is some radiance proceeding from them, and how this if they live in secret and if they are never understood to be Christians at all? But then, where does the text say they are to shine as lights?—in their house? No, *"in the world."* True, they are to be lights in their own family; but moreover if they come up to the full standard of what they should be, they are to be lights *in the world.* These three words—lights, lights shining, and lights in the world—most positively teach that a Christian must have some degree of publicity, and that it is hardly possible for him to carry out his true character, if he lives in such retirement and secrecy, as never to be known to be a Christian. Some timid hearts there are, some gentle spirits, who shun altogether the exposure of their religion; they quote Nicodemus as if they did not know

that Nicodemus is rather a beacon than an example. I would be far from crushing a tender spirit, far from laughing at the nervousness, which may keep a man in the back rank, when he ought to stand in the forefront of the battle; but if I should, by some Scriptural remarks, lead Christians to see that they are not to be always seeking retirement, but rather they must stand out and avow the Master, and if I can persuade the gentle spirit to bear its willing witness to Christ, thrice happy shall I be! Pharisees of old courted publicity. They could not give away one halfpenny in the street, but they must sound a trumpet that everybody might see their splendid charity! They could not pray in their closet, but they must seek some corner of the street that every passerby might hold up his hands in amazement, at the man who was so good, that he prayed even in the street! The world has found this trick out; we usually say of ladies, when we find them working at parties, that they do not work at home; and we would surely think of people who pray in the streets, that they pray nowhere else; and of persons who show their charity publicly, that they show all that they have to show! Ostentatious religion nowadays is soon discovered and detected. But, while we must be warned against the pride of the Pharisee, we must take care that we run not into another extreme! "Am I always to serve God by stealth? Am I never to speak a good word for Christ lest somebody should say I am proud?" Your own conscience will be your guide in that matter; if you detect in yourself any desire to glorify yourself—then you are wrong in making your religion public at all! Plainly, if you discover that you are keeping back in order to get an easier path for yourself—then you are grievously wrong in seeking to hide your religion! If it is for God's honor for you to publish on the housetops what He has told you in the closet, do it; and if it is for Christ's honor to do only in the closet that which another man would do in the street, do it. Your conscience will always teach you, if it is an enlightened conscience, when you might act boldly, and when, on the other hand, you would be cowardly. I think there is no difficulty in steering between this Scylla and Charybdis. Any man with a little wisdom will soon discern what he ought to do. But do not, I pray you, make the Pharisee's pride an excuse for your cowardice! Never say, "I do not like to make a profession because there are so many hypocrites!" This is the more reason why *you should* make a profession, that there may be some honest ones. Do not say, "Oh, I would not, for fear people should think I am proud!" Why should you look at the fear of man which brings a snare—is it not yours to obey God, rather than man?

I cannot understand Christ's words, "You are a city set on a hill which cannot be hid." Nor these, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Nor these, "He who with his mouth confesses, and with his heart believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." I cannot understand these passages, if you are never to avow your faith, but keep your religion hidden up in a secret place and go to heaven by stealth! How much publicity, then, do we really think is necessary in a Christian? It is becoming that *he should make a public avowal of his faith;* he should come out from among the world and declare himself to be on the Lord's side. There is an

ordinance which God has Himself ordained, which is the proper way in which to make this profession—to be baptized in water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—thus openly being buried in water to show our death to the world, and rising out of the water to show that we hope to live a new life as the result of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. If you should differ as to the form in which this profession is to be made, yet the profession should be made! If you would be honest and true, you must in answer to the Master's summons, "Who is on the Lord's side?" come out and say, "Here am I, Lord, I am Your servant, and I would serve You even to the end." You should also be *associated constantly with Christian people*. The one act of profession is not enough—it should be continued by union with some visible Church of Christ! We find in the apostle's days that those who were converted were added to the Church. It is written, "They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." Christianity requires you to unite yourselves with those who are united to Christ. If the Church of Christ is the spouse of Jesus, you should seek to be a member of her visibly, as well as invisibly—especially you who are lately converted, for your presence in the Church is for your good, and much for the Church's comfort. The man who was healed stood *with* Peter and John; and it is written, when they saw the man who was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against them. The gathering together of the converts to sustain the minister is a very great help in the propagation of the truth of God as it is in Jesus! Besides this association with Christians, there should be *a daily carrying out of your Christianity in your life*. It is not all that we say that shines; that may be only a flash, a sparkle, a display of fireworks—it is our *daily* acting which is the true shining out of Christ within! Let the servant prove her Christianity by being more attentive than any other; let the master prove his by being more generous than any other master; let the rich man shine in his generosity; let the poor man shine in his patience. Let each in every sphere seek to excel those who are not in Christ, that so everyone may prefer us in our position to the worldling in the same office, and take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him!

But to shine as lights, we must add *the open testimony of our words*. I will not give a rusty nail for your religion if you can be quiet about it. I do not believe you have any! That which is nearest to the heart is generally most on the tongue; you must be constantly bearing your witness by the words of your mouth for Christ, seeking to teach the ignorant, to warn the careless, to reclaim the backsliding, and to bring the wanderers to the cross! You will have many opportunities in the sphere in which you move—avail yourself of them all, and so shall you shine as a light in the *world*. And there are times when you cannot shine without *a very bold and stern decision for Christ*. When the old Roman senator, in the days of Vespasian, was told by the emperor that he might go into the senate house, but he must hold his tongue, he answered, "I, being a senator, feel impelled to go into the senate house, and being in the senate, it is the part of a senator to speak what his conscience dictates." "Then," said Vespasian, "if you speak you will die." "Be it known to you, O emperor,"

said he, "that I never hoped to be immortal, nor did I ever wish to live when I might not speak my mind." Brave Roman! We must have brave Christians, too, who say, "Being a Christian, it is mine to speak, and if that should cost me all I have, and life itself, I never thought myself immortal, and I wish to die when I may not speak out that which God has written in my heart." There are times, I say, when if we should falter, or delay, we become traitors at once; make sure that in those "crises of your being," you promptly follow your Lord.

So much of publicity I think is needed then—an open profession, a constant association with the Christian Church, a perpetual living out of godliness, an open declaration of the same, and a deliberate decision when occasion shall present itself. Look you, sirs, Christians are *soldiers!* If our soldiers were to take it into their heads that they ought never to be seen, a pretty pass things would come to! What were the soldiers worth when they shunned parade, and dreaded battle? Take off your uniforms, and be packing, sirs! We want not men who must always lie skulking behind a bush, and dare not show themselves to friend or foe! Christians are *runners* too, and what sort of runners are men who run in the dark? Not so, says the apostle! He says, we are "encompassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses," and therefore bids us, "Lay aside every weight and the sin that does so easily beset us." What? Running match and no spectators! Ave Imperator! The champion salutes you! He prays you to dismiss the spectators. Conscript fathers, leave your seats, and you knights of the empire retire from the race! You common herd retire, or put your fingers to your eyes—here comes a runner who is so dainty that he cannot be looked at, a swift-footed racer who must be scrutinized by no vulgar eye or he will faint, and lose the crown. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha, the mob laughs. "Ah," they say, "these are not the men to make a Roman holiday; these timid fools had better play with babies in the nursery; they are not fit to consort with men." What do you think of Christians who must have the stadium cleared before they can enter the course? Rather, O children of God defy all onlookers; crowd the seats and look on, you angels, and men, and devils, too—and see what you will! What does it matter it to the Christian, for he is looking unto Jesus! He runs not for you, but for the reward—and whether you look or look not—his zeal and earnestness are still the same! Christ is in him, and run he must, look on who will.

II. Secondly, here is in the text, USEFULNESS.

"Well" says one, "if I were known to be a Christian what use would it be?" We will soon show you. One remark, however, I will make—the better Christian you are, the more public you will be—but the less will be thought *of you!* You have noticed at night a star, it is only a little spark, but still it is very bright, and everybody says, "Do you see that star?" Yes, but there is a moon, why does not everybody say, "Look what a beautiful moon?" They notice the star first, because it is not usual to see stars so brilliant. By-and-by, of a moonlight night, you will hear people say, "What a lovely moon!" Now, in the daylight people do not say, "What a lovely sun!" No. "What a lovely landscape! What a beautiful view! Look at the tints of those trees now the sun is shining!" Just so, the little Christian is like a star, bright in his little sphere. Others are like the moon;

they excite admiration and attention to themselves. But a full-grown Christian, who should be perfectly conformed to the image of Christ, though giving more light than either the moon or the star, would not be half as much looked at, for men would be looking at what he shed light upon, rather than upon him! They would look to the doctrine that he taught rather than to how he taught it; they would be looking rather at the lesson of his life than at the life itself. So that if I should urge you to more and more publicity, it will not be for *your* sake, but that you may be more and more forgotten, while the *truth of God* is the more clearly seen!

But what is the use of lights, what is the use of Christians as lights? The answer is manifold. We use lights to *make manifest*. A Christian should so shine in his life that those who come near him can see their own character in his life, can see their sins, can see their lost estate; he should so live that a person could not live with him a week without knowing the gospel! His conversation should be such that all who are about him should perfectly understand the way to heaven; things that men will not see and cannot see without him, should be very clear wherever he is. Men sometimes read their Bibles, and they do not understand the Bible because they need light. Like Philip, we should be willing to sit in the chariot and instruct the passerby, making manifest the meaning of God's Word, the power of God's Word, the way of salvation, the life of godliness, and the force of the truth of God! May I ask each one of you, have you made men understand the gospel better? "Ah," says one, "I leave that to the minister." Then you have neglected your duty—repent of your great sin and ask God, now, to help you to be making manifest to all persons who come near you their sin and the Savior! The next use of a light is *to guide*. The mariner understands this. When our sailors, some years ago had a Nore light, they thought they were getting on marvelously; but when they had the Mouse, the Maplin, the Swin Middle, and all the other lights on the sands, they soon found navigation much easier than it had been before. Every Christian should light some part of the voyage of life, and there should not be a channel without its light. Blessed pole star! How many a slave have you guided from the swamps and whips of the South up to the country of the free? Blessed are you, O Christian, if your light has led some soul to Jesus, to the land of the free, where the slave can never wear his fetters again! I hope that you have often, when men have scarcely known it, pointed them the way to Christ, by saying, "Behold the Lamb of God."

Lights are also used for *warning*. On our rocks and shoals a lighthouse is sure to be erected. Christians should know that there are plenty of false lights shown everywhere in the world. The wreckers of Satan are always abroad, tempting the ungodly to sin under the name of pleasure. We must put up the true light upon every dangerous rock, to point out every sin, and tell what it leads to, so that we may be clear of the blood of all men, shining as lights in the world.

Lights also have a very *cheering* influence, and so have Christians. Late one night we had lost our way in a park not far from the suburbs of London, and we were walking along and wondering where we were. We said, "There is a light over there," and you cannot tell what a source of

comfort that candle in a cottage window proved to us! I remember riding in a third class carriage, crowded full of people, on a dark night, when a woman at the end of the carriage struck a match and lit a candle—with what satisfaction was everybody's face lit up, as all turned to see it! A light really does give great comfort. If you think it does not, sit in the dark an hour or two. A Christian ought to be a comforter—with kind words on his lips, and sympathy in his heart—he should have a cheering word for the sons of sorrow!

Light, too, also has its use in *rebuking sin*. I think our street gas lamps are the best police we have. If those lamps were out, we would need 10 times the number of watchers, and there would be far more crimes. Why is it that thieves do not like the light?—because their dark deeds can only be done in darkness! And how is it ungodly men do not like Christians? Why, because they rebuke them; and just as lights tend to make a city safe, and stop robberies and crime, so Christians, when they are in sufficient numbers to act upon the commonwealth, will make crime less common—certainly they will compel it to hide its deformity under the shadows of night, whereas before it might have walked in the blaze of day with acceptance! But the Christian is a light in a very peculiar sense—he is a *light with life in it*. Turn the lantern upon that dead man's face; you can see it cold and white, like the chiseled marble. Shoot the light right into his eyes; he does not see; you cannot make him live by the power of any human light! But the believer is God's lantern, full of the Holy Spirit—and it happens often, that through our testimony God shoots into the eyes of the dead a light which makes them live—so that the darkness of Hades gives way to the brightness of glory, and the midnight darkness of the spirit is made to fly before the rising Sun of righteousness!

We have dwelt long enough upon the uses of these lights, and I may only say, in concluding this point, I wonder what is the good of a Christian who is not thus useful to the world? He has a treasure but he hoards it! What is the good of misers while they live? They are like swine which only eat—they are of no service till they die; then they are cut up, and their estates are pulled into pieces; and perhaps some good may be gotten by those who get something to eat from them. Vile is the wretch who hoards gold, but what is he who hoards bread? The world is starving, and they hoard the bread of life. It is like manna—it breeds worms and they cannot eat it themselves, but they will not give it to others. A religion that is no blessing to others is no blessing to me—I am just laying up for myself a mass of putridity! It will never do my soul good, or else it would have compelled me to do good to others! But they are hoarding water, the living water; they are damming up the stream to keep enough for themselves, and what is it doing? It is covered with rank weeds! It breeds malaria; it turns foul; all manner of loathsome creatures are in it! There are more foolish still, they are trying to hoard up the light, as if they would have any the less if they let others have it! Hoard up light as if there were only a scant supply. Infamous! Diabolical! I wish there were a stronger word than that, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha," says Paul. And I question whether that dreadful anathema does not include within it those who do not love

souls, and therefore prove they do not love Christ; if they loved Christ they must love sinners; if they loved Jesus they must seek to extend His kingdom and to let Him see of the travail of His soul!

III. But time waits not for me, and I must proceed to touch with brevity upon the third point—POSITION INDICATED.

"But," says one, "I cannot shine, it is of no use talking about it; I am not in a position to do any good." The apostle anticipates you. He says, "In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." "If I were to remove from this," says one, "I might serve the Lord's cause, but I cannot where I am." But, dear friend, you are not to get out of it, you are to speak for your Lord where you are! In the *midst* of that crooked and perverse nation you are to shine as lights in the world. Your position teaches you three things. First of all, it should be *an incentive to you*. The worse the people are among whom you live, the more need they have of your exertions! If they are crooked, the more necessity that you should set them straight; and if they are perverse, the more need have you to turn their proud hearts to the truth of God! The worse your position is, the more thankful you ought to be that you are in it. Where would the physician be but where there are many sick? Where is honor to be won by the soldier, but in the hottest fire of the battle? Do not blame your position if you are an unprofitable servant, but lay the blame upon yourself! If you find it hard to do good where you are, it will be harder anywhere else. As the bird that wanders from her nest, so is the man who wanders from his place. Lazy workmen find fault with their tools and employers. If you transplant a tree to make it produce more fruit, you may possibly succeed, but there are nine chances to one that you will kill it altogether.

Again, as you are in such a position, let it *administer a caution* to you. They are a crooked and perverse nation, do not wonder, therefore, if they hate your light and try to blow it out. Be the more anxious not to give them any unnecessary offense; let your goodness be the only fault they can find in you! Ask the Lord to keep your lamp well trimmed for you; beseech Him to protect it from their malicious breath; be the more anxious to cultivate a close acquaintance with Christ, because a crooked nation would decoy you from Him. Do not try to please men—make not the opinion of this generation your rule, for it is very crooked—and if you travel one way, you will not please them unless you turn the other way, and then turn again to humor their crooks. One is often amused to find one's self publicly abused for doing the very thing the opposite of which one was abused for the week before! And sometimes in the same newspaper article you will nowadays catch the writer first falling foul with you for doing one thing, and then falling foul with you for not doing it again! It is a crooked and perverse nation—the man who tries to please man shall find himself in a labyrinth of the most mazy kind; he shall be a wretched time server all his life, and a detestable hypocrite even to his death. Such a man, to use a rustic simile, is like a toad under a harrow—he will have to be crawling continually to escape the spikes on the right, and the iron ties on the left! And he will probably die a miserable death with the iron in his soul at the last. Be cautious, but be particularly cau-

tious against excessive caution! Please the Lord, and let men please themselves.

Once more, while the eyes of perverse men should be an incentive and a caution to you, do not forget the *rich consolation* afforded by the fact that all the saints have endured the like trial. Are you in the midst of a crooked people? So was Paul. So was the Church at Philippi—so are all the saints! Remember that as they won their crowns in a strife which was none of their choosing, so must you; they were not carried on beds of down to heaven, and you must not expect to travel more easily than they. They had to hazard their lives unto the death in the high places of the field, and you shall not be crowned till you also have endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; the road of your pilgrimage will not be smooth if it is the way of the apostles and prophets. Soft raiment, delicate nursing, dainty feeding, and luxurious ease belong to the palaces of earth—but not to the company outside the camp who bear their Lord's reproach. I charge you, O servants of the Lord, and especially you who are members of this Church, stand fast, wait, watch and wrestle. Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord!

IV. To conclude, there is an ARGUMENT SUGGESTED.

It is a very affectionate and touching one which I mean to take the liberty of applying to you, my beloved flock. "That I may not run in vain, nor labor in vain in the day of Christ." The apostle was the founder of the Church at Philippi; he had watched over them with all the anxiety of one who had planted and watered, and who looked for the increase. He therefore appealed to the affection which he knew they had for him. "I have run," argues the apostle, "with all men looking on and gazing—many of them hating and scoffing. I have run with all my might; would you have me run in vain? I have labored, I have labored more than they all," the apostle could say, "would you have me labor for nothing?" He knew the answer they would give him would be, "No, beloved Paul, we would see you win the prize for which you did run, and reap the fruit for which you did labor." "Well," argues the apostle, "but I cannot, except you shine as lights in the world! You disappoint my hopes, you snatch the prize from my grasp, and you fill me with anguish, if you are not holy, heavenly-minded witnesses for Christ." I use the same argument with you! To the stranger here today, it will have no force, but with many of you, I know it will be an argument of power. How many out of this congregation first learned of Jesus from my lips? A multitude of you were brought to Christ through the preaching of the Word here, or in Park Street, or the Surrey Gardens, or Exeter Hall. The Word was feebly preached in rough language, then, as now—but God acknowledged it—neither to tens nor twenties, but to hundreds, yes, to thousands of you! And, by His grace, not to you only—but to people in every land and of every kindred; the Lord has made my spiritual children as many as the stars of heaven for multitude! I rejoice, yes, I must rejoice, when I hear continually of the multitudinous conversions, which are worked by the Holy Spirit through the sermons, both printed and preached! God is with us, and He does not let one Word fall to the ground! But what if you, as a Church, should be idle? What if your lives should be unholy? What if you should lack

zeal and faith to testify for Christ? What then? My best expectations are defeated, my life has been a failure, and all that I have done falls to the ground! I have thought it in my heart, and I earnestly pray to my God, that it may come to pass that here, as in a barracks, a great army may find its constant lodging place; that afterwards, the Lord may pour you out like a vast conquering host, upon all parts of the world, to teach and testify, and live and labor, and speak for Christ! Surely, my brothers and sisters, you would desire this yourselves! I pray for it! Will you unite in desiring it and praying for it with me?

It has happened of late, especially to me, to see God's hand very visibly. Never in my experience have I seen so much spiritual activity as just now, and while it is true of all sections of the Christian Church, it has been peculiarly so of that section over which it is my lot to preside. The sermons have been now, for eight years, scattered in English, Welsh, French, Dutch, German, and Swedish—in fact, in all Protestant languages. At first, there were many conversions—there still are. Next, I find that those who were regular subscribers to the sermons begin to receive the doctrine of the preacher; the converts to Christ grow and get clear views of the truth of God; even in the point of baptism there are great numbers who are convinced that it is most Scriptural that only believers should be baptized! Very many have come here, and in the pool beneath, I have baptized them into the name of Christ. Our denomination does not increase. I am not very anxious that it should, for as it stands at present, I have no great love for it; but our principles are spreading marvelously, and in this I must rejoice! As the result of this, I have constantly letters like this, "Sir, I live in a village where the gospel is not preached; there is a Church, it is true, but we have a Puseyite clergyman. Cannot you do something for us? You have many young men training for the ministry, could you not send a friend to preach in my drawing room?" Then comes another—"Sir, the chapel has been shut up in our village a long time; could you not come and help us?" Then there are many of this kind—two Christian men write, wishing to be baptized into Christ—they come, they go back. Within a month there are four more from the same village. They go back and I almost forget them, but they do not forget me. Soon, the whole six will write a letter—this is a common thing—and say, "Could not we be formed into a Church? We will find a room—can you send someone to preach to us?" This happens every week, and your minister feels that as long as ever he has a man, he will say, "I will do it for you." And as long as he has any money of his own he will say, "Oh, yes, I will do it for you." But every now and then, he wishes that he had some who would stand by him in larger attempts. Cheerfully you give week after week for the support of our young ministers, and I think our friends will continue to do this. At any rate, the Lord will provide, and friends far away may be moved to assist us. I still need more aid, for the field is ripe, and we need more harvest men to reap it. It grows, the thing grows—every day it increases! It started but as a little flake of snow, and now, like an avalanche, it sweeps the Alps' sides bare before its tremendous force! I would not now that you should prove unworthy of the day in which you live, or the work to which God has called us as a Church. Four Churches

of Christ have sprung of our loins in one year, and the next year shall it not be the same, and the next and the next, if the Holy Spirit is with us, and He has promised to be with us, if we are with Him!

Now, in regard to the particular effort at Wandsworth, for which a collection is to be made; when I was sorely sick some three years or more ago, I walked about to recover strength, and walking through the town of Wandsworth, I thought, "How few attend a place of worship here. Here are various churches, but there is ample room for one of our own faith and order. Something must be done." I thought, "If I could start a man here preaching the Word, what good might be done." The next day, some four friends from the town called to see me, one a Baptist, and the three others were desirous of baptism, "Would I come there and form a Church?" We took the large rooms at a tavern, and preaching has been carried on there ever since! Beginning with four, the Church has increased to one hundred and fifty. I have greatly aided the interest, by going there continually and preaching and helping to support the minister. Now, a beautiful piece of ground has been taken, and a chapel is to be erected, and I firmly believe there will be a very strong cause raised. We have many rising Churches, but this one has just come to such a point, that a house of prayer is absolutely needed. I should not have asked you for this aid so soon, but the rooms in which they worship are now continually used for concerts on Saturday evenings, and are not altogether agreeable on Sunday. I would just as soon worship in one place as another, for my own part, but I see various difficulties are now in the way, which a new chapel will remove. I hope you will help them in so doing. Help me in the earnest effort of my soul to hold forth the word of life, and to let Christ's kingdom come and His will be done.

You who feel no desire to honor the Master—you who care nothing for the spread of His kingdom—you who are satisfied to hold your heads down, and not boast and glory in Him—stand back and assist us not! But you who would help His kingdom—you who love His name—you who are the debtors of His grace—help the cause everywhere, and help it this day! For Christ's sake, I ask it of you, and by His grace you will not deny me!

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GOOD NEWS FOR YOU
NO. 473

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was."
Luke 10:33.

THE Good Samaritan is a masterly picture of true benevolence. The Samaritan had no kinship with the Jew, he was purely of foreign origin, yet he pities his poor neighbor. The Jews cursed the Cuthites, and would have no dealings with them, for they were intruders in their land. There was nothing, therefore, in the objective of the Samaritan's pity that could excite his national sympathies, but everything to arouse his prejudices, hence the grandeur of his benevolence.

It is not my intention, this morning, to indicate the delightful points of excellence which Christ brings out in order to illustrate what true charity will perform. I want you only to notice this one fact, that the benevolence which the Samaritan exhibited towards this poor wounded and half-dead man was *available* benevolence. He did not say to him, "If you will walk to Jericho, then I will bind up your wounds, pouring in the oil and wine." Or, "If you will journey with me as far as Jerusalem, I will then attend to your needs." Oh, no, he came "where he was," and finding that the man could do nothing whatever for his own assistance, the good Samaritan began with him, then and there, upon the spot, putting no impossible conditions to him, proposing no stipulations which the man could not perform—but doing everything for the man, and doing it for him as he was, and where he was.

Beloved, we are all quite aware that a charity, of which a man cannot avail himself, is no charity at all. Go among the operatives of Lancashire, and tell them that there is no necessity for any of them to starve, for on the top of Mount St. Bernard, there are hospitable monks who keep a refectory, where they relieve all passers-by; tell them they have nothing to do but to journey to the top of the Alps, and there they will find food enough. Poor souls! They feel that you mock them, for the distance is too great! Penetrate one of our back streets, climb up three pairs of stairs into a wretched room, so dilapidated that the stars look between the tiles, see a poor young girl dying of consumption and poverty, tell her, if you dare, "If you could get to the seaside, and if you could eat so much beef steak, you would no doubt recover." You are shamefully laughing at her! She cannot get these things; they are beyond her reach—she cannot journey to the seaside—she would die before she reached it! Like the wicked, your tender mercies are cruel. I have noticed this unavailing charity in hard winters. People give away bread and soup tickets to poor

people who are to give sixpence, and then receive soup and bread. And often I have had persons come to me—"Sir, I have a ticket. It would be worth a great deal to me, if I had sixpence to go with it to get the relief, but I have not a farthing in the entire world, and I cannot make out the good of giving me this ticket at all." This is hardly charity! Think you see Jeremiah, down in the low dungeon—if Ebedmelech and Baruch had stood over the top of the dungeon, and called out to him, "Jeremiah, if you will get half way up, we will pull you out," when there was not a ladder, nor any means by which he could possibly get so far, how cruel would have been this charity! But, instead thereof, they took old rags from under the king's treasury, and put them on ropes, and bade him put the rags under his armpits, and sling his arms through the ropes, and then, they pulled him up all the way! This was available charity; the other would have been hypocritical pretense. Brothers and sisters, if in the description of a good Samaritan, Christ describes him as giving to this poor wounded man a charity of which he could avail himself, does it not seem to be strongly probable—no, even certain—that when Christ comes to deal with sinners, He gives them available mercy—divine grace which may be of real service to them?

Therefore, permit me to say I do not believe in the way in which some people pretend to preach the gospel. They have no gospel for sinners as sinners, but only for those who are above the dead level of sinnership, and are technically styled *sensible sinners*. Like the priest in this parable, they see the poor sinner, and they say, "He is not conscious of his need, we cannot invite him to Christ." "He is dead," they say, "it is of no use preaching to dead souls." So they pass by on the other side, keeping close to the elect and quickened, but having nothing whatever to say to the dead, lest they should make out Christ to be too gracious and His mercy to be too free! The Levite was not in quite such a hurry as the priest; the priest had to preach, and might be too late for the service, and therefore, he could not stop to relieve the man. Besides, he might have soiled his cassock, or made himself unclean; and then, he would have been hardly fit for the dainty and respectable congregation over which he officiated. As for the Levite, he had to read the hymns. He was a clerk in the church, and he was somewhat in a hurry, but still, he could get in after the opening prayer, so he indulged himself with the luxury of looking on. Just as I have known ministers say, "Well, you know we ought to describe the sinner's state and warn him, but we must not invite him to Christ." Yes, gentlemen, you must pass by on the other side, after having looked at him, for on your own confession, you have no *good news* for the poor wretch! I bless my Lord and Master; He has given to me a gospel which I can take to *dead* sinners, a gospel which is available for the vilest of the vile. I thank my Master that He does not say to the sinner, "Come half way and meet Me," but He comes "where he is," and finding him ruined, lost, unyielding, He meets him on his own ground, and gives him life and peace without asking, or expecting him to prepare himself for divine grace. Here is, I think, set forth in my text, the available benevolence

of the Samaritan. It is mine, this morning, to show the available grace of Christ.

I. The sinner is WITHOUT MORAL QUALIFICATION FOR SALVATION, but Christ comes where he is.

I want, if I can, not to talk about this as a matter having to do with the multitude that are abroad, but with us in these pews. I speak not of *them* and *those,* but of *you* and *me!* I want to say to every sinner, "You are in a state in which there is nothing morally that can qualify you for being saved, but Jesus Christ meets you where you now are."

1. Remember first, that when the gospel was first sent into the world, *those to whom it was sent were manifestly without any moral qualification*. Did you ever read the first chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans? It is one of those awful passages in Scripture, not intended to be read in congregations, but to be read and studied in the secrecy of one's chamber. The apostle gives a portrait of the manners and customs of the heathen world, so awful, that unless our missionaries had informed us that it is exactly the photograph of life in Hindustan at the present moment, and infidels might have declared that Paul had exaggerated! Heathendom, in the time of Paul, was so desperately wicked that it would be utterly impossible to conceive of a sin into which men had not fallen! And yet, "We turn unto the Gentiles," said the apostle; and the Lord Himself commanded, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." What? To Sodomites, whose very smallest sin is adultery and fornication? And do you mean to thieves and murderers, and to murderers of fathers and mothers? Yes, go and preach the gospel *to them!* Manifestly, the fact is that the world was steeped up to its very throat in the filth of abominable wickedness, and yet, the gospel was sent to it! This proves that Christ does not seek for any qualification of morality, or righteousness in man, before the gospel is available to them. He sends the Word to the drunk, to the swearer, the harlot, and the vilest of the vile; for such is the gospel of Christ intended to save!

2. Remember again, *the Biblical descriptions of those whom Christ cared to save in the world prove to a demonstration that He comes to the sinner where he is*. How does the Bible describe those whom Christ came to save? As men? No, my brethren; Christ did not come to save men as men, but men as *sinners*. As sensible sinners?—No, I think not. They are described as, *"Dead* in trespasses and sins." But to the law and to the testimony, let me read you one or two passages. And, while I read them, I hope you may be able to say, "There is hope for me." First, those whom Christ came to save are described in 1 Timothy 1:15 and many other places, as *"sinners."* "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "Sinners!" Without any adjective before the word! Not "awakened" sinners, not "repenting" sinners, but sinners, as sinners. "Surely," says one, "I am not shut out!" Another account is found in Romans 5:6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died"—for whom? Those who had some desires after God? Some respect for His name? No,

"for *the ungodly."* Now, an ungodly man means a man without God, who cares not for God. "God not in all his thoughts," and therefore, he is not what men call a "sensible sinner." The ungodly are like "the chaff which the wind drives away." Even these are the persons who Christ came to save. In the same chapter, 10th verse, you find them mentioned as *"enemies."* "When we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." What do you say to this? They are not described as friends. Christ laid down His life for His friends in one sense—"But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Enemies to God were the objects of divine grace, so that in enmity Christ comes and meets man where he is!

In Ephesians 2:1, we read of them as "*dead* in trespasses and sins." "And you has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Christ, then, does not ask the sinner to make himself alive; the gospel is not only to be preached to those who have some good notions, some good desires, some trembling of the heavenly life within, but to the dead as *dead!* To the dead does Christ come, and meets them in the grave of their sin. Again, Ephesians 2:3—they are "*children of wrath."* "We were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Yet, the gospel came to such! Can you see anything hopeful in a child of wrath? I ask you to look over him from head to foot—if this is his name and character—can you see a spot of goodness as large as a pin's point in the man? And yet, such Christ came to save! Once again, they are mentioned as *"accursed."* "Ah," says one sinner, "I have often cursed myself before God, and asked Him to curse me." Well, Christ died for the accursed, (Gal 3:13), "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for *us."* That is, for us who were under the curse; and, once more, they are described by the dreadful word *"lost."* They are lost to all hope, to all consideration for themselves; even their own friends have given their case up as hopeless. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). If I understand those passages which I have read in your hearing, they mean just this—that those whom Christ came to save have no good whatever in them to co-operate towards their salvation! And Christ does not look upon them in order to find anything that is good in them. I am bold to say, the only fitness for cleansing is filthiness! The only fitness for a Savior is being lost; and the only character under which we come to Jesus is as sinners, lost, dead, and accursed!

3. But, thirdly, it is quite certain from *the work of divine grace itself* that the Lord does not expect the sinner to do anything or to be anything in order to meet Him, but that He comes to him where he is. Look, sinner, Christ *dies* on Calvary, a weight of sin is on His shoulders, and on His heart; in agonies the most awful, He shrieks under the desertion of His God! For whom did He die? Did He die for the innocent? Why for the innocent? What sacrifice did they need? For those who had some good thing in them? Why all these agonies *for such?* Surely a lesser price might do for them, if they could eke it out themselves! But because Christ died on account of sin, I take it that those whom He died for must

be viewed as *sinners,* and only as such. Inasmuch as He paid a dreadful price, I gather that they must be dreadfully in debt, and that He died for those who had nothing to pay with! But Christ *rose again,* rose again for our justification; for whose justification? For the justification of those who were justified in themselves? Why, this would be to perform an unnecessary work! No, my brothers and sisters, for those who had no justification of their own—not a shadow of any—who were condemned, utterly condemned on account of their own works! Moreover, I hear Him by the ear of faith *pleading* before the eternal throne. Who does He plead for? For those who have something to plead on their own account?—that were needless! Do men give their money to the rich? Do they spend their charity on those who do not need it? If men have something to plead for themselves, then why does Christ plead for them? No, beloved, He pleads for those who have nothing whatever, that they can bring as an argument with which to enforce their prayers! But Christ ascended and *received gift*s. Who for? For those who merited rewards? No, verily, let them get them for themselves! But He received gifts for men—yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. But he *gives the Holy Spirit.* To whom does He give the Holy Spirit? To those who are strong, and good, and can do all themselves? O, my brothers and sisters, no! He gives the Holy Spirit to those who are powerless, weak, and dead! He gives the Holy Worker to those who are all unholy, and full of sin; He puts the omnipotent influence into those who were slaves to the spirit of evil! Brothers and sisters, the work of Christ supposes a lost, ruined, rebellious sinner, and so I say—Christ meets the man where he is!

4. Yet more, for I would clear up this point before I leave it, *the Godlike character of the grace of God* proves that He meets the sinner where he is. If God forgives little sinners only, then He is little in His mercy; if the Lord does not do something more than men can think, then we have made too much noise about the gospel, and have exalted the cross above measure. Unless there is something extraordinary in divine grace, then I cannot understand such a passage as this, "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are My ways above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts." I venture to say, brethren, that many of us have thought of forgiving our enemies. It has sometimes been our happy portion to do good to them who hate us. Now, if God would be Godlike in His grace—and I am sure He will—He must do something more than that! He must not only forgive His enemies, but they must be enemies of such an atrocious character that no *man* would have forgiven them—

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee,
Or who has grace so rich and free?"

But where is the meaning of this boast, if the Lord merely pardons sinners who are sensible of their sins, and lament them? The marvel is in this—that while they are yet enemies, He calls them by His grace, and invites them to mercy. Yes, more, He blots out their sins, and makes them friends—thus meeting the sinner where he is.

5. *The spirit and genius of the gospel utterly forbid the supposition that God requires anything in any man in order to save him.* If salvation is offered to man upon a *condition,* they who fulfill the condition have a claim to the blessing. This is the old covenant of works. The substance of the legal covenant is, "Do this and I will reward you." When the man has done it, he deserves what has been promised; yes, and if you make the condition ever so easy, yet, mark you, so long as it is a *condition*, God is bound by His own Word, the condition being fulfilled, to give man what he has earned! This is works and not divine grace; it is debt and not free favor. But, inasmuch as the gospel is free favor from beginning to end, I am absolutely sure that God requires nothing—neither good wishes, good desires, nor good feelings of a sinner—before he may come to Christ. But that he may know that everything is of grace, the rebel is commanded to come just as he is, bringing nothing, but taking everything from God, who is superabundant in mercy, and therefore, meets the sinner just where he is.

I say to the sinner, wherever you may be today, if you are without any virtue, and if you are filled with all vice, if there are no good points in your character, if there is everything that is bad against man and against God in you. If you have committed every crime in the catalog; if you have ruined your body, and damned your soul, yet still Christ has said it—"He who comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." And if you come to Him, He can no more cast you out than if you had been the most virtuous, the most honorable, and the most devout of all living men! Only today, believe in the mercy of God, in Christ, and cast yourself on Him, and you are saved to the praise and glory of that divine grace which meets you just where you are, and saves you from sin.

II. In the second place, there are very many of the lost race of Adam who say that they are WITHOUT ANY MENTAL QUALIFICATION.

This is their excuse—"But, sir, I never was a scholar. I was sent out as a boy to earn my own living, so that I never had a week's schooling; I am so ignorant that I cannot read any book, and if anybody were to ask me to make a prayer, I could not, I have not sense enough." Now, you see the Lord Jesus meets you just where you are! And how does He do this? Why, first, *the saving act is one that requires no mental power. Faith* lays hold on eternal life! Now, a child whose faculties are ever so little developed can believe what it is told; the child cannot reason, cannot argue, cannot dispute, cannot spilt hairs, cannot see a knotty point in theology, but it can believe what it is told! Faith requires so little mental vigor or intellectual clearness, that there have been many who were idiots in other things, but who have been made wise unto salvation by the act of faith in Christ! You remember our Lord's own words, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." But this never could have happened had not the act which brings us into communion with Christ been the lowest act of the human faculty—that of simply trusting

to Christ—as the result of crediting that which is told us upon good testimony!

But then, again, to meet this defect of mental power, remember *the singular simplicity of that which is believed*. Is there anything simpler in the world than the doctrine of the atonement? We deserve to die, Christ dies for us. We are in debt, Christ pays for us. Is not this plain enough for a Ragged School child? It is so plain, that many of our learned doctors of divinity try to take it out of the Bible! They think, "If this is the marrow of it all, then any fool can be a theologian." So they kick against it. What is Unitarianism but a stumbling at the simplicity of the cross? There were Unitarians who stood at the cross when Christ died; they said, "Let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe on Him." That has been the Unitarian character ever since! They will receive Jesus anywhere but on His cross! But up there, dying in man's place, He is so commonplace, that these great gentlemen run to philosophy and vain deceit sooner than lay hold on that which the most common may as fully understand as they!

Yet more; to meet any mental deficiency in man, while the truth of God itself is simple, it is *taught in the Bible under such simple metaphors*, that none can say they cannot understand it. How simple is the metaphor of the bronze serpent, held up before the snake-bitten Israelites, while they are commanded to look and live? Who does not understand that a look at Christ, who dies in the place of men, will make them live? "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." Who does not understand the figure of a fountain flowing in the streets, that every thirsty passerby may put his lips down and drink? "Behold the Lamb of God." Who does not understand the sacrifice? Here is a lamb killed for the sins of Israel, and so Christ dies for the sins of those who believe in Him. The act of faith is simple; the object of faith is plain; the metaphors make it clear, and he is without excuse who does not understand the gospel of Christ.

To crown all, to you, my beloved hearers, Christ *has given you abundance of teachers*. There sits in your pew with you today a man of your own rank and calling, who will explain to you the gospel, if you do not understand it; here are many of us, who are but too glad if we can roll away the stone from the door of your sepulcher! Here are children of God themselves, saved by sovereign grace, and if you really do not know the way, do but touch your neighbor and say to him, "Can you explain to me yet more clearly what I must do to be saved?" Now, this is meeting you, let your brains be the very smallest! This is coming down to you, though you sit on the lowest step of human intellect! Jesus Christ meets you just where you are.

III. But yet again, I think I hear another say, "I am in despair, for I CANNOT FIND ANY REASON IN MYSELF, OR OUT OF MYSELF, WHY GOD SHOULD FORGIVE SUCH A PERSON AS I AM."

So then, you are in a hopeless state—at least *you* see no hope! The Lord meets you where you are, by putting *the reason of your salvation al-*

together in Himself. Shall I remind you of one or two texts which will surely satisfy you? "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions." What for? "Do you suppose for My own sake." He cannot pardon you for *your* sake, you clearly see that; and you feel that He cannot pardon you for other people's sake. But for "My own sake," He says, "That I may glorify Myself." Not in you, but in His own mighty breast He finds the motive, that He may make His own mercy illustrious; for His own sake He will do it. Or take another—"For My name's sake, even for My name's sake, will I defer My anger, that I cut you not off." Here it is again—for His *name's sake,* as if He knew He could not find any motive, so He puts it all on Himself! He pardons, that He may honor and glorify His own name. Sinner, you cannot say that this does not meet your case—for if you are the most hellish good-for-nothing sinner that ever cursed God's earth, and polluted the air you breathe, yet, He can save you, *for His own sake!* There is still room for you to hope; for the bigger the sinner you are, the more glory to Him if He saves you! And if salvation is given for a reason only in Himself, there is, therefore, a reason by which He can save you, even you!

Remember that *He puts His own design* before your eyes to show you that if you have no reason in yourself, that is no hindrance to His saving you. What is God's design in saving men? When He brings them to heaven, what will be the result of it? Why, that they may love and praise His name forever, and sing, "Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory." You are just the man. If you are ever saved and brought to heaven, oh, will you not praise His grace? "Yes," said one old man who had long lived in sin, "If He ever does bring me to heaven, He shall never hear the last of it, for I will praise Him throughout eternity." Why, do you not see that you are the man? You are the very man that will answer God's design, for who shall love as much as he who has had much forgiven? And who shall praise so loudly as he whose mighty sins have been overcome by the mighty love, and goodness, and grace of God? You can not say that it does not meet you, for here is a motive and a reason—though you can find none in yourself.

Here is another reason why God should save you—it is *His own Word,* the Word of Him that cannot lie! I will bring up that text again, perhaps there is a heart here that will be able to cast anchor on it—"Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." You say, "But if I come, I can see no reason why He should save me." I answer that there is a reason in His promise! God cannot lie. You come; He will not cast you out. He says, "I will in no wise cast out." "But," you say, "He may for such-and-such a reason." Now, this is a flat contradiction! The two cannot stand; if there is anything that is necessary in order for a soul to come, and you come without it, yet, there is the promise—and as it has no limit in it, plead it—and the Lord will not refuse to honor His own Word! If He can cast you out because you have not some necessary qualification, then His Word is not true. Whoever you may be, whatever you may not be, and whatever you may be, if you believe in Jesus Christ, there is a reason in

every attribute of God why you should be saved! His truth cries, "Save him, for You have said 'I will.'" His power says, "Save him, lest the enemy deny Your might." God's wisdom pleads, "Save him, lest men doubt Your judgment." His love says, "Save him." His every attribute says, "Save him." And even Justice, with its hoarse voice, cries, "Save him, for God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, if we confess our sins."

I am trying to fish in deep waters after some of you who have long escaped the net. I know when I have given free and full invitations, you have said, "Ah, that cannot mean *me."* You are without faith in Christ, because you think you are not fit. I will be clear of your blood this morning; I will show you that there is no fitness needed, that you are *commanded* now to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as you are, for Jesus Christ's gospel is an available gospel, and comes to you just where you are! Without moral or mental qualification, and without any sort of reason why He should save you, He meets you as such, and bids you trust Him.

IV. We proceed to our fourth point. "Oh," says one, "but I am WITHOUT COURAGE! I dare not believe on Christ, I am such a timid, trembling soul, that when I hear that others trust Christ, I think it must be presumption. I wish I could do the same, but I cannot, I am kept under by such a sense of sin that I dare not! O sir, I dare not, it would look as if I were flying in the face of justice if I were to dare to trust Christ, and then to rejoice in the pardon of my sin." Very well, Christ comes to meet you where you are, by very tender *invitations*. "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come you to the waters, and he who has no money, come you, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him who hears say, Come." "And let him who is thirsty, Come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." How sweetly He puts it to you! I do not know where more wooing words could be found, than those the Savior uses. Will you not come when Christ beckons, when with His loving face streaming with tears, He bids you come to Him? What? Is an invitation from Him too little a thing for you? O sinner, trembling though you are, say in your soul—

"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives!
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives."

Knowing that you would neglect the invitation, He has put it to you in the light of a *command*. "This is the *commandment* that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who believes not shall be damned." He thought you would say, "Ah, but I am not fit to accept the invitation." "Well," He says, "I will *command* the man to do it." Like a poor hungry man with bread before him, who says, "Ah, it would be presumption on my part to eat," but the king says,

"Eat, sir, or I will punish you." What a generous and liberal command! Even the threat itself has no anger in it; like the mother, who, when the child is near to die, and nothing will save it but the medicine, and the child will not drink, she threatens the child, but only out of love to it that it may be saved. So the Lord does add *threats* to commands, for sometimes a black word will drive a soul to Christ, where a bright word would not draw it. Fears of hell sometimes make men flee to Jesus; the weary wing made the poor dove fly to the ark—and the thunderbolts of God's justice are only meant to make you fly to Christ the Lord!

Beloved, once more, my Master has sweetly met your lack of courage by bringing many others, so that you may follow their *example*. As fowlers sometimes have their decoys, so my Master has decoys who are to draw others to Him. Other sinners have been saved, others He has cleansed who did but trust Him. There was Lot. Ah, Lot! Guilty of drunkenness and incest, and yet a saint of God! David, the adulterer and murderer of Uriah, and yet, washed "whiter than snow." Manasseh, the bloody persecutor, who had cut Isaiah in two, sawing him in halves, and yet, he was taken among the thorns, and God had mercy on him. What shall I say of Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of God's people? And the robber dying on the cross for his crimes, and yet saved? Sinners, if these do not induce you to come, what can overcome your sinful diffidence? "But," says one, "you have not stated my case yet; and besides, I am an *outrageous* sinner!" Well now, I will hit it this time! In 1 Corinthians 6:9, hear the Word of the Lord, "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And *such were some of you:* but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Why, brothers and sisters, what horrible descriptions there are here! There are some of them so bad that when we have read the description, we wish to forget the sin. And yet—and yet, glory be to Your Almighty grace, O God! Such have You saved, and such You save still! O, timid sinner, can you not trust in Jesus after this? Hear the Word of the Lord again in Titus 3:3-5—"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving many lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." Now, you hateful sinners, and you who hate others; you who are full of malice and envy, here is the gate open, even for you, for the kindness and love of God towards man appears in the person of Christ!

Listen to another, for God's Words are more than mine, and I do hope they will attract some of you. In Ephesians 2:1-3—"Dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in times past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. Among whom 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. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved), and has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." What for? "That in the ages to come"—mark this—"He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." One more passage and I will not weary your attention. O that this last passage might comfort some of you! It is Paul who speaks in 1 Timothy 1:13, "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying." See how he puts it from his own experience, "and worthy of all acceptation"—and therefore, worthy of yours, poor sinner, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "Ah" says one, "but He would not save any more." Let me go on—"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." So that if you trust as Paul did, you shall be saved as Paul was, for his conversion and salvation are a pattern to all those who will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, unto life everlasting! So sinner, timid as you are, here Jesus meets you!

O, I wish I could say a word that would lead you poor tearful ones to look to Jesus! O, do not let the devil tempt you to believe that you are too sinful! "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him"—

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream."

Fitness is not needed! Do but come to Him! You are black in sin, and you do not feel your blackness as you ought—that makes you all the blacker. Come, then, and be clean! You are sinful, and this is your greatest sin, that you do not repent as you ought. But come to Him, and ask Him to forgive your impenitence! Come as you are—if He rejects one of you, I will bear the blame forever! If He casts one of you away who shall trust Him, call me a false prophet in the day of the resurrection. But I pawn my life upon it—I stake my own soul's interest on this—that whoever comes unto Him, He will in no wise cast out!

V. I hear one more complaint. "I am WITHOUT STRENGTH," says one, "Will Jesus come just where I am?" Yes, sinner, just where you are! You, you say, cannot believe, that is your difficulty. God meets you, then, in your inability! First, He meets you with *His promises*. Soul, you can not believe. But when God, who cannot lie, promises, will you not believe, can you not believe, then? I think God's promise—so sure, so steadfast—must overcome this inability of yours, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Cannot you believe now? Why, that promise must be true!

But next, as if He knew that this would not be enough, He has taken *an oath* with it—and a more awful oath was never sworn—"As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me, and live. Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel." Can you not believe *now?* What? Will you doubt God when He *swears* it? Not only make God a liar but—let me shudder when I say it—will you think that God can perjure Himself? God forbid you should so blaspheme! Remember, He who believes not has made God a liar, because he believes not on the Son of God. Do not do this! Surely you can believe when the promise and the oath compel you to faith! But yet more, as if He knew that even *this* were not enough, He has given you of *His Spirit*. "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 who ask Him?" Surely with *this* you can believe!

"But," says one, "I will try." No, no, do not *try!* That is not what God commands you to do—no *trying* is needed! Believe Christ *now,* sinner! "But," says one, "I will think on it." Do not think on it! Do it now, do it at once, for this is God's gospel. There are some of you standing in these aisles, and sitting in these pews, who I feel in my soul will never have another invitation. And if this is rejected today, I feel a solemn motion in my soul—I think it is of the Holy Spirit—that you will never hear another faithful sermon, but you shall go down to hell impenitent, unsaved, unless you trust in Jesus *NOW!* I speak not as a man, but I speak as God's ambassador to your souls, and I command you, in God's name, trust Jesus; trust Him *now!* At your peril reject the voice that speaks from heaven, for "he who believes not shall be damned." How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation? When it comes right home to you; when it thrusts itself in your way, oh, if you neglect it, how can you escape? With tears I would invite you, and if I could, would compel you to come in. Why will you not? O souls, if you will be damned, if you make up your mind that no mercy shall ever woo you, and no warnings shall ever move you, then, sirs, what chains of vengeance must you feel that slight these bonds of love? You have deserved the deepest hell, for you slight the joys above! God save you. He *will* save you, if you trust in Jesus. God help you to trust Him even now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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FAITH OMNIPOTENT
NO. 474

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 12, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus said to him, If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."
Mark 9:23.

I MUST take your minds back to the scene in the midst of which Christ uttered these memorable words. Christ had been upon the mountaintop, transfigured in the presence of His three disciples. During His absence, the remaining disciples had been put to a perplexity. They found themselves, for lack of faith, unable to work a miracle, and the Pharisees triumphed. Christ came down just at the very moment, and turned the scale. We find a parallel case in the story of Moses, when with his servant, Joshua, he went up to the mountain and beheld the glory of the Lord. While he and Joshua were absent, evil lifted up its head, and those who would walk by sight prevailed over the poor weak faith of Aaron, so that he made for them a golden calf; and lo, as Moses returned, he saw the people given up to the worship of this image which they could see with their eyes and handle with their hands. Faith had left the field routed, because the champion was not there, and sinful sight was for the moment triumphant. Moses dashes boldly into the midst of the people, and instantly they are put to confusion; some tremble, and the most brazen of them are made to hang their heads. He lays hold upon their molten calf, grinds it to powder, and makes them drink it. Now, our Lord with his Joshuas—Peter, James, and John, the three elect out of the elect—had been on the mountain of transfiguration. The rest, like Aaron, found themselves attacked by those who would have signs and wonders; and being unable to furnish these signs and wonders for lack of faith, the Pharisees pushed their advantage, and the hosts of God seemed to fly before them! But suddenly, like a great King, Christ stands in their midst; the Pharisees are abashed; a miracle is performed; faith triumphs, and the doubters are shamed. Like some mighty general who, having been absent from the field of battle, finds that his lieutenants have rashly engaged in action and have been defeated; the left wing is broken, the right has fled, and the center begins to fail! He lifts his standard in the midst of his troops, and bids them rally around him; they gather; they dash upon the all but triumphant enemy, and soon they turn the balance of victory, and make the late victors turn their dishonorable backs to flight. Beloved, here is a lesson at the very outset. What we need for conquest is the shout of a King in the midst of us! The presence of Christ is victory to His Church—the absence of the Lord Jesus entails disgraceful defeat. O armies of the living God, count not your numbers! Rely not upon *your*

strength! Reckon not upon the ability of your ministers! Trust not in human might. Nor on the other hand be dismayed because you are few, nor tremble because you are feeble. If He is with you, more are they who are for you than they that are against you! If Christ is in your midst, there are horses of fire and chariots of fire round about you—

"When He makes bare His arm,
Who can His cause withstand?
When He, His people's cause defends,
Who? Who shall stay His hand?"

Lift up your eyes, then, to the hills from where Jesus comes who is your help, and entreat Him never to forsake His people, but to dwell with them, and walk among them forevermore!

The matter about which the dispute had arisen was this—a certain man had a demoniac son who was afflicted with a dumb spirit, which threw him into convulsions and ravings of the most hideous kind. The father, having seen the futility of the endeavors of the disciples, had little or no faith in Christ, and therefore, when he was bid to bring his son to Him, he said to Jesus, "If You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." Now there was an "if" in the request, but the poor trembling father had put the "if" in the wrong place! Jesus Christ, therefore, without telling him to retract the "if," just puts it in its legitimate position. "No, verily," He seemed to say, "there should be no 'if' about My power, nor about My willingness; the 'if' lies somewhere else." "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." The man received faith, offering at the same time a humble prayer for an increase of faith, and instantly Christ spoke the word, and the devil was cast out with an injunction never to return! Brothers and sisters, you and I see that there is an "if" somewhere, but we are perpetually blundering by putting it in the wrong place! *If* Christ can convert heathens? No, no, *if* the Church can believe He can! *If* Christ can make the ministry successful? No, *if* you can believe He can! *If* Christ can give me the pardon of sin, *if* He can give me high enjoyments, *if* He can lift me above doubts and fears? Not so, brothers and sisters—not so! You have misplaced your "if." It is *if* you can believe, for *if* you can, even as all things are possible to Christ, so shall all things be possible to you! Faith stands in God's power, and in God's majesty; it wears the royal apparel, and rides on the king's horse, for it is the divine grace which the king delights to honor. Girding itself with the glorious might of the all-working Spirit, it becomes, in the omnipotence of God, mighty to do, to dare, and to suffer. "All things," without limit, "are possible to him who believes."

I shall, this morning, dwell upon *some of the achievements of faith,* and then notice *where faith's great power lies*. God help us to speak on both of these points with divine power.

I. First, SOME OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF FAITH.

Time would fail me if I should attempt to rehearse the record of those who have earned a good report through faith. It is not necessary that my humble tongue should recapitulate what Paul, with inspired lips, has uttered in the ears of the Church. Turn to the 11th chapter of Hebrews and see there a mighty triumphal arch which God the Holy Spirit has raised

in commemoration of the splendid triumphs which faith has achieved! Behold this tower of David, built for an armory, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men! With joy the Church recounts her worthies, for the Lord utters His voice before His army, for His camp is very great. But it needs not that I remind you of these ancient things, I will rather speak of some of the things which faith can perform today, even today.

1. First, we will consider faith in *its relationship to guilt*. Here we may say, in your hearing, if you can believe guilt can be removed; perfect pardon and complete justification are possible to the vilest sinner, if he can believe in Christ. Behold my brothers and sisters, faith going forth to conflict with sin! Mark for a moment its determined struggles, but see it coming back, like David, with Goliath's head in his hand—a mighty conqueror—through the strength of its God! Faith, in dealing with sin, *does not forget the greatness of it*. Our sin is tremendous—it is not possible for us to overestimate its guilt; the sinner, under the most awful convictions, never exaggerated the evil of sin, it is a dreadful and a bitter thing; but faith deals thus with it, "What if my sin is great? I have a great Savior—surely He is able to take my sin, even if it were a hundred times as great as it is—and to cast it all into the depths of the sea! I know that I have greatly revolted, and have sinned with many aggravations against my God, but I believe in His great mercy, and I know that He is able to blot out my sins like a cloud, and my transgressions like a thick cloud." Faith does not lessen sin in the estimate of a sinner; but it exalts Christ, so that the sinner firmly and fully believes that if his sin could be multiplied by all the number of the elect, yet He who is mighty to save could roll all the burden away, and make him free. The greatness of sin is no barrier to its removing, if you can believe.

Many, also, are troubled with a consciousness of *the ill consequence of sin*. They are made to look into hell; they seem to hear the wailings as they ascend from the place of torment. Such awful passages as these are in their troubled mind—"Tophet is prepared of old, the pile thereof is wood and much smoke." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched." But faith says, "Yes, but despite all this, the agonies of Christ were so great that they are a fit and full expiation by which all these torments can be, by God's mercy, fully removed from those who trust in Jesus, and they can even mount to the upper skies." To know the consequence of sin, and yet believe that Christ can pardon—this is faith work. Not to make out sin to be a peccadillo, a small and trivial offense, but to confess that the full weight of God's eternal arm can be none too heavy to fall upon the man who has dared to insult his Maker's laws. But despite all this, to believe that the atonement made by blood upon the cross is enough, and more than enough, to expiate all—this is the victory of faith—to know that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin.

Multitudes, also, I know, are very much vexed by remembering *what guilt has done in them*. "I am," says such a one, "so hard-hearted, I have so little repentance. I am so prayerless, I have nothing good in me; I am

everything that is vile; there is not a commendable thing in me to move the pity of God." Now faith comes in and says, "It is even so; but, despite all this, I do believe the naked promise of God; I come to Jesus as I am, having nothing in myself, but possessing all things in Him." Nor will faith let the hardness of the heart, or the stubbornness of the will be any argument why the soul should not rest on Christ. Believing all that could be laid to its charge, and sorrowfully repenting of it all, still faith says, "It is written, 'He who comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.' I come, and Jesus cannot, will not, cast me out." When I feel my soul softened, when I feel the motions of the living fire within, then to believe that Christ can save me is no great faith; but when I feel no spiritual life, when my heart is as hard as a nether millstone, and I see myself as corrupt as a dunghill, then to believe in Him who justifies the ungodly—then to take the mercy which Christ gives to the very chief of sinners—this is a masterpiece of faith! And herein faith makes all things possible to him who believes—

"In hope against all human hope,
Self desperate, I believe
Your quickening Word shall raise me up,
You shall the Spirit give.
The thing surpasses all my thought,
But faithful is my Lord;
Through unbelief staggers not,
For God has spoke the word.
Faith, mighty faith the promise sees,
And looks to that alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, 'It shall be done.'"

Sinners also are greatly troubled when they are awakened concerning *the future*. "You will sin again," says Satan, "just as you have done. All pretences to a new life will be signal failures; you will go, like the dog to his vomit, and return, like the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." The quickened mind clearly perceives that this would inevitably be the result, if the work were to be performed by human strength; but faith denies the slander by looking to the Lord, alone. "Though in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing, yet He is able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God by Him." And faith clutches that promise, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." And she looks upon the future with the same eyes of faith with which she looks back upon the past, and rests herself upon the faithfulness and power of God to save. At times these old sins will rush in upon the believer's mind with a terrific force. Gathering dreadful strength from *the justice of God*, our eyes are tormented with the vision of an angry God, with His sword drawn, ready to smite us for our offenses. Glorious is that faith which can fling itself into the arms of God, even when the sword is in His hand, and will not believe that God can strike the sinner who relies upon the blood of Jesus! Mighty is that faith which, looking at justice, stern and severe, yet trembles not, but cries, "You are merciful and *just* to forgive me my sins, for I have confessed them. Christ has made full atonement, and You will not

twice demand the debt; He paid it once, and You cannot lay anything to my charge." Triumphant is that faith which marches right up to heaven, and stands before the blazing throne of the great and holy God, and yet can cry, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God has justified—who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died; yes, rather, who has risen again"—and this, even when sin rolls like a black flood, and the remembrance of the past has lashed the soul to tempest! When we really know the blessed merit of Jesus' blood; when we fully understand the superlative mercy of God; when we come to know the overflowing love of the Father towards His beloved children—we shall not look upon sin as being less sin than before, but we shall no longer fear its penal consequences, being confidently assured in our soul that none of these sins can destroy us! That not the whole of them together can for a moment shake our standing in Him, nor by any means put us in any danger of eternal wrath, since we are covered with the righteousness of Christ, and washed in His blood!

Brothers and sisters, our sins, when pardoned, should increase our delight in God, since they afford us evidences of His exceedingly abundant grace and love. Amalie Sieveking, a notable Christian heroine, one of the most zealous workers of modern times, writes thus—"The sense of my own powerlessness but brings me nearer to Him whose strength is made perfect in weakness. I give myself up to His guidance in cheerful trust that He will finish the work which He has begun, and help the poor stumbling child again and again to rise, yes, should it stumble a hundred times a day." And this is the point I want you to notice—"Sometimes I feel as though I must lay bare to others the whole accumulated amount of my guilt, that they may with me admire the riches of divine long-suffering." This is how faith learns to deal with sin—to make it a foil to show the brightness of *mercy*—the setting in which the diamond of divine love flashes with superlative luster! The faithful heart always remembers its sin with shame; but still it remembers God's pardoning love with gratitude, and the sorrow helps to increase the thankfulness. The lower we sink by reason of our sin, the higher our love to God rises when we reflect how His strong hand has taken us up "out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock and established our goings." Oh, I would this morning that some of you who are full of sin would believe that Christ can save you! "All things are possible to him who believes." What if you are the blackest sinner out of hell, and think the devil, himself, white compared with you? If you can trust Christ this morning, "All things are possible to him who believes." Whiter than the newly fallen snow shall you be in an instant, if you can now rest your soul upon Jesus, who is able to save.

2. Let us now observe faith in the midst of *those constant attacks of which the heir of heaven is the subject*. Here faith, again, does all things. My brothers and sisters, no sooner is a Christian born, than there is a great stir about him, even as concerning Christ Himself, for Herod seeks the young Child, that he may destroy Him. We all know how constantly the *world* attacks us, more especially if we will be separate from it, and

will keep our garments white, and will not indulge in the common pleasures, nor be guided by the ordinary maxims of society. Then the world howls at us like a pack of wolves. What then? Why, faith finds here but an easy task, for it learns to glory in tribulations, delightfully remembering the beatitude of Jesus on the mount—"Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." This is an everyday conquest with the Christian—to laugh at Satan's threats! "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith." The world attacks us also with its smiles, and unhappy is the man who has no faith, for soon the blandishments of the world will overcome him. But he who is full of faith, when the world offers him silver, replies, "No, I am rich in gold." And if the world would give him treasure, he would say, "I have a better portion than you can offer me; will you tempt a king with farthings, or a prince with beggar's broken victuals? I am heir of all things in Christ! This world is mine, and heaven is mine, too." So *he* laughs to scorn all the smiles of the wicked, just as he did in the case of their frowns.

Alas, beloved, we are equally attacked by *the flesh*. The lusts within are not dead; they are still powerful, and we know it. But here, too, faith overcomes; for while faith recognizes the power of the flesh, and the lusts thereof, it so lays hold upon Christ that it is lifted up into heavenly places, and is able to tread its corruptions under foot. Faith says to the believer, "Be assured that notwithstanding all the plagues of your heart, and all the loathsomeness of your nature, yet you shall as surely conquer as Christ has conquered, and you shall one day be as pure and spotless as even Christ Himself before the Father's throne!" Up and at your lusts, believer! There is no sin which will not yield to faith! There is no reason that we should always be sinning as we have been—we *can* overcome our lusts! You *can* drive out these Canaanites—though they dwell in cities walled to heaven, and have chariots of iron, you shall put your feet upon their necks, and utterly destroy them! By little and by little you may assuredly drive them out—but only by faith! Not by works, not by trust in your own moral resolutions, but by trust in the sprinkled blood of Jesus, can you overcome all temptation, and subdue your sins—

"With my sling and stone I go,
To fight the Philistine,
God has said it shall be so,
And I shall conquer sin!
On His promise I rely,
Trust in an Almighty Lord,
Sure to win the victory,
For He has spoke the word!
In the strength of God I rise,
I run to meet the foe,
Faith, the word of power applies
And lays the giant low!
Faith in Jesus' conquering name,
Slings the sin-destroying stone,

Points the Lord's unerring aim,
And brings the monster down!"

So is it with *the devil*. The devil comes out against us; but we are more than a match for him when our faith is firm. Upon the shield of our faith we catch his arrows, and by the sword of our faith we smite him to the very heart. There is no temptation that ever can assail a believer, but faith can certainly supply an antidote! If I believe in Jesus, I have His promise that I shall overcome, and I shall overcome because I believe that promise! Even if I should get beneath the devil's foot, and he should lift his sword to smite me, if I can say, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, for when I fall, yet shall I rise again," I will rise, and victory is mine. Faith overcomes even hell itself and its crowned monarch—for defense it is a full armor, and for attack, it is our battle-axe and weapons of war.

As for the *trials of this life,* it is marvelous what teachers these are to faith, for she perceives that troubles come from God. Chrysostom has a gloss upon that passage in Job, where Job says, "The Lord has taken away." He did not say the Chaldeans did it, nor the Sabeans, though they certainly were the instruments; but the *Lord* has taken away! The believer, seeing God's hand in everything that happens to him, feels pleased with all alike. As providence is in his Father's hand, he knows that it is always guided by love, by wisdom, and by divine grace. And so he thinks his worst days to be as good as his best; his foul days are fair; his dark days are bright. In full confidence he believes that all things work together for his good, and he leaves the working of them entirely with his God. Oh, beloved, it is only lack of faith that makes this world such a place of sorrow to God's people—but when we get faith, faith laughs at every tribulation—from whatever source it may come!

Thus I have shown you that "All things are possible to him who believes." Rise up, O hosts of hell, and shoot your arrows! You heavens, prepare your tempests! O earth, cast forth your floods, and you, O flesh, come forth with all your blasphemy and wickedness—faith walks unharmed amidst all your fury more than conqueror through Him who has loved her!

3. We turn your attention to another point; the *obtaining of eminence in divine grace*. Many professed Christians are always doubting and fearing, and they think that this is the necessary state of believers. By no means, brothers and sisters! "All things are possible to him who believes." And it is possible for you to get into a state in which a doubt or a fear shall be but as a bird of passage flitting across your soul, but never lingering there! When you read in biographies of the high and sweet communion enjoyed by favored saints you sigh, "Alas, these are not for me." Oh climber, if you have but faith, you shall stand upon the very pinnacle of the temple—for "All things are possible to him who believes." I know you read of what some great men have done for Jesus; what they have enjoyed of Him; how much they have been like He is; how they have been able to endure for His sake; and you say, "Ah, as for me, I am but a worm! I can never attain to this." There is nothing which one saint was that you may not be! There is no height of divine grace, no attainment of

spirituality, no position, or assurance, no post of duty which is not open to you, if you have but the power to believe! Get up, get up from your dunghills—lay aside your sackcloth and your ashes—it is not right that you should grovel in the dust, oh children of a king! Ascend! The golden throne of assurance is waiting for you! The crown of confidence in Jesus is ready to bedeck your brow! Wrap yourself in scarlet and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day; for, if you believe, all your land shall flow with oil, and wine, and milk, and honey—your soul shall be as a watered garden, and your spirit shall be satiated as with marrow and fatness. "All things are possible to him who believes."

4. And yet, a fourth point; the power of faith in reference to *prayer*. Here "All things are possible to him who believes." In prayer we are sometimes staggered by reason of the *great* things we are about to ask; but faith looks at the great promise, the great God, and His great love, and thinks that even a great thing is but a crumb from the Master's table! Then, again, we are often driven back by a sense of unworthiness; but faith looks at *Christ's* worthiness, and believes that *His* worthiness is quite sufficient to put our unworthiness altogether out of court! Then we are apt to think of God's delays; but faith thinks that God cannot deny, though He may delay—so she hangs on till the promise is fulfilled. Though the vision tarries, she waits for it till it comes, for sure is she that it *will* come! And, oh, it is a splendid thing to see faith wait upon God in prayer, and forswear all carnal means, depending simply and wholly upon the naked promise, and believing that God can do His own work, and perform His own Word. Brothers and sisters, no person ought to doubt in these modern times that God will answer prayer, and that faith with prayer can do anything! We have often heard of George Muller, of Bristol. There stands, in the form of those magnificent orphan houses full of orphans, supported without committees, without secretaries, supported only by that man's prayers and faith—there stands, in solid brick and mortar, a testimony to the fact that God hears prayer! But, do you know that Mr. Muller's case is but one among many? Remember the work of Francke at Halle. Look at the Rough House just out of Hamburgh, where Dr. Wichern, commencing with a few reprobate boys of Hamburgh, only waiting upon God's help and goodness, has now a whole village full of boys and girls, reclaimed and saved—and is sending out on the right hand, and on the left, brothers to occupy posts of usefulness in every land! Remember brother Gossner, of Berlin, and how mightily God has helped him to send out not less than 200 missionaries throughout the length and breadth of the earth, preaching Christ, while he has for their support nothing but the bare promise of God, and faith which has learned to reach the hand of God, and take from it all it needs! And need I remind you of a story we told you last Friday night—the story of Pastor Harms, in Hermaunsburg, where, by the power of that man's faith in preaching the Word, he has seen the barren wilderness made to blossom like the rose! His Church has become a very model of what a Church of God ought to be, a living, working body, from which he sends out missionaries to the coast of Africa, having nothing for their supply but the

offerings of the people, drawn from them by the exercise of prayer and faith! I was reading a memorable passage in his life, where he says he was wanting to send his missionaries out to the Gallas tribe in Africa, but could not find any means. And so he says, "Then I knocked diligently on the dear God in prayer; and since the praying man dares not sit with his hands in his lap, I sought among the shipping agents, but came to no speed. And I turned to Bishop Gobat in Jerusalem, but had no answer; and then I wrote to the missionary Krapf in Mornbaz, but the letter was lost. Then one of the sailors who remained said, 'Why not build a ship and you can send out as many, and as often as you will?' The proposal was good! But the money! That was a time of great conflict, and I wrestled with God, for no one encouraged me, but the reverse. And even the true friends, and brothers and sisters hinted that I was not quite in my senses. When Duke George of Saxony lay on his deathbed, and was yet in doubt to whom he should flee with his soul, whether to the Lord Christ and His dear merits, or to the pope and his good works, there spoke a trusty courtier to him—'Your grace, *straightforward makes the best runner*.' That word has lain fast in my soul. I had knocked at men's doors, and found them shut, and yet the plan was manifestly good, and for the glory of God. What was to be done? *Straightforward makes the best runner*. I prayed fervently to the Lord, laid the matter in His hands, and, as I rose up at midnight from my knees, I said with a voice that almost startled me in the quiet room—*forward now, in God's name!* From that moment there never came a thought of doubt into my mind."

Friends, the Churches of Christ have no need of the modern machinery which has supplanted the simplicity of faith! I verily believe if the Lord swept the committees, secretaries, and missionary societies out of the universe, we would be better without them if our churches would but trust God, send out their own men, raise the money to support them, and believe that God would bless them! I hope the church will soon say, like David in Saul's clanking armor, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tried them," and with only her sling and her stone, confident in her God, I trust she will confront her foe. We can do all things if we can but trust Christ! "All things are possible to him who believes," but nothing is possible to your schemes and to your systems! God will sweep them away, and happy shall be that man who shall lead the van in their utter destruction! Go up against her; take away her bulwarks, for they are not the Lord's. He did not ordain them, nor will He stand by them! Act in faith, O you people of God, and prove the power of prayer, for "All things are possible to him who believes."

5. There is another point, upon which I have already entrenched, that is, *in the service of God* "All things are possible to him who believes." I know the devil will say to you, "Why, you have no gifts." And what if you have not? If you have the gift of *faith*, you may do somewhat, and fulfill your mission. Perhaps you are a minister; you have been laboring in a village with very little success. Brother, may it not be that you did not believe that God would give you success? For if you had believed it, you would have had it! You are not straitened in God, but straitened in your

own heart! I know what it is to go to my chamber and feel ashamed of many a sermon I have preached, and moan and groan over it; and I have known what it is to discover, within a month, that the sermon has been far more useful in conversion than those which I thought had something about them which might render them effective! The fact is, God wants not *our* power, but our *weakness!* Not our greatness but our *nothingness!* Oh, brother, if God has called you to a work that is ten times harder than you have strength to perform, go and do it in *His* strength, and "All things are possible to him who believes." I would that this age would breed a few extravagant men—we are getting so dull, so cold, so common-place—we all run in the same cart rut, imitating one another! In the sight of one of the heroes of old, we little men do walk under their huge legs, and peep about to find ourselves dishonorable graves; and all this is because we have left off faith! Let a man believe that God has called him to a mission; let him say, "Forward, in God's name!" and that man will carve his name in the rock of ages, and leave memorials behind him which angels shall gaze upon when the names of emperors and kings have been swept into oblivion! Men and brethren in this Church! Many and many a time have I stirred you up to faith, and there are some few of you who begin to know what faith means; but, oh, I fear there are still many of you who have not come to the fullness of the meaning of faith. To live in a region of miracles, to be called fanatics, to see God's hand as visibly as you see your own, to recognize Him as greater than second causes, to find Him as one whose arm *you* can move, whose power *you* can command, to stand in an extraordinary position, far above the place where reason can put you—to know that you are a distinguished, separated, especially-favored child of God—oh, this is heaven begun below! Believe me I often marvel how people can think that the present attainments of the church are all the church can expect. I look upon decent tradespeople, respectable ministers, and amiable women, and so forth, doing something but doing very, very little—and I am apt to say—"What? What? Is this all Christ shed His blood for—to make us do *this?* Is this all the Holy Spirit does, to make a man get through a decent sermon on a Sunday? Is this all? Is this God's work?

I see God's work in nature, and there are towering Alps, and roaring seas, and waterfalls lashed to fury; but I look on God's work in the Church—little, little, little everywhere! Littleness is stamped upon the brow of today! We do not *do* and *dare;* and I am inclined to think that until we see some great and daring deed attempted, and some great and marvelous thing done for Christ, we shall not see the glory of the Lord revealed, so that all flesh shall see it together! What are we doing here, all of us cooped up in this little island, all of us living in England? "The *world* lies in the wicked one." How is it our hearts beat not for the heathen? We must stay at home; we have calls. But is not the call of God louder still, if we had but faith? But we are so carnal—we live so much on "the things that are seen," that we cannot do a rash, brave, imprudent act for the Master. God help us to do it! Then shall the Church arise and put on her beautiful garments! And woe to you, Askelon, when Israel's

God is in the camp! Woe to you, Gaza, for your gates shall be carried on our shoulders, when once we believe we are strong enough to bear them to the top of the hill, posts and bars and all! "All things are possible," in the service of God, "to him who believes."

Finally, when we shall come to die, sickness shall cause us no anxiety; the solemn mysteries of the last article shall give us no alarm; the grave shall be no place of gloom! Judgment shall know no terrors—eternity shall have no horrors; for to him who believes, all things are possible, and death and death's shade give way before faith. Heaven yields to faith; hell trembles at it; earth is powerless before it, and lies in the hands of the faithful man, like clay upon the potter's wheel, to be molded as he wills.

II. I come to my last point, and may God bless it. WHERE LIES, THEN, THE SECRET STRENGTH OF FAITH? It lies in the food it feeds on; for faith studies *what the promise is*—an emanation of divine grace, an overflowing of the great heart of God! And faith says, "My God could not have given this promise, except from love and grace; therefore it is quite certain that this promise will be fulfilled." Then faith thinks, "Who *gave* this promise?" It considers not so much its greatness, as "Who is the author of it?" She remembers that it is God, who cannot lie—God omnipotent, God immutable—and therefore she concludes that the promise must be fulfilled; and forward she goes in this firm conviction! Then she remembers, also, *why* the promise was given—namely, for God's glory, and she feels perfectly sure that God's glory is safe—that He will never stain His own escutcheon, nor mar the luster of His own crown; and therefore she concludes that the promise must and will stand! Then faith also considers the amazing *work of Christ* as being a clear proof of the Father's intention to fulfill His word. "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?" Then faith looks back upon *the past,* for her battles have strengthened her, and her victories have given her courage. She remembers that God never has failed her! No, that He never did once fail *any* of His children. She recollects times of great peril, when deliverance came—hours of awful need, when as her day, her strength was; and she says, "No. I never will be led to think that He can now forswear and change His character, and leave His servant.

Faith, moreover, feels that she cannot believe a hard thing of her dear God. Is it wrong to use that expression? I must use it, for He is dear to me! I think this is one of the things I have repented of above all other sins I have committed—the sin of ever doubting Him who loves me so well that He had sooner die than I should perish, and did die that I might live! What? That God so dear to my soul—do I doubt Him? I would not spread a report that my father was a liar, or that my mother would forswear herself. No, blessed parents, you would not be unkind to me, and, my blessed God, my faith knows that You cannot be unkind—our love will *make* You faithful even if your faithfulness were not enough in itself! If our God *can* leave us, then indeed am I mistaken in His character. If I can *dare* something for God, and He can leave me, then have I misread

Scripture. I do not believe, young warrior, if God shall prompt you to dash into the thick of the battle that He will leave you, as Joab did Uriah, to fall by the arrows of the enemy. Only dare it, and God will be greater than your daring! But we refuse to be honorable. A little hardship, a little difficulty, a little danger, and we shrink back to our shameful sloth! Oh that we would rise to the glory of believing!

Dearly beloved, I have tried thus to stir up your souls; but I am very conscious that we cannot have this faith in Christ, except as we have more of His Holy Spirit. But then we have the promise—"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 who ask Him?" Ask for more faith! This Church is enough by itself for the conversion of the whole world, if God will give us faith enough! If the little band at Jerusalem were all that was needed, a band of more than 2,000 faithful men and women might be enough, if we had faith! And look at all the churches around—would their success be as little as it is, if they had more faith? All things are possible, and yet we do nothing! Everything within our reach, and yet we are poor! Heaven itself on our side, and yet we are defeated! Shameful unbelief, be you put to death forever! Glorious faith, live you in our souls! I hope that both sinner and saint will believe in the mercy, and goodness, and truth of God, as revealed in Christ, and that we will take this home with us for today's meal—"All things are possible to him who believes."—

"Faith treads on the world and on hell;
It vanquishes death and despair.
And, O! Let us wonder to tell,
It overcomes heaven by prayer—
Bids sins of a crimson-like dye
Be spotless as snow and as white—
And raises the sinner on high
To dwell with the angels of light!"

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SELF-DELUSION
NO. 475

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 19, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."
Luke 13:24.

EVERY wise merchant will occasionally hold a stock-taking, when he will cast up his accounts, examine what he has on hand, and ascertain decisively whether his trade is prosperous or declining. Every man who is wise in the kingdom of heaven will do the same by himself; he will cry, "Search me, O God, and try me." And he will frequently set apart special seasons for self-examination, to discover whether things are right between God and his soul. The God whom we worship is a great heart-searcher; of old His servants knew Him as "The Lord which searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men." We, who are called to be the mouth for God unto the people, feel ourselves impelled to stir you up in His name to make diligent search, for we would not have you come short of the promised rest. We would be unfaithful to your souls if we did not warn you against deception, and excite you to solemn trial of your state. That which every wise man does, that which God Himself does with you, I may well exhort you to do with yourselves this morning! O may God help you to deal very faithfully with your own hearts. Let the oldest saint here look well to the fundamentals of his piety, for gray heads may cover black hearts; and let not the young believer, in the first flush of his joyous faith, despise the word of warning, for the greenness of youth may be joined to the rottenness of hypocrisy!

I shall not, this morning, aim to introduce doubts and fears into your minds; no, verily, I rather hope that the rough winds of self-examination may help to drive them away! It is not security, but carnal security, which we would kill; not confidence, but fleshly confidence, which we would overthrow; not peace, but false peace, which we would destroy. I am sure I am right in taking such a text as this, and in desiring to force it home upon your attention; for Christ, speaking to His own disciples, says, "I say unto YOU." Notice with great care how He repeats the personal pronoun, *you, you, yourselves,* some 12 times in a few verses; as if this were a matter especially belonging to professors—a subject which ought to come under our immediate notice, not as having reference to aliens and foreigners from the commonwealth of Israel, but to us, the professed followers of Jesus Christ! Let us bow our strength to our solemn work at once. O great Master of assemblies, make our words as goads to the conscience, and fasten them as nails in the memory!

I. Our first remark is this—MANY PROFESSORS ARE DECEIVED. So the text teaches us. It does not say, "A few *may* be misled," but *"Many shall* seek to enter in, and shall not be able." That many professors are

deceived is clear enough from the language of Christ Himself, both here and in other places. For instance, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom; and five of them were wise and *five were foolish*." We hope that in our churches we have not such a division as this! It were a fearful thing to contemplate only one half as sincere, and the other half graceless, having the lamp of profession, without the secret vessel of spiritual life! Yet, so alarming a proportion as five out of ten should make us search ourselves very carefully, lest we are found among the virgins, and among the virgins having lamps, yes, and among those whose lamps are burning—and yet, should be cast away as having no oil in our vessels! Remember how the Master in another parable puts the multitude of the lost clearly before us—"When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." Now, by these goats are meant those who are in the flock, but are not sheep. A separation is needed, for they once were mingled; yes, so mingled that they had a sort of hope, and were able impudently to plead—"Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto You?" Yet, I do not discover in the parable that there were more sheep than goats. I find, at any rate that the goats did make up a very considerable multitude! And though they expected to receive the benediction with the blessed, He said, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Remember, also, another parable of our Savior, where the sower went forth to sow his seed. Here there were three places where the seed fell in vain and only one where it brought forth fruit! And, out of the three where it fell in vain, there were two that must be numbered with professors. In the one case, it fell where the thorns sprang up and choked it—there was religion but worldliness killed it! In the next, it fell where there was not much depth of earth; and the Master tells us that there are some who hear the Word, and with joy receive it; but when persecution comes by-and-by, they are offended, for there was never a deep work in their inner spirit. Tremble, my hearers, as many of you as have received the Word with joy and gladness, lest *you* should be found to have had no depth of earth and so, by-and-by, the good things which have blossomed and budded in you should perish before the burning sun of persecution!

Nor are these parables so few; I might occupy much of your time by recalling them; but let me remind you that Christ Himself is compared by Malachi to a refiner. "He shall purify the sons of Levi; He shall be like a refiner's fire, and like a fuller's soap." Now, of the mass that is put into the refining furnace, how little comes out pure gold or silver! All those who have to deal with metals will tell you that the ore and the slag make up, by far, the greater part, and that if they get but a small percentage, they are well rewarded for all their toil and trouble. The Master says He will bring a third part through the fire, and happy should it be for us, if

we are not found among the two-thirds that shall be put away like dross! You will remember, too, that Christ compares Himself to a farmer winnowing his corn. "Whose fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Ask the farmer whether the chaff does not make a very considerable part of the unwinnowed mass, and whether it is not most intimately connected with the wheat. A large heap, it lies upon the floor—wait till the fan has been used, and diligently applied, and you shall see the heap diminished by handfuls, for the chaff has fled, and now only the good grain is left. All these metaphors, and many more, go to warn us that there are many professors who are deceived—many who are in Israel, who are not of Israel—many who are mingled with us, who, like the mixed multitude which came up out of Egypt with Moses, shall never enter into the promised land, but shall leave their carcasses to perish in the wilderness!

But, dear friends, we are not left to inferences, for Holy Scripture gives us facts! Let me recall them to your recollection. Among the apostles themselves, chosen by Christ, having Christ for their teacher and exemplar, there was a Judas. "I have chosen you 12, and one of you is a devil." Were it very reasonable to suppose that our modern churches have a smaller proportion than this of devilish deceivers? If even among apostles, one in 12 is a liar, deceiving and being deceived, O Lord, how should Your people search and try themselves, lest they be found wanting at the last! Remember, too, that in the early Church, within a few days after the Spirit of God had been poured out, when that Church was in the overflowing joy of her espousals, there were found at least two who were false to their profession! Ananias and Sapphira "lied unto the Holy Spirit," and fell dead before the rebuke of Peter. If, with the Spirit just poured out, there were spots in their solemn feasts; if in the first glory of the Church's sky there were wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness and darkness forever, how much more in these days of the Church's weakness, when we have need enough to cry, "Descend, O sacred fire, descend again; for without You Your Church shall die"? The Book of the Acts of the Apostles also informs us of an instance of a wonderful success in the city of Samaria; and yet even here, among the early converts of this revival, there was found an arch-impostor! Philip the evangelist preaches in Samaria, and it is written, "Then Simon Magus believed also." But you know how false he was; for Peter said, "Your money perish with you, because you have thought that the Holy Spirit can be purchased with money." "I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Well, if in one of the earliest of revivals, when converts were numerous, when miracles abounded, when the whole city was full of joy, we still find a Simon Magus, what must we expect now?

And, brothers and sisters, I scarcely need to remind you, that with Paul as an overseer of the Church, the cases of deception and apostasy were not few. "All they which are in Asia are turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." "Demas has forsaken me." "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil." Hymenaeus and Alexander having made shipwreck of faith, the apostle says, "Whom I have de-

livered unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme." There were, even with Paul as an overseer—I say, there were even in such churches as the Galatians—men who were accursed because they preached another gospel; and in the Church of Corinth there were found evil ones who had to be cast out of the assembly! Moreover, beloved, you will remember that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself gives no flattering character of the seven churches in Asia, though they were like seven golden candlesticks! Of the best of them He might say, "I have somewhat against you." Of Sardis, it is said, "You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments." And of Laodicea, you will remember, it was, "neither cold nor hot, so that Christ did spew it out of His mouth." Put these things together, and you will see they make up a mass of hypocrisy and deception, in the most favorable age of the Church's history! And we, therefore, think ourselves far from an uncharitable judgment when we expect to find in the Church of today many who are deceived.

But, friends, I need not argue thus; for we *know* that there are such, and know it to our shame! Every now and then a cedar falls in our midst. "Howl fir trees," when the cedars fall; we have seen—who has not, that has had any experience in the religious world—we have seen our leaders turn their backs in the day of battle; and our teachers fail to sustain their own character! Ah, and we have the painful conviction that there are others who are not discovered yet, whose sins do not go beforehand unto judgment but follow after, who are nevertheless tainted at the core. There are the many covetous professors who are as grasping and as grinding as if they never professed to be Christians; and you know that "Covetousness is idolatry." There are the many time-serving Christians who hold with the world and with Christ, too; and you know that we cannot serve two masters. There are the many secret sinners among Christians who have their petty vices which come not under human observation, and who, because they are thought to be good, write themselves down among the godly! Now, we know there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and woe to them when their secret sins shall be published on the housetops!

Then, we have the legal professors who trust to their own works, and shall find that the curse of Sinai shall wither them. And what more shall I say? Have we not many who are not so inconsistent that we could put our finger upon any open sin sufficient to deserve excommunication, but who are guilty of enormous spiritual wickedness? They are dead; they bring forth no fruit; their hearts are hard as a millstone with regard to the conversion of sinners; they have not the *faith* of God's elect; they do not live by faith; they have not the *spirit* of Christ, and therefore, they are none of His! God knows we have sought to use all care and diligence in this church, both to keep out unworthy persons, and to cast out unhallowed livers; but, despite all that, we cannot but be conscious, and we tell it to you faithfully, that the enemy still continues to sow tares among the wheat! The gold is mixed with the dross, and the wine with water—for evil men thrust themselves into the heritage of the Lord. When our muster-roll shall be revised at last, how many out of our more than 2,000 members will be found to be base-born pretenders unto godliness! O my

brothers and sisters, I implore you by the precious blood of Christ, which was not shed to make you hypocrites, but shed that a sincere people might show forth His praise—I beseech you, search and look, lest at the last it be said of you—"Mene, Mene Tekel, you are weighed in the balances and found wanting."

II. We shall now turn to a second point. IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THERE ARE FALSE PROFESSORS.

There is an imitation of the externals of godliness which is not easy to detect. Art can carve a statue so that it almost breathes; and some of us, in looking at very skillful paintings, have mistaken them for realities. In a notable picture in the Exhibition, you will have noticed an imitation of sunlight shining under a door so well painted that many go up to it to ascertain if it is not really a gleam from the sun! We know that men can counterfeit coins and notes so well that only the most experienced can detect them; and in all commercial transactions, men are so well aware of the subtlety of their fellows, that they look well lest they are deceived. The vital mysteries of godliness are mysterious—the inner life cannot be perceived by the carnal eye, and the outer life of the godly seems to most men to be but morality carried out with care; and therefore, it becomes but a very simple task for a man to make himself look just like a Christian, so as to deceive the very elect. To learn by heart that which others say *from* the heart—to get the outline of a believer's experience, and then to adapt it skillfully to one's self as *our* experience—this is a thing so simple that, instead of wondering that there *are* hypocrites, I often marvel that there are not 10 times more! And then, again, the graces—the real graces within—even they are very easy to counterfeit! There is a repentance that needs to be repented of—and yet, it approaches as near as possible to true repentance. Does repentance make men hate sin? They who have a false repentance may detest some crimes. Does repentance make men resolve that they will not sin? So will this false repentance; for Balaam said, "If Barak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I will not go beyond the word of the Lord." Does true repentance make men humble themselves? So does false repentance; for Ahab humbled himself before God, and yet he perished! There is a line of distinction so fine that an eagle's eye has not seen it, and only God Himself, and the soul which is enlightened with His Spirit, can tell whether this repentance is genuine or not. And as for faith, how easy it is to counterfeit this! Even in Christ's day, there was a faith which worked miracles, but did not save the soul! And Paul tells us that if we had a faith which could remove mountains, yet if we had not charity, it would profit us nothing. I know it, that a man may say that he is saved by faith without works; and his faith may give him comfort, his faith may help him in trials, it may make him forsake some sins, and yet, it may not be the faith which looks alone to Christ, and so saves the soul. To imitate these things, to so cunning and well-practiced a counterfeiter as Satan, is no great difficulty!

Dear friends, let us remember too that there are so many things which *help* a man to deceive himself. He himself is naturally disposed to be very partial. "Let well enough alone," is a proverb which most men have

learned. Very few men *care* to look at the worst of their own state; they would rather say, "Peace, peace," than think too harshly of themselves. What man ever gave *himself* a bad character? Or if he did, what man could not abundantly excuse himself for having such a character? Then, there is the devil who never wants us to be too careful, for heedlessness is one of the nets in which he takes his prey; he will whisper in the ear, "It is all well," and so beguile the simple soul to its sure ruin! Besides that, there are the inconsistencies of true Christians. Self and Satan will always use these. "Why, you are as good as old So-and-So." Or, "David sinned; therefore you may be a saint and sin! Lot fell; therefore you may fall and be a saint." And so, what with the flesh, what with the sins of true Christians, and what with the devil, it is easy for a man to fall asleep in carnal security, dreaming about heaven, and never having his dream broken till he lifts up his eyes in hell!

Beloved, I must add to this point that I marvel not that so many are deceived, when I see the careless way in which you deal with religion. When men have to do with their estates, they are very careful—they retain a lawyer to go back over the title-deeds perhaps for two or three hundred years! In trade, they will hurry here and there to attend to their commercial engagements; they would not launch into speculations, nor would they run great risks. But the soul, the poor soul—how men play with it as a toy and despise it as if it were worthless earth! Two or three minutes in the morning, when they first roll out of bed; two or three odd minutes in the evening, when they are nearly asleep—the ends of the day given to their souls—and all the best part given to the body! And then, the Sunday! How carelessly spent by most people! With what indifference do you lend your ears too often to the preaching of the Word! It is an old song; you have heard it so many times, heaven has become a trifle to you! Hell is almost a jest; eternity a notion, and death but a bugaboo. Alas, alas! It is a marvel that there are not more deceived! The wonder is that *any* find the gate—that any discover eternal life—when we are so, so mad, so foolish, so insane, as to trifle where we ought to be awfully in earnest, and to play and toy where the whole heart is all too little to be given to a work of such dread, such everlasting importance! God help us, since it is so easy to be deceived, to search and watch, and look and test, that we are not found castaways at the last!

III. But now, for a third point, and that is a very solemn one, namely, that THIS DELUSION MAY CONTINUE THROUGHOUT LIFE, even to the very last moment; and probably the first minutes of our life in the next world may be tinctured with the same delusion! Strange to think so, and yet, some Scriptures seem to hint as much. Let me tell you one or two parables which Christ has used, which prove that this delusion may last long. There are the tares and the wheat—"Let both grow together until the harvest." It appears that the time of division does not arrive until the reapers, who are the angels, gather together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn. So, you see, you may stand in a professing state through your whole threescore years and ten, and you may be carried to your grave, followed by a train of devout men, who make great lamentation over you; and yet, though laid in the grave like a sheep, the

worm may devour you, and you may wake in the morning to shame and everlasting contempt! The separation may never occur, so far as the Church on earth is concerned; it may go on till the angelic revisers shall correct the list, and cut you off who are not of God. Another parable—the Draw Net repeats the same warning, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that is cast into the sea, and gathers of every kind." When does the division come? Not till they have drawn the net to land! *Then,* they put the good into vessels, and throw the bad away. So not till the land comes—that is, till eternity has begun, shall be the great division! And some of you may remain in the net of the Church till it is pulled ashore at the day of judgment, and we may, some of us, be expecting to find you in the vessels—and yet, you will be thrown away! Or we may expect ourselves to be there, and yet ourselves may be thrown away.

I refer you again to another parable, where the same truth of God is taught but, perhaps, even more forcibly. A great king made a supper, and it is said, "When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, friend, how came you in here?" Here was a man who remained in the kingdom—that is, in the visible Church—till the King came in to see the guests—that is, until Christ comes to judge the quick and dead. Then was he cast out, but not till then. Many postpone all trial of themselves as to their possession of the righteousness of Christ to the last moment; no, some manage to defer it, with all the miserable discoveries which it brings, until the grave is past, and the great judgment is held, but further, the lie cannot be played—further, the examination cannot be deferred! When Jesus comes, it will be impossible for any to remain ignorant of their true state, for that day will pour a flood of light into the dark corners of the dark hearts, and reveal the most secret of all secret things! Solemn reflection! Solemn reflection for every man and woman here who has made a profession of godliness! You may be sitting at the table, and you may continue to sit there without any of your fellow guests taking any exception to you; but when the King comes in, whose eyes can read the secrets of all hearts, He will say, "How came you in here, not having on a wedding garment?" Then will your nakedness and defilement startle you from your fancied security! Speechless confusion shall cover you; your heart shall find no excuse, the sentence shall bear justice on its forefront. "Bind him hand and foot." Let resistance and escape be made impossible. "Cast him into outer darkness," for he shunned the light of God; "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"—fit doom for one who would not weep nor search his soul!

Sundry other parables utter the same warning notes, but I shall quote only one more and that is, the unprofitable servant. He was a servant, and remained so, and he had the impudence to present himself among the other servants to receive the reward. Yes, and when he had no reward, he had the impertinence to argue with his Master, and to claim that he had done his best with his Lord's money. You may have a talent—and, oh, how many of you have—which you are burying in the earth; and you may never be upbraided by your fellow servants; but when *He* comes, you may, with brazen face, go up to ask for your reward,

but He shall say, "Take the unprofitable servant!" And you know what the doom of such must be!

Therefore, from Christ's own language, we have the most satisfactory and solemn cause to believe that the delusion of many may continue even to the last. The blindness of the self-deceiver may continue until he finds himself in the tenfold night of eternal perdition. But we need not go to Scripture for a proof of this, for we *know* that it is so ourselves. We have not an exact way of testing men's states—it were foolish to pretend to infallibility—but there are times when one can form a very accurate guess, the door of man's heart, now and then, stands partially open. Deathbeds tell tales. It is not every man who has the hardihood to dance with death, and wear a mask upon the brink of the grave! Ah, how many there are who go through the first and the second gate, but they cannot open the iron gate that leads into the city. I have seen some who could brave it out when in life, which have made a sorry figure in the article of death. It is a gloomy thing to hear a high professor, after all his boastings, compelled to condemn himself out of his own mouth—"I have been a hypocrite; I have sat at the Lord's table, and I have drunk the cup of devils, too! I was respected, when I was not respectable; I was accepted among saints, when I was a foul villain the whole while." Some men have had to hang in chains before their execution. Some wretches lift up their eyes before they are actually in torment. But there have been others, more unemotional still, who have gone right through the iron gate, with perfect quietness and calmness; and when we have heard their friends say, "Oh, he died such an easy death!" we have remembered that passage concerning the wicked, "There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." This is the mark of the wicked, not of the righteous! O that sullen quietude, that dead calm, in which some men float into another world! How wretched that awful peace which heralds the overwhelming tempest and hurricane! Have I not watched the spirits of unregenerate professors, and seen the ghastly horror of the dread suspense which they labored to conceal? Not that their lives were inconsistent, but they had no *spiritual* life—no care for souls, no love for Christ, no private prayer, no secret fellowship with Him; and now, at last, they have no triumph, and no comfort of the Spirit! When their time has come to die, they have talked as glibly as any, and they have closed their eyes as peacefully as any, but, like Dives, "In hell, they have lifted up their eyes, being in torment," and found their delusion dissipated, when, alas, it was too late!

I warn you, dear hearers, that delusion may continue for even fifty, sixty, or seventy years! You may say, "It is all well with my soul," and have neither doubt nor fear the whole time—and yet you may turn out rotten at the last! The glorious Dreamer has sketched the end of the false professor; I quote his words that you may see the scene before your eyes. "Now while I was gazing upon all these things, I turned my head to look back, and saw Ignorance come up to the riverside; but he soon got over, and that without that difficulty which the other two men met with. For it happened that there was then in that place, one Vainhope, a ferryman,

that with his boat helped him over; so he, as the others I saw, did ascend the hill, to come up to the gate, only he came alone; neither did any men meet him with the least encouragement. When he was come up to the gate, he looked up to the writing that was above, and then began to knock, supposing that entrance should have been quickly administered to him; but he was asked by the men who looked over the top of the gate, Where did you come from? And what do you want? He answered, I have eaten and drank in the presence of the King, and He has taught in our streets. Then they asked him for his certificate, that they might go in and show it to the King. So he fumbled in his bosom for one and found none. Then they said, Have you none? But the man answered never a word. So they told the King, but He would not come down to see him but commanded the two Shining Ones who conducted Christian and Hopeful to the city, to go out and take Ignorance and bind him hand and foot and take him away. Then they took him up and carried him through the air to the door that I saw in the side of the hill, and put him in there. *Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction.*"

IV. The next point is this—that this delusion, even to the last, MAY SEEM TO HAVE THE MOST EXCELLENT ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT IT. I shall prove this from Scripture. A man may be a deceiver, and he may accomplish his task all the more readily because he can say, "I have made, and I have maintained, a very respectable profession in the church. I do not know that I have ever tarnished my character; I believe I am looked upon by most people as a pattern and example." Yes, this may be all correct, and yet, you may be shut out at the last! Remember that the five foolish virgins *were* virgins. They had not forfeited the chastity of their character, but were of such good repute as to have virtuous companions, and to have allowance to meet the honored bridegroom. They had lamps. Mark that. I do not find that they threw them away. Those lamps were burning, too, for a long time; and they had *some* oil, mark, or else the lamps could not have burned so long; but they had not the oil in the vessel, though they had the oil in the lamp. Here was the fatal blunder. So the man may say, "Well, I am all right; the lamp burns; does it not burn as well as yours? *You* say you have other oil in your vessel; that does not matter; I have as much oil *in my lamp* as you; mine shines as brightly; I am careful with it; and if *I* sleep, you sleep too; so that I have as decent a profession as you have." And yet, for all this, *God* may at the last tear you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver you. How often is the candle of the wicked put out, and his beauty utterly consumed!

Again, some may bring a very careful outward observance of religion as an excellent argument, and think the conclusion to be drawn is very satisfactory. "Lord, we have eaten and drank in Your presence, and You have preached in our streets." You have been baptized; you are always at the Lord's table; your pew always sees you in it whenever the doors are opened. All this is very proper and right; but it may all help to make you more easily deceived! You may conclude that you must be right because of this, and yet, the *Master* may say, "I never knew you." If means of divine grace could raise men to heaven, Capernaum would not have been

cast down to hell! If attendance at the temple could save the soul, then Caiaphas would be in glory! If hearing the Word would be enough, then Herod would be in heaven! O brothers and sisters, more than this you must have, or you will miss everlasting life! Further, you may even go the length of manifesting much religious activity, and you may conclude from this that it must be all right with you—as those did who said, "In Your name we have done many wonderful works." We may have been preachers, and have converted our hundreds and attracted our thousands; we may have been Sunday school teachers, and led our little ones to Christ; we may have been missionaries, whose names have been applauded at the public meeting; but, for all that, we may be found castaways at the last; for it is not the doing of mighty works, but *vital union with Christ* by real faith, which shall be the point that shall decide the question! O friends, your preaching, praying, almsgiving, tract distributing—unless divine grace is in you—only help you in your delusion, and make it the more difficult to awaken you from it! The more diligent in service the self-deceiver becomes, the more strong is the net in which his foot is taken. Every duty performed may be but another fetter to bind our souls if we are graceless professors! O that I could awaken you, you desperately bewitched and stupefied deceivers!

Dear friends, even the righteousness of God may furnish us with a plea if we choose our own delusions, and from every holy thing we may fetch apologies. We may say, "Religion is very hard; God is very strict and severe; nobody can carry it out as he should; therefore, it will be well with me." Just as *he* said, "Lord, I knew that you were an austere man, gathering where you had not scattered seed, and reaping where you had not sown." And so, knowing that we are not what we should be, we may keep up our delusion by the excuse that there are very few who are, and that God is a hard Master. And so we may go on, keeping our eyes fast shut, till the flames of hell shall wake us up to sleep and dream no more! I know some who will even make it an excuse that they did not know what religion required of them, and they will plead ignorance. "It is true," they will say, "I have not done as I should, but I did not know about it." Just as they did on the left hand, "When did we see *You* hungry and fed You not, or thirsty, and gave You no drink?" "I did not know," says the man, "that Christ was on earth! I knew there was a parcel of poor people about that many despised and called fanatics; I did not suppose that feeding them would have been feeding Christ; I did not know Christ." "No," says Christ, "and I do not know you; depart from Me, you workers of iniquity, for I *never* knew you." Ah, beloved, if you *will* be deceived, it is the easiest task in the world to accomplish your purpose! Any fool can delude himself; it needs no wise and persevering and patient man to invent a method by which to drag his soul into a damnable delusion; this can be done by sitting still! If you would be saved, you must "*Strive* to enter in at the narrow gate." But if you would be damned, there is no striving needed; it is only a little matter of neglect, and the whole is done. "How shall we escape, if we *neglect* so great a salvation?"

V. And now, to the last point—this delusion may last through life, and be sustained by many specious arguments, but IT MUST ALL BE DISPELLED.

Ah, if this pretty dreaming could last forever—if the man could have hope forever—then, I need not be earnest with you this morning! But since it must be dispelled, hear me! Hear me, brothers and sisters, while I briefly utter a few solemn warnings!

Remember, professor, you will then be all alone. There will be no minister to comfort you—no deacons and church members to say you have maintained a good profession. You will have then to look at your own acts, your own faith, and your own life, in the solemn privacy of eternity; and *then,* you will give the right verdict, if you do not now. Then, too, your conscience will be awake. You would give a thousand worlds if you could make it sleep then, for *conscience* is "the worm" of hell, and it "dies not." It is the fire that can *never* be quenched! Then, you will not be able to satisfy conscience with pretenses, nor with promises, but it will gnaw, and bite, and devour, and vex you; the fury of its fire will consume once and for all your proud conceits, and comfortable fancies. Then, too, your mind shall be more sensitive than it is now. Now, you think little of hell or heaven, time or eternity; but then, those words will stick like daggers in you! You will feel, then, that your soul *was* of importance—no, that it was all-important! You will then be made to feel those themes which now only enter your ears and are forgotten. There will be no cups in which to drown your thoughts, no theatres in which to dissipate your melancholy, no gay company in which to laugh or talk away the impressions of the Sunday. There will be no chance, then, of laughing at the minister, or pacifying your conscience about these things; but your sensitive soul, wounded in every point, shall be made to cry aloud, and never shall its cries cease, for then, you shall be lost, lost, lost forever! Then, your *knowledge* shall *increase*, and you shall know what you know not now, and all you know shall only make your folly appear the more folly, because when there was hope, you despised it, and when Christ was preached to you, you were content with the counterfeit, and despised the reality!

But hear me—hear me once again! Then, *God* shall deal with you! Now, it is only my poor voice; it is only my feeble utterance that goes to your heart today, and you will forget it all; or perhaps you do not feel it now. But when God deals with you, it will be another thing! Oh, if I were a Baxter, I would preach my sermon out in tears, and weep over you proud and high professors who will not search and examine yourselves whether you are in the faith! But, if *I* cannot get at you, God will! Those eyes of fire shall shed a light into the dark corners of your soul; that finger shall find out the leprous spots which now you have so well concealed; *His* hand shall rip open your breast, to look at your heart, and expose it to the assembled universe! As sure as God shall deal with you, so would I have you surely deal with God! Make *sure* work for eternity. Pull it down; pull it down, if it is built on the sand! Consume it, consume it, if it is "wood, hay, stubble," and cry to God this day that you may

build upon the rock, and use nothing but "gold, silver and precious stones," that your building may abide the fire!

Sinners, a word to you! If the professor, "If the righteous scarcely are saved," where will *you* appear? Drunkard, surely *you* shall drink the cup of wrath! Swearer, surely you shall have your "damns" and your "anathemas" replayed into your soul abundantly! Thief, you shall find that you have stolen your own soul! Harlot! Whoremonger! You shall find at the last that God abhors you, and He will cast you from His presence! I say, if even the best living of men need thus to search and try, and if many of *them* shall be shut out, careless sinners, what must then, become of you?

And you timid ones—you timid Christians! I have not preached this to alarm you. Let me bid you, however—fly to Jesus again this morning! If there is all this ado, when we come to sift and try, would it not be better for you and me to cling to the cross again, with, "Just as I am, I trust You, Jesus—I trust You alone"? For oh, remember, none can perish that are clinging to the cross!

But, proud professors! The last word must still be for you. You may soar, yes, like Icarus, with wings of wax, but the higher you fly, the more terrible will be your fall! And what will become of you? Think of what has become of others like you, now in hell! What would they give for your Sabbaths over again? What would they give to be here, that they might hear one faithful sermon—that they might repent and escape from the wrath of God? Think, while you are here, how they are cursing themselves to think that they threw away the golden hour, and lost the opportunity! How they gnaw their tongues, while they say, "I came from the table of God to the place of fiends; I came from the pulpit into hell; I descended from Mount Zion to the very depths of Hades; I was brought from Jerusalem to Tophet!" And this is to be your lot, proud professor, unless you repent! What do you say? Are you willing to make your bed in hell, after having talked of leaning your head on Jesus' bosom? What? Will you dwell with everlasting burnings, after having sung of everlasting love? What? Must you be driven from His presence, when you have boasted of being justified by His righteousness, and washed in His blood? It must be so, professor! It must be so unless God helps you to make true work, and real work, and sure work of it by the Holy Spirit! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved; for he who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned."

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CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN
NO. 476

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 12, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For our conversation is in heaven; from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."
Philippians 3:20.

THERE can be no comparison between a soaring seraph and a crawling worm. Christians ought so to live that it were idle to speak of a comparison between them and the men of the world. It would not be a comparison but a contrast. No scale of degrees should be possible; the believer should be a direct and manifest contradiction to the unregenerate. The life of a saint should be altogether above and out of the same list as the life of a sinner. We should compel our critics not to confess that moralists are good, and Christians a little better; but while the world is darkness, we should manifestly be light; and while the world lies in the wicked one, we should most evidently be of God, and overcome the temptations of that wicked one. Wide as the poles asunder, are life and death, light and darkness, health and disease, purity and sin, spiritual and carnal, divine and sensual! If we were what we profess to be, we should be as distinct a people in the midst of this world, as a white race in a community of Ethiopians; there should be no more difficulty in detecting the Christian from the worldling than in discovering a sheep from a goat, or a lamb from a wolf! Alas, the Church is so much adulterated, that we have to abate our glorying, and cannot exalt her character as we would. "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" O for the time when "our citizenship shall be in heaven," and the ignoble life of the man, whose god is his belly and whose end is destruction, shall be rebuked by our unworldly, unselfish character! There should be as much difference between the worldling and the Christian as between hell and heaven, between destruction and eternal life. As we hope at last that there shall be a great gulf separating us from the doom of the impenitent, there should be here a deep and wide gulf between us and the ungodly! The purity of our character should be such, that men must take knowledge of us that we are of another and superior race. God grant us more and more to be most clearly a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that we may show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light!

Brothers and sisters, tonight I exhort you to holiness, not by the precepts of the law; not by the thunders from Sinai; not by the perils or punishments which might fall upon you if you are unholy; but by the privileges to which you have been admitted! Gracious souls should only

be urged by arguments from divine grace. Whips are for the backs of fools, and not for heirs of heaven! By the honorable citizenship which has been bestowed upon you, I shall beseech you to let your citizenship be in heaven, and I shall urge that most prevailing argument, that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming, and therefore we should be as men and women who watch for our Lord, diligently doing service unto Him, that when He comes He may say unto us, "Well done, good and faithful servants." I know that the grace which is in you will freely answer to such a plea.

Our text, I think, might be best translated thus—"Our *citizenship* is in heaven." The French translation renders it, "As for us, our burgessship is in the heavens." Doddridge paraphrases it, "But we converse as citizens of heaven, considering ourselves as denizens of the New Jerusalem, and only strangers and pilgrims upon earth."

I. The first idea which is suggested by the verse under consideration is this—if our citizenship is in heaven, then WE ARE ALIENS HERE; we are strangers and foreigners, pilgrims and sojourners in the earth, as all our fathers were. In the words of Sacred Writ, "Here we have no continuing city," but, "we desire a better country, that is a heavenly." Let us illustrate our position. A certain young man is sent out by his father to trade on behalf of the family—he is sent to America, and he is just now living in New York. A very fortunate thing it is for him that his citizenship is in England; that, though he lives in America, and trades there, yet he is an alien, and does not belong to that afflicted nation; for he retains his citizenship with us on this side of the Atlantic. Yet there is a line of conduct which is due from him to the country which affords him shelter, and he must see to it that he does not fail to render it. Since *we* are aliens, we must remember to behave ourselves as aliens should, and by no means come short in our duty. We are affected by the position of our temporary country. A person trading in New York or Boston, though a freeman of the city of London, will find himself very much affected by the trade of the Dis-United States—when the merchants of his city suffer, he will find himself suffering with them, the fluctuations of their money market will affect his undertakings, and the stagnation of commerce will slacken his progress. But if prosperity should happily return, he will find that when the coffers of their merchants are getting full, his will be the better; and the happy development of trade will give buoyancy to his own ventures. He is not of the nation, and yet every trembling of the scale will affect him; he will prosper as that nation prospers, and he will suffer as that nation suffers; that is to say, not as a citizen, but as a trader.

And so we, in this country, find that though we are strangers and foreigners on earth, yet we share all the inconveniences of the flesh. No exemption is granted to us from the common lot of manhood. We are born to trouble, even as others, and have tribulation like the rest. When famine comes we hunger; and when war rages we are in danger. We are exposed to the same climate, bearing the same burning heat, or the same freezing cold; we know the whole train of ills, even as the citizens of earth know them. When God in mercy scatters liberally with both His hands the bounties of His providence, we take our share, though we are aliens,

yet we live upon the good of the land, and share the tender mercies of the God of Providence. Therefore we have to take some interest in it; and the good man, though he is a foreigner, will not live even a week in this foreign land without *seeking to do good* among the neighbors with whom he dwells! The good Samaritan sought not only the good of the Samaritan nation, but of the Jews. Though there was no sort of kinship among them (for the Samaritans were not, as we have often heard erroneously said, first cousins or relations to the Jews; not a drop of Jewish blood ever ran in the Samaritans' veins; they were strangers brought from Assyria; they had no relation to Abraham whatever) yet the good Samaritan, finding himself traveling between Jericho and Jerusalem, did good to the Jew, since he was in Judea. The Lord charged His people by His servant Jeremiah, "Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall you have peace." Since we are here, we must seek the good of this world. "To do good and to communicate forget not." "Love you your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and you shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." We must do our utmost while we are here to bring men to Christ, to win them from their evil ways, to bring them to eternal life, and to make them, with us, citizens of another, and a better land; for, to tell the truth, we are here as recruiting sergeants for heaven! We are here to give men the enlisting money, to bind upon them the blood-red colors of the Savior's service, to win them to King Jesus, that, by-and-by, they may share His victories after having fought His battles.

Seeking the good of the country as aliens, we must also remember that it behooves aliens to *keep themselves very quiet*. What business have foreigners to plot against the government, or to intermeddle with the politics of a country in which they have no citizenship? An Englishman in New York had best be without a tongue just now; if he should criticize the courage of the generals, the accuracy of their dispatches, or the genius of the President, he might meet with rather rough usage. He will be injudicious, indeed, if he cannot leave America to the Americans. So, in this land of ours, where you and I are strangers, we must be orderly sojourners, submitting ourselves constantly to those who are in authority, leading orderly and peaceable lives, and, according to the command of the Holy Spirit through the apostle, "honoring all men, fearing God, honoring the king," "submitting ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." I cannot say that I delight in political Christians; I fear that party-strife is a serious trial to believers, and I cannot reconcile our heavenly citizenship with the schemes of the election platform and the riot of the polling-booth. You must follow your own judgment here, but for my part, I am a foreigner even in England, and as such I mean to act! We are simply passing through this earth, and should bless it in our transit, but never yoke ourselves to its affairs. An Englishman may happen to be in Spain—he wishes a thousand things were different from what they are, but he does not trouble himself much about them. He

says, "If I were a Spaniard I would see what I could do to alter this government, but being an Englishman, let the Spaniards see to their own matters. I shall be back in my own country by-and-by and the sooner the better." So with Christians here; they are content very much to let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth; their politics concern their own country, they do not care much about any other. As *men* they love liberty, and are not willing to lose it even in the lower sense; but, spiritually, their politics are spiritual, and as citizens they look to the interest of that divine republic to which they belong, and they wait for the time when, having patiently borne with the laws of the land of their banishment, they shall come under the more beneficent sway of Him who reigns in glory, the King of kings, and Lord of lords! If it is possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men, and serve your day and generation still, but build not your soul's dwelling place here, for all this earth must be destroyed at the coming of the fiery day!

Again, let us remember that as aliens *we have privileges as well as duties*. The princes of evil cannot draft us into their regiments; we cannot be compelled to do Satan's work. The king of this world may make his vassals serve him, but he cannot raise a conscription upon aliens! He may order out his troops to this villainy, or to that dastardly service, but the child of God claims an immunity from all the commands of Satan; let evil maxims bind the men that acknowledge their sway, we are free, and acknowledge not the prince of the power of the air. I know that men of this world say we must keep up appearances; we must be respectable; we must do as others do; we must swim with the tide; we must move with the crowd. But not so the upright believer—"No," he says, "do not expect me to fall in with your ways and customs! I am in Rome, but I shall not do as Rome does. I will let you see that I am an alien, and that I have rights as an alien, even here in this foreign land. I am not to be bound to fight your battles, nor march at the sound of your drums." Beloved, we are soldiers of Christ; we are enlisted in *His* army! And as aliens here, we are not to be compelled into the army of evil. Let lords and lands have what masters they will, let us be free, for Christ is still our Master. The seven thousand, whom God has reserved, will not bow the knee to Baal! Be it known unto you, O world, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the image which you have set up! We are servants of God, and we will not be in bondage unto men.

As we are free from the conscription of the State, we must remember, also, that *we are not eligible to its honors*. I know you will say that is not a privilege; but it is a great benefit if looked at aright. An Englishman in New York is not eligible for the very prickly throne of the President; I suppose he could not well be made a governor of Massachusetts or any other State, and, indeed, he may be well content to renounce the difficulties and the honor too. So also, the Christian here is not eligible to this world's honors. It is a very ill omen to hear the world clap its hands and say, "Well done," to the Christian. He may begin to look to his standing, and wonder whether he has not been doing wrong when the unrighteous give him their approval! "What, did I do wrong," said Socrates, "that yon-

der villain praised me just now?" And so may the Christian say, "What, have I done wrong, that So-and-So spoke well of me, for if I had done right, he would not; he has not the sense to praise goodness—he could only have applauded that which suited his own taste." Christian brothers and sisters, you must never covet the world's esteem! The love of this world is not in keeping with the love of God. "If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Treat its smiles as you treat its threats, with quiet contempt! Be willing rather to be sneered at than to be approved, counting the cross of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. O harlot world, it were a sad dishonor to be your favorite! Adorn your head and paint your face, you Jezebel, but you are no friend of ours, nor will we desire your hollow love! The men of this world were mad to raise us to their seats of honor, for we are aliens and citizens of another country.

When the Pope sent a noted Protestant statesman a present of some silver goblets, he returned them with this answer—"The citizens of Zurich compel their judges to swear twice in the year that they will receive no presents from foreign princes, therefore take them back." More than twice in the year should the Christian resolve that he will not accept the smiles of this world, and will do no homage to its glory. "We fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts." Like the Trojans of old, we may be beguiled with presents even if unconquered in arms. Forswear, then, the grandeur and honor of this fleeting age! Say in life, what a proud cardinal said in death, "Vain pomp and glory of the world, I hate you." Pass through Vanity Fair without trading in its vanities, crying, in answer to their, "What will you buy?"—"We buy the truth of God!" Take up the pilgrim's song and sing it always—

"The things eternal I pursue,
And happiness beyond the view
Of those who basely pant
For things by nature felt and seen;
Their honors, wealth and pleasures mean
I neither have nor want.
Nothing on earth I call my own—
A stranger to the world unknown,
I all their goods despise.
I trample on their whole delight,
And seek a country out of sight—
A country in the skies!"

Furthermore, as aliens, *it is not for us to hoard up this world's treasures;* Gentlemen, you who know the exchange of New York, would you hoard up any extensive amount of Mr. Chase's green-backed notes? I think not! Those stamps which officiate in the States in lieu of copper coinage I should hardly desire to accumulate; perhaps the fire might consume them, or if not, the gradual process of wear and tear which they are sure to undergo might leave me penniless before long! "No, sir," says the British trader, "I am an alien; I cannot very well accept payment in these bits of paper. They are very well for you, perhaps. They will pass current in your State, but my riches must be riches in England, for I am going there to live directly; I must have solid gold, old English sovereigns,

nothing else but these can make me rich." Brothers and sisters, so it is with us! If we are aliens, the treasures of this world are like those bits of paper, of little value in our esteem; and we should lay up our treasure in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." The money of this world is not current in Paradise; and when we reach its blissful shore, if regret can be known, we shall wish that we had laid up more treasure in the land of our fatherhood, in the dear fatherland beyond the skies. Transport your jewels to a safer country than this world; be rich toward God rather than before men! A certain minister collecting for a chapel, called upon a rich merchant, who generously gave him 50 pounds. As the good man was going out with sparkling eyes at the generosity of the merchant, the tradesman opened a letter, and he said, "Stop a minute, I find by this letter, I have lost this morning a ship worth six thousand pounds." The poor minister trembled in his shoes, for he thought the next word would be, "Let me have the fifty pound check back." Instead of it, it was, "Let me have the check back a moment," and then taking out his pen, he wrote him a check for 500 pounds! "As my money is going so fast, it is well," he said, "to make sure of some of it, so I will put some of it in God's bank." The man, you doubt not, went his way astonished at such a way of dealing as this, but indeed that is just what a man should do, who feels he is an alien here, and his treasure is beyond the sky—

"There is my house and portion fair;
My treasure and my heart are there,
And my abiding home—
For me my elder brethren stay,
And angels beckon me away,
And Jesus bids me come."

II. It is our comfort now to remind you that although aliens *on earth*, WE ARE CITIZENS IN HEAVEN.

What is meant by our being citizens in heaven? Why, first that *we are under heaven's government!* Christ, the King of heaven, reigns in our hearts; the laws of glory are the laws of our consciences; our daily prayer is, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The proclamations issued from the throne of glory are freely received by us, the decrees of the great King we cheerfully obey. We are not without law to Christ. The Spirit of God rules in our mortal bodies, divine grace reigns through righteousness, and we wear the easy yoke of Jesus! O that He would sit as King in our hearts, like Solomon upon his throne of gold. We are Yours, Jesus, and all that we have; You rule without a rival.

As citizens of the New Jerusalem, *we share heaven's honors*. The glory which belongs to beatified saints belongs to us, for we are already sons of God, already princes of the blood imperial! Already we wear the spotless robe of Jesus' righteousness; already we have angels for our servitors, saints for our companions, Christ for our Brother, God for our Father, and a crown of immortality for our reward. We share the honors of citizenship, for we have come to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. "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 is; for we shall see Him as He is."

As citizens, *we have common rights in all the property of heaven*. Those wide extensive plains we sung of just now are ours! Ours are the yonder harps of gold and crowns of glory; ours the gates of pearl, and walls of chrysolite; ours the azure light of the city that needs no candle nor light of the sun; ours the river of the water of life, and the twelve types of fruit which grow on the trees planted at the side thereof. There is nothing in heaven that does not belong to us, for our citizenship is there! "Things present, or things to come, all are ours; and we are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

And as we are thus under heaven's government, and share its honors and partake of its possessions, so we today *enjoy its delights!* Do they rejoice over sinners who are born to God—prodigals that have returned? So do we! Do they chant the glories of triumphant grace? We do the same! Do they cast their crowns at Jesus' feet? Such honors as we have, we cast there, too! Do they rejoice in Him? So, also, do we! Do they triumph, waiting for His second advent? By faith we triumph in the same! Are they tonight singing, "Worthy the Lamb"? We also have sung the same tune, not to such glorious notes as theirs, but with as sincere hearts; with minstrelsy not quite as splendid, but we hope as sincere, for the Spirit gave us the music which we have, and the Spirit gave them the thunders of their acclamations before the throne! "Our citizenship is in heaven."

Brothers and sisters, we rejoice to know, also, that as the result of our being citizens, or rather, I ought to have said, as the *cause* of it, our *names are written in the roll* of heaven's freemen. When, at last, the list shall be read, our names, by His grace, shall be read, too, for where Paul and Peter, where David and Jonathan, where Abraham and Jacob shall be found, we shall be found, too! Numbered with them we were in the divine purpose, reckoned with them we were in the purchase on the cross, and with them shall we sit down forever at the tables of the blessed. The small and the great are fellow citizens and of the same household. The babies and the perfect men are recorded in the same great registry, and neither death nor hell can erase a single name!

Our citizenship then is in heaven. We have not time to expand that thought. John Calvin says of this text, "It is a most abundant source of many exhortations, which it were easy for anyone to elicit from it." We are not all Calvin; but even to our smaller capacities, the subject appears to be one not readily exhausted, but rich with unfathomable joy.

III. We must now come to our third point, which is OUR CONVERSATION IS IN HEAVEN. Our walk and acts are such as are consistent with our dignity *as citizens of heaven*. Among the old Romans, when a dastardly action was proposed, it was thought a sufficient refusal to answer, "Romanus sum—I am a Roman." Surely it should be a strong incentive to every good thing if we can claim to be freemen of the Eternal City! Let our lives be conformed to the glory of our citizenship. In heaven they are holy, so must we be—so *are* we if our citizenship is not a mere pretense. They are happy, so must we be, always rejoicing in the Lord! In heaven

they are obedient—so must we be, following the faintest monitions of the divine will. In heaven they are active, so should we be, both day and night praising and serving God. In heaven they are peaceful, so should we find a rest in Christ, and be at peace even now. In heaven they rejoice to behold the face of Christ, so should we be, always meditating upon Him, studying His beauties, and desiring to look into the truths of God which He has taught. In heaven they are full of love, so should we love one another as brethren. In heaven they have sweet communion, one with another, so should we, who though many, are one body, be every one members one of the other. Before the throne they are free from envy and strife, ill-will, jealousy, emulation, falsehood, anger, so should we be—we should, in fact, seek while we are here, to keep up the manners and customs of the good old fatherland, so that, as in Paris, the Parisian soon says, "There goes John Bull," so they should be able to say in this land, "There goes a heavenly citizen, one who is with us and among us, but is not of us." Our very speech should be such that our citizenship should be detected! We should not be able to live long in a house without men finding out what we are. A friend of mine once went across to America, and landing, I think at Boston, he knew nobody, but hearing a man say, when somebody had dropped a cask on the wharf, "Look out there, or else you will make a Coggeshall job of it." He said, "You are an Essex man, I know, for that is a proverb never used anywhere but in Essex—give me your hand." And they were friends at once! So there should be a ring of true metal about our speech and citizenship, so that when a brother meets us, he can say, "You are a Christian, I know, for none but Christians speak like that, or act like that." "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth, for your speech betrays you." Our holiness should act as a sort of beacon, by which we know how to give the grip to the stranger, who is not a real stranger, but a fellow citizen with us, and of the household of faith! Oh, dear friends, wherever we wander, we should never forget our beloved land. In Australia, on the other side the world, or in the Cape of Good Hope, or wherever else we may be exiled, surely every Englishman's eyes must turn to this fair island—and with all her faults, we must love her still! And surely let us be where we may, our eyes must turn to heaven, the happy land unstained by shadow of fault! We love her still, and love her more and more, praying for the time when our banishment shall expire, and we shall enter into our Fatherland to dwell there forever and ever! Shenstone says, "The proper means of increasing the love we bear our native country is to reside some time in a foreign land." I am sure that we who cry, "Woe is me, for I dwell in Mesech, and sojourn in the tents of Cedar!" are sure to add, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest."

IV. The text says, "Our conversation is in heaven," and I think we may also read it, as though it said, "OUR COMMERCE IS IN HEAVEN." We are trading on earth, but still the bulk of our trade is with heaven. We trade for trinkets in this land, but our gold and silver are in heaven. We commune with heaven, and how? Our trade is with heaven by *meditation;* we often think of God, our Father, and Christ, our Brother; and, by

the Spirit, the Comforter, we are brought in contemplative delight to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Brothers and sisters, do not our *thoughts* sometimes burn within us, when we trade with that blessed land? When I have sent the ships of understanding and consideration to that land of Ophir, which is full of gold, and they have come back again laden with all manner of precious things, my thoughts have been enriched—my soul has longed to journey to that good land! Black and stormy are you, O sea of death, but I would cross you to reach that land of Havilah, which has dust of gold! I know that he who is a Christian will never have his mind long off that better land. And do you know we sometimes trade with heaven in our *hymns?* They tell us of the Swiss soldiers in foreign countries, that there is a song which the band is forbidden to play, because it reminds them of the cowbells of their native hills. If the men hear it, they are sure to desert, for that dear old song revives before their eyes the wooden chalets and the cows, and the pastures of the glorious Alps, and they long to be away! There are some of our hymns that make us homesick, until we are hardly content to stop, and therefore, well did our poet end his song—

"Filled with delight, my raptured soul,
Can here no longer stay!
Though Jordan's waves around us roll,
Fearless we launch away."

I feel the spirit of Wesley, when he said—

"O that we now might see our guide!
O that the word were given!
Come, Lord of hosts, the waves divide,
And land us all in heaven!"

In times of high, hallowed, heavenly harmony of praise, the songs of angels seem to go astray, and find their way down to us, and then our songs return with them, hand in hand, and go back to God's throne, through Jesus Christ.

We trade with heaven, I hope, too, not only thus by meditation, and by thought, and by song, but *by hopes and by loves*. Our love is toward that land. How heartily the Germans sing of the dear old fatherland; but they cannot, with all their Germanic patriotism; they *cannot* beat the genial glow of the Briton's heart, when he thinks of *his* fatherland, too. The Scotchman, too, wherever he may be, remembers the land of "brown heath and shaggy wood." And the Irishman, too, let him be where he will, still thinks the "Emerald Isle" the first gem of the sea! It is right that the patriot should love his country. Does not our love fervently flame towards heaven? We think we cannot speak well enough of it, and, indeed, here we are correct, for no exaggeration is possible! When we talk of that land of Eschol, our mouths are watering to taste its clusters; already, like David, we thirst to drink of the well that is within the gate; and we hunger after the good corn of the land. Our ears are wanting to have done with the discords of earth, that they may open to the harmonies of heaven; and our tongues are longing to sing the melodious sonnets, sung by flaming ones above. Yes, we do love heaven, and thus it is that we prove that our commerce is with that better land!

Beloved, just as people in a foreign land who love their country always are glad to have plenty of letters from the country, I hope we have much *communication with the old fatherland*. We send our prayers there as letters to our Father, and we get His letters back in this blessed volume of His Word. You go into an Australian settler's hut, and you find a newspaper. Where from, sir? A gazette from the south of France; a journal from America? Oh no, it is a newspaper from England, addressed to him in his old mother's handwriting, bearing the postage stamp with the good Queen's face in the corner; and he likes it, though it is only a newspaper from some little pottering country town, with no news in it; yet he likes it better, perhaps, than the "Times" itself, because it talks to him about the village where he lived, and consequently touches a special string in the harp of his soul. So must it be with heaven! This book, the Bible, is the newspaper of heaven, and therefore we must love it! The sermons which are preached are good news from a far country. The hymns we sing are notes by which we tell our Father of our welfare here, and by which He whispers into our soul His continued love to us. All these are and must be pleasant to us, for our commerce is with heaven! I hope, too, we are sending a good deal home. I like to see our young fellows, when they go out to live in the bush, remember their mother at home. They say, "She had a hard struggle to bring us up when our father died, and she scraped her little together to help us to mother." And it goes home. Well, I hope you are sending a great many things home. Dear friends, I hope as we are aliens here, we are not laying up our treasure here, where we may lose it, but packing it off as quickly as we can to our own country. There are many ways of doing it. God has many banks; and they are all safe ones. We have but to serve His Church, or serve the souls which Christ has bought with His blood, or help His poor, clothe His naked, and feed His hungry—and we send our treasures beyond sea in a safe ship, and so we keep up our commerce with the skies.

V. Time has gone; those clocks will strike when you ought not. There is a great reason why we should live like aliens and foreigners here, and that is because CHRIST IS COMING SOON! The early Church never forgot this. Did they not pant and thirst after the return of their ascended Lord? Like the 12 tribes, day and night they instantly watched for Messiah. But the Church has grown weary of this hope. There have been so many false prophets who tell us that Christ is coming, that the Church thinks He never will come; and she begins to deny, or to keep in the background the blessed doctrine of the second advent of her Lord from heaven. I do not think the fact that there have been many false prophets, should make us doubt our Lord's true Word. Perhaps the very frequency of these mistakes may show that there is truth at the bottom! You have a friend who is ill, and the doctor says he cannot last long. He must die; you have called a great many times expecting to hear of his departure, but he is still alive. Now the frequent errors of the physicians do not prove that your friend will not die one of these days, and that speedily, too! And so, though the false prophets have said, "Lo, here," and "Lo,

there," and yet Christ has not come—that does not prove that His glorious appearing will never arrive.

You know I am no prophet. I do not know anything about 1866. I find quite enough to do to attend to 1862. I do not understand the visions of Daniel or Ezekiel; I find I have enough to do to teach the simple word such as I find in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the Epistles of Paul. I do not find many souls have been converted to God by exquisite dissertations about the battle of Armageddon, and all those other fine things. I have no doubt prophesying is very profitable, but I rather question whether they are as profitable to the *hearers,* as they may be to the preachers and publishers. I conceive that among religious people of a certain sort, the abortive explanations of prophecy issued by certain doctors gratify a craving, which in irreligious people, finds its food in novels and romances! People have a panting to know the future; and certain divines pander to this depraved taste, by prophesying for them, and letting them know what is coming by-and-by. I do not know the future, and I shall not pretend to know. But, I do preach this, because I know it, that *Christ will come,* for He says so in a hundred passages! The Epistles of Paul are full of the advent, and Peter's, too, and John's letters are crowded with it. The best of saints have always lived on the hope of the advent. There was Enoch—he prophesied of the coming of the Son of Man. So there was another Enoch who was always talking of the coming, and saying, "Come quickly." I will not divide the house tonight by discussing whether the advent will be premillennial or postmillennial, or anything of that, it is enough for me that *He will come,* and, "in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man will come." He may appear tonight, while we stand here; just when we think that he will not come, the thief shall break into the house. We ought, therefore, to be always watching! Since the gold and silver that you have will be worthless at His advent; since your lands and estates will melt to smoke when He appears; since, *then* the righteous shall be rich, and the godly shall be great, lay not up your treasure *here,* for it may at any time vanish, at any time disappear, for Christ at any moment may come!

I think the Church would do well to be always living as if Christ might come today. I feel persuaded she is doing ill if she works as if He would not come till 1866, because He may come before, and He may come this moment! Let her always be living as if He would come *now,* still acting in her Master's sight, and watching unto prayer. Never mind about the last vials—fill your own vial with sweet odors and offer it before the Lord. Think what you like about Armageddon; but forget not to fight the good fight of faith! Guess not at the precise era for the destruction of Antichrist, go and destroy it yourself, fighting against it every day; but be looking forward and hastening unto the coming of the Son of Man; and let this be at once your comfort and excitement to diligence—that the Savior will soon come from heaven!

Now, I think you foreigners here present—and I hope there are a great many true aliens here—ought to feel like a poor stranded mariner on a desolate island! You have saved a few things from the wreck, and built

yourself an old log hut. You have a few comforts round about you, but for all that, you long for home. Every morning you look out to sea, and wonder when you shall see a sail. Many times while examining the wide ocean to look for a ship, you have clapped your hands, and then wept to find you were mistaken. Every night you light a fire that there may be a blaze, so that if a ship should go by, they may send relief to you. Ah, that is just the way *we* ought to live! We have heard of one saint who used to open his window every morning when he woke, to see if Christ had come. It might be fanaticism, but better to be enthusiastic than to mind earthly things! I would have us look out each night, and light the fire of prayer, that it may be burning in case the ships of heaven should go by—that blessings may come to us poor aliens and foreigners who need them so much. Let us wait patiently till the Lord's convoy shall take us on board, that we may be carried into the glories and splendor of the reign of Christ! Let us always hold the log hut with a loose hand and long for the time when we shall get to that better land where our possessions are, where our Father lives, where our treasures lie, where all our brothers and sisters dwell. Well said our poet —

"Blest scenes,
Through rude and stormy seas
I onward press to You."

My beloved friends, I can assure you, it is always one of the sweetest thoughts I ever know, that I shall meet with you in heaven. There are so many of you members of this church, that I can hardly get to shake hands with you once in a year; but I shall have plenty of time then in heaven! You will know your pastor in heaven better than you do now! He loves you now, and you love him; we shall then have more time to recount our experience of divine grace, and praise God together, and sing together, and rejoice together concerning Him by whom we were helped to plant and sow, and through whom all the increase came—

"I hope when days and years are past,
We all shall meet in heaven,
We all shall meet in heaven at last,
We all shall meet in heaven!"

But, we shall not all meet in glory; not all, unless you repent. Some of you will certainly perish, unless you believe in Christ. But why must we be divided? Oh, why not *all* in heaven? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who believes not shall be damned." Trust Christ, sinner, and heaven is yours, and mine, and we are safe, by His grace, forever! Amen.

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

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NEVER! NEVER! NEVER! NEVER! NEVER!
NO. 477

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 26, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you."
Hebrews 13:5.

WHAT power resides in "Thus says the Lord!" The man who can grasp by faith, "He has said," has an all-conquering weapon in his hand. What doubt will not be slain by this two-edged sword? What fear is that which shall not fall smitten with a deadly wound before this arrow from the bow of God's covenant? Will not the distresses of life and the pangs of death, will not the corruptions within, and the temptations without, will not the trials from above, and the temptations from beneath all seem but light afflictions when we can hide ourselves behind the bulwark of, "He has said"? Whether for delight in our quietude, or for strength in our conflict, "He has said" must be our daily resort!

Therefore, let us learn, my brothers and sisters, the extreme value of *searching the Scriptures*. There may be a promise in the Word which would exactly fit your case, but you may not know of it, and therefore miss its comfort. You are like prisoners in a dungeon, and there may be one key in the bunch which would unlock the door so that you might be free; but if you will not look for it, you may remain a prisoner still, though liberty is near at hand! There may be a potent medicine in the great pharmacopoeia of Scripture, and you may still remain sick, though there is the precise remedy that would meet your disease if you will but examine and search the Scriptures to discover what "He has said." Should we not, besides reading Scripture, *store our memories richly with the promises of God?* We can remember the sayings of great men; we treasure up the verses of renowned poets—ought we not to be profound in our knowledge of the Word of God? The Scriptures should be the classics of a Christian, and as our orators quote Homer, or Virgil, or Horace, when they would clinch a point, so we should be able to quote the promises of God when we would solve a difficulty or overthrow a doubt. "He has said," is the foundation of all riches, and the fountain of all comfort! Let it dwell in you richly as "a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." And, oh, my brothers and sisters, *how diligently should we test the Scriptures!* Besides searching them by reading, and treasuring them by memory, we should test them by *experience.* As often as a promise is proven to be true, we should mark it, and note that we also can say, as did one of old, "This is my comfort in my affliction: for Your Word has quickened me." "Wait on the Lord," said Isaiah, and then he added, "Wait, *I say,* on the Lord," as if his own experience led him to echo the voice of God to his hearers. Test the promise, take God's banknote to the counter, and mark if it is cashed. Grasp the lever, which He ordains to

lift your trials, and see if it possesses real power; cast this divine tree into the bitter waters of your Marah, and learn how it will sweeten them! Take this salt, and throw it into the turbid waters, and witness if they are not made sweet, as were the waters of old by the prophet Elisha. Taste and see that the Lord is good, for there is no want to them who fear Him!

The Apostles, you will notice, like their Master, were always very ready at quotations. Though they were inspired men, and could have used fresh words, yet they preferred, as an example to us, to quote, "He has said." Let us do the same, for, though the words of ministers may be sweet, the words of God are sweeter; and though original thoughts may have the novelty of freshness, yet the ancient words of God have the ring, and the weight, and the *value* of old and precious coins—and they shall not be found wanting in the day when we shall use them!

It seems from our text that, "He has said," is not only useful to chase away doubts, fears, difficulties, and devils, but that it also yields nourishment to all our divine graces. You perceive that when the apostle would make us contented, he says, "Be content with such things as you have, for *He has said."* And when he would make us bold and courageous, he puts it, *"He* has said, therefore, *we* may boldly say, God is my helper, I will not fear what man can do to me." When the apostle would nourish faith, he does it by quoting from Scripture the examples of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, of Gideon, of Barak, and of Jephthah. When he would nourish our patience, he says, "You remember the patience of Job." Or if it is our prayerfulness, he says, "Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed and prevailed." *"He has said"* is food for every grace as well as death for every sin! Here you have nourishment for that which is good and poison for that which is evil. Search, then, the Scriptures, for so shall you grow healthy, strong, and vigorous in the divine life.

We turn at once, with great pleasure, to the wonderful words of our text, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." I have no doubt you are aware that our translation does not convey the whole force of the original, and that it would hardly be possible in English to give the full weight of the Greek. We might render it, "He has said, I will never, never leave you; I will never, never, never forsake you." Though that would be not a literal, but rather a free rendering, yet, as there are five negatives in the Greek, we do not know how to give their force in any other way. Two negatives nullify each other in our language. But here, in the Greek, they intensify the meaning following one after another, as I suppose David's five stones out of the brook would have done if the first had not been enough to make the giant reel. The verse we sung just now is a very good rendering of the original—

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

Here you have the five negatives very well placed, and the force of the Greek, as nearly as possible, given.

In trying to expound this five-fold assurance, this quintessence of consolation, we shall have to draw your attention, first of all, *to an awful*

condition, or what is negative. Secondly, to *a gracious promise,* or what is positively guaranteed. Next, we shall observe *notable occasions* or times when this promise was uttered. Then we will say a few words upon certain *sweet confirmations* which prove the text to be true; and then, in the fifth place, *necessary conclusions* which flow from the words of the promise.

I. First of all, then, AN AWFUL CONDITION—LOST AND FORSAKEN OF GOD! I am quite certain I shall fail in attempting to describe this state of mind. I have thought of it, dreamed of it, and felt it in such feeble measure as a child of God can feel it, but how to describe it, I know not.

1. *Forsaking* implies *an utter loneliness*. Put a traveler in a vast howling wilderness, where for many a league there is no trace of man—no footsteps of travelers. The solitary wretch cries for help—the hollow echo of the rocks is his only reply. No bird in the air; not even a prowling jackal in the waste; not an insect in the sunbeam to keep him company; not even a solitary blade of grass to remind him of God! Yet, even there he is not alone—for yonder bare rocks prove a God, and the hot sand beneath his feet, and the blazing sun above his head—all witness to a present Deity! But what would be the loneliness of a man forsaken of God? No migration could be so awful as this, for he says, "If I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, *You are there."* Such a state were worse than hell, for David says, "If I make my bed in hell *You are there."* Loneliness is a feeling which none of us delight in. Solitude may have some charms, but they who are *forced* to be her captives have not discovered them. A transient solitude may give pleasure; to be alone, utterly alone, is terrible! To be alone, *without God,* is such an emphasis of loneliness, that I defy the lips, even of a damned spirit, to express the horror and anguish that must be concentrated in it. There is far more than you and I dream of in the language of our Lord Jesus, when He says, "I have trod the winepress *alone." Alone!* You remember He once said, "You shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." There is no agony in *that* sentence, but what must be His grief when He says—"I have trod the winepress *alone!"* "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" is the cry of human nature in its uttermost dismay! Thank God, you and I, by this promise are taught that we never shall know the desperate loneliness of being forsaken of God! Yet, this is what it would be if He should forsake us!

2. Mingling with this mournful solitude is a sense of *utter helplessness*. Power belongs unto God; withdraw the Lord, and the strong man must utterly fail. The archangel without God passes away and is not; the everlasting hills bow, and the solid pillars of the earth are dissolved. Without God, our dust returns to the earth; without God, our spirit mourns like David, "I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind; I am like a broken vessel." Christ knew what this was when He said, "I am a worm, and no man." He was so utterly broken, so emptied of all power, that as He hung with dislocated limbs upon the cross, He cried, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; You have brought Me into the dust of death." No broken reed or smoking flax can be so feeble as a soul forsaken of God! Our state would be as deplorably destitute as that of Eze-

kiel's infant—deserted and cast into the open field with none to swaddle, and none to care for it—left utterly to perish and to die. Such should we be if we could be forsaken of God! Glorious are those negatives which shut us in from all fear of this calamity!

3. To be forsaken of God implies *utter friendlessness*. A thousand times let Jehovah be blessed that very few of us have ever known what it is to be friendless! There have been times, in the experience of some of us, when we felt that we stood without a friend in the particular spot which we then occupied, for we had a grief which we could not entrust to any other heart. Every man who is eminently useful in the Church will know seasons when, as the champion of Israel, he must go forth alone. This, however, is compensated by stronger faith, and the moral grandeur of solitary heroism. But what must it be to be some poor wretch whose parents have long since been buried? Who has lost his most distant relatives? Who, passing along the street, remembers the name of one who was once his father's friend, knocks at the door, and is repulsed? Recollects another—and this is his last hope— he stands at that door asking for charity from one he played with in his infancy—and he is bid to go his way! He paces the cold November streets while the rain is pouring down, feeling to his utter dismay that no friend breathes for him. Should he return to his own parish, it would be like going to his own dungeon, and if he enters the workhouse, no eye there will flash sympathy upon him! He is utterly friendless and alone! I believe that many a suicide has been produced by the lack of a friend. As long as a man feels he has someone loving him, he has something worth living for; but when the last friend is gone, and we feel that we are floating on a raft far out at sea, with not a sail in sight—it is then we cry, "Welcome death!" Our Lord and Master was brought to this state, and knew what it was to be forsaken, for He had no friends left. "He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me." "All the disciples forsook Him and fled." Beloved, many saints have lost all their friends, but have bravely borne the trial, for turning their eyes to heaven, they have felt that though without friends, they were still befriended! They have heard the voice of Jesus say, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come unto you." And made strong by divine friendship, they have felt that they were not utterly bereaved. But to be forsaken *of God!* Oh, may you and I never know it! To be without a friend in heaven—to look to that throne of glory and to see the blackness of darkness there; to turn to mercy, and receive a frown; to fly to love, and receive a rebuke; to turn to God, and find that His ear is heavy, that He will not hear, and His hands restrained that He will not help—oh, this is *terror*, terror heaped on terror, to be thus forsaken!

4. Loneliness, helplessness, friendlessness—add these together, and then put the next—*hopelessness*. A man forsaken of men may still entertain some hope; but let him be forsaken of God, and then hope has failed! The last window is shut; not a ray of light now streams into the thick Egyptian darkness of his mind. Life is death; death is damnation—damnation in its lowest depths. Let him look to men, and they are broken reeds; Let him turn to angels, and they are avengers; let him look to death, and even the tomb affords no refuge! Look where he will—blank,

black despair seizes hold upon him! Our blessed Lord knew this when lover and friend had been put far from Him. It was only His transcendent faith which enabled Him after all to say, "You will not leave My soul in hell: neither will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." The black shadow of this utter hopelessness went over Him when He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," and He "sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground."

5. To make up this five-fold forsaking, against which we have the five negatives, let us add to all this loneliness, helplessness, friendlessness, and hopelessness, a sense of *unutterable agony*. We *speak* of agony, but to *feel* it is a very different thing! Misery and despair—the *wrestling* of these with the spirit, till the spirit is trod down, and crushed, and broken, and chooses strangling rather than life! A horrible sense of every evil having made one's heart its den; a consciousness that we are the target for all God's arrows; to feel that *all* God's waves and billows have gone over us; that He has forgotten to be gracious; that He will be merciful to us no more; that He has, in anger, shut up the heart of His compassion—all this is a *part* of being forsaken of God which only lost spirits in hell can know! Our unbelief sometimes lets us get a glimpse of what this would be, but it is only a glimpse, only a glimpse! Let us thank God that we are delivered from all fear of this tremendous evil! By five wounds does our Redeemer slay our unbelief.

Brothers and sisters, if God should leave us, mark the result—I picture to myself the very best state of one forsaken of God—it is uncertainty and chance. I would rather be an atom, which has God with it, predestinating its track and forcing it onward according to His own will, than I would be an archangel left to my own choice, to do as I would, and to act as I please, without the control of God; for an archangel, left without God, would soon miss his way, and fall to hell; or he would melt away and drop and die. But the tiny atom, having God with it, would fulfill its predestinated course; it would be ever in a sure track, and throughout eternity would have as much potency in it as at its first creation! I cannot think why some people are so fond of free will. I believe free will is the delight of sinners, but that God's will is the glory of saints. There is nothing I desire more to get rid of than my own will, and to be absorbed into the will and purpose of my Lord; to do according to the will of Him who is most good, most true, most wise, most mighty, seems to me to be heaven! Let others choose the dignity of independence; I crave the glory of being wholly dead in Christ and only alive in Him! Oh, dear friends, if the Lord should forsake us, to say the best of it, our course would be uncertain, and, before long, it would end in nothingness! We know, further, that if God should forsake the best saint alive, that man would immediately fall into sin. He now stands securely on yonder lofty pinnacle, but his brain would reel, and he would fall, if secret hands did not uphold him. He now picks his steps carefully; take away divine grace from him and he would roll in the mire, and wallow in it like other men. Let the godly be forsaken of his God, and he would go from bad to worse, till his conscience, now so tender, would be seared as with a hot iron! Next, he would ripen into an atheist or a blasphemer, and he would come to his

dying bed foaming at the mouth with rage; he would come before the bar of his Maker with a curse upon his lips; and in eternity, left and forsaken of God, he would sink to hell with the condemned. Yes, and among the damned he would have the worst place, lower than the lowest, finding in the lowest depths a lower depth—finding in the wrath of God something more dreadful than the ordinary wrath which falls upon common sinners!

When we thus describe being forsaken of God, is it not satisfactory to the highest degree to remember that we have God's Word for it five times over, "I will never, never leave you; I will never, never, never forsake you"? I know those who caricature Calvinism say we teach that a man may live as he likes, yet if God is with him, he will be safe at the last. We teach no such thing! And our adversaries know better; they know that our doctrines are invulnerable if they will state them correctly, and that the only way in which they can attack us is to slander us, and to misrepresent what we teach. No, verily, we say not so—we say that where God begins the good work, the man will never live as he likes, or if he does, he will like to live as God would have him live; that where God begins a good work, He carries it on; that man is never forsaken of God, nor does he forsake God, but is kept even to the end!

II. We have before us now, in the second place, A GRACIOUS PROMISE, or what is positively guaranteed.

What is guaranteed in this promise? Beloved, herein does God give to His people everything. *"I* will never leave you." Then no attribute of God can cease to be engaged for us! Is He mighty? He will show Himself strong on behalf of them who trust Him. Is He love? Then, with everlasting loving kindness will He have mercy upon us. Whatever attributes may compose the character of Deity, every one of them, to its fullest extent, shall be engaged on our side. Moreover, whatever God has, whether it is in the lowest hades, or in the highest heaven—whatever can be contained in infinity or can be held within the circumference of eternity—whatever can be in Him who fills all things, and yet is greater than all things—shall be with His people forever! "He has said, *I* will never leave you, nor forsake you." How one might enlarge here, but I forbear. You yourselves know that to sum up "all things" is a task beyond all human might!

III. More fully, however, to expound this promise, I would remind you of the five OCCASIONS in which it occurs in Scripture. The number five runs all through our subject. The sense and spirit of the text are to be found in innumerable places, and possibly there may be some other passages which approximate so very nearly to our text that you might say they are repetitions, but I think there are five which may clearly take the priority.

1. One of the first instances is to be found in Genesis 28:15. "Behold, I am with you, and will keep you in all places where you go, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you." Here, we have this promise in the case of a *man of trials*. More than either Abraham or Isaac, Jacob was the son of tribulation. He was now flying away from his father's house, leaving the

over-fondness of a mother's attachment, abhorred by his elder brother, who sought his blood. He lies down to sleep, with a stone for his pillow, with the hedges for his curtains, with the earth for his bed, and the heavens for his canopy. And as he sleeps thus friendless, solitary, and alone, God says to him, "I will never, never leave you." Mark his later career. He is guided to Padanaram. God, his guide, leaves him not. At Padanaram, Laban cheats him, wickedly and wrongfully cheats him in many ways; but God does not leave him, and he is more than a match for the thievish Laban. He leaves, at last, with his wives and children; Laban, in hot haste, pursues him, but the Lord does not leave him. Mizpah's Mount bears witness that God can stop the pursuer, and change the foe into a friend! Esau comes against him; let Jabbok testify to Jacob's wrestling, and through the power of Him who never did forsake His servant, Esau kisses his brother, whom once he thought to slay. Soon Jacob dwells in tents and booths at Succoth; he journeys up and down throughout the land, and his sons treacherously slay the Shechemites. Then, the nations round about seek to avenge their death, but the Lord again interposes and Jacob is delivered! Poor Jacob is bereaved of his sons. He cries—"Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now you will take Benjamin away? All these things are against me." But they are not against him; God has not left him, for He has not yet done everything that He had spoken to him. The old man goes into Egypt; his lips are refreshed while he kisses the cheeks of his favorite, Joseph, and until the last, when he gathers up his feet in the bed, and sings of that coming Shiloh and the scepter that should not depart from Judah, good old Jacob proves that in six troubles, God is with His people, and in seven, He does not forsake them; that even to hoar hairs, He is the same, and until old age, He does carry them! You Jacobs, full of affliction, you tried and troubled heirs of heaven, He has said to you, each one of you—oh, believe Him!—"I will never leave you. I will never forsake you."

2. The next instance in which we find this same promise is in Deuteronomy 31:6. Here we find it spoken, not so much to individuals as to the whole body collectively. Moses said unto the people of Judah, by the Word of God, "Be strong, and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord your God, He it is who does go with you. He will not fail you, nor forsake you." Beloved, we may take this promise as being spoken to God's Church, *as a Church*. These people were to fight the accursed nations of Canaan, to drive out the giants, and the men who had chariots of iron, but the Lord said He would never leave them, nor did He, till from Dan to Beersheba the favored race possessed the promised land, and the tribes went up to Jerusalem with the voice of joyful song! Now, as the Church of God, let us remember that the land lies before us, and we are called of God to go up and possess it. I would it were my lot yet more and more, like Joshua, to lead you from one place to another, smiting the enemies of the Lord and extending the kingdom of Messiah! Let us undertake what we may, we shall never fail. Let us, by faith, *dare* great things, and we shall *do* great things! Let us venture upon notable exploits which shall seem fanatical to reason, and absurd to men of prudence, for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." If the

Church of God would but know that her Lord cannot leave her, she might attempt greater things than she has ever done—and the success of her attempts would be most certain and sure! God never can forsake a praying people, nor cast off a laboring Church; He must bless us even to the end!

3. The third occasion upon which this promise was made is in Joshua 1:5, where the Lord says to Joshua, "There shall not any man be able to stand before you all the days of your life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you." Now, this is *a minister's text*. If we are called to lead the people, to bear the brunt of the fight, the burden and heat of the day, let us treasure up this as our precious consolation—He will not fail us nor forsake us! It needs not that I should tell you that it is not every man who can stand first in the ranks, and that, albeit there is no small share of honor given by God to such a man, yet, there is a bitterness in his lot which no other men can know. There are times when, if it were not for faith, we would give up the ghost, and, were not the Master with us, we would turn our backs and fly, like Jonah, unto Nineveh! But if any of you are called to occupy prominent positions in God's Church, bind this about your arm and it shall make you strong; He has said to you, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Go, in this, your might; the Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!

4. On the next occasion, this same promise was given by David in his last moments to his son, Solomon, 1 Chronicles 28:20. David was speaking of what he himself, by experience had proved to be true, and he declares—"Be strong, and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with you. He will not fail you, nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord." Some Christians are placed where they need much *prudence, discretion, and wisdom*. You may take this for your promise. The Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon; she put to him many difficult questions, but God did not leave him, nor forsake him, and he was able to answer them all! As judge over Israel, many knotty points were brought before him; you remember the child and the harlots, and how wisely he decided the case. The building of the temple was a very mighty work—the like of which the earth had never seen, but, by wisdom given to him, the stones were fashioned, and laid one upon another, till at last the topstone was brought out with shouts. You shall do the same, O man of business, though yours is a very responsible situation. You shall finish your course, O careful worker, though there are many eyes that watch for your stumbling. You shall do the same, sister, though you need to have seven eyes rather than two—you shall hear the voice of God saying, "This is the way, walk in it." You shall never be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.

5. Once more, and perhaps this fifth occasion may be the most comforting to the most of you, Isaiah 41:17, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them, I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them." You may be brought to this state today. Your soul may *need Christ,* but you may not be able to find Him. You may feel that without the mercy which comes

from the atoning blood you are lost. You may have gone to works and ceremonies, to prayers and doings, to alms giving and to experiences, and have found them all dried wells, and now, you can hardly pray, for your tongue cleaves to the roof of your mouth for thirst. Now, in your worst condition, brought to the lowest state into which a creature ever can be cast, Christ will *not* forsake you! He will appear for your help.

Surely, one of these five occasions must suit you! And let me here remind you that whatever God has said to any *one* saint, He has said to *all*. When He opens a well for one man, it is that *all* may drink. When the manna falls, it is not only for those in the wilderness, but we, by faith, eat the manna still. No promise is of private interpretation. When God opens a granary door to give out food, there may be some starving man who is the occasion of its being opened—but all the hungry may come and feed, too! Whether He gave the word to Abraham or to Moses matters not; He has given it to *you* as one of the covenanted seed. There is not a high blessing too lofty for you, nor a wide mercy too extensive for you. Lift up your eyes now to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, for all this is yours! Climb to Pisgah's top, and view the utmost limit of the divine promise, for the land is all your own! There is not a brook of living water of which you may not drink! If the land flows with milk and honey, eat the honey and drink the milk; the fattest of the cattle, yes, and the sweetest of the wines, let all be yours, for there is no denial of any one of them to any saint! Be bold to believe, for He has said, "I will never leave *you*, nor forsake *you."* To put everything in one, there is nothing you can need, there is nothing you can ask for, there is nothing you can need in time, or in eternity, there is nothing living, nothing dying, there is nothing in this world, nothing in the next world, there is nothing now, nothing at the resurrection morning, nothing in heaven that is not contained in this text—"I will never leave you; I will never forsake you."

IV. I shall now give five blows to drive home the nail while I speak upon THE SWEET CONFIRMATIONS of this most precious promise.

1. Let me remind you that the Lord will not and cannot leave His people, because of *His relationship to them*. He is your *Father;* will your Father leave you? Has He not said—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you"? Would you, being evil, leave your child to perish? Never, never! Remember, Christ is your *husband*. Would you, a husband, neglect your wife? Is it not a shame to a man, unless he nourishes and cherishes her even as his own body? And will Christ become one of these evil husbands? Has He not said—"I hate putting away," and will He ever put you away? Remember, you are *part of His body*. No man yet ever hated his own flesh. You may be but as a little finger, but will He leave His finger to rot, to perish, to starve? You may be the least honorable of all the members, but is it not written that upon these He bestows abundant honor, and so our uncomely parts have abundant comeliness? If He is Father, if He is husband, if He is head, if he is all-in-all, how can He leave you? Think not so harshly of your God!

2. Then, next, *His honor* binds Him never to forsake you. When we see a house half-built and left in ruins, we say, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish." Shall this be said of your God, that He began to save you and could not bring you to perfection? Is it possible that He will break His word and so stain His truth? Shall men be able to cast a slur upon His power, His wisdom, His love, His faithfulness? No! Thank God, no! "I give," says He, "unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." If you should perish, believer, hell would ring with diabolical laughter against the character of God! And if ever one whom Jesus undertook to save should perish, then, the demons of the pit of hell would point the finger of scorn forever against a defeated Christ, against a God that undertook but did not finish—

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep.
All that His heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep."

3. And if that is not enough, will you remember, besides this, that *the past* all goes to prove that He will not forsake you? You have been in deep waters, have you drowned? You have walked through the fires, have you been burned? You have had six troubles, has He forsaken you? You have gone down to the roots of the mountains, and the weeds have been wrapped about your head; has He not brought you up again? You have borne great and sore troubles, but has He not delivered you? Say, brothers and sisters, when did He leave you? Testify against Him; if you have found Him forgetful, then doubt Him! If you have found Him unworthy of your confidence, then disown Him—but not till then! The past is vocal with a thousand songs of gratitude, and every note therein proves by an indisputable logic that He will not forsake His people!

4. And if that is not enough, ask your father, and *the saints that have gone before*. Did ever any perish trusting in Christ? I have heard that some whom Jehovah loved have fallen from grace and have been lost. I have heard lips of ministers thus prostitute themselves to lies—but I know that such never was the case! He keeps *ALL* His saints; not one of them has perished! They are in His hands, and have up to now been preserved. David mourns, "All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me." Yet, he cries, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him." Jonah laments, "The earth with her bars was about me forever." And yet, before long he says, "Salvation is of the Lord." You glorified ones above, through much tribulation you have inherited the kingdom, and wearing your white robes, you smile from your thrones of glory and say to us, "Doubt not the Lord, neither distrust Him; He has not forsaken His people nor cast off His chosen."

5. Beloved friends, there is *no reason why He should* cast us off. Can you come up with any reason why He should cast you away? Is it your poverty, your nakedness, your peril, the danger of your life? In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who has loved us! Do you say it is your sin? Then, I answer, sin can never be a cause why God should cast away His people, for they were full of sin when He at first embraced them, and espoused their cause! That would have been a rea-

son why He never should have loved them at all! But having loved them, when they were dead in trespasses and sins, their sin can never be a reason for leaving them. Besides, the apostle says, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come"—and sin is one of the things present, and I fear it is one of the things to come—"nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." O child of God, there is no fear of your misusing this precious truth of God! The base-born *professor* of godliness may say, "I will sin, for God will not cast me away," but *you* will not, you heirs of heaven! Rather, you will bind this about your heart and say, "Now will I love Him, who having loved His own, loves them even unto the end." Glory be to God—

"Midst all my sin, and care, and woe,
His Spirit will not let me go!"

Go, you slaves who fear the curse of God, and sweat and toil; we are His sons and daughters, and we know He cannot expel us from His heart! May God deliver us from the infamous bondage of the doctrine which makes men fear that God may be unfaithful, that Christ may divorce His own spouse, may let the members of His own body perish; that He may die for them and yet not save them! If there is any truth of God taught us in Scripture, it is that the children of God *cannot* perish! If this Book teaches anything whatever, if it is not all a fiction from beginning to end, it teaches in a hundred places that, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of His love cannot depart from us, says the Lord that has mercy upon us."

V. And now, fifthly, the SUITABLE CONCLUSIONS to be drawn from this doctrine.

1. One of the first is *contentment*. The apostle says, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content, for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Ishmael, the son of Hagar, had his water in a bottle; and he might have laughed at Isaac because Isaac had no bottle—but here was the difference between them—Isaac lived by the well. Now, some of us have little enough in this world; we have no bottle of water, no stock in hand; but then, we live by the well, and that is better, still. To depend upon the daily providence of a faithful God is better than to be worth twenty thousand pounds a year.

2. *Courage* is the next lesson. Let us boldly say, "God is my Helper, why should I fear what man can do unto me?" A child of God afraid! Why, there is nothing more contrary to his nature. If any would persecute you, look them in the face and bear it cheerfully. If they laugh at you, let them laugh—you can laugh when they shall howl. If any despise you, be content to be despised by fools, and to be misunderstood by madmen. It would be hard if the world loved us; it is an easy thing if the world hates us. We are so used to be spoken of as altogether vile in our motives and selfish in our objects—so used to hear our adversaries misconstrue our best words and pull our sentences to pieces—that if they were to do anything else but howl, we should think ourselves unworthy!

"Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass, and forget the Lord your Maker, that has stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth?"

3. Then next, *we ought to cast off our despondency*. Some of you came here, this morning, as black as the weather. Just now, we saw some gleams of sunshine peering through those side windows, until our friends hastened to draw the blinds, to shut out the dazzling brightness from their eyes. I hope, however, you will not shut out the rays of holy joy which break in upon you now. No, since He has said, "I will never leave nor forsake you," leave your troubles in your pews, and bear away a song.

4. And then, my brothers and sisters, here is argument for *the greatest possible delight*. How we ought to rejoice with unspeakable joy if He will never leave us! Mere songs are not enough! Shout for joy all you who are upright in heart!

5. And, lastly, what ground there is here *for faith*! Let us lean upon our God with all our weight. Let us throw ourselves upon His faithfulness as we do upon our beds, bringing all our weariness to His dear rest. Now, right on our God let us cast the burdens of our bodies, and our souls, for He has said, "I will never leave you; I will never forsake you."

Oh, I wish this promise belonged to you all! I would give my right hand if it could! But some of you must not touch it; it does not belong to some of you, for it is the exclusive property of those who trust in Christ! "Oh," says one, "then I will trust in Christ." Do it, soul, do it! And if you trust in Him, He will never leave you! Black with sin as you are, He will wash you; He will never leave you! Wicked as you are, He will make you holy; He will never leave you! Though you have nothing that should win His love, He will press you to His bosom; He will never leave you! Living or dying, in time, or in eternity, He will never forsake you, but will surely bring you to His right hand, and say to His Father, "Here am I, and the children whom You have given Me."

May God seal these five negatives upon our memories and hearts for Christ's sake. Amen.

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CHRIST—PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS
NO. 478

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 2, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For it became Him, from whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."
Hebrews 2:10.

BELIEVING that God foreknows all things, we cannot but come to the conclusion that He foreknew the fall, and that it was but an incident in the great method, by which He would glorify Himself. Foreknowing the fall, and foreordaining and predestinating the plan, by which He would rescue His chosen out of the ruins thereof, He was pleased to make that plan a manifestation of all His attributes, and, to a very great extent, a declaration of His wisdom. You do not find in the method of salvation a single tinge of folly. The Greeks may call it folly, but they are fools, themselves. The gospel is the highest refinement of wisdom, yes, of divine wisdom; and we cannot help perceiving, that not only in its main features, but in its little points, in the details and the minutiae, the wisdom of God is most clearly to be seen. just as in the making of the tabernacle in the wilderness, not a single loop or clasp was left to human chance or judgment, so in the great scheme of salvation, not a single fragment was left to the human will or to the folly of the flesh. It appears to be a law of the divine action that everything *must* be according to the fitness and necessity involved in perfect wisdom—*"It behooved* that Christ should suffer." And in our text we find, *"It became Him* from whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." It seemed to be but the order of natural fitness and congruity, in accordance with the nature and character of God, that the plan of salvation should be just what it is. Oh, how careful should we be who have to preach it, never to alter it in the slightest degree! How important it is that we should lift our prayers to heaven, that God would give us a clear understanding, first, of what we have to teach, and then a clear method of teaching what we have learned, so that no mistake may be made here, for one mistake here would mar that express Image of God which shines in the gospel, and prevent our hearers from seeing the beautiful fitness and proportion which are so adapted to reveal the perfect character of God.

We say the plan *must* be what it is; it could not be otherwise so as to be in keeping with the divine character; and, therefore, it is imperative upon us that we make no alteration in it, no, not of a single word, lest we should hear the Apostle's anathema hissing through the air like a thun-

derbolt from God—"If we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that you have received, let him be accursed!"

Our text invites us to the consideration of three particulars—first, *that Christ is a perfect Savior*. Secondly, *that He became so through sufferings,* and thirdly, *that His being made perfect through sufferings will ennoble and dignify the whole work of divine grace*. "It became Him"—it seemed fitting—"that in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

I. To begin, then, first of all with the joyous thought, so well-known to you all, but so necessary still to be repeated, that THE LORD JESUS IS A PERFECT SAVIOR.

1. For, first, *He is perfectly adapted for the work of saving. The singular constitution of His nature* adapts Him to His office. He is *God*. It was necessary that He should be so. Who but God could sustain the enormous weight of human guilt? What but divinity was equal to bear the awful load of wrath which was to be carried upon His shoulders? What knowledge but omniscience could understand all the evil, and what power but omnipotence could undo that evil? That Christ is God must always be a theme for grateful admiration to His people! They who reject the divinity of Christ can have but a poor foundation to rest upon; the fickle sand would seem to be more stable than the basis of their hope. It is enough for one man to work out his own obedience—more than enough for one man to bear wrath for himself; how, then, could he do it for others, and for those countless multitudes whose ruin was to be retrieved? But, beloved, we know that had He only been God, yet still He would not have been fitted for a perfect Savior, unless He had become *man*. Man had sinned; man must suffer. It was man in whom God's purposes had been for a while defeated; it must be in man that God must triumph over His great enemy! He *must* take upon Himself the seed of Abraham, that, He may stand in their place, and become their federal head. An angel, we believe, could not have suffered on the cross; it would not have been possible for an angelic nature to have borne those agonies which the wrath of God demanded as expiation for guilt! But, when we see the Lord Jesus before us, being verily the Son of Man, and as certainly, the Son of God, we perceive that now Job's desire is granted! We have a daysman who can lay His hands on both, and touch humanity in its weakness, and divinity in its strength; He can make a ladder between earth and heaven, can bridge the distance which separates fallen manhood from the perfection of the eternal God! No nature but one as complex as that of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, would have been perfectly adapted for the work of salvation!

And, as He was adapted in His nature, so, beloved, it is very clear to us that He was also adapted by His *experience*. A physician should have some acquaintance with disease—how shall he know the remedy if he is ignorant of the malady? Our Savior knew all because, "He took our infirmities and He bore our sicknesses. He was tempted in all points, like as we are." He looked not at sin from the distance of heaven, but He walked and lived in the midst of it! He did not pass hurriedly through the world, as one might hastily walk through a hospital without clearly understand-

ing the disease, but He lived His more than 30 years in the very center of it, seeing sin in all its shapes; yes, seeing it in shapes that you and I have not yet seen! He saw it in demonic forms, for hell was let loose for a season, that the combat might be the more terrible, and the victory the more glorious. He saw sin carried to its most aggravated extent, when it crucified God, Himself, and nailed Jesus, the heir of heaven, to the accursed cross. He understood the disease; He was no charlatan; He had studied the whole case through; deceitful as the human heart is, Jesus knew it! Fickle as it is in its various appearances—versatile as it is in its constantly varying shapes—Christ knew and understood it all! His lifelong walking of the hospital of human nature had taught Him the disease. He knew the *subjects, too, upon whom to operate*. He knew man, and what was in man; yes, better than the most skilled surgeon can know by experiment. He knew by experience. He, Himself, took our infirmities and bore our sorrows. He was Himself, the patient, Himself the medicine. He took upon Himself the nature of the race He came to save, and so every feeling made Him perfect in His work; every pang instructed Him; every throb of anguish made Him wise, and rendered Him the more accomplished to work out the purposes of God in the bringing of the many sons unto glory.

If you will add to His perfect experience, *His marvelous character*, you will see how completely adapted He was to the work. For a Savior, we need one who is full of love, whose love will make Him firm to His purpose, whose love will constrain Him to yoke every power and talent that He has to the great work. We need one with zeal so flaming, that it will eat Him up; of courage so indomitable, that He will face every adversary rather than forego His end; we need one, at the same time, who will blend with this brass of courage, the gold of meekness, and of gentleness. We need one who will be determined to deal fearlessly with His adversaries, who will put on zeal as a cloak, and will deal tenderly and compassionately with the disease of sin-sick men. Such a one we have in Christ! No man can read the character of Christ with any sort of understanding without saying, "That is *the man* I want as my friend." The argument which Christ used was a very powerful one—"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." Why? *"For I am meek and lowly in heart."* The character of Christ qualifies Him to be the world's Savior, and there is something in His character, when properly understood, which is so attractive, that we may well say—

"His worth if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him, too."

If we had to make a Savior ourselves, and it were left to a Parliament of the wisest senators of the race, to form an ideal person who should just meet man's case, if the Divine One had lent us His own wisdom for the occasion, we could only have desired just such a person as Christ is! In character, we should have needed just such traits of nature and of Spirit as we see in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. We think, therefore, we may safely say to every unconverted man, Christ is adapted to be a Savior to you. We know that the saints, without our saying it, will respond, "Yes, and He is just fitted to be a Savior to us." man, yet God! Bone of

our bone, and yet counting it not robbery to be equal with God! Sufferer like ourselves, bearer of all the ills of manhood, and yet, unlike us, free from sin, holy, harmless, undefiled—qualified in all respects to undertake and accomplish the great work! Jesus, You are a perfect Savior to us!

2. Furthermore, as Christ is thus perfectly adapted, *so He is perfectly able to be a Savior*. He is a perfect Savior by reason of ability. He is now able to meet *all the needs* of sinners. That need is very great. The sinner needs *everything*. The beggar at the door of Christ asks not for crumbs or grain, but needs all that Christ can give. Nothing short of all-sufficiency can ever meet the needs of a poor son of Adam fallen by sin. Christ Jesus has all fullness dwelling in Himself. "More than all in Christ we find"—pardon in His blood; justification in His righteousness; wisdom in His teaching; sanctification in His Spirit. He is the God of all grace to us. Deep as our miseries, and boundless as our sins may be, the mines of His unfathomable love, His grace, and His power exceed them still. Send a spirit throughout all nations to hunt up the most abject of all races—discover, at last, a tribe of men degenerated as low as the beasts; select out of these the vilest, one who has been a cannibal; bring before us one lost to all sense of morality, one who has put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, light for darkness, and darkness for light! Let that man be red with murder, let him be black with lust; let villainies infest his heart as innumerable and detestable as the frogs of Egypt's plague—yet, Christ is able to meet that man's case! It is impossible for us to produce an exaggeration of the work of sin, and the devil, which Christ shall not be able to overtop by the plenitude of His power. "He is able to save *unto the uttermost* them who come unto God by Him." That divine Word which made heaven and earth is able to make a new creature in Christ Jesus; and that power, which never can be exhausted, which after making ten thousand times ten thousand worlds could make as many more, is all in Christ—and is linked with the virtue of His merit, and the prevalence of His blood! And therefore, He has all power in heaven and in earth to save souls. As He has this power to meet all needs, so He can meet all needs *in all cases*. There has never been brought to Christ a man whom He could not heal. If born blind, a touch of His finger has given sight; if lame, He has made men leap like a hart! Yes, and though dead, the voice of Christ has made Lazarus come forth from his tomb. Some troubled consciences think their case is not in the list of possible cures, let us assure them it must be. I would like to know, who is the vilest sinner, for if I knew him, I should feel delighted to behold him, since I should see a platform upon which my Lord's grace might stand to be the more gloriously resplendent in the eyes of men! Are you the vilest of the vile this morning? Do you feel so? Does Satan say you are so? Then I pray you do my Master the honor to believe that He is still able to meet your case, and that He can save even you! Though you yourselves are the ends of the earth, the very raveling of the garment of manhood, yet "look unto Him and be you saved, all you ends of the earth, for He is God, and besides Him there is none else." As He can meet all cases, so He can meet all cases *at all times*. One lie of hell is to tell sinners that it is too late. While the lamp holds out to burn, the vilest sinner that returns shall find

mercy in Christ! At the eleventh hour He saved the thief. Let not this be a reason for your procrastination—that were ungrateful! Let it, however, be a cause for hope—that were reasonable! He is able to save you *NOW*. Now, at this hour, at this very moment, if you trust Him, you are saved! If now, without an hour's delay to retire to your chamber, without even five minutes' time elapsing in which to prepare your soul for Him—if NOW you can believe that Christ can save you, He will do it, do it at this moment! His cures are instantaneous! A word, and it is done! Swift as the lightning's flash is the accomplishment of His purpose of free grace.

As the lightning flashes from the west even to the east, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be at His last great Advent. And so is it in His marvelous advent into the hearts of sinners whom He ordains to save. Able to meet all cases, able to meet them at this very hour is Christ. Sinner, Christ is perfectly able to save you, and to save you perfectly! I know the will and wit of man want to be *doing* something to begin salvation. Oh, how wicked is this! Christ is Alpha, why would you take His place and be an Alpha to yourselves? I have had this week two cases in which I have had to hold a solemn argument with troubled souls about this matter. Oh, the "ifs" and "buts" they put up! The "perhaps," and "and," and, "Oh, I don't feel this," and, "I don't feel that!" Oh, that wicked questioning of Christ! While talking with them, endeavoring to comfort them, and I hope not unsuccessfully, I was led to feel in my own mind what an awful crime it is to doubt God, to doubt Him who speaks from above, to doubt Him when He hangs bleeding on the cross. While it seemed to me to be such a hard thing to bring a sinner to trust Christ, yet it did seem, on the other hand, such a sin of sins, such a masterpiece of iniquity, that we do not trust Christ at once! Here is the plan of salvation—trust Christ and He will save you. But they say, "I do not *feel* enough." Or else, "I have been such a sinner." Or else, "I cannot feel the joy I need." Or else, "I cannot pray as I would." Then I put it to them. Do you trust Christ? "Yes," they will say, "I do trust Christ, and yet am not saved." Now, this makes God a liar, for He says, "He who believes in Him is not condemned, and he who believes on Him has everlasting life." When a soul professes to trust Christ, and yet says, "I am afraid He will not save me," what is this but telling the Eternal God to His face that He is a liar? Can you suppose a grosser infamy than this? Oh, that men were wise, that they would take God at His Word, and that they would believe that Christ is a perfect Savior, not asking that they need to help Him at the first, but to understand that He is able to begin with them just where they are, and to lift them up from all the hardness of their hearts, and the blackness of their souls to the very gates of heaven! He is a perfect Savior, soul, and a perfect Savior for you! You know the old story of the bronze serpent. There may have been some very wise persons who, when the bronze serpent was lifted up, would say, "I cannot look there and be healed, for, you see, I do not feel the venom in my veins as my neighbor does." The man is bitten and his veins are swelling, but he says he does not *feel* the pain so acutely as his neighbor, and he does not feel the joy of those who are healed, or else he would look! "If some angel would come," he says, "and tell me that the bronze serpent was set up on pur-

pose for *me,* and that I am ordained to be healed by it, then I would look." There is a poor ignorant man over there who asks no questions. He does just as he is told. Moses cries, "Look, look, you dying! Look and live!" And, asking no questions about what he has *felt,* or what he *was,* or what he *should* feel, yonder poor soul just looks, and the deed is done! The flush of health runs through him, and he is restored, while the questioner, the wise man in his own conceit, too wise indeed, to do as he is told, perishes through his own folly—a victim to the serpents—but yet, more a victim to his own conceit! Christ is a perfect Savior to begin with you, and He will also be a perfect Savior to carry on the work. He will never need your help; He is a perfect Savior to finish the work. He will bring you at last to His right hand, and enthroned with Him in the light of God, you shall bless and praise the name of God that He provided a perfect Savior for men!

3. Once more, let me remind you *that Christ is a perfectly successful Savior*. I mean by this that, in one sense, *He has already finished the work of salvation*. All that has to be done to save a soul, Christ has done already! There is no more ransom to be paid; to the last drachma He has counted down the price. There is no more righteousness to be worked out; to the last stitch He has finished the garment. There is nothing to be done to reconcile God to sinners; He has reconciled us unto God by His blood. There is nothing needed to clear the way to the mercy seat; we have a new and living way through the veil that was torn, even the body of Christ! There is no need of any preparation for our reception on the part of God. "It is finished," was the voice from Calvary; it meant what it said, *"It is finished."* Christ has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. And, as He has been successful in doing all the work for us, so, *in every case where that work has been applied, perfect success has followed!* Produce a single case where an application has been made to Christ without success; find a single soul in whom Christ has commenced His work, and then left it. You do hear of some who fall from divine grace—produce them! We are told of some, who are children of God today and children of the devil tomorrow—produce them! We are told that whom once He loves, He may leave—produce those whom He has ever left! Let them be seen; hold them up to the gaze of men and devils—the patients in whom Christ's medicine did work a while, but failed to produce a lasting cure! Heaven were clothed in sackcloth if such a discovery were made, for if He has failed to keep on earth, why not in heaven? Hell would be echoing with infernal laughter if one such instance were found, for where were the honor of God's word and promise? We challenge you, you princes of darkness, and you who make the vast assembly of the damned in hell, we challenge you to produce in all your ranks a single case of one who trusted in Christ that He would deliver him, and yet Christ cast him away! Or one in whom the new spirit was infused, and regeneration worked, and who, after all, fell and perished like the rest. Lift up your eyes to heaven; innumerable as the stars are the spirits redeemed by Christ's blood! So many as they are, they are all witnesses to the fact that Christ is a perfect Savior; that He is no professor who does not per-

form, for He has carried them all there, and as we gaze upon them, all can say, "You have redeemed them unto God by Your blood." You can save and perfectly save, O Lord Jesus Christ!

Now, I have thus dwelt upon the perfect adaptation, the perfect ability, and the perfect success of Christ. Our text tells us *that it became Him, for whom are all things, that He should give us such a Savior*. "For whom are all things," says the Apostle. That is, all things are made for His glory! Now, it could not have been for God's glory to give us an imperfect Savior—to send us one who would mock us with hopes which could not be fulfilled! It would have been a tantalizing of human hope, which I do not hesitate to pronounce an awful cruelty, if any but a complete and perfect Savior had been presented to us. If it had been partly works, and partly grace, there had been no grace in it! If it had been necessary for us to *do* something to make Christ's atonement efficacious, it would have been no atonement for us! We must have gone down to the pit of hell with this as an aggravation, that a God who professed to be a God of mercy, had offered us a religion of which we could not avail ourselves—a hope which did but delude us—and make our darkness the blacker! I want to know what some of my Brothers in the ministry, who preach such very high doctrine, do with their God's character. They are told to preach the gospel to every creature, but they very wisely do not do it, because they feel that the gospel they preach is not a gospel suitable to every creature! So they neglect their Master's mandate, and single out a few. I bless my Master that I have an available gospel, one that is available to you this morning, for "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." And I hold that it were inconsistent with the character of Him, "For whom are all things," and that it were derogatory to His honor if He would have sent to you a salvation that would not meet your case—if He would have sent me to preach a gospel to you which could not completely save! But, glory be to God, the salvation which is here preached, the salvation taught in this Book, brings *all* to you, and asks *nothing* from you!

Moreover, Paul calls our God—"Him by whom are all things." It would be inconsistent with the character of Him, by whom are all things, if He had sent a part-Savior—for us to do part ourselves, and for Christ to do the rest. Look at the sun. God wills for the sun to light the earth—does He ask the earth's darkness to contribute to the light? Does He question night, and ask it whether it has not in its somber shades something which it may contribute to the brightness of noon? No, my brothers and sisters! Up rises the sun in the morning, like a giant to run his race, and the earth is made bright. And shall God turn to the dark sinner, and ask him whether there is anything in him that may contribute to the eternal light of God? No! Up rises the face of Jesus, like the Sun of Righteousness, with healing beneath His wings, and darkness is, at His coming, light! See, too, the showers. When the earth is thirsty and cracking, does the Lord say unto the clouds, "Wait until the earth can help you, and can minister unto its own fertility"? No, verily, but the wind blows, and the clouds cover the sky, and upon the thirsty earth the refreshing showers come down! So is it with Christ—waiting not for man—asking nothing

from us, He gives us of His own rich grace, and is a complete and perfect Savior!

Thus much, then, upon our first head; I wish we had more time for our second, but we will pass to it at once.

II. CHRIST WAS MADE A PERFECT SAVIOR THROUGH SUFFERINGS. He was not made perfect in character by His sufferings, for He always was perfect—perfect God, perfect man—but He was made officially perfect, perfect as the captain of our salvation through His sufferings, and that in four ways.

By His sufferings He became perfect as a Savior *from having offered a complete expiation for sin*. Sin could not have been put away by holiness. The best performance of an unsuffering being could not have removed the guilt of man. Suffering was absolutely necessary, for suffering was the penalty of sin. "In the day you eat thereof," said God to Adam, "you shall surely die." Die then He must; nothing short of death could meet the case. Christ must go to the cross; He must suffer there—yes, and He must bow His head and give up the ghost—or else no atonement for sin would have been possible. The curse came upon us as the result of sin. "Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Now, had Christ been ever so perfect, yet had He never suffered, He never could have taken our curse. "Cursed is everyone that hangs on the tree," but without the tree, without the cross, Christ had not been our substitute, and all He did could have been of no use to us. Being crucified, He became accursed; being crucified, He died, and thus He could make perfect expiation for sin. Sin demanded punishment—punishment must consist of loss, and of pain; Christ lost everything, even to the stripping of His garments; His glory was taken from Him; they made nothing of Him; they spat in His face; they bowed the knee, and mocked Him with bitter irony.

There must be pain, too, and He endured it. In His body there were the wounds and the fever which the wounds produced; and in His soul there was an exceeding heaviness even unto death, and an agony which no tongue can tell, for we have no words in which to speak of it. We believe that this agony was commensurate with the agonies of the lost in hell; not the same agony, but an equivalent for it; and remember, not the equivalent for the agony of *one,* but an equivalent for the hells of all that innumerable host whose sins He bore—condensed into one black draught to be drained in a few hours! The miseries of an eternity without end, miseries caused by a God infinitely angry because of an awful rebellion—and these miseries multiplied by the millions for whom the man Christ Jesus stood as covenant head! What a draught was that, brothers and sisters! Well might it stagger even Him! And yet, He drained that cup, drained it to its utmost dregs, till not a drop was left! For you, my soul, no flames of hell; for Christ the Paschal Lamb has been roasted in that fire! For you, my soul, no torments of the damned, for Christ has been condemned in your place! For you, my spirit, no desertion of your God, for He was forsaken of God for you! It is done, it is finished, and by Your sufferings, Jesus, You have become perfect as the expiation of Your people's sins. My beloved, remember that your sins are perfectly expiat-

ed. Do not let them trouble you as to punishment; the punishment has gone. Sins cannot lie in two places at one time; they were put on Christ, and they cannot be on you. In fact, your sins are not to be found! The scapegoat has gone, and your sins will never be found again; your sins, if they were searched for, could not be discovered, nor by the piercing eyes of God can a single blemish be found in you. So far as the punishment of the law is concerned, it is finished, and Christ is a perfect Savior!

Again, if Christ had not suffered, He could not have been perfect as a Savior, *because He could not have brought in a perfect righteousness*. It is not enough to expiate sin. God requires of man perfect *obedience*. If man would be in heaven, He must be perfectly obedient. Christ, as He took away our guilt, has supplied us with a matchless righteousness. His works are our works. His doings are, by imputation, our doings. But, a part of obedience is a patient endurance of God's will. Patience is no mean part of the full obedience of a sincere soul. Christ must, therefore, suffer hunger, and cold, and nakedness, throughout life—that He may be capable of the virtue of patience! Obedience even unto death is now the only perfect form of obedience. The man who would keep the law of God perfectly, must not start back even at martyrdom. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength," would now require death to consummate it. It was not possible for the Master to have made the robe, woven from the top throughout without seam, unless the scarlet thread of crucifixion had run along its edge. But now, my soul, Christ is your perfect Savior, for He presents you with a perfect righteousness. There is nothing more to do! Neither my living, nor my dying can make my righteousness more complete. No doing, no laboring, no denying, no suffering, are needed to finish that which Christ began! "It is finished." Put on your robe, O Christian! Walk ever in it; let it be your wedding dress. Angels admire you! God Himself accepts you! Coming into His wedding feast, He sees you with this garment on, and He asks you not how you come here, but bids you sit down and feast forever, for you are such as even He can keep company with in His glory!

Yet, thirdly, it was necessary that Christ should suffer to make Him a perfect Savior *so far as His sympathy goes.* After sin is washed away, and righteousness imputed, we yet need a friend, for we are in a land of troubles and of sorrows. Now, if Christ had not suffered, He could not have been a faithful high priest, made like unto His brethren. We would never have had that sweet text—"He was tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin," if He had not suffered. But now He knows all shapes of suffering. It is not possible that even out of the thousands now in this house, there should be one heart whose case Christ cannot meet—

"In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows had a part."

Disease, sickness of body, poverty, need, friendlessness, hopelessness, desertion—He knows all these! You cannot cast human suffering into any shape that is new to Christ. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." If you feel a thorn in your foot, remember that it once pierced His head! If you have a trouble or a difficulty, you may see there the mark of His

hands, for He has climbed that way before. The whole path of sorrow has His blood-stained footsteps all along, for the Man of Sorrows has been there, and He can now have sympathy with you! "Yes," I hear one say, "but my sorrows are the result of *sin."* So were His—not His own—yet they were the result of sin! "Yes," you say, "but I am slandered, and I cannot bear it." They called Him a drunk, and a wine-bibber! Why, when you once think of the sufferings of Christ, yours are not worth a thought! Like the small dust of a balance that may be blown away with the breath of an infant, such are our agonies, and our trials, when compared with His. Drink your little cup—see what a cup He drained! The little vinegar and gall that fall to your share, you may gladly receive, for these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared to the sufferings through which He passed!

Finally, upon this point; He thus became perfect *as our exemplar*. This, too, was necessary in bringing many sons unto glory, for we come to heaven by following the example of Christ, as well as by being washed in His blood. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." That holiness is best of all promoted by an investigation of Christ's character, and a studious imitation of all its points. Now, had Christ not suffered, He could not have been an Example to us. We would have said, "Yes, yes, He may be an example to unsuffering angels, but not to men who have to tread the hot coals of the furnace." He could have afforded no example of patience if He had never suffered; He could never have taught us to forgive, if He had never felt injuries; He could not have trained us to holy courage, if He had never fought a battle; He could never have shown us the way to make tribulation work experience, and experience hope, if through tribulation He had not Himself waded to His throne! We want not an example taken from princes to be applied to peasants! We need a poor man to be an example for the poor; we need a man who lives in private to teach us how to live in retirement; we need one who fears not the face of crowds to show us how to walk in our public ways; we need, if we would meet the case of fallen humanity, a man just like the Savior, who passed through all the various phases of life, was in all companies, was shot at from all quarters, was tempted in all points like as we are, and this could not have been, if He had been led in quiet ways along a path of joy! He must do business on the tempestuous deeps; His ship must rock, His anchor drag, the thick darkness, and the lightning must gather round Him! They did so, and thus the captain of our salvation was made perfect *through sufferings,* as an Example for our imitation. I would that we might each of us know Him in the efficacy of His blood, in the glory of His righteousness, in the sweetness of His sympathy, and in the perfection of His example—for then would we know Him to the joy of our hearts forever!

III. And now, our last point—CHRIST'S HAVING BEEN MADE PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS WILL ENNOBLE THE WHOLE WORK OF DIVINE GRACE.

"It became Him for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory"—that is the great work—"to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." The whole thing will

work for His glory. Oh, my brothers and sisters, how this will glorify God at the last—that Christ, the man, should have been perfect through suffering! How this will glorify Him in the eyes of devils! Looking upwards from their beds of fire where they bite their iron bands in vain, how they will see the wisdom and power of God as more than a match for the wisdom and might of their leader! It was in man that they defeated God; in man God destroys them! They trampled on man's heel—man has broken their head! They took away from man the transient crown of his Eden-glory; man wears the unfading crown of immortality! man, even man, sits upon the throne of Godhead, and that man, crowned with light, and glory everlasting, was a man who did encounter Satan—who met him, too, on fair grounds—not a man shielded from pain; not a man who had an immunity from internal or external distress; but a man full of weakness, full of infirmity, like other men and yet, through God in alliance with His manhood, more than a conqueror and now reigning forever and ever! Milton, I think it is, supposes that this may have been the reason for Satan's first rebellion—he could not bear that an inferior race should be lifted up to be set above himself on God's throne. Whether this is so or not, it must certainly be an aggravation to the misery of that proud arch-traitor, that now the man, the man, the man in whose image God was defeated, is heir of all things, one with the King of kings, and Lord of lords!

How greatly will God be exalted that day *in the eyes of lost spirits*. Ah, you who shall perish—God grant there may be none such here!—if you shall ever perish in hell, you will have to glorify God as you see Christ, who was made perfect through sufferings, reigning there! You will not be able to say, "My damnation lies at God's door," for you will see in Christ a suitable Savior. You will have to look up and say, "Yes, He who was preached to me on Sundays was God; He could save me. He whom I was bid to trust in was man, and could sympathize with me, but I would not come unto Him that I might have life." In letters of fire you shall see it written, "You knew your duty, but you did it not." And even your moans and groans, as you suffer, shall be but an utterance of this awful truth of God—"Great God, You are just; no, You are doubly just; just, first, in damning me for sin, just, next, in trampling me under foot, because I trampled under foot the blood of the Son of God, and counted His covenant an unholy thing." Your weeping and wailing shall be but the deep bass of the awful praise which the whole universe, willingly or unwillingly, must give to Him who has provided a perfect Savior, and made Him perfect through suffering! Oh, my brothers and sisters, what delight and transport will seize *the minds of those who are redeemed!* How will God be glorified then! Why, every wound of Christ will cause an everlasting song! As we shall circle His throne, rejoicing, will not this be the very summit of all our harmony—"You were slain, and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood"? We must not say what God could do, or could not do, but it does seem to me that by no process of creation could He have ever made such beings as we shall be when we are brought to heaven; for if He had made us perfect, then we would have stood through our own holiness; or if He had forgiven us without an atonement, then we would

never have seen His justice, nor His amazing love. But in heaven we shall be creatures who feel that we have everything, but deserve nothing; creatures who have been the objects of the most wonderful love, and therefore, so mightily attached to our Lord, that it would be impossible for a thousand Satans ever to lead us astray!

Again—we shall be such servants as even the angels cannot be, for we shall feel under deeper obligation to God than even they! They are but created happy; we shall be redeemed by the blood of God's dear Son, and I am sure, brothers and sisters, day without night we shall circle God's throne rejoicing, having more happiness than the angels, for they do not know what evil is, but we shall have known it to the fullest—and yet shall be perfectly free from it! They do not know what pain is, but we shall have known pain, and grief, and death—and yet shall be immortal! They do not know what it is to fall, but we shall look down to the depths of hell and remember that this could have been our portion. Oh, how we will sing, how we will chant His praise, and this, I say again, shall be the highest note, that we owe all to that bright one, that Lamb in the midst of the throne! We will tell it over, and over, and over again, and find it an inexhaustible theme for melodious joy and song—that He became man, that He sweat great drops of blood, that He died, that He rose again! While the angels are singing, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah," we will bid them stop the song a moment, while we say, "He whom you thus adore was once covered with bloody sweat." As we cast our crowns at His feet, we will say, "And He was once despised and rejected of men." Lifting up our eyes and saluting Him as God over all, blessed forever, we will remember the reed, the sponge, the vinegar, and the nails; and as we come to Him, and have fellowship with Him, He shall lead us beside the living fountains of water! And we will remember the black brook of Kedron of which He drank, and the awful depths of the grave into which He descended. Amid all the splendors of heaven we shall never forget the agony, and misery, and dishonor of earth; and even when they sing the loudest sonnets of God's love, and power, and grace, we will sing this after all, and before all, and above all, that Jesus, the Son of God died for us, and this shall be our everlasting song—"He loved us and gave Himself for us, and we have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

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CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY
NO. 479

A SERMON
FOR THE LANCASHIRE DISTRESS,
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"Did not I weep for him who was in trouble?
Was not my soul grieved for the poor?"
Job 30:25.

IN endeavoring to justify the ways of God, Job's three friends came to the harsh conclusion that he would not have been so severely afflicted if he had not been such a great sinner. Among other accusations against the afflicted patriarch, Eliphaz, the Temanite, had the cruelty to lay this at his door, "You have not given water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry." Such a slander we may describe as "speaking wickedly for God," for in his ignorance of the great laws of providence towards the saints in this life, the Temanite had uttered a lie in order to account for the divine procedure. God's own testimony of Job is that he was, "a perfect and an upright man, one who feared God and eschewed evil." And certainly he could never have earned the character of "perfect" if he had been devoid of pity for the poor! Richly did the three miserable comforters deserve the burning rebuke of their slandered friend, "You are forgers of lies, you are physicians of no value. O that you would altogether hold your peace and it shall be your wisdom."

Job, in his great indignation at the shameful accusation of unkindness to the needy, pours forth the following very solemn imprecation—"If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless have not eaten thereof; if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate—then let my arms fall from my shoulder blades, and my arm be broken from the bone." Thus, vehemently making a tremendous appeal to heaven, he shakes off the slander into the fire as Paul shook the viper from his hand! I trust there are many present who, if the like charges should be laid to their door, might as boldly deny it; not in the same form of imprecation, for that is forbidden to the Christian, but with all the positiveness which can dwell in the, "Yes, yes, no, no" of the followers of Jesus! I trust that many of you can, in your measure, use the language of the man of Uz, and say, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eyes saw me, they gave witness to me—because I delivered the poor who cried, and the fatherless, and him who had none to help him. The blessing of him who

was ready to perish came upon me—and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." In the two questions of my text, Job claims something more than merely having helped the poor with gifts, he declares that he wept and grieved for them. His charity was of the *heart*. He considered their case, laid their sorrows to his own soul, and lent his eyes to weep, and his heart to mourn. "Did I not weep for him who was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?" Human sympathy is the subject of our present meditation, and I shall labor to excite in you those emotions which are the genuine result of sympathy when it is truly felt. Practical sympathy is my aim; I trust your generosity, at the end of the sermon, will prove that I have hit the center of my target!

I will speak of human sympathy, then, its *commendations,* its *hindrances,* its *sure fruits,* and its *special application to the case in hand this morning*.

I. HUMAN SYMPATHY, ITS COMMENDATIONS:

1. We may say of it, first, that even *nature* dictates that man should feel sympathy for his kind. Humanity, had it remained in its *unfallen* estate, would have been one delightful household of brothers and sisters! If our first parents had never sinned, we would have been one unbroken family, the home of peace, the abode of love. The fact that, "God has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth," would then have been a realized and established truth; no nationalities would have divided, or personal interests separated us. Having one common Father, one loving God, one blissful Paradise, our lives would have been one long heaven on earth of sweetly intermingled peace, love, joy, fellowship and purity. One can hardly indulge a conception of such a happy world without an intense regret that the fall has made it all a dream—yet, let us dream a moment of a world without a soldier, without a sword, or spear, or shield—a world without a prison, a magistrate, or a chain; a society in which none will wrong his fellow man, but each is anxious for the well-being of all; a race needing no exhortation to virtue, for virtue is its very life! Let us dream of a land where love has knit all natures into unity, and breathed one soul into a thousand bodies! Alas, for us, when Adam fell, he not only violated his Maker's laws, but in the fall, he broke the unity of the race, and now, we are isolated particles of manhood, instead of being what we should have been—members of one body—moved by one and the same spirit. The dream may vanish but we lose not our argument, for even in fallen humanity there are some palpitations of the one heart, some signs of the, "one blood." Flesh and blood are able to make the revelation that we were not made to live unto ourselves. Fallen and debased as man is, and this pulpit is not prone to flatter human nature, yet we cannot but recognize the generous feeling towards the poor and suffering which exists in many an unregenerate heart. We have known men who have forgotten God, but who, nevertheless, do not forget the poor; who despise their Maker's laws, but yet have a heart that melts at a tale of woe! It were folly to dispute that some who deny the God who made them, have yet exhibited hearts of compassion

to the poor and needy. When even publicans and harlots can exhibit sympathy, how much more should it burn in the Christian heart? We should do more than others, or else we shall hear the Master say, "What thanks have you? For sinners also do even the same." Called with a nobler calling, let us exhibit, as the result of our regenerate nature, a loftier compassion for the suffering sons of men! Many interesting incidents have been recorded by naturalists of sympathy among animals. The "dumb driven cattle" of our pastures and the dogs of our streets have manifested commiseration towards a suffering one of their own species; and we are less than men, we are worse than brute beasts, if we can enjoy abundance without sharing our bread with the starving! Woe to us if we can be wrapped in comfort and refuse a garment to the shivering poor, or rest in our ceiled houses and yield no shelter to the homeless wanderer! Brothers and sisters, if nature herself teaches you, why should I say more? You are not unnatural, you achieve already more than mere nature can demand; you do the greater, you will not fail in the less!

2. Further, we may remark that *the absence of sympathy has always been thought of, in all countries, and in all ages, as one of the most abominable of vice*s. In old classic history, who are the men held up to everlasting curses? Are they not those who had no mercy on the poor? Each land has its legend of the proud noble who hoarded up his corn in the day of famine, and bade the perishing multitudes curse and die; and down to this day the name of such a wretch is quoted as a word of infamy! A man without a heart would be a beast more worthy of being hunted down than a tiger or a wolf. Men with little hearts and grasping ungenerous spirits—how heartily are they despised! If they wear the Christian garb, they disgrace it! The ordinary disciples of morality are ashamed of them, and I may add that even vice and immorality shun their company. The grinding, hardhearted man may gain the approval of those who are like himself, and therefore applaud him for his prudence and discretion, but the big heart of the world has ever been sound enough on this matter to understand that there is no genuine virtue without generosity! One of the most damning of all vices which stamps a man as being thoroughly rotten to the core is that vice of selfishness which makes the wretch live and care only for his own personal aggrandizement, and offer only a stony heart to the woes of his fellows. Brothers and sisters, I entertain no fear that you will ever win the badge of infamy which hangs about the neck of churls!

3. But, I have better arguments to use with you. Sympathy *is especially a Christian's duty*. Consider what the Christian is, and you will say that if every other man were selfish, he would be unselfish; if there were nowhere else a heart that had sympathy for the needy, there would be one found in every Christian breast! The Christian is a king; it becomes not a king to be merely caring for himself. Was Alexander ever more royal than when his troops were suffering from thirst, and a soldier offered him a bowl full of the precious liquid, and he put it aside, and said it was not fitting for a king to drink while his subjects were thirsty—and that he

would share the sorrow with them? O, Christian, whom God has made kings and princes, reign royally over your own selfishness, and act with the honorable generosity which becomes the royal seed of the universe! You are sent into the world to be saviors of others, but how shall you be so if you care only for yourselves? It is yours to be lights, and does not a light consume itself while it scatters its rays into the thick darkness? Is it not your office and privilege to have it said of you as of your Master—"He saved others, himself he cannot save?" The Christian's sympathy should always be of the widest character because he serves a God of infinite love. When the precious stone of love is thrown by divine grace into the crystal pool of a renewed heart, it stirs the transparent life floods into ever widening circles of sympathy—the first ring has no very wide circumference; we love our own household; for he that cares not for his own household is worse than a heathen and a publican—but mark the next concentric ring; we love the *household of faith*. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." Look once more, for the ever-widening ring has reached the very limits of the lake, and included all men in its area, for "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks are to be made for all men."

If any man shall think that we are not, "born for the universe," and should narrow our souls, I can only say that I have not so learned Christ, and hope never to confine to a few the sympathy which I believe to be meant for mankind. To me, a follower of Jesus means a friend of man. A Christian is a philanthropist by profession, and generous by force of grace; wide as the reign of sorrow is the stretch of his love, and where he cannot help, he still pities.

4. Beloved, *will you remember the blessed example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,* for this, surely, will teach you not to live for self. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty might be rich." His heart is made of tenderness, it melts with love. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. Since the day when He became flesh of our flesh, He has never hidden Himself from our sufferings. Our glorious Head is moved with all the sorrows which distress the members. Crowned though He now is, He forgets not the thorns which once He wore; amid the splendors of His regal state in Paradise, He is not unmindful of His children here below. Still is He persecuted when Saul persecutes the saints; still are His brethren as the apple of His eye, and very near His heart. If you can find in Christ a grain of selfishness, consecrate yourselves unto your lusts, and let Mammon be your God! If you can find in Christ a solitary atom of hardness of heart, or callousness of spirit, then justify yourselves, your thick hearts are as stones to the wailing of the desolate! But if you profess to be followers of the Man of Nazareth, be full of compassion; He feeds the hungry lest they faint by the way; He binds up the broken in heart and heals all their wounds; He hears the cry of the needy, and precious shall their blood be in His sight! Therefore, be also tender-hearted and also very affectionate the one toward the other.

5. Dear friends, though this last reason will certainly be to a Christian heart the very best that can be urged, yet permit me to suggest another. *Sympathy is essential to our usefulness.* I know that a man in the ministry, who cannot feel, ought to resign his office. We have heard some hold forth the doctrines of grace as if they were nauseous medicine, and men were to be forced to drink them by hard words and violent abuse. We have always thought that such men did more harm than good, for while seeking to vindicate the letter, they evidently missed the spirit of the faith once delivered unto the saints! Cold and impassive are some of our divines; they utter the truth of God as though it were no concern of theirs whether men received it or not! To such men, heaven and hell, death and eternity, are mere themes for oratory—not subjects for emotion. The man who will do well must throw himself into his words; he must put his whole being into intense communion with the truth of God which he utters! God's true minister cannot preach a sermon upon the ruin of man without feeling a deep amazement in his own spirit, because of the burden of the Lord. He cannot, on the other hand, unfold the joys of pardon, and the love of Jesus without a leaping heart and rejoicing tongue! The man who is devoid of love will be devoid of power, for sympathies are golden chains by which Christian orators draw men's ears and hearts to themselves and the truths they teach. "I preached," said one, "when I spoke of condemnation, as though I wore the chains about my own arm, and heard them clanking in my ears." "And I," another might have said, "I preached of pardon bought with blood, as though I had myself just come up from the sacred fountain, having left my foulness all behind, and being girt about with the white linen which is the righteousness of the saints." If our hearers perceive that we do not really long for their good, that our preaching is but a matter of mere routine to be got through as so much irksome "duty," can we hope to win their hearts? But when they feel that there is a loving heart within the preacher, then they give the more earnest heed to the things whereof we speak. You Sunday school teachers, you must have warm hearts or you will be of little use to your children. You street preachers, City missionaries, Bible women, and tract distributors, you who in any way seek to serve our Lord—a heart, a heart, a heart, a tender heart, a flaming heart, a heart saturated with intense sympathy, when sanctified by the Holy Spirit, will give you success in your endeavors! Name the men the wide world over who have been the most successful in bending multitudes to their own will, and they are the men who have the largest hearts. For good or evil, *heart* power is *real* power! The men, whose hearts move with mighty pulsations like the piston of a steam engine, will soon move the wheels and drag along the ponderous load. We must have within us the engine of the heart throbbing mightily and continually, and then shall we draw the hearts of men with irresistible force!

6. Here I must supplement that thought with another—*sympathy may often be the direct means of conversion.* How do the Romanists craftily avail themselves of this! The loaves and fishes have always been used at

Rome as an attraction to the multitude. Still the Sister of Mercy, with her basket on her arm, goes to the poor, or devotes herself to the sick—and in this, we praise them; were it the gospel they had to teach, they could scarcely have found a wiser method for its propagation; and be it what it may which they have to disseminate, they certainly have not failed for lack of wisdom. I would that we who have a purer faith could remember a little more the intimate connection between the body and the soul. Go to the poor man and tell him of the bread of heaven, but first give him the bread of earth, for how shall he hear you with a starving body? Talk to him of the robe of Jesus' righteousness, but you will do it much better when you have provided a garment with which he may cover his nakedness. It seems an idle tale to a poor man if you talk to him of spiritual things and cruelly refuse him help as to temporals! Sympathy, thus expressed, may be a mighty instrument for good; and even without this, if you are too poor to be able to carry out the monetary part of benevolence, a kind word, a look, a sentence or two of sympathy in trouble, a little loving advice, or an exhortation to your neighbor to cast his burden on the Lord, may do much spiritual service. I do not know, but I think, if all our Church members were full of love, and would always deal kindly, there would be very few hearts that would long hold out, at least from hearing the Word of God! You ask a person to hear your preacher; but he knows that you are crotchety, short-tempered, and stingy—and he is not likely to think much of the Word which, as he thinks, has made you what you are! But if, on the other hand, he sees your compassionate spirit, he will first be attracted to *you,* then next to what you have to say, and then you may lead him as with a thread, and bring him to listen to the truth of God as it is in Jesus! And who can tell but thus, through the sympathy of your tender heart, you may be the means of bringing him to Christ?

7. And I shall say here, that this sympathy *is sure to be a great blessing to yourselves*. If you want joy—joy that you may think upon at nights, and live upon day after day, next to the joy of the Lord, which is our strength, is the joy of doing good! The selfish man thinks that he has the most enjoyment in laying out his wealth upon himself. Poor fool! His interest is vastly small compared with the immense return which generosity and sympathy bring to the man who exercises them. Be assured that we can know as much joy in another's joy as in our own joy! Then, beside the joy it brings, there is experience. Experiential knowledge may be gained by it. I would not, of course, declare that a man can get experience without having trouble himself, but the next best thing to it, is to bear other people's troubles. We may never have known what it is to need bread, but to see a saint who has been brought to the door of starvation, and yet has had his bread given, and his water sure, may be almost as useful. You and I may not be tortured with the pangs of sickness or the weakness of decay, but to climb some three pairs of stairs to a miserable back room, and watch a child of God patient in his tribulation, and to put ourselves by sympathy upon his bed, and suffer and smart with him—that may give us the next best thing to the experience, itself! I

do think, brothers and sisters, that some men may live 20 lives, and get the experience of 20 men, and the information and real good of 20 men's troubles, by having large hearts which can hold the sorrows of others! Oh, we cannot tell how much blessedness we might receive if we were freer to aid our fellows! "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Ask any man who has been to visit the sick, the poor and the needy, whether he has not come home more resigned to his own trials, and more satisfied with his own lot. We gave a shilling, and received a casket of pearls, which dropped from the lips of the poor suffering one while he told of God's faithfulness, and the preciousness of the love of Christ! We are great losers when we know not these rich poor saints! If we would but trade with them, it would be a blessed barter for us. Coral and pearl—let no mention be made of them in comparison with the priceless gems which we might receive if we had greater sympathy and fuller communion with the suffering sons and daughters of Jerusalem!

Thus have I said as much as may be fitting this morning in commendation of Christian sympathy.

II. We speak now of THE HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY.

Some say that there is very little Christian sympathy abroad. I do not believe them, except as regards themselves! I dare say they have measured other men's corn with their own bushels. When any say, "O, there is no love in the Church," I have always noticed that, without exception, they have no love themselves! On the other hand, we have heard others say, "What a blessed unity there is in the Church; when we come to the Tabernacle, it does us good to get such hearty shakes of the hand, and to see such love in every brother's eyes." When they speak thus, I know the reason is that they carry fire in their own hearts, and then they think the Church warm, while the others carry lumps of ice in their hearts, and they imagine that everybody must be cold.

1. One of the great impediments to Christian sympathy is *our own intense selfishness*. We are all selfish by nature, and it is a work of divine grace to break this thoroughly down, until we live to Christ, and not to self any longer. How often is the rich man tempted to think that his riches are his own! A certain lady being accosted by a beggar, asked charity of her; she gave him a shilling, saying, "Take that shilling; it is more than God ever gave me." The beggar said, "O, Madam, but God has given you all your abundance." "No," she said, "I am right; God has only *lent* me what I have. All I have is a loan." I would that all who are entrusted with this world's substance felt that it was only loaned out to them, and that they were stewards. Now, a steward, when he has orders to give a poor man a large sum of money, does not say, "Dear me, that will make me poor!" He never considered that which was entrusted to him, belonged to him, and so he gives it freely enough. So, remember, you have nothing of your own—especially you Christian men and women who have been bought with a price—you are in a double sense stewards unto God, and should act as such! Living to God, we should devote ourselves to the good of the race for Jesus' sake.

2. Another hindrance lies *in the customs of our country*. We still have among us too much of caste and custom. The exclusiveness of rank is not readily overcome. It is not so, I thank God, in this place of worship, but I have known many places of worship where there are tiers of Christian people, layer on layer, who never associate with each other. In some places of worship they put up in conspicuous letters, "FREE SEATS FOR THE POOR." That is abominable! Then you have another class—respectable tradesmen, and though they sit at the same table with the dons, and my lord this or that, they never think for a moment of speaking to them. When people come out of Church, what a gradation there is! Have I not seen in many a country village how, first of all, the squire goes out, and then the bailiff follows? And then all the poor people curtsey and bow to show their abject servitude and serfdom—and all this in a Christian land! In our Dissenting places of worship, what stiffness there is! What rustling of the silks up one aisle, and what quietude of the cottons in another! When the members come together Lady So-and-So, who sits yonder, or Miss This, who sits there, will hardly recognize Nancy That, or Betsy So-and-So! Now, I feel as much pleased in associating with the poorest of God's saints as with those who are of a higher degree in this world, for I believe the happy fusion of all will promote the interests of all. It would vex my heart to see you grow into the stuck-up respectability of some of our fine congregations. Away forever with these castes and divisions! Let us maintain the *family* feeling, and allow nothing to violate it!

3. Much lack of sympathy is produced by *our ignorance of one another*. We do not know the sufferings of our fellows. If I had brought the newspaper here today, and I had half a mind to do so, and had read you some extracts about the sufferings in Preston and Wigan, and the various towns in Lancashire, you would have known much more about the distress than you do now. Or if, which would do as well, you were to go next Monday with some City missionary to the East End, or St. Giles's, or some poor district this side of the water, you would say, "Dear me, I did not know that people really did suffer at this rate; I had no idea of it, or I would have given more to the poor." We need to be educated into the knowledge of our national poverty! We need to be taught and trained, to know more of what our fellow men can, and do suffer! Oh, if the Christian Church knew the immorality of London, she would cry aloud to God! If but for one night you could see the harlotry and infamy; if you could but once see the rascality of London gathered into one mass—your hearts would melt with woe and bitterness, and you would bow yourselves before God, and cry unto Him for this city as one who mourns for his only son, even for his first-born!

4. No doubt the abounding deception which exists among those who seek our help has checked much generosity. I think I can tell the moment a man opens his mouth to address me, when a man wants to beg of me. There is such a particular whine, and a sanctified unction, that the moment you hear it, you think, "I will give that man nothing; he is an old

established beggar, and gets his living by it." Seeing, as I have, not scores, but hundreds of these beings, there is a tendency to get one's heart hard and callous, and to say, "Oh, they are *all* deceivers!" But they are *not* all such; there is a vast amount of real distress of a private character, a suffering which will not cry nor moan; and I take it that it ought to be your business, and mine, to seek out these cases; not to stop till they come to us, but *to go to them!* We must avoid, with a stern discretion, those cases which do but prey upon Christian charity, but we must also seek out the genuine sufferers and give them relief! Let none of these things, great obstacles though they are, hinder your sympathy today, for none of them exist in the matter which we shall have to plead this morning.

III. A few minutes upon THE FRUITS OF CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY—

1. The fruit of Christian sympathy will be seen in *a kindly association with all Christians*—we shall not shun them nor pass them by.

2. It will be seen next, in a *kindly encouragement of those who need aid*, constantly being ready to give a word of good advice, and good cheer to the heart which is ready to faint. Dear Christian friends, I think our experience is not as available as it might be for the good of others. In the olden times, they who feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord listened and heard! You will find your brethren often distressed in mind; you have passed through the same stage—conversation with them will help them to escape as you have done. More especially is this conversation very valuable under the pangs of conviction. When a young man or woman has been awakened under the ministry, I charge you each, before God, you who have found peace in Christ, to watch the throes and agonies of the new birth, and be ready to take the little child and nurse it for Christ! The senior members of every Christian Church should consider themselves, as called by their very position, to look after the young! We have some such here; we need a few more. We especially need you mothers in Israel to be so sympathetic that you may no sooner hear that a soul is in distress than you are in distress, too, till you can have poured in the oil and the wine into their wounds! I think this sympathy should be especially shown to any who backslide. There is a tendency to cut such off from the Church book and then leave them. This should not be! We must look after those who are out of the way. The shepherd must leave the 99 sheep to go after the one which has gone astray! If you see one vacillating, be most careful there. If you detect in any a growing coldness, be the more anxious to foster that which remains, which is ready to die! Let a holy discipline and watchfulness be maintained over the entire Church, by the care and forethought of everyone for his next friend. Thus can you practically allow your Christian sympathy.

3. Show it, also, *whenever you hear the good name of any called into doubt*. Stand up for your brethren! It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest, but there are some such birds. The moment they hear a word or a whisper against a Christian, though a member of the same Church, "Report

it! Report it!" they say—always pretending that they are very sorry—but all the while sucking it as a dainty morsel! The old proverb, you know, was, "We have finished dinner; clear the things away, and now let us sit down and wreck other men's characters." I fear there are even some professing Christians who do that! This is not sympathy, but the malice of Satan—may God deliver you from it! Stand up for all who are your fellow soldiers—be jealous of the honor of the regiment in which you have enlisted!

4. But still, there is no Christian sympathy in all this if it does not, when needed, *prove itself by real gifts of our substance!* Zealous words will not warm the cold; delicate words will not feed the hungry; the most free speech will not set free the captive, or visit him in prison; the most adorned words will not clothe the naked, and the words that are most full of unction will not pour oil and wine into the wounds of the sick. Words! Words! Words! Chaff! Chaff!! Chaff!!! If there is no *act,* there is no *sympathy!* "Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?"

Perhaps some of my hearers this morning will say that the text and the subject are appropriate to the occasion—but that they need some *spiritual food.* Well, you get that often, I trust, here. But I am persuaded that there are times when, if Christ were upon earth, He would dwell mainly upon these themes of practical Christianity! I read my Master's Sermon on the Mount, and what doctrine is there in it? It is all *precept* from beginning to end! And so shall my sermon be this morning. Not doctrine, but precept! For this I know—we need to see in the Christian world more of the practical carrying out of the loving benevolence of the Savior. What do I care about the doctrines for which you fight, unless they produce in you the spirit of Christ? What do I care for your *forms* of faith, and your *ceremonies*, if all the while you are a Nabal, wickedly saying in your heart, "Shall I take my bread, and my water to give it to these strangers?" Oh, let your faith be a *living* faith, lest, while you have the form of godliness, you deny the power thereof! Time was, whenever a man met a Christian, he met a helper. "I shall starve!" he said, until he saw a Christian's face, and then he said, "Now I shall be aided." But some have thrown benevolence aside, and imagine that these are old duties of a legal character. Legal, then, will I be, when, in my Master's name, again I say, "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices, God is well-pleased."

IV. I now conclude with an appeal for a special collection this morning. I ASK YOUR AID FOR THESE NEEDY ONES IN LANCASHIRE.

1. Remember, first, *that their poverty is no fault of their own.* They are not brought to it by excess of meats or drinks. They are not reduced to it by riot or disorder. It is not idleness; it is not a willful strike against the masters. It is utterly unavoidable; and here, therefore, is the right place for benevolence to display itself! The Egyptian hieroglyph for charity is very suggestive. It is a naked child giving honey to a bee which has lost

its wings. Notice, it is a *child*—we should give in meekness. It is a *naked* child—we should give from pure motives, and not for show. It is a child feeding a bee; not a drone, but one that will work; a bee that has lost its wings—one, therefore, which has lost its power to supply itself—a picture before you of those martyrs and confessors of industry whose cause I plead today! A bee that has lost its wings makes its appeal for a little honey to every childlike heart here today, and they who are true to God will not refuse their aid!

2. Remember, too, *that the cause of this suffering is a national sin—the sin of slavery!* We have not yet passed the third generation, and upon a nation God visits sin to the third and fourth generation. We have rid ourselves, at last, of this accursed stain as far as our present Government is concerned—we are therefore delivered from any fear in the future on that ground; but still, if slavery is now in America, we must remember that it would not have been there if it had not been carried there—and we are partners in guilt! Moreover, there has been too much winking at slavery among the merchants of Manchester and Liverpool. There has not been that abhorrence of the evil which should have been, and therefore it is just in the providence of God that when America is cut with the sword, we should be made to smart with the rod! If the Lord is pleased to smite our nation in one particular place, yet we must remember that it is meant for us all. Let us all bear the infliction as our tribulation, and let us cheerfully take up the burden, for it is but a little one compared with what our sins might have brought upon us! Better far for us to have famine than war! From all civil war and all the desperate wickedness which it involves, good Lord deliver us; and if You smite us as You have done, it is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of man!

3. I must also refresh your memories, though you know it well, *with the fact of the patient endurance of those who have been called to suffer*. You have read of no burning of mills, no breaking open of baker's shops; you have heard no accusations brought against the aristocracy; you have heard of no great political movement for the upsetting of our institutions. There was never upon earth a nobler spectacle than that of these men suffering so frightfully with their wives and children, and yet enduring it so patiently! They deserve to be helped! If ever there was a case in which human ears must be opened to hear the cry of woe, this is it. If you and I had our wives and children at home starving, and had nothing but the charity of the parish, and the little relief of the committees, making only some one-and-fourpence or one-and-sixpence a head to live upon for a week, I am afraid we would begin to think that we could readjust the machinery of Government! Or it might happen that if we saw bread, and could not get it, we might break the window, or do some unrighteous act to take away another man's property sooner than see our children starve. They suffer well, brothers and sisters, and we do not well unless we help them!

4. Moreover, *remember how widely spread is this distress*. I know too many of my dear hearers are often brought to as great poverty as the op-

eratives in Lancashire—but then, you have a little help—sometimes the Church can give it; at other times some friend, not quite so badly off as you are, will help you. But there, if a poor man needs a loaf, he cannot get it from the tradesman even on credit, for the tradesman has no power to give him credit. Nor can these people borrow from their neighbors, for where all are equally destitute, one cannot help the other! Even the Churches fail to do what they would wish to do. In the case of one dear brother, late a student in our College, to whom we constantly send supplies week by week, and who maintains a class of some 40 young women—in answer to the cry of faith has found all the means, and I hope to aid him by this collection of today. The distress is not only with the poor, now, but with those a little above them, and God only knows to what extent it must go unless in His gracious providence He, by some means or other, brings a supply of cotton that they may once again be at work.

5. Why need I urge you, my hearers? I feel that you are ready now to assist these suffering ones. *Let your own gratitude to God move you!* Blessed be God that you have not this famine and lack of bread! Thank the Master that though times may be hard, and some may now and then complain, yet we have not to walk through our streets and see our factories shut up, and miss the smoke which marks the daily toil that brings food to hungry mouths! We have not to know every habitation is a Bochim because the strong man bows down for lack of bread, and the faces of the children are wan, and the mothers weep, and even the breasts refuse the infant child its needed nourishment! Give as God has prospered you. He who gives to the poor lends to the Lord, and the Lord shall remember him in his time of trouble. He who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life freely given him. Let him, therefore, freely give, even as he has freely received!

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A MESSAGE FROM GOD FOR YOU
NO. 480

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 16, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; He will no more carry you away into captivity: He will visit your iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will discover your sins."
Lamentations 4:22.

EVERY Sunday we are insisting upon it that both the law and the gospel have a voice to universal manhood—the law in its condemnation of every subject under its sway, and the gospel in its gracious invitation and command to every creature under heaven. Yet, at the same time, we must never forget that both the law and the gospel have a special voice to certain characters; that the law has ten-fold thunders for peculiar sinners, and, on the other hand, the gospel has a voice of unutterable sweetness to those favored persons who have by the Holy Spirit been prepared to hear its voice! While there are texts which are universal, and invitations whose range is as wide as fallen humanity, there are, at the same time, a still larger number of texts which are aimed like arrows at an appointed target. My text this morning can never be understood, unless we clearly point out the characters to whom it is addressed. The blessing is not for the daughter of Edom, neither is the curse for the daughter of Zion. We must be very earnest with our own hearts this morning, to discover, if possible, whether we come under the number of those whose warfare is accomplished, and whose sin is pardoned; or whether, on the other hand, we abide with the multitude on whom rests the curse of God, and whose sins shall be discovered and punished by the right hand of the Most High! I have a double message from the Lord this morning. I say not alone, as did the blind prophet of old, "Come in, you wife of Jeroboam, for I am sent to you with heavy tidings," but I have also to say, "Come in, you blessed of the Lord, why stand you outside?" According to the persons I address, my message will be as pleasant as ever was brought by those whose feet were beautiful upon the mountains, because they published good tidings of great joy, or as dreadful as that which Daniel bore to the trembling monarch, in the day when his kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians!

Our two messages we will *try to deliver in their order*. We shall, then, need your attention and patience for a minute while we answer the question—*Why the difference?* And then, we will *press upon each character the force of the message,* that each may be led to believe what is addressed to him.

I. OUR FIRST MESSAGE IS ONE OF COMFORT. "The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; He will no more carry you away into captivity."

1. We find, at the outset, *a joyous fact*. Read it with glistening eyes, you to whom it belongs—"The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion." In the case of the kingdom of Judah, the people had suffered so much in their captivity that their God, who in His anger had put them from Him, felt His repenting kindle together and considered that they had suffered enough; "For she has received at the Lord's hand," said the prophet, "double for all her sin." Brothers and sisters, in our case we have not been punished at all, but yet, the words may stand as they are, and be literally true, for the punishment of our iniquity *is* accomplished! Remember that sin *must* be punished. Any theology which offers the pardon of sin without punishment ignores the major part of the character of God. God is love, but God is also just—as severely just as if He had no love, and yet, as intensely loving as if He had no justice! To gain a just view of the character of God, you must perceive all His attributes as infinitely developed; justice must have its infinity acknowledged as much as mercy. Sin *must* be punished. This is the voice which thunders from the midst of the smoke and the fire of Sinai—"The soul that sins it shall die." "Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." "Sin must be punished," is written on the base of the eternal throne in letters of fire! And, as the damned in hell behold it, their hopes are burned to ashes! Sin must be punished, or God must cease to be. The testimony of the gospel is not that the punishment has been mitigated, or foregone, or that justice has had a bribe given it to close its mouth. The consolation is far more sure and effectual: "Say unto the daughter of Zion that the punishment of her iniquity is *accomplished."* Christ has, for His people, borne all the punishment which they deserved! And now every soul for whom Christ died may read with exultation—"The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished." God is satisfied, and asks no more.

Sin deserved God's wrath; that wrath has spent itself on Christ! The black and gathering clouds had all been summoned to the tempest, and manhood stood beneath the dark canopy waiting till the clouds of vengeance should empty out their floods. "Stand aside!" said Jesus—"Stand aside, My spouse, My Church, and I will suffer in your place." Down dashed the drops of fire; the burning sleet swept terribly over His head, and beat upon His poor defenseless person, until the clouds had emptied out their awful burden, and not a drop was left! beloved, it was not that the cloud swept by the wind into another region where it tarries until it is again called forth—it was annihilated—it spent itself entirely upon Christ! There is no more punishment for the believer since Christ has died for him! In His dying, our Lord has satisfied the divine vengeance to the fullest. Then this, too, *must satisfy our conscience*. The enlightened conscience of a man is almost as inflexible as the justice of God, for an awakened conscience, if you give it a false hope, will not rest upon it, but cries out for something more! Like the horseleech it says, "Give, give, give!" Until you can offer to God a full satisfaction, you cannot give the conscience peace. But now, O daughter of Zion, let your conscience be at rest; justice is satisfied; the law is not despised—it is honored! It is established! God can now be just, severely so, and yet, seeing that your punishment is accomplished, you may come with boldness to Him, for no

guilt lies on you. You are accepted in the beloved! Your guilt was laid on Him of old, and you are now safe.—

"In your Surety you are free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee!
With His spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One."

Come boldly unto God and rejoice in Him!

Lest, however, while God is reconciled and conscience is quieted, our fears should even for an instant arise, let us repair to Gethsemane and Calvary, and see there this great sight—how the punishment of our iniquity is accomplished. There is the God of heaven and of earth, wrapped in human form. In the midst of those olives yonder I see Him in an agony of prayer. He sweats, not as one who labors for the bread of earth, but as one who toils for heaven! He sweats "as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." It is not the sweat of His brow, only, but, "All His head, His hair, His garments, are bloody." God is smiting Him, and laying upon Him the punishments of our iniquities! He rises with His heart exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. They hurry Him to Pilate's judgment seat. The God of heaven and earth stands in human form to be blasphemed and falsely accused before the tribunal of His cowardly creatures! He is taken by soldiers to Gabbatha; they strip, they scourge Him; clots of gore are on the whip as it is lifted from His back. They buffet Him, and bruise Him with their blows; as if His robe of blood were not enough, they throw about His shoulders an old cloak, and make Him a mimic-king! Little knew they that He was the King of kings! He gives His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them who pluck off the hair; He hides not His face from shame and spitting. Oh, what shall be said of You, Son of man? In what words shall we describe Your grief? All you that pass by, behold, and see if there was ever any sorrow like unto His sorrow that was done to Him! Oh God, You have broken Him with a rod of iron; all Your waves and Your billows have gone over Him. He looks, and there is none to help! He turns His eyes around, and there is none to comfort Him! And look, through the streets of Jerusalem He is hastened to His death! They nail Him to the transverse wood; they dash it into the ground—they dislocate His bones! He is poured out like water; all His bones are out of joint; He is brought into the dust of death; agonies are piled on agonies! As in the classic fable, the giants piled Ossa upon Pelion that they might reach the stars, so now that man may reach to heaven, misery is piled on misery—what if I say hell on hell? But Jesus bears the dreadful load. At last He reaches the climax of anguish, grief could go no higher. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!" was the sum total of all human misery; the gathering up of all the wrath of God, and all the sorrow of man into one sentence! And thus He dies! Say unto the daughter of Zion that her punishment is accomplished. "It is finished!" Let the angels sing it; sing it in the plains of glory; tell it here on earth, and once again, say unto the daughter of Zion that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, and that she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins! This, then, is the joyous note we have to sound this morning.

2. But—but—and here comes the solemn, soul-searching part of our discourse—Is the punishment of *my* iniquity accomplished? *Let us see to*

whom this message is sent. Will you open your Bibles at the book of Lamentations—it is but a slender volume—and follow me a moment with your eyes, and with your hearts? This promise is sent to a certain character, and I know there are some here who will read their own history in it.

In the first chapter and at the sixth verse you find it said of her—"From the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed." We would have thought that Christ would have died for those who had some form and comeliness, but no, "God commends His love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners,* in due time Christ died for the *ungodly."* At the coming of the Holy Spirit into the soul, all self-righteousness melts away; our merit is dissolved like the coating of the morning frost before the heat of the rising sun. In the light of the Holy Spirit, the darkness of the creature is removed, and the fancied goodness of fallen humanity dies like a dream. Now the man perceives himself to be utterly vile; that which once he esteemed as making him lovely in the sight of God has withered before his eyes, and all his glory is trailed in the mire! My hearer, has all your self-righteousness been taken from you? Rest assured you are not this daughter of Zion unless your beauty has all departed, and all your boastful thoughts have been utterly slain!

Wonder of wonders, the eighth and ninth verses tell us, "Jerusalem has grievously sinned," and the ninth verse tells us yet more, that, *"her filthiness is in her skirts."* Thus, those for whom Christ died are made to feel their sin. While their righteousness becomes as filthy rags, their *unrighteousness* becomes loathsome and detestable in their sight! Holy Scripture rakes up the most terrible figures to set forth the abominable character of sin, some, even, which we would hardly dare to quote to meet the public ear, but which the renewed heart feels to be perfectly true! The heart discovers itself to be all wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores, till it abhors itself before God. "O Lord, I am vile." "We are all together as an unclean thing." "We are laden with iniquity." Such are the cries of awakened souls, and it is to such as these that the gracious message is directed!

Look on, again, to the 17th verse, and there you find that this filthiness has brought her into utter distress—"Zion spreads forth her hands, and *there is none to comfort her."* So those to whom this message is sent are brought, through a sense of sin, into a comfortless state. Ceremonies, Baptism, the Lord's Supper—all these yield them no peace. They can no longer rest in their church and chapel attendance. A formal, notional religion would once satisfy them, but they find no rest for the soles of their feet in such a presence now. Time was when if they went through a prayer at night, and morning, and read a verse or two of the Bible, they thought all would be well; but now there is none to comfort them. These refuges of lies are all swept away, for the furious hail of conviction has laid them level with the ground! Let us be certain of this, that there is no word of peace or comfort for us in our text until the beauty in which we once boasted has all been withered before the wintry blasts of the law of God; till our filthiness has been discovered before our sight, and we have been led to an experiential acquaintance with our ruined and comfortless condition on account of our iniquities!

To make the case worse, this poor daughter of Zion is obliged to confess that she deserved all her sufferings! In the 18th verse she says—*"The Lord is righteous:* for I have rebelled against His commandments." The soul feels now that God is just. Unrenewed persons find fault with God's justice; they quibble at eternal punishment; hell is such a bugaboo to them, that, just as every culprit will, of course, find fault with the prison and the gallows, so they rail at the wrath to come, though that wrath is just, notwithstanding all their objections to it! But, when the heart is really touched by divine grace, then it has no more to say for itself, but pleads guilty at the bar of God's great judgment; and if the Judge should put on the black cap, and condemn it to be taken instantly to the place of execution, that soul could only say, "You are righteous, O Lord, for I have sinned." I despair of ever finding a word of comfort for any man or woman among you, if you have not been brought to feel that you deserve the wrath of God! Come with the ropes around your necks, ready for execution, and you will find a God ready to forgive!

Further still—in the first verse of the second chapter you find that *her prayer was not yet heard*—"How has the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not His footstool in the day of His anger!" Well do I remember the time in my own experience, when I prayed in vain; when I bowed my knees, and the heavens were as brass, and not a word or answer of comfort was given to my languishing spirit! All who are converted do not pass through this, for no one experience is a standard for all, but remember, I am seeking out a certain class this morning, for my text is addressed to a special character. If you have been for months, yes, even for years, crying for mercy, and still have not found it, let not this cast you down, for to you is this message sent this morning! You are this daughter of Zion covered with a cloud, and I have to say to you that, "The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished." Your prayer has come up with acceptance, for the Spirit inspired it, and Jesus offered it! God absolves you, from heaven your forgiveness comes. Oh, believe the word of the Lord, and rejoice in it! "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

Further—as her prayer was not heard, *so every place of refuge was broken down.* In the eighth verse of the second chapter you find—"The Lord has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: He has stretched out a line, He has not withdrawn His hand from destroying; therefore He made the rampart and the wall to lament: they languished together." Even what few stones of the ruined wall remained as a heap, behind which the Israelite warriors might defend themselves, were to be broken down! So God goes on overturning, overturning, overturning in the sinner's heart, till Christ comes in! After every hope has been broken down, we are apt to build up another. "Peace, peace, where there is no peace," is the sinner's constant cry. Our Lord, who is determined to bring us to the obedience of faith, continually beats down the sinner's confidences, till at last there is not one stone left upon another that is not thrown down! Then the sinner yields himself a captive, and free grace leads him in triumph to the Cross! Is this your case this morning, my

dear hearer? If it is, then my sweet message is for you! "Go in peace, your sins which are many are all forgiven you!"

Further still—this daughter of Jerusalem was now brought into a state of *deep humiliation*. Look at the 10th verse of the second chapter—"The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground and keep silence; they have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves in sackcloth; the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground." Here is a state of deep prostration of spirit! I do not need to enlarge on these points, because we have not time; and, what is more, there is no necessity for doing so, for you who have been brought through them, understand them; and some of you who are in this state now will say, as I read the verses, "There is my picture! As face answers to face in a glass, so does the description of Jeremiah exactly answer to my condition." Well then, to you who lie in deep soul prostration, conscious that the lowest position is not too low for you—to you is this gracious message sent—"The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished!"

Furthermore—it seems from the 13th verse that all her foes here let loose against her, and her *grief exceeded all bounds,* and prevented all comparison—"What thing shall I take to witness for you? What thing shall I liken to you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I equal to you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your breach is great like the sea: who can heal you?" So the sinner feels as if he stood all alone. That sorrowing young woman over yonder thinks that no one has ever suffered what she is now enduring; that trembling conscience there is writing this bitter thing against itself—"There was never such a sinner as I am, never one who had so hard a heart, and was so terribly broken on account of it!" You give a full vent to your sorrows, till your distress rolls like a torrent deep and wide. Yet, it is not true that you are thus the only wayfarer in the path of repentance! Oh, but remember, that even though this were true, though all your enemies, your own heart, and all the devils in hell, should conspire against you, yet to you, even to you, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, "Comfort you, comfort you, my people; speak you comfortably unto Jerusalem, and say unto her that her warfare is accomplished."

Not to keep you longer on this point, let me take you on to another. In the 18th and 19th verses of the same chapter, you will see that at last this afflicted daughter of Zion was brought to *constant prayer*—"Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give yourself no rest. Let not the apple of your eye cease. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches, pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up your hands toward Him," and so on. Thus, the soul is brought to abide fast by the mercy seat, and clings to the horns of the altar. At last the awakened spirit enters into a constant state of prayer, and its prayer is not so much an act, as a condition. You know that hymn—that litany, I was about to call it—

"Wealth and honor I disclaim,
Earthly comforts, Lord, are vain,
These can never satisfy,
Give me Christ, or else I die."

Every verse ends with that intense desire—"Give me Christ, or else I die." This comes to be the state of a soul which God intends to bless! It falls into such a condition that it must have the blessing—"Give me Christ, or else *I die*." "I can take no denial." Again, and again, and again, the sound of its moaning goes up before the Lord God of Sabaoth; its knocks at the gate of mercy are as frequent as the moments of the hour. Now, to you who are thus brought to pray, because you cannot help it, who do not pray at set times, merely, but whose very life has become one perpetual prayer for mercy—to you the Master speaks today. (Lord! Open their ears that they may hear)! "The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished."

I have no time to go further into this case of the daughter of Zion. If you read the whole book of Lamentations through, it will well repay you. If you have ever passed through a state of conviction—if the law has ever had its perfect work in you—you will find that the Lamentations of Jeremiah will suit you. And when you get to the verse with which we commenced our reading this morning, you will read it with a holy unction resting on it—"It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, and because His compassions fail not." Now if you thus can read it, then remember there is no doubt at all about the fact that the precious word of this morning is for you! Lay hold on it by faith! Feed on it, live on it, and rejoice!

3. I have not yet, however, told this message perfectly, for we must not overlook a third point. We have had a joyous fact, then a chosen person, and now there is *a precious promise*. "I will no more carry you away into captivity." You are in captivity now, but it is the last you shall ever have! You are sorrowing on account of sin and troubled even to despair; but you are now forgiven—not you *shall* be, but you *are;* all the wrath was laid on Christ; there is none remaining upon you; you are forgiven, and your captivity is turned as the streams in the south! Let your mouth be filled with laughter, and your tongue with singing, for the Lord has done great things for you! These convictions of yours shall never return again in their present terror—just cling to the Rock of Ages, and no wave shall bear you back into the deeps. You shall go through the wilderness but once; you shall pass through the Jordan of a Savior's blood, and then you shall enter into Canaan and rest, for, "we who have believed do enter into rest." And as to the future, in the world to come there is no captivity for you! All your hell is past; Tophet burns not for you, neither can the pit of hell shut its mouth upon you. All that you deserve of the wrath of God, Christ has endured, and there is not a drop remaining for you. Come to the golden chalice into which God drained His wrath, and look at the sparkling wine of love which fills it. Ah, how changed from what it once was! 'Twas full, and foul, and black—each drop was Tophet—and the whole of it eternal misery! Christ drained it; to the very dregs He drained it; turning it upside down, He said, "It is finished!" And not a drop was left. Come, I say, to it, for it is not empty now! It is full again, but with what is it filled with? It is full to the brim and overflowing with unsearchable *love,* eternal, divine! Come and drink—

"Calvary's summit let us trace,
View the heights and depths of grace;
Count the purple drops and say,
Thus my sins were borne away.

Now no more His wrath we dread,
Vengeance smote our Surety's head.
Justice now demands no more,
He has paid the dreadful score.
Sunk, as in a shoreless flood,
Lost, as in the Savior's blood,
Zion, O, how blessed are you,
Justified from all things now."

"I will take the cup of salvation, and will call on the name of the Lord." You may have *troubles,* but you will never have *punishment!* You may know affliction, but you shall never know wrath! You may go to the grave, but you shall never go to hell! You shall descend into the regions of the dead, but never into the regions of the damned! The evil one may bruise your heel, but he shall never break your head! You may be in prison under doubts, but you shall never be in prison under condemnation! "He will no more carry you away into captivity." Your punishment is all paid for by another! You are free today; come forth out from the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, and brought out His people, and delivered them with His own right hand!

Thus have I sought, as best I could, to deliver my first message. I hope many will be comforted thereby.

II. We shall now turn to our second, which is, BURDEN OF WOE. Daughter of Edom! Thus says the Lord unto you—"I will visit your iniquity." Unbeliever, you who have never felt your need of Christ, and never fled to Him, to you He says, "I will visit your iniquity." His justice tarries but it is sure; His axe seems rusty, but it is sharp. The sins of the past are not buried; or if they are, they shall have a resurrection. Your thoughts, your words, your deeds—all shall return in terror on your head! You shall begin, even in this life, to feel some of this punishment. On your dying bed, your frail tenement shall creak, and you shall see the blazing of the furnace of fire through the rifts of your crumbling cottage. When you shall lie dying, then shall the messengers of the Emperor of heaven stand about your bed and summon you to judgment! Your cheeks shall blanch however brazen your brow may now be. Then, strong man, you shall be bowed down, and your loins shall be loosened—for when God deals with you, you shall feel His hand, even though you are girt about with bars of brass or triple steel. And then you die; your death shall be the foretaste of the second death. Your soul descends into the pit of hell among your kindred, and you begin to feel what God can do against the men who laughed, despised, and defied Him. Then shall your oaths be all fulfilled; then shall your lusting and your reveling come to you in their true light; then shall you hear, ringing in your conscience, the echo of the divine sentence, "You deserve all this, for God gave you warning when He said, 'I will surely visit you for your iniquity.'" Then shall the trumpet ring—"Awake! Awake! You dead, and come to judgment!" From sea and land they start to live again. Your soul comes back to its body which was its partner in guilt. I see you, and the multitudes like you, standing there while the great white throne is lifted up on high. The righteous have been gathered out from among the crowd and you remain; and, now, listen! Listen to a voice more dread than thunder—

"Bind them up in bundles to burn them—the drunkard with the drunkard; the swearer with the swearer; the careless, the proud, the self-righteous, each with each—and cast them into the furnace of fire." It is done, and where are you now, sinner? Do you say of me this morning—"I knew that you would speak not good but evil unto me"? Another day you shall bless your stern reprover! Call me not your enemy; it is your *sin* that is your enemy! *I* make not hell; I do but warn you of it with a brother's love. You dig hell yourself; you yourself fill it, and the breath of your sins shall fan the fire! "The Lord of hosts *will* visit your iniquity, O daughter of Edom." Hear it; listen to it, for it is the voice of God which now forewarns you! Beware, O careless soul, beware of forgetting God, lest He tears you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you. I have heavy tidings indeed from the Lord to you.

But who is this daughter of Edom? As we searched for the daughter of Zion just now, so we must also search for the daughter of Edom. The verse preceding our text seems to give us some inkling of who she is. Of course it refers to the race of Esau, who inhabited such cities as Bozrah and Petra, which have now become a desolate wilderness. It seems, then, according to the 21st verse, that the daughter of Edom was a *mirthful one*. In irony and sarcasm the prophet says—"Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, who dwells in the land of Uz; the cup shall pass through unto you; you shall be drunk, and shall make yourself naked." There is a holy joy which belongs unto the people of God; there is an unholy mirth which is a sure sign of a graceless state! You say from day to day, "How shall we amuse ourselves? What next gaiety? And what new levity? With what new liquor shall we fill the bowl of merriment? What shall we eat? What shall we drink? With what shall we be clothed? Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Pleasure is your life, and your only thought! Ah, daughter of Edom, there is sackcloth for your fine linen; there are ashes for all your ornaments; your earrings shall give place to everlasting teardrops, and all your beauty shall turn to rottenness and decay! Weep, all you who thus make mirth in the presence of the avenging Judge, for the day comes when He shall turn your laughter into mourning, and all your joys shall be ended! "Thus says the Lord: say, a sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth?"

Edom, moreover dwelt *very carelessly*, she dwelt in the land of Uz, far from danger. Her dwelling was among the rocks. Petra, the stony city, was cut out of the live rock. The daughter of Edom said in her heart, "Who shall come here to disturb the eagle's nest? The son of Esau dwells like an eagle in his nest, and he pounces down upon his prey before his victim is aware. Who shall go up and bind the strong eagle, or pull forth his feathers from his mighty wings? Lo, he dares to look in the face of the sun, and he laughs at the spear of the hunter—who shall bring him down?" Thus says the lord, "O daughter of Edom, I will visit your iniquity." "Though you exalt yourself as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there will I bring you down, says the Lord." You proud men and women! You say, "Will God deal with us? Will He treat us as common sinners? Even if He should, we will not care! Fill high the bowl and let us drink, even though it is at Belshazzar's feast; we

will drink, though there is damnation in the cup!" Thus you speak, but thus says the Lord, even as He said unto Moab—"I will bring down your high looks; I will trample you like straw is trod for the dunghill, and you shall know that I am the Lord."

More than this; it appears that this daughter of Edom rejoiced because of the sorrow of Zion, and made mirth and *merriment over the sorrows of others*. Do you not hear even the wise men say—"Ah, these driveling hypocrites, whining about sin! Why, it is only a peccadillo, a mere trifle!" "Look," says one, "I am a man of the world; I know nothing of these women's fears and child-like trembling; why do you sit and hear a man talk to you like this, and tell you of hell and of judgment—do you believe it? No," he says, "I know nothing of your care. I despise the narrow spirits that believe in justice and in wrath to come!" O haughty boaster, as the Lord my God lives, the day shall come when you shall be trod as ashes under the soles of our feet! Beware, for when the Avenger comes forth, a great ransom shall not deliver you! I see the floods bursting forth on the earth. Noah, the preacher of righteousness, has been laughed at, and called an old hypocrite, for talking of God's destroying nations. He is shut in yonder ark—and what do you think, now, of the prophet—what do you think, now, of the preacher of righteousness? You are swept away! The waves have covered you! A few of your strong ones climb to the tops of the hills, but the all-devouring waters reach them there. I hear their last shriek of awful anguish—there is not a single note of unbelief in it now; as you go down and the gurgling waters cover you, your last verdict is that the prophet was right and you were fools! To your deathbeds I make my appeal. I appeal from your drunken lives to the sad sobriety of death. From all your gaiety, and carelessness, and contempt today, I appeal to your last hours, and to your resurrection terrors! God help you! God help you to repent! But heavy, O daughter of Edom, heavy is your curse; God will visit your iniquity upon you!

It seems, too, from a passage in Malachi, first chapter and fourth verse, that Edom always retained a hope, a vain and self-sufficient confidence. "Whereas Edom says, we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places. Thus says the Lord of hosts, they shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, the border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord has indignation forever." So there are some of you who say, "I dread not a loss of hope! Why, I have fifty refuges; I trust in this, and that, and the other, and when I do despair a moment, yet I pluck up heart again." Ah, daughter of Edom, God will visit you for your iniquity, and your vain confidences shall be as stubble to the flame!

Besides, it seems that this daughter of Edom was very proud. Jeremiah describes her in the 49th chapter and the 16th verse, in much the same language as Obadiah. But this tremendous pride was brought low at the last; and so also, all those who think themselves righteous shall find themselves low at last. They rest and trust in the rotten and broken reed of their own doings, and woe shall be unto them, for God will visit them for their sins!

I shall not enlarge further, except on that special word of warning with which the verse ends, *"I will discover your sins."* Let every sinner here be

afraid because of this! You have hidden your sin; He will discover it. It may be it was last night—it was in a very secret place, and you contrived so that none might track you. But the All-seeing One will discover your sin! "How are the things of Esau searched out; how are his hidden things sought up!" I may address some here who wear a very excellent moral character in the eyes of their neighbors, but if those neighbors did but know all, they would loathe them utterly. Your disguises are torn asunder, your masks are plucked away; the Revealer of Secrets comes forth. Dreadful shall be the day when, with sound of trumpet, every secret iniquity shall be published on the housetops! The day comes when, as Achan stood guilty before Joshua, so shall every man hear it said, "Be sure your sin will find you out." This is your portion, daughter of Edom! Your secret sins shall all be published in the light of the sun, for God will surely visit you!

III. The time expires, but I must just notice the next point—WHAT IS THE REASON WHY THERE ARE THESE DIFFERENT MESSAGES?

The reason why I had to publish a message of mercy to the daughter of Zion just now was *sovereign grace*. The daughter of Zion had no *right* to pardon; she had done nothing to deserve it, but God had chosen her, and had entered into covenant with Abraham concerning her, that He would not leave nor forsake her. Everlasting love preserved deliverance for the beloved city. Our God had kindled in her heart thoughts of repentance, and in His sovereignty, because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, He sent her the gracious message of full remission by an accomplished punishment.

But, why was the second message sent to the daughter of Edom? Here it is not the line of sovereignty, but the line of justice. He sent it *because the daughter of Edom deserved it*. Sinner, when God says He will punish sin, you may kick against it if you will, but your conscience tells you, you deserve to be punished. God will not smite you more than you deserve, but let Him only give you as much, and wrath will come upon you to the uttermost! Edom has waxed proud; she has been careless; she has despised God; she is unbelieving; she repents not; therefore shall her iniquity be published, and God shall visit it upon her head.

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT CLAIMS HAVE THESE MESSAGES TO OUR FAITH? Well, we believe this Bible to be the Word of God. I know we live in a day when even a bishop has ventured to impugn plenary inspiration. Do not attach too much importance to this new attack. It has no novelty in it; it is an old enemy, long since wounded to the heart, which now attempts a revival of its force. We have been alarmed at a man of straw, and a deal of noise has been made about nothing. The servants of Zion's household are more glorious than this new hero of error, and are more than a match for him! We did think at first, that there might be some force in his objections, but now we laugh them to scorn; ridicule is the only answer they deserve; let even the young children and the old women in the streets of Zion laugh at the new adversary! We still believe, and I hope that always in this Christian land, and from this pulpit—I may always say that we believe this Book to be the Word of God! Well then, you to whom the first message is sent, believe it! You said, as I read the description just now, "That is my case." Very well then, the punish-

ment of your iniquity is accomplished. Do not say, "I will *try* and believe it," but *believe* it. Do not say, "I hope it is true." It *is true!* Believe it, and walk out of this house full of joy, saying in your spirit, "My punishment was borne by Christ; I shall never be carried into captivity any longer; being justified by faith, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ my Lord; I am accepted, I am forgiven." Praise Him every day, now that His anger has passed away forever, and let the men of the world see how happy a Christian can be! "Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God now accepts your works. Let your garments be always white; and let your head lack no ointment." Does anybody object to that quotation? Object to Solomon, and not to me! I intend, God helping me, to rejoice and be glad all my days!

As for the second message, again I say this Book is God's Word, and it is true. Believe it. "Oh," says one, "but if I believed it, I would be full of awful anguish." Would to God you were; for do you not see that then you would come under the description of the daughter of Zion, and then the promise would be yours, for what is the law sent for—to flog men to hell? No, but to be our teacher, to bring us to Christ! The schoolmasters in the old Greek times were such cruel fellows, that no boys would go to school voluntarily, so they had a teacher, who with a stick, went round to the parents' houses and whipped the boys to school! Now we are so afraid to come to Christ, though He is a good and tender Master, that He employs the law to go round to our houses, to whip us to Himself, and His peace, and His great salvation! Ah, I wish I could drive you to the Savior, for these thunders of today are meant to bring you from under the law that you may put your trust in Jesus Christ alone! Oh, daughter of Edom, careless and proud, your doom is certain! The wrath of God is sure! Oh that you would but believe this, and that your heart were broken, for then we might come to you again, and say, "Thus says the Lord, I have blotted out like a cloud your iniquities, and like a thick cloud your sins."

May God bless the words of this morning, and unto His name be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

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A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS
NO. 481

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 23, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remains, that both they who have wives be as though they had none. And they who weep, as though they wept not; and they who rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they who buy, as though they possessed not. And they who use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passes away."
1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

HOLY Scripture seldom gives a special rule for each particular case, but it rather instructs us by general principles applicable to all cases. To meet every distinct moral emergency which could possibly arise, and solve every separate problem of action, would require rather a library than a volume! To men who are taught of the Spirit of God, general principles are far more valuable than special precepts, and I am half persuaded that it is so with all persons; for it is less difficult to apply a general principle to a peculiar case than it is to find out exactly what the particular case may be, and what special rule is applicable to it. In writing to the Church at Corinth, the apostle had to answer several questions with regard to marriage; whether, for instance, it was not better in those persecuting times, when men often had to flee suddenly from their houses, that they should remain unmarried; whether, again, supposing a person became a Christian after marriage, it was lawful for him to separate from the person with whom he was unequally yoked; and several other questions as to fitting action in certain extraordinary positions. To these the apostle answers with an, "I suppose," or again, "Howbeit, for this speak I, not the Lord," as if he felt himself quite out of his element in attempting to meet every case; but soon he lands on sure ground in the verses before us, and seems to say, "Whatever may be the answers which I ought to give to these special questions, of this one thing I am quite sure—I say positively and without any doubt that the time is short, and therefore, it remains, whether you are married or not, whether you weep, or whether you rejoice, whether you buy or whether you sell—that you should act in all these things as knowing their temporary and unsubstantial character."

Dear brothers and sisters, the important lesson which we endeavor to teach this morning is just this—that because time is so short, and the things of this world so frail and fleeting, it becomes us always to look at the things which are seen in their true character, and never to build substantial hopes on unsubstantial comforts, nor seek for solid joy from unreal things.

In order that I may make this matter very plain, and may be the more likely to enlist your attention, and to secure the friendship of your memories in future years, I intend this morning to *take you to a play*. Strange thing for me to do, who has never crossed the threshold of a theater on any occasion, good or bad! Yet this morning I shall seat you in front of the stage, and I shall *put the worldling side by side with you while the five acts are performed*. I shall next invite you to attend *in the character of a Christian, to look through the whole and discern its emptiness*. Then, in the third place, I shall *point you to the curtain which is quite sure to drop upon the scene;* and then, we will walk out of this theater of unreal show, this fashion of this world which passes away, and *see what there is to do in this world which is real, practical, and lasting*.

Do not suppose that the idea of taking you to a theater this morning is original on my part. It is in my text. "The fashion of this world passes away"—the word translated "fashion" is borrowed from the changing scenes of the drama; where the splendid pageantry vanishes as the scene changes. Nor will you think Holy Scripture too severe in its comparison, when I remind you that one of the world's own poets has said—

"The entire world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players."

Nor will the most precise among you complain of the levity of a metaphor which is sanctioned by Apostolic use; but I trust you will all cheerfully listen, while in simple words I tell the story which the bard of the sanctuary has sung in flowing verse—

"This life's a dream, an empty show!
But the bright world to which I go,
Has joys substantial and sincere—
When shall I wake and find me there?"

I. WE WILL WITNESS "THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD" AS IT PASSES BEFORE US, LISTENING TO THE WORLDLING'S COMMENT.

The *first act* introduces *those who have wives*. It opens with *a wedding*. The bride and bridegroom advance to the altar in bridal attire. The bells are ringing; crowds are cheering at the door, while overflowing mirth is supreme within. In another scene, we observe domestic happiness and prosperity, a loving husband and a happy wife. Yet, further on in the performance, rosy children are climbing the father's knees; the little prattlers are lisping their mother's name. "Now," says our companion, as he gazes with rapture, "This is real and enduring, I know it is! This will satisfy me; I crave for nothing more than this. *Home* is a word as sweet as heaven, and a healthy happy race of children is as fine a possession as even angels can desire! On this rock will I build all my hope; secure me this portion, and I cheerfully renounce the dreamy joys of religion." We whisper in his ear that all this is but a changing scene and, will by-and-by pass away, for time is short, and wife and children are dying creatures. The man laughs at us, and says, "Fanatics and enthusiasts may seek *eternal* joys, but these are enough for me!" He believes that if there is anything permanent in the universe, it is marrying and being given in marriage, educating and bringing up a family, and seeing them all comfortably settled. He is right in valuing the blessing, but

wrong in making it his *all*. Will he see his error before the curtain falls? Or will he continue to found the hopes of an immortal spirit upon dying joys? See the green mounds in the cemetery, and the headstone, with, "Here he lies." Alas for you, poor deluded worldling, where is your soul now? Does it console you that the dust of your offspring shall mingle with your ashes? Where have you now a home? What family have you now to care for? The first act is over. Take a breath and say, "This also is vanity."

The tenor of the drama changes, alas, how soon! Household joys are linked with household sorrows. *They who weep* are now before us in the second act. The cloudy and dark days have come. There are parents wringing their hands; a beloved child has died, and they are following its corpse to the tomb. Soon, the merchant has suffered a tremendous loss; he puts his hand to his aching head and mourns, for he knows not what will be the end of his troubles! The wife is smitten by the hand of death. She lies on her bed, blanched with sickness, and weak with pain. There is a weeping husband at her side, and then there is another funeral, and in the dim distance I see the black horses again and again. The woes of men are frequent, and sorrow's visits are not, like those of angels, few and far between! Our man of the world, who is much moved at this second act, foreseeing his own sorrows in it, weeps until he fairly sobs out his feelings, clutches us with earnestness and cries, "Surely this is awfully real! You cannot call this a fleeting sorrow or a light affliction! I will wring my hands forever; the delight of my eyes has been taken from me; I have lost all my joys now; my beloved in whom I trusted has withered like a leaf in autumn before my face; now shall I despair; I shall never look up again!" "I have lost my fortune," says the afflicted merchant, "and distress overwhelms me. This world is indeed a wilderness to me; all its flowers are withered; I would not give a snap of my finger to live now, for everything worth living for is gone!" Sympathizing deeply with our friend, we nevertheless venture to tell him that these trials to the Christian, because they are so short and produce such lasting good, are not killing sorrows. "Ah," he says, "you men of faith may talk in that way, but I cannot! I tell you these are real things." Like an English sailor, who, seeing a play, sprung upon the stage to help a lady in distress, believing that the whole was real, so do such men weep and sigh, as if they were to mourn forever, because some earthly good has been removed. Oh, that they knew that the depths of sorrow were never yet explored by a mortal mourner! Oh, that they would escape from those lower deeps where immortal spirits weep and wail amidst an emphasis of misery! The sorrows of time are trifles, indeed, when compared with the pains of everlasting punishment; and, on the other hand, *we* reckon that they are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us! They are but light afflictions, which are but for a moment, a mere pin's prick to the man of faith. Happy is the man whose eyes are opened to see that heirs of heaven sorrow not as those who are without hope! A real joy of heavenly origin is always with believers, and it is but the shadow of sorrow

which falls upon them. Then, let the curtain drop—let us enter into an eternal state and what and where are these temporary griefs?

But the *third act* comes on, and presents us with a view of *those who rejoice*. It may be that the first-born son has come of age, and there are great festivities. They are eating and drinking in the servants' hall, and in the master's banquet chamber; there are high notes of joy, and many compliments, and the smiling sire is as glad as man can be. Or is it the daughter's wedding, and kind friends implore a thousand blessings on her head, and the father smiles and shares the joy? Or is it a gain in business, a fortunate speculation? Or the profits of industry have come flowing in, slowly perhaps, but still surely, and the man is full of rejoicing? He has a house, and home, and friends, and reputation, and honor, and he is, in the eyes of all who know him, happy; those who do not know him think he has no cares, that he can have no sorrows, that his life must be one perpetual feast, and that surely there can be no spot in his sun, no winter in his year, no ebb to follow his floods! Our friend by our side is smiling at this sunny picture. "There," he says, "is not that real? Why, there must be something in that! What more do you need? Only let me get the same, and I will leave the joys of faith, and heaven, and immortality, to yourselves; these are the things for me—only let me laugh and make merry—and you may pray as you will! Fill high the bowl for me; put the roast and the food on the table, and let me eat and drink, for tomorrow I die." If we gently hint to our friend that all this passes away like a vision of the night, and that we have learned to look on it as though it were not, he laughs us to scorn, and accounts us mad, when he is most mad himself. As for ourselves, so far from resting upon the softest couch that earth can give us, we spurn its vain delights—

"There's nothing round this spacious earth
That suits my large desire!
To boundless joy and solid mirth
My nobler thoughts aspire
Where pleasure rolls its living flood,
From sin and dross refined,
Still springing from the throne of God,
And fit to cheer the mind!"

But the *fourth act* of the drama is before us, and *they who buy* demand our attention. The merchant is neither a mourner nor a man of mirth; in the eyes of certain Mammonites, he is attending to the one thing necessary, the most substantial of all concerns! Here feast your eyes, you hard, practical, earth-scrapers. There are his money bags; hear how they thump on the table! There are the rolls of bonds, the banker's books, the title-deeds of estates, mortgages, securities, and the solid investment in his country's own bonds. He has made a good thing of life, and still he adheres to business, as he should do; and, like a painstaking man, he is still accumulating, and piling up his heap, meanwhile adding field to field, and estate to estate, till soon he will possess a whole county! He has just now been buying a large and very fine house, where he intends to spend the remainder of his days, for he is about to retire from business; the lawyers are busy making out the transfer; the sum of money is waiting to be paid, and the whole thing is as good as settled. "Ah,

now," says our friend, who is looking on at the play, "you are not going to tell me that *this* is all a shadow? It is not; there is something very solid and real here, at least, something that will perfectly satisfy me." We tell him, we dare say, there is something that will satisfy *him,* but *our* desires are of a larger span, and nothing but the infinite can fill them! Alas for the man who can find satisfaction in earthly things! It will be only for a time; for when he comes to lie upon his dying bed, he will find his buying, and his money poor things with which to stuff a dying pillow; he will find that his gains and his acquisitions bring but little comfort to an aching heart, and no peace to a conscience exercised with the fear of the wrath to come! "Ah, ah," he cries and sneers sarcastically, putting us aside as only fit for bedlam, "let me trade and make a fortune, and that is enough for me! With that I shall be well content!" Alas, poor fool, the snow melts not sooner than the joy of wealth and the smoke of the chimney is as solid as the comfort of riches!

But we must not miss the *fifth act*. See the rich man, our friend whom lately we saw married, whom we then saw in trouble, afterwards rejoicing, and then prospering in business—he has entered upon a green old age; he has retired and *has now come to use the world*. You will notice that, in my text, this is the last act of the drama. The world says he has been a wise man and has done well, for all men will praise you when you do well for yourself. Now he keeps a liberal table, a fine garden, excellent horses, and many servants; he has all the comforts, in fact, that wealth can command—and as you look around his noble park, as you gaze at his avenue of fine old trees—or stay a day or two at the family mansion, and notice all its luxuries, you hear your friend saying, "Yes, there is something very real here; what do you think of this?" When we hint that the gray hairs of the owner of all these riches betoken that his time is short, and that if this is all he has, he is a very poor man, for he will soon have to leave it—and that his regrets in leaving will make his death more pitiable than that of a pauper, our friend replies, "Ah, ah, you are always talking in this way! I tell you this is not a play. I believe it is all real and substantial, and I am not, by any talking of yours, to be made to think that it is unsubstantial and will soon be gone!" O World, you have fine actors, to cheat men so well, or else mortal man is an easy fool, taken in your net like the fishes of the sea. The whole matter is most tangibly a mere show, but yet men give their souls to win it! Why, O sons of men, are you thus beside yourselves? "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread; and your labor for that which satisfies not?"

Dear friends, I have put before your mind's eye a fair picture of that which men who live by sight, and not by faith, regard as being the chief end of man, and the real object of his being. It is to be married; to pass through the trials and joys of life with decency; to trade and grow rich, and at last, to use the comforts of this world without abuse—a very comfortable and quiet picture, by no means the representation we would have to present before you of the degenerate, the profane, the dissolute, or the debauched! There is nothing here but what is proper and right, and yet, everything is improper, and everything becomes wrong at once if

these are thought to be the substantial things for which an immortal spirit is to spend its fires, and for which an undying soul is to exhaust its powers!

II. Let us now take the CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THIS DRAMA.

"Life *is* real; life is earnest"—it is real thus far to the Christian, it is real for work and activity for God; it is real in the solemn responsibility which it brings; it is real in the gratitude which we owe to God for the comforts which He is pleased to bestow; it is real to us so far as we can see God in it, and can turn everything to God's glory. The unreality of this world to a Christian is found in the fact that *time is short*. This is the wand which torches the substance and makes it, before the eye of wisdom, dissolve into a shade. Time is short!

When the apostle declares that *they who have wives* should be as though they had none, he does not teach us to despise the marriage state, but not to seek our heaven in it, nor let it hinder our serving the Lord! It is supposed that there are some things which a man without a wife and family can do—those things the man with a wife and family should do. It is supposed that a man without a wife can give his time to the cause of God—the man with a wife should do the same, and he will not find it difficult to do so, if God has blessed him with one who will second all his holy endeavors. It is supposed that a man without a wife has no care—a man with a wife should have none—for he should cast all his cares on God who cares for him. "He who cares not for his own house is worse than a heathen and a publican." And yet, the apostle says, in the verse following my text, "But I would have you without carefulness," for we should learn to live by faith! The man who has a large family, and many things to exercise his mind, should, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, live as quietly and comfortably as though he had none, depending and resting by simple faith upon the providence and goodness of God. Then, again, it is supposed that an unmarried man will find it easier to die, for there will be none of that sorrow at leaving his beloved family—the man with a wife and family *should*, by faith, find it just as easy, since the promise runs, "Leave your fatherless children, and let your widows trust in Me." Full of the same faithful tenderness and affection which another husband would exhibit, and even excelling in love and kindness, yet the Christian should look up to the divine Lord who is the husband of the widow, and with confidence leave his offspring, and bid them trust in his God. May God the Holy Spirit teach us how to walk in our households, loving always and yet remembering that all our kindred shall pass away!

Again, there is the second act—*weeping*. Every Christian must weep—but the apostle says that our sorrows are to be regarded by us, because time is short, *as though they were no sorrows at all*. A man who knows that his trials will not last long can be cheerful under them. If he sees a Father's hand in the midst of every adversity, and believes that when he is tried, he shall come forth like gold from the furnace; if he knows with the Psalmist that, "Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning," why then grief has lost its weight, and sorrow has lost its

sting! And while the man weeps, he rejoices, seeing the rainbow of the covenant painted on the clouds. Happy man, who, under bereavement, under crosses and losses, can still cast his burden upon God, and can say, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation!" The Christian is bound to live above his sorrows; he weeps, for, "Jesus wept." He may mourn, for the faithful have been mourners often, but he must not so mourn and weep as to be eaten up with grief! Over the tops of the rolling waves, he must see the haven of peace, and rejoice evermore.

So is it in the third part. The Christian has his *rejoicings,* and he is not forbidden to be happy; indeed, he is *commanded to rejoice!* And the things of this life he may freely enjoy with the double zest of the mercy itself, and of the God who gave it to him. But still, believer, in all your joys, *remember to hold them with a loose hand.* Never so hold your joys as if they were all in all to you! Though it is wife, or child, or property, or health, or wealth, or fame—still always stand ready to surrender all into your Father's hands, feeling that these, after all, are not your joys; you have better springs to drink from than those which earth's summers can dry up—and that you have rivers of pleasure deeper and broader than any which earth's winter shall be able to freeze! Stand steadfast in this that, as earth cannot cast you down to despair, so it cannot lift you up so as to make you forget your God. Learn in these things to rejoice as though you had them not, and let this be your solace, that your name is written in heaven.

So, too, in the matter of *buying and possessing;* it is not wrong for a Christian to trade and to trade well. I cannot see any reason why a Christian should be a fool; in fact, those who are fools in business are very often a great dishonor to the Christian religion, for a fool is very often first cousin, if not father, to a knave! But, still, while we buy and sell it should always be thus—"This is not my real trade; this is not the way in which I really get rich, for my treasure is beyond the skies, where moth devours not, and where rust cannot consume." Handle these things, brothers and sisters, knowing that they take to themselves wings and fly away! Look at them as transient objects which are to be used and sanctified in the passing—not your own—but lent to you for a time; to be repaid at last, with interest, in the day when the Master says, "Give an account of your stewardship, for you may be no longer a steward." A man may be as rich as Croesus, and his wealth will never hurt him if he does not hold it with a tight hand; and a man may be as happy as happiness can make him here, and yet, it will not hurt him if he learns to keep it under his feet. But oh, when one's rejoicings or possessions get the upper hand of us, there is as dreadful a drowning in a sea of pleasure as in a sea of misery! Keep before your mind the words of our sweet singer—

"To You we owe our wealth and friends,
And health and safe abode;
Thanks to Your name for meaner things,

But they are not my God.
What empty things are all the skies,
And this inferior clod!
There's nothing here deserves my joys,
There's nothing like my God."

The last scene *is the using of the things of this life*. The creatures of God are given us to be used. John the Baptist may be an ascetic, but the Son of Man is come eating and drinking. The Christian knows that the mercies which God has given him are to be used, but while he uses them, *he must use them as though he did not use them*. That is a high philosophy which I fear not many of us have learned, the philosophy of the apostle when he said, "I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound." That man is the full grown and true Christian whom circumstances cannot alter! He trusts in God when he is penniless, and he trusts in his God just the same when he is rich; he rests on God when he can enjoy nothing, and he rests on Him just the same when he can enjoy everything! He learned to build on the Rock of Ages when he had no comfort, and he builds on the Rock of Ages now, when he has every comfort! This, I take it, is where the apostle would have us brought. To the true Christian, the things of this world are only real so far as they involve responsibility; but, seeing that time is short, he looks on life as men look upon a play; he sees a monarch strut, and he says, "Ah, he is to pull off his robes behind the stage!" He sees a peasant or a beggar, and he smiles and thinks of the time when the king and the peasant shall be equal, and the servant and his lord shall stand before one tribunal to give an account of the things done in the body. Send your souls longing after real and unchanging joys, for these splendid, gaudy, shifting scenes mock the beholder and delude his hopes. Gorgeous as the colors of the bubble, and quite as frail, farewell, you worthless things, our spirit leaves you for eternal mansions in the skies!

III. And now, dear friends, I want your attention a few minutes while I point you to THE CURTAIN WHICH IS SOON TO DROP UPON ALL THESE THINGS, it bears this short message, "TIME IS SHORT."

It is very difficult to keep men in mind of the fact that they are mortal. We confess that we are mortal, but we profess by our actions that we are immortal. Said a man of eighty-two concerning another of seventy, when he wanted to buy his land and could not get it at the price he wished—"Never mind, So-and-So is an old man, he will soon be dead, and then I'll buy it." Though he was 10 or 12 years older than the other, yet the other must, of course, soon die, while he, in his own thoughts, must live for many a year. How short time is! Do we not, dear friends, get more and more that impression? I am but young compared with very many of you, yet the impression constantly grows upon my mind. Why, it seems but the day before yesterday when I plucked the first early primrose of spring, while the flowers were breaking up from under the earth, and the buds were ready to burst from the sheath! It was only as yesterday that we were walking in the fields, and were remarking that the corn was just beginning to be tinged with the golden hue of harvest! Only a few Sab-

baths ago I was talking to you of Ruth in the harvest fields, and of the heavily laden wagon that was pressed down with sheaves; and now the leaves are almost all gone; but few remain upon the trees. These frosty nights and strong winds have swept the giants of the forest till their limbs are bare, and the hoar frosts plate them with silver. Then, before we shall have time to burn the winter's log, we shall see the snow flakes drop, and the yellow crocus heralding another spring! At what a rate we whirl along! Childhood seems to travel in a wagon, but manhood at express speed. As we grow older, I am told that the speed increases till the gray-headed old man looks back upon all his life as being but a day; and I suppose, if we could live to be a 130, we would feel the same, till, like Jacob, we would say, "Few and evil have been the days of your servant!" And, if we could live as long as Methuselah, I doubt not our life would appear shorter still! How time flies, not only by the measurement of the seasons but by *ourselve*s*!* A few days ago, I trudged with my satchel on my back to school, or joined in boyish sport. How lately was it when the boy became a youth, and must be doing something, and was teaching other boys as he had been taught in his day? It was but yesterday I came to Park Street to address some few of you, and yet, how time has fled since then, till now, some nine years of our ministry have passed! No weaver's shuttle, no arrow from a bow, no swift post, no meteor seems to fly at a rate so fast as does our life! We heard of one the other day, who had seen Wesley preach, and so we find ourselves side-by-side with the last century, and those old people have known some others in their youth who told them of the yet older time! And you find that going through the history of some 10 or 12 persons you are carried back to the days of William the Conqueror, and you see our country taken by the Normans, and then you fly back to ancient British times as with a thought. You no longer say, "How long the nation has existed!" for it is as a sleep! You stand by some old cliff and see a deposit of shells, and as you remember that it may have taken a million years to have formed that bed, you think—"What is man? And what is time? It is not here but gone!" We have only to think of what time is to conclude at once that time is not! It is but a little interlude in the midst of the vast eternity—a narrow neck of land jutting out into the great, dread, and unfathomable sea of everlastingness!

But while time is thus short, *its end is absolutely sure*. That curtain yonder must soon fall! *It must fall*. It is inevitable. I cannot prevent my death by the most regular habits of life. The most skillful physician cannot preserve my life for me. A host of angels, should they swear to make me immortal, could not! When the time comes, die I must! And, as my death is inevitable, so it may be *very near*. Let each man remember that! How soon it may be we cannot tell! Every Sunday there are some in this house who are dead before the next Sunday. I am not now venturing a guess; it is a matter of fact, a matter of fact, too, that comes under my own cognizance very frequently. According to our population and the gradual number of deaths, there must be some out of this congregation here this morning, who will have gone the way of all flesh before next

Sunday! There was one—I look at her seat now, and a brother sitting nearby looks there with sorrow!—who was with us one Sunday, and we soon heard that she had gone to enjoy the Eternal Sunday! At a Church meeting last week, no less than three of our sisters were reported as having fallen asleep in Jesus within a week. Ah, how near is death to us! Perhaps he now stands looking over your shoulder, young man! God holds back his hand, but the dart of death is close to your heart and soon—ah, how soon!—may you be taken to the place appointed for all living! Go, you strong man, and remember that you are a mass of feebleness! Go, you young man, and remember that death reaps green corn! Go, you old man, and expect the sickle! And go, you rich man, and remember that you shall soon leave everything that you have—and then, where are you if you have no treasure in heaven—if you have not laid up in store for immortality?

And I must add here that, to those who have no God, death, while inevitable and very near, *will be most awful and terrible!* There was a dreadful story told in the papers this last week. At the seaport town of Garliestown, one day last week, certain workmen were busy preparing a better berth for a vessel which seems to have taken the ground a little too soon. Suddenly, someone raised a cry that the ship was listing over, and while some four men were able to escape, one poor fellow was unable to do so, and the ship fell upon his lower extremities and loins. Now, this was thought, perhaps, to be no great danger, for they could take away the sludge and extricate him. So they began to shore the ship, and willing hands brought ropes and blocks, and wedges, and earnest strength. But they soon discovered that the thing was impossible from the nature of the bottom of the river, and from the position of the cargo, which, I suppose, they could not speedily remove. The man was jammed under the bulwarks, and must remain fixed there without hope. There was just one awful hour before the coming tide would reach the spot. Well might a solemn hush succeed the frantic labors of the townsmen as death was seen riding on the advancing flood. The poor creature had to lie there that hour as the tide came gently in. A minister stood by his side praying with him; let us trust that his soul found peace with God! But O the terror of his position; well might he say, "Cover my head, that I may not see the water." Steadily the cold unpitying waters flowed on until a corpse was hidden where an hour or so before a strong man labored. This is a graphic picture of the position of every ungodly man! He does not know it, but the waves of time are coming up about him now, and *we* cannot help him to escape. The load of his sins is on his loins; he cannot deliver himself; the great waters of God's wrath must swallow him up quickly. O, sinner, would that I could save you! Alas, it is not in my power! But there *is* an arm that can deliver you; there is one who can lift the burden off you, and say to you, "Be free!" Believe in Him and you shall never die! Trust in His power, and rest yourself on His love, and you shall escape as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; and when death comes it shall be no death to you, but a peaceful migration from the land of shadows to the

world of substance. God help us to be wise, that we may remember our latter end!

I would say a few more words to the sinner. I cannot think, O worldling, why you should love this world so much when it is so soon to vanish! In the old Greek cities, they had a king every year, and because it was so poor a thing to be a king for only one year, and then to be a common man again, all the citizens dreaded to be kings! How can you long to be rich, when you are only to be rich for so short a time? When the sailor is just about to furl his sail because he is near the port, he will not fret himself with some little inconvenience in the ship; and why are you so sorely vexed with all these little trials, when you are so near the eternal haven? When men buy property on a short lease, they will not give much for it, for they are only to have it for a brief term; why do you spend your *soul* to buy this *world?* What will it profit you, if you gain it, if your soul is lost? When men have a house and they are soon to leave it, they will not lay out much in repairing it; why, then, care you so much for your body? Why mind you so much *this* life? The bell is even now trembling to toll for you, and the grave is yawning that it may swallow you up! Oh man! Oh woman! I would that you were wise! You are to live forever, forever, forever, either—

"In flames that no abatement know,
Though briny tears forever flow,"

or else in joy beyond degree! Which shall it be with you? If you die as you are, O sinner, remember, there remains nothing for you but a fearful looking for judgment, and of fiery indignation! I pray you by the love of God, to consider your ways! Thus says the Lord unto you this day by my lips, as truly as He spoke to Hezekiah by the prophet of old, "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." How will you stand, sinner, in the day when the Lord comes to make inquisition for sin, and to avenge their iniquity upon the heads of the unpardoned? Fly, sinner! God help you by His grace to fly now to yonder open door, where Jesus waits to receive you, and to put away your sin. Whoever believes on Him is not condemned! Like Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of man is lifted up that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life!

IV. Come, come, you wise men, rise and leave this theater, we have seen enough of it! "The fashion of this world passes away." And for you, and for me, happy shall it be when it shall have passed away forever. But is there nothing real? Can I do nothing real here? Is there nothing I can do that shall last forever? Yes, the *soul* is lasting. Then, let me see to my own soul. Let me make my calling and election sure, for I shall have been of all fools the most mad, if I shall have trifled with these things and yet have neglected my soul! The Roman emperor, Claudius, once invaded Great Britain, but his performance only consisted of gathering pebbles and shells from the coast. This shall be my triumph; this my only reward, if here in this world I live only to gather wealth! At the last, I shall be as though I gathered pebbles, for these things shall be of no value to me if my soul shall perish! O Lord, by Your rich grace, set me upon a sure foundation, and make me right before Your face!

Yes, there are some real things besides my own soul. There are *other men's souls*. What am I doing for them? Am I teaching, am I preaching, or, if I am not doing this, am I helping others to preach? Am I doing my best to add to the kingdom of Christ by the ingathering of immortals? Have I a sphere in the Ragged School or in tract distributing, or am I helping in some way or other to do good? For, if not, my life is a play—I am doing nothing real; I am only hurrying here and there, and when it comes to the last, I shall have been as a workmen that has neglected his own work to play with children in the streets! Dig up your buried talents, O idlers. Work while it is called today, O you who are given to slumber!

Yes, there is something real—*there is Christ's Church*. The Church that is to shine like the stars in heaven forever, the Bride of the Lamb—what am I doing for her? Do I seek the good of Jerusalem? As a member of the Church, do I contribute to its strength? Do I give of my substance to her efforts, and of my talents to her doings? Do I cast myself wholly into the arms of Christ, and work for Him! Yes, there is something real—*Jesus is so!* Am I glorifying Him here on earth? When I see Him in His poor people, do I feed Him? When He shivers at my door in the garb of poverty, do I clothe Him? When I know that He has need, do I visit Him? If so, I am doing real things. If I devote my life to God, to Christ, to His Church, to the souls of men, and if my own soul is saved, then I am living! But if not, I am dead while I live. *"Let us live while we live!"* Alas, how many are dying while they live, driveling while they live? Oh, the scores of pounds we spend on ourselves! The hundreds we give to our own comfort! And where is that? It is gone like smoke! But that which is given to God lasts and endures; it is treasured up in God's bank. That which is given to the poor and needy is made—though unrighteous mammon—to be treasured up in heaven! But I know many practical persons will say, "Yes, this is a very pretty speech for a young minister; but these ministers do not understand business; they cannot be expected to understand temporal matters." I would to God you understood them half as well, for our understanding in this matter we know is sound! And when you shall come to see these things in the light of eternity streaming between the curtains of your dying bed, you will understand, then that there was nothing worth living for but God, and Christ, and His Church! And you will give your verdict, then, with mine to this—that truly to live must be Christ, or else to die never can be gain!

God add His blessing, and may some be led to trust in Jesus, by His grace, this morning!

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THE ROYAL PAIR IN THEIR GLORIOUS CHARIOT
NO. 482

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 30, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Who is this who comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man has his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O you daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."
Solomon's Song 3:6-11.

GREAT princes in the East are in the habit of traveling in splendid palanquins, which are at the same time chariots and beds. The person reclines within, screened by curtains from public view; a bodyguard protects the equipage from robbers, and blazing torches light up the path along which the travelers proceed. King Solomon, in this Song, describes the Church of Christ, and Christ Himself, as travailing through the world in such a palanquin. The day is coming when both our divine Lord and His chosen bride shall be revealed in glory before the eyes of all men. The person age is the period of concealment—the mystical Solomon and his beloved Solyma are both on earth, but they are unseen of men. Like the ark of old, they dwell within curtains—only the anointed priests of God can discern their beauties, and even they gaze rather by faith than by sight. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," is certainly true, for Jesus is here; but equally correct is that word of Peter, "Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." He is here in the reality, power, and influence of His person, but He is not here as to the visibility of His kingdom and person, for we wait with our loins girt about, and with patience of hope, until the revelation of Jesus Christ! The portion of the blessed canticle now before us is, we think, descriptive of the progress of the hidden Christ through the world. He has been borne along, in very truth, but He Himself has been so little perceived of men, that they even ask the question, "Who is this who comes out of the wilderness?" He is not now manifested openly to men. If any should say, "Lo here!" Or "Lo there! This is Christ!" Believe them not, for Christ is not as yet seen. When He does come, He shall be as perceptible as the lightning's flash, which every man's eye discerns without the need of an instructor. So, also, with His true Church. She also is hidden like

her Lord, and though her hands, her feet, or her face may sometimes be seen, yet the whole elect body has never yet been beheld. If any say, "Lo, here is the Church of Christ!" Or, "Lo there!" Believe them not, for it is a fact, that there is no corporation of men of which we can say exclusively or even universally, "Lo, this is the Church of Christ." There are tares growing with the wheat in the best guarded field, and on the other hand, no one enclosure contains all the wheat. The true Church of Christ is scattered here and there; it is found among all denominations, and there is not one denomination of which you can say, "This, only, is the Church of Christ," or, "All its members belong to the body of Christ's spouse." Just now the mystical bride is in a certain sense as invisible as her husband. Behold, then, the betrothed ones, carried through the world, in the sumptuous chariot of which we have to speak this morning!

I must now claim your attention while I notice, first, *the glory of the progress of Christ through the world, as described in the sixth verse;* secondly, *the security of Christ's cause, as represented in the seventh and eighth;* thirdly, *the superlative excellence of it, as described in the ninth and 10th verses*. And lastly, *our joyful duties with regard to it, as openly declared in the 11th verse*.

I. First, then, THE MAGNIFICENT PROGRESS, THE GLORIOUS ONGOING OF THE CHURCH AND HER LORD THROUGH THE WORLD.

"Who is this who comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" The furnishings excite the attention of the onlooker; his curiosity is raised, and he asks, *"Who is this?"* Now, in the first progress of the Christian Church, in her very earliest days, there were person who marveled greatly; and though they set down the wonders of the day of Pentecost to drunkenness, yet "They were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, What does this mean?" In later years, many a heathen philosopher said, "What is this new power which is breaking the idols in pieces, changing old customs, making even thrones unsafe—what is this?" By-and-by, in the age of the Reformation, there were scowled monks, cardinals in their red hats, and bishops, and princes, and emperors, who all said, "What is this? What strange doctrine has come to light?" In the times of the modern reformation, a century ago, when God was pleased to revive His Church through the instrumentality of Whitefield and his brothers, there were many who said, "What is this new enthusiasm, this Methodism? Where did it come from, and what power is this which it wields?" And, doubtless, whenever God shall be pleased to bring forth His Church in power, and to make her mighty among the sons of men, the ignorance of men will be discovered breaking forth in wonder, for they will say, "Who is this?" Spiritual religion is as much a novelty now, as in the day when Grecian sages scoffed at it on Mars' Hill. The true Church of God is still a stranger and a pilgrim; an alien and a foreigner in every land; a speckled bird; a dove in the midst of ravens; a lily among thorns.

The ignorance of men concerning spiritual things is not, however, caused by the darkness of the things themselves, for Christ and His Church are *the great lights of the world*. When great person traveled in

their palanquins, and more especially in marriage processions, they were attended by a number of persons who, at night, carried high up in the air burning cressets which gave forth a blaze of light. Sometimes these lights were simply torches, carried in the hands of running footmen; at other times, they were a sort of iron basket, lifted high into the air upon poles, from which went up a pillar of smoke and flame. Our text says, "Who is this who comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke?" This is a beautiful illustration of the fact that wherever Christ and His cause are carried, the light of God is a sure accompaniment! Into whatever region the gospel may journey, her every herald is a flash of light; her every minister a flaming fire. God makes His Churches the golden candlesticks, and says unto His children, "You are the lights of the world." This is as certain as ever God said, "Let there be light," and there was light over the old creation. So does He say, whenever His Church advances, "Let there be light," and there is light! Dens of darkness, where the bats of superstition had folded their wings, and hung themselves up for perpetual ease, have been disturbed by the glare of these divine flames! The innermost caverns of superstition and sin, once black with a darkness which might be felt, have been visited with a light of God, above the brightness of the sun! "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death, light has sprung up." Thus says the Lord unto the nation where His kingdom comes, "Arise, shine, for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you!" Bear the Church of Christ to the South Seas; carry Christ and His spouse in His palanquin to the African, or the Eskimo, and everywhere the night of death is ended, and the morning, with its glorious dawn, has come! Lift high your lamps, you servants of our Lord! Lift high the cross of the Redeemer; for in Him is light, and His light is the life of men!

But, you will tell me that our text rather speaks of *"pillars of smoke,"* than of sparkling lamps. Brothers and sisters, the smoke is but the effect of the flame and even the pillar of smoke is luminous! What is the smoke that has attended the Church? What but the deaths of her martyrs, the sufferings of her confessors, the patient endurance of her valiant sons? Wherever she goes, the thick smoke of her suffering goes up to heaven. "We are always delivered unto death," said the apostle. The cause of the truth of God involves a perpetual sacrifice! Her smoke ascends forever. Black smoke, I say, it is in the eyes of man, but unto God it is a sweet-smelling savor! Never did fat of rams, or the fat of kidneys of fed beasts smell so sweetly before the Most High as the faith, the love, the courage, which has ascended up to heaven from the dauntless heroes of the Church in past ages when at the stake they have been faithful even unto death! Suffering, grief, and woe are the lot of the spouse of the despised and rejected Savior, but all these are as things of nothing, if thereby she may scatter that terrible blackness which blinds the face of man and makes him a stranger to his God.

It often happens that oriental monarchs of immense possessions, are not content with burning common coals in these cressets, but frequently consume sandalwood and other woods which give forth a delightful

smell. Or else, if they use ordinary coals, they sprinkle upon them frankincense and myrrh, so that a delicious perfume is spread on all sides. In the olden times, they also went to great expense in obtaining drugs, which the merchants collected from all parts of the earth, and these were carefully compounded into the renowned *"powders of the merchants,"* which yielded a delicious variety of delicate perfumes, not to be produced by any particular aromatic essence! Our inspired poet describes the traveling procession of the royal pair, and fails not to dwell upon the delightful perfume of myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant, "which make the wilderness smell as a garden of roses." Wherever the Church of Christ proceeds, though her pathway is a desert, though she marches through a howling wilderness, she scatters the richest perfume! The pages of history were only worthy to be blotted in oblivion, were it not for the sweet odors which the Church has left upon it! Look at all past ages, and the track of the Church is still perfumed with all the richest fragrance of human virtue and divine grace. Wherever the Church advances, she makes manifest the savor of the knowledge of Christ in every place! Men believe in Jesus, and unto the Lord faith has all the fragrance of myrrh. They love Jesus; and love, in the esteem of heaven, is better than frankincense. Loving Christ, they endeavor to be like He is, till patience, humility, brotherly kindness, truthfulness, and all things that are honest, lovely and of good repute, like "powders of the merchant," are spread abroad throughout the whole earth! Tell me where the Church is not, and I will tell you where sin reigns; tell me where Christ and His Church are carried, and I will tell you where you shall find every virtue that can adorn humanity, and every excellence that can magnify the excellence of the grace of God! If you would find an antidote for the deadly exhalations which lurk among this world's deserts of sin; if you would destroy the foul pestilence which reigns in the darkness of heathenism, of Popery, and of infidelity, cry unto the Mighty One—"Arise, You unknown traveler, arise and bid Your servants carry You into the midst of all this misery and death! The light of Your flaming torches shall scatter the darkness, and the burning of Your precious perfumes shall say unto evil—'Fold your wings!' And unto the pestilence of sin—'Get you back unto your den!'"

Among the ten wonders which Jewish tradition ascribes to the temple, we find that the rain never extinguished the fire of the wood which was laid in order upon the altar, nor did the wind ever conquer the pillar of smoke so as to disperse or bend it. Verily, it is so with the Church of God as she comes out of the wilderness—who shall quench her flaming lamp, or stay the incense of her golden censers? Ride on, Great Prince, and bear Your spouse with You in Your majestic chariot, till You have lit the world with Your divine light, and have made it a temple filled with a cloud of incense of sweet smell to the nostrils of Jehovah!

II. We have, secondly, to notice THE SECURITY OF CHRIST'S CHURCH AT ALL TIMES.

Of course, when traveling through a wilderness, a royal procession was always in danger of attack. Arabs prowled around; wandering Bedouins were always prepared to fall upon the caravan; and more especially

was this the case with a marriage procession, because then the robbers might expect to obtain many jewels, or, if not, a heavy ransom for the redemption of the bride or bridegroom by their friends. What shall I say of the attacks which have been made upon the Church of Christ, and upon Christ, Himself? They have been incessant. When one form of evil has been routed, another has person itself. Evil teems with children! The frogs and lice of Egypt were not more numerous than the enemies of the Lord's anointed and His bride. Every day produces new battles. These attacks arise from all quarters. Sometimes from the world, and sometimes, alas, from even professed members of the Church! Adversaries lurk everywhere, and until the Church and her Lord shall be revealed in the splendor of the Millennium, having left the wilderness forever, we must expect to find her molested on every side! My dear brothers and sisters, we know that Christ's cause in the world is always safe because of divine protection, and because the legions of God's angels keep watch and ward over the saints. But we have something more tangible than this! Our gracious God has been pleased to commit unto *men,* the ministry of Christ. "Unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." The Lord ordains that chosen men should be the protectors of His Church—not that they have any power as of themselves to do anything—but He girds the weak with strength, and makes the feeble mighty. So then, men, even the sons of men, stand in array around the traveling palanquin of Christ, to guard both the bridegroom and the bride!

Read the 7th and 8th verses carefully and you will notice *that there are enough swordsmen*. "Threescore valiant men are about it." There are always enough men, chosen of God, to guard the Church! Poor Unbelief holds up her hands and cries—"Ah, the good men are all dead! Zion is under a cloud; the Lord has taken away the great men; we have no valiant defenders of the faith, none such as this crisis may require!" Ah, Unbelief let the Lord say unto you as he did unto Elijah—"Yet have I left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal." There shall be just as many warriors as the crisis shall require; we do not know where the men are to come from, but the Lord will providence. There may be sitting in the Sunday school today, a child who shall one day shake this nation from one end to the other! There may be even here, unknown, obscure and unobserved, the man whom God will make strong to rebuke the infamous infidelity of our age! We know not where the anointing rests. We, in our folly, would anoint Eliab or Abinadab—but, God has chosen David, the shepherd boy, and He will bring him forth and teach him how to hurl the stone at Goliath's brow! Tremble not, neither be afraid; God who makes man, and makes man's mouth, will find the 60 men when the 60 shall be needed. "The Lord gave the word, great was the company of them who published it." The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

Observe that these warriors *are men of the right mettle*. "Yes," says poor trembling Little-Faith, "we have hosts of men, but they are not like the Great-Hearts of old; they have not the qualifications which the age

requires." Ah, but remember, about the bed of Solomon there are "threescore *valiant* men." And, glory be unto my Master, while I may not flatter the ministry, I must not dishonor Him by believing that He has left His Church without *valiant* defenders! There are Luthers still living, who bid defiance to all adversaries! There are men, still, who can say, "We count not our lives dear unto us that we may finish our course with joy, and fulfill the ministry which the Lord has delivered unto us." Fear not; you may not at person know the valor of the Lord's bodyguard, but when the Church's battle grows hotter than just now, suddenly there shall be seen a champion, stalking to the front of the battle, and men shall say, "Who is this? How he wields that battle-axe! How he splits the armor of his foes! See how he piles them in heaps on heaps, and mounts that hill of slaughtered enemies to smite a greater foe! Who is this?" And the answer shall be, "This is a man whom God has found; the world knew not of him, but God has trained him in the camps of Dan, and now the Spirit moves him to smite the Philistines."

"Ah," I think I hear you say, "but though there may be so many men, and men of the right sort, I am afraid *they are not in the right place."* Look again at the text. It is written—"Threescore valiant men are ABOUT IT." That is, there are some on that side, and some on this, some before, and some behind; they are all round the traveling chariot of Christ. "I wish there might be one in our parish," says one. Pray for him, and He who has promised to send you all good things may yet send him to you. "Pray you the Lord of the harvest that He may send forth laborers into His harvest." It is singular how God sometimes raises a mighty man, in this denomination, then in that, and then in the other. Suppose any body of Christians should try to monopolize all the valiant men themselves? Why, they could not do it, because every side of the royal bed must be guarded, and in his own place each man is set for the defense of the gospel! The Church is compassed about with mighty men, who are under God to do great exploits. If the Lord guides the flight of sparrows, surely He knows how to dispose His ministers! Let the Church be well content to let them occupy their posts, until the wilderness is past, and the glory shall be revealed. The Church often makes mistakes, and thinks she can *make* ministers, or at least choose their position. She can do no such thing! *God* sends the valiant man; all you can do is to recognize his valor, and accept him as your champion; beyond that you cannot go. This is God's work, not man's! A minister made by men—made valiant by human strength—had better betake himself at once shamefully to his tent, for his disgrace will be certain! God, who sends the men, knows where to put them, so that they may stand round about the bed and leave no corner unprotected.

Notice that these men *are all well armed.* The text says expressly, "They all hold swords." What swords are these? Every valiant man in Christ's Israel holds the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God! A man who is a good specialist in Scripture will usually be a good divine; he, who draws from the treasury of the written Word, will find his spoken word to be fruitful in providence to the people of God. If we use carnal reason; if we rely upon refinement, argument, eloquence—or any other

form of the wisdom of man—we shall soon find our enemies will defeat us! But to ply the Word right and left; to give gospel cuts and strokes, such as the devil himself cannot ward off; this is to overcome the world through the Word of God! Besides this, and here is an opportunity for you all to carry swords—every valiant man in God's Israel carries the sword of prayer—which is comparable to those huge two-handed swords of olden times, which the soldier lifted up and brought down with such tremendous force, as to cleave a man in half! Prayer is a weapon which no man can effectually resist! If you know how to use it, bring it down upon your enemy's head, and woe unto him! I would to God, that in this Church there were found many of these valiant men of Israel! Indeed, would God all the Lord's servants were prophets, that it might be said of all of you that you hold swords. Your holy lives can be swords with which to smite your enemies; the tongues with which you speak of Christ lovingly, tenderly, persuasively—these may be weapons against our common enemy. Oh, that when we hear the muster roll at last, it may be said of every Church member that he held a sword! Do not tremble, you timid ones, for the ark of the Lord; neither let your fears promote your unbelief—God knows full well how to give the right weapons to the right men—and His Church shall be secure even to the end!

Further, beloved, these men are not only well armed, but *they are well trained*. They are all expert in war; men who have endured temptations themselves; men whose souls have been exercised; men who have slain both the lion and the bear, and are men of war from their youth. Christian ministers especially should be no novices—but both in the school of temptation, and in some school of the providence, they should be disciplined for fight. May there be such found here! I look out daily for such among you as are taught of God, and much of my time is spent with our young soldiers, to make them expert in war. O that the Lord would hear my prayers, and bless our College with men and means, and above all, with His Spirit! Fools are not the men for this age. We need a sound knowledge of doctrine, practical power in preaching, and a thorough insight into the human heart; and where these by earnest prayer can be found in a man, and further developed by careful teaching; we are bound to give our aid! Such men should be looked after, and no pains should be spared to bring them forth; in fact, dear friends, you ought to think it a high honor to be allowed to help in putting such men into working order. Oh, how I groan to get my friends to feel the importance of sending out trained young ministers! I give my time and my substance cheerfully, but when will the Christian Church help in this matter as it should?

Further, these men were not only well trained, but you will see *that they were always ready*. Each man has his sword upon his thigh, ready to be drawn. I know some nominal ministers, who seem to me to carry no sword at all. They keep a sheath, a very handsome sheath, with a hilt at the top, and a stick inside! What is the good of such men? We need men to have *swords* in their sheaths—men who can speak with power, and have the demonstration of the Spirit, and the power thereof resting upon them! Such men should wear their swords where they are to be got at, so that when the adversary comes they may dash at him at once. Rejoice, O

daughter of Zion, your Lord has not left you, even at this day, without some such men!

Observe also, that these men were *watchful,* for "They had their sword on their thigh because of fear *in the night."* They never sleep, but watch always for the Church's interest. Pray that the Lord may raise up many such, who night and day, with tears, shall watch for the souls of men, and against the enemies of our Israel.

Dear friends, some of you may at times be alarmed, when you hear of attacks made upon the Bible. At one time, it was thought that science would prove that the human race could not be one. And Moses was terribly abused by some, who said it was not possible that all of us could have come of one pair. That battle was fought, and you hear nothing of it now; it is over; learning and argument in the hands of God have routed those antagonists. Then, they pelted us with shells, and bones of lizards. Geology threatened to dig our graves; but we have lived all through that struggle; and we have found geology to be a great blessing, for it has shed a new light on the first chapter of Genesis, and made us understand a great deal better what it meant. Another Amalekite advances to combat! This time it is with figures and numbers; we are to be speared with arithmetic and slain with algebra! And what will be the result of it? Why, it will do the Bible a world of good, for we shall understand it better! I thank God whenever the Bible is attacked; for all those who know the times and seasons, begin to study just that part of Scripture more carefully, and then we get a clearer light shed upon it, and we find ourselves more confirmed than ever, that this is the very truth of God, and that God has revealed it to us! "Well, but who will take this matter up?" I do not know, and I do not particularly care, but I know my Master has His threescore valiant men round about His bed, and that each man has his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. Never mind what the battle may be, the end of it will be for God's glory, and there shall be progress with the chariot of Christ, through that which seemed as if it must overthrow it! Cast aside your fears! Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Zion! Your Lord is with you in the traveling chariot, and the threescore valiant men are watching against your foes!

III. Meanwhile, reposing in peace, let us notice THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS CHARIOT IN WHICH JESUS RIDES.

It is not difficult to convey to person the most unacquainted with Eastern manners, and customs, an idea of what this palanquin is. It is a sort of large sedan in which one or two person may recline with ease. Of course, this palanquin could not be made of gold or silver, because then it would be too heavy for carriage. It must be made of wood. Therefore King Solomon made a bed, or chariot, or palanquin, of the wood of Lebanon. Then, there needs to be four pillars supporting the covering and the curtains; the pillars are of silver. The bottom of it should be something massive, in order to sustain the weight of the person; the bottom is of gold. The canopy on the top is a covering of purple. Since to lie on gold would be very unpleasant, it is covered with delicate, daintily worked carpets; and so we have the bottom paved, or rather carpeted, with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. Some delicate devices of needlework

adorn the bottom of this bed-chariot, in which the king and his spouse recline during their journey.

The doctrines of the gospel are comparable, for their antiquity, for their sweet fragrance, for their incorruptibility, to the wood of Lebanon. The gospel of Christ never decays; Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Not one single truth of God bears any sign of rot. And to those souls who are enlightened from above, the gospel gives forth a fragrance, far richer than the wood of Lebanon—

"No beams of cedar or of fir,
Can with Your precious truth compare."

I rejoice to know concerning you as a Church, that the more you understand the doctrines of grace, the better you love them. You are confirmed in the person faith, and well you may be, for our doctrine is worthy of your confidence. We are not afraid that any truth which Christ has uttered should be tried by the most stringent criticism, for not one single stone, of all the bulwarks of gospel doctrine, can ever be removed out of its place! When cedars of Lebanon have yielded to the worm, even then shall the truth of God, as it is in Jesus, remain the same!

As for the silver pillars which bear up the canopy, to what should I liken them but to *the attributes of God*, which support and guarantee the efficiency of the great atonement of Christ, beneath which we are sheltered? There is the silver pillar of God's *justice*. He cannot, He will not, smite the soul that hides beneath the cross of Christ. If Christ has paid the debt, how is it possible that God should visit again, a second time, the iniquity of His people, first on their Surety, and then again on themselves? Then stands the next, the solid pillar of His *power*. "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands; My Father who gave them Me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father's hands." Then, on the other side, is the pillar of His *love,* a silver pillar indeed, bright and sparkling to the eyes! Love unchanging and eternal, strong as the power, and fast as the justice which bear up the canopy on the other side. And, here on this side stands *immutability,* another column upon which the atonement rests. If God could change, then might He cast away His blood-bought; but, "Because I am God and change not, therefore you sons of Jacob rejoice." As for the *covering of the chariot,* it is of purple. I need not tell you where it was dyed. No Tyrian hues are mingled here! Look up, Christian, and delight yourself in that blood-red canopy, which shelters you from the sun by day, and from the moon by night! From hell and heaven, from time, and from eternity, are you secured by this covering which is of purple. Oh, tempting theme to dilate upon the precious and glorious doctrine of atonement! Whenever our adversaries assail the Church, whatever may be the apparent object of their animosity, their real one is always the same—a desperate hatred of the great truth, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Well, as they hate it, let us love it; and under it let us take our greatest delight!

As for the *bottom of this palanquin,* which is of gold—may not this represent the eternal purpose and counsel of God that purpose which He formed in Himself before the earth was? Pure was the decree of God—

holy, wise, just—for His own glory, and most true; and as the precious things of the temple were all of gold, well may the basis of eternal love, an immutable and unchangeable decree, be compared to much fine gold. I do not know, brothers and sisters, how it is with you, but I find it most pleasant to have as the basis of my hope, the firm decree of God. Atonement covers me, I know, but still on this I must rest—Jehovah wills it, God decrees it—He has said it, and it must be done! He has commanded and it stands fast. Oh, that golden sovereignty, whereon is written—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs." Dear brothers and sisters, the apostle plainly tells us that this is the basis on which even the silver pillars rest, "For He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as He has chosen us in Him from before the foundation of the world."

Then, to make this all soft and pleasant to recline upon, here is carpeting of needlework; soft cushions of love on which to rest. There is a double meaning here, for both the bride and bridegroom find rest in love. Our Lord finds rest in the love of His people. "Here will I dwell forever." They do, as it were, make these carpets of needlework in their love and affection for Him, and in their trust and confidence in Him. And here He rests. On the other hand, our beloved spent His life to work for us our bed of rest, so that we must translate it, "love *of,"* as well as love *for* the daughters of Jerusalem." *We* rest in Christ's love; He rests in our love. Come, I need not explain further, brothers and sisters. Take your rest now to the fullest. You are married to Christ; you are one with Him; you are betrothed to Him in faithfulness, embraced in the arms of His affection. Fear not the noise of archers; the "threescore valiant men" protect you, and the King, Himself, embraces you! Now solace yourself with Him; take your full of His sweet society, and say to Him from the bottom of your heart, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine." Leave fighting for the evidences to the valiant men who can do it; as for you, you daughters of Jerusalem, rest upon your Lord's bosom; leave conflict to the men ordained to fight, the men expert in war; as for you, be you expert in communion! Understand the motions of Jesus' heart; look unto the luster of His loving eyes; behold His beauties; be ravished with His divine affection to you; and now let your soul be satisfied with favor, and be full of the loving kindness of the Lord!

IV. We close, then, by noticing THE DUTY OF EVERY BELIEVING HEART in connection with the subject.

Let every believer, while he recognizes himself as part of the Church inside the palanquin, yet look upon himself person as one of the daughters of Zion, and let us each *go forth* this morning to meet King Solomon! It is not King David—King David is the type of Christ up to the time of His crucifixion—"despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and yet King of the Jews. King Solomon is the type of Christ ever since the day when—

"They brought His chariot from above,
To bear Him to His throne."

And then with sound of trumpet, conducted Him to His Father's presence! Now it is King Solomon; King Solomon for wealth, for wisdom, for

dignity, for honor, for peace. He is the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and therefore is He King Solomon going forth! Get up from your beds of sloth; rise from your chambers of ease; go forth, go forth to pray, to labor, to suffer; go forth to live in purity, leaving Babylon behind! Go forth to walk with Him alone, leaving even your kinfolk and acquaintances if they will not follow with you. Why tarry at home, when the King is abroad? "Behold the Bridegroom comes, come forth to meet Him," *and behold King Solomon!* Today let your eyes rest upon Him; let your eyes behold the head that today is crowned with glory, wearing many crowns. Behold, too, His hands which once were pierced, but are now grasping the scepter! Look to His belt, where swing the keys of heaven, and death, and hell; look to His feet, once pierced with iron, but now set upon the dragon's head. Behold His legs, like fine brass, as if they glowed in a furnace. Look at His heart, that bosom which heaves with love to you, and when you have surveyed Him from head to foot, exclaim, "Yes, He is the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely." Does sin prevail? Behold King Solomon! Have doubts and fears arisen? Behold King Jesus! Are you troubled, and does your enemy annoy you? Look up to Him! Behold King Solomon! I pray you remember the light in which you are to behold Him. Do not think that Christ has lost His former power. Behold Him as He was at Pentecost, *with the crown wherewith His mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals*. Oh, how glorious was our Lord when the Church crowned Him with her zeal, and the arrows went abroad, and three thousand fell, slain by His right hand, to be made alive by the breath of His mouth! Oh, how these early saints crowned Him, when they brought of their substance and laid it at the apostle's feet! Neither did any man consider that all he had was his own. They crowned Him with their heart's purest love; the Church had on her brow, her bridal wreath, and her husband wore His nuptial crown. Behold Him today as still wearing that crown, for He is the same Christ! Now go forth to meet Him, and labor for Him, and love Him as the first saints did!

Forget not that His mother is to crown Him soon, in the day of His espousals. He is our brother, as well as our husband, and the Church is *His* mother, as well as ours! Oh, she is to crown Him soon! The day of His espousals draws near. Listen! I hear the trumpet sound! Jesus comes, and His feet stand upon Mount Olivet! Kings and princes lick the dust before Him; He gathers sheaves of scepters beneath His arms, even as the mower gathers wheat with the sickle. He treads on principalities and powers, the young lion and the dragon does He trample under foot. And now His saints cry, "Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." The long expected one is come, and His mother crowns Him in the day of His espousals! Courage, poor heart, courage! Go forth and see King Solomon today as He is to be, and remember—

"It does not yet appear
How great we shall be made;
But when we see our Savior here,
We shall be like our Head."

When we look on *Him,* let us rejoice that this is to be our glory. We are to put off this sackcloth and put on scarlet and fine linen. The dust is to be

wiped from our brow and the sweat from our face; the fetters are to be taken from our wrists and the shackles from our legs; and we are to be emancipated, ennobled, glorified, made partners with Christ in all His splendor, and taught to reign with Him world without end!

But, there are some here who I can hardly call the daughters of Jerusalem, yet they are always round about Zion's gate. Oh, there are many of you, who are always listening to our voice, and joining in our hymns, and yet, you have never seen our Master! Go forth; leave your sinful pleasures, and leave your self-righteousness, too; go forth and behold King Solomon. Look to Jesus, sinner, bleeding on the cross, and as you look, love and trust; and I know that as soon as you have seen Him, and trusted Him, you will have a crown to put upon His head. It will be the day of your espousal to Him, and you will crown Him with such a crown! You will decorate that crown with jewels dug from the secret mine of your deepest heart, and having made this crown, you will put it on His head, and fall down before Him and sing —

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

Well, then, we will lay aside every fear, and continue all the day gazing upon our matchless Christ, adoring Him, exalting Him, and having fellowship with Him; for all is well; his traveling chariot is always safe, and soon He will step out of it with His bride at His right hand, and the world shall be astonished to behold the beauties of the royal pair, when He shall be exalted, and they who are with Him, before the presence of His Father and all the holy angels!

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LIFE AND WALK OF FAITH
NO. 483

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 7, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."
Colossians 2:6.

OUR nature is fond of change. Although man was made in the image of God at first, it is plain enough that any trace of immutability which he may once have possessed has long ago departed. Man, unrenewed, could he possess the joys of heaven, would in time grow weary of them, and crave for change. When the children of Israel in the wilderness were fed on angels' food, they murmured for variety, and groaned out, "Our soul loathes this light bread." It is little wonder, then, that we need cautions against shifting the ground of our hope and the object of our faith. Another evil principle will work with this love of change in our hearts and produce much mischief—our natural tendency to build upon our own works. For a time, that ruinous habit is cured by conviction of sin. The law, with its sharp axe, cuts down the lofty cedar of fleshly confidence, and withers all its greenness; but, since the root still remains, at the very scent of water it sprouts again, and there is good need to set the axe going with all its former edge and weight! When we think legality quite dead, it revives, and, linking hands with our love of change, it tempts us to forsake our simple standing upon Christ, the Rock of Ages, and urges us to advance to a something which it decorates before our eyes with fancied colors, and makes out to our feeble understandings to be better or more honorable to ourselves. Though this will certainly be again beaten down in a Christian, for he will meet with trouble after trouble when once he goes astray from his first path, yet again the old secret desire to *be* something, to *do* something, to have some little honor by performing the works of the law, will come in, and we shall have need to hear the voice of wisdom in our hearts saying to us, "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." Persevere in the same way in which you have begun, and, as at the first, Christ Jesus was the source of your life, the principle of your action, and the joy of your spirit, so let Him be the same even till life's end—the same when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and enter into the joy and the rest which remain for the people of God!

In trying to teach this very useful, though simple lesson, I shall, in the plainest possible language, first of all talk a little of the text *by way of exposition;* then, secondly, *by way of advocacy;* and then, thirdly, *by way of application.*

I. Oh that the gracious Spirit, who alone can lead us into all the truth of God, would aid me while I endeavor to open up this verse BY WAY OF EXPOSITION.

In expounding the text, we readily break it up into two parts—here is the life of faith—receiving Christ Jesus the Lord. Here is, secondly, the walk of faith—so walk in Him.

1. The Holy Spirit here reveals to us *the life of faith*—the way by which you and I are saved, if saved at all. Mark, carefully, that it is represented as *receiving!* Now the word "receiving" *implies the very opposite of anything like merit*. Merit is purchasing; merit might be called making by labor or winning by valor; but receiving is just the accepting of a thing as a *gift*. The eternal life which God gives His people is in no sense whatever the fruit of their exertions; it is the gift of God! As the earth drinks in the rain, as the sea receives the streams, as night accepts light from the stars, so we, giving nothing, partake freely of the grace of God. The saints are not, by nature, wells or streams, they are but cisterns into which the living water flows. They are but as the empty vessel; sovereign mercy puts them under the pipe, and they receive divine grace upon divine grace till they are filled to the brim! He who talks about winning salvation by works; he who thinks he can earn it by prayers, by tears, by penance, by mortification of the flesh, or by zealous obedience to the law, makes a big mistake; for the very first principle of the divine life is not giving out, but *receiving!* It is that which comes *from* Christ *into* me which is my salvation; not that which springs out of my own heart, but that which comes from the divine Redeemer and changes, and renews my nature. It is not what I give out, but what I *receive*, which must be life to me!

The idea of receiving, again, seems to imply in it *a sense of realization*, making the matter *a reality*. One cannot very well receive a shadow! We receive that which is substantial. Gold, silver, precious stones—such things we can receive. Estates, riches, bread, water, food, raiment—all these are things which are substances to us, and therefore it becomes possible for us to *receive* them. We do not receive a dream; we do not receive, again, I say, a shadow; we do not speak of receiving a specter; we do not receive a phantom. There is something real in a thing that is received. Well now, so is it also in the life of faith! We realize Christ. While we are without faith, Christ is a name to us, a person that may have lived a long while ago, so long that His life is only a history to us! By an act of faith Christ becomes a real person in the consciousness of our heart, as real to us as our own flesh, and blood, and bones—and we speak of Him, and think of Him as we would of our brother, our father, our friend. Our faith gives a substance to the history and idea of Christ, puts real solidity into the spirit and name of Christ—and that which to the worldly man is but a phantom, a thing to hear about and talk about—becomes to us a thing to taste and handle, to lay hold upon, and to receive as real and true! I know, you who are unconverted, think all these things an idle tale; but you who are saved, you who have received Christ—you know that there is substance here—and shadow everywhere

else! This has become to you the one grand reality, that God is in Christ reconciling you unto Himself!

But receiving also means a third thing; that is *getting a grip of it, grasping it!* The thing which I receive becomes my own. I may *believe* it to be real, but that is not *receiving* it. I may believe, also, that if I ever do get it, it must be given to me, and that I cannot earn it for myself. But still that is not *receiving* it. Receiving is the *bona fide* taking into my hands, and appropriating to myself as my own property that which is given to me! Now this is what the soul does when it believes on Christ. Christ becomes *my* Christ; His blood cleanses *my* sin, and it is cleansed; His righteousness covers *me*, and I am clothed with it; His Spirit fills me, and I am made to live by it. He becomes to me as much mine as anything that I can call my own; no, what I call my own here on earth is not mine—it is only lent to me, and will be taken from me—but Christ is so mine, that neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever be able to rob me of Him! Oh, I hope, dear friends, you have that blessed appropriating faith which says, "Yes, He is not another man's Christ, He is *my* Christ," I hope you can look into His face today and say, "*My* beloved, who loved *me,* and gave Himself for me." I hope you do not talk of these things as I might talk of my lord So-and-So's park, and admire its beauties, while I, myself, have no right to one acre of the many thousands within the fence; but I trust, on the other hand, you can say—"The blessings and promises of the Lord, my God, are all my own! Whatever I read of in the covenant of grace that is good, that is comely, that is desirable, I have heard a voice say in my ears, "Lift up now your eyes, and look to the north, and the south, to the east and the west—all this have I given *you* to be your possession forever and ever by a covenant of salt." Now put these three things together, and I think you have the idea of receiving Christ. To receive Him is to have Him as the result of God's free gift; to realize Him; and then to appropriate Him to yourselves.

The word "receive" is used in some 10 or 12 senses in Holy Scripture. Five of them will suffice my purpose just now. To receive is often used for *taking*. We read of receiving a thousand shekels of silver, and of receiving money, garments, sheep, and oxen. Perhaps in this sense we understand the words of the Master—"No man can receive anything unless it is given him from above." And that other sentence—"To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." We take Christ into us—to return to my old simile—as the empty vessel takes in water from the stream; so we receive Christ. The love, life, merit, nature, and grace of Jesus freely flow into us, as the oil into the widow's vessels. But the word is also used in Scripture to signify *holding that which we take in*. Indeed, a vessel without a bottom could hardly be said to receive water! I do not suppose anyone would talk of a sieve receiving water except in a mock sense. But the life of faith consists in holding within us that which Christ has put into us, so that Jesus Christ is formed in us the hope of glory. By faith it comes in; by faith it is kept in. Faith gives me what I have; keeps what I have. Faith makes it mine; faith *keeps* it mine. Faith

gets hold of it with one hand, and then clasps it with both hands with a grasp that neither death nor life can loosen! Then, receiving sometimes means in Scripture simply *believing*. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." We read of receiving false prophets; that is, believing them. Now, to receive Christ is to believe Him. He says, "I can save you"—I receive that. He says, "I will save you"—I receive that. He says, "Trust Me and I will make you like Myself"—I receive that. Whatever Jesus says, I believe Him, and receive Him as true. I make His words so true to myself that I act upon them as being true, and regard them not as a word that may *possibly* be true but which *must* be true, even if heaven and earth should pass away! This is receiving Christ—believing what He has said. Receiving, also, often signifies in Scripture *entertaining*. Thus the barbarous people at Melita received Paul and his companions kindly, and kindled a fire. Ah, after we have once found all in Christ to be our own, and have received Him into ourselves by faith, then we entreat the Lord to enter our hearts and sup with us. We give Him the best seat at the table of our souls; we would feast Him on the richest dainties of our choicest love. We ask Him to abide with us from morn till eve; we would commune with Him every day and every hour of the day. We entertain Him; we have a reception chamber in our hearts, and we receive Christ. And then, once again, receiving in Scripture often signifies *to enjoy*. We hear of receiving a crown of life which fades not; that is, enjoying it, enjoying heaven, and being satisfied with all its bliss! Now, dear friends, when we receive Christ, there is intended in this an enjoying of it. I am only now talking the simplicities of our faith, but I do need to make them very personal to you. Are you thus enjoying Christ? If you had a crown you would wear it; you have a Christ—feed on Him! If you were hungry and there was bread on the table, you would eat. Oh, eat and drink, beloved, of your Lord Jesus Christ! If you have a friend, you enjoy his company—you have a friend in Christ; oh, enjoy His conversation! Do not leave Him, like a bottle of cordial for the fainting, sealed up from us; let Him not be as some choice dainty all untasted, while you are hungry! Oh, receive Christ, for this is the very heaven and rest of the soul. His flesh is meat, indeed, His blood is drink, indeed. Never did angels taste such divine fare. Come here, saints, and satisfy yourselves in Him! To take Him into one's self, to hold Him there, to believe every word He says, to entertain Him in our hearts, and to enjoy the luscious sweetness which He must confer upon all those who have eaten His flesh and have been made to drink of His blood—this it is to receive Christ!

But we have not brought out the real meaning of this life of faith yet till we dwell upon another word. As you have received. Received what? Salvation may be described as the blind receiving sight, the deaf receiving hearing, the dead receiving life; but beloved, beloved, here is a thought here—oh that you may get hold of it! We have not only received these things, but we have received CHRIST! "As you have received *Christ Jesus the Lord*." Do you see it? It is true that He gave us life from the dead? He gave us pardon of sin; He gave us imputed righteousness. These are all precious things, but do you see we are not content with

them? We have received *Christ Himself!* The Son of God has been poured out into us, and we have received Him, and appropriated Him! Mark, I say, not merely the blessings of the covenant, but *Himself!* Not merely the purchase of His blood, but He Himself from whose veins the blood has flowed has become ours; and every soul that has eternal life is this day a possessor of Christ Jesus the Lord! Now we will put this, also, personally to you. Have I received *Christ*, that is, the *anointed?* My soul, have you seen Christ as the anointed of the Father in the divine decree to execute His purposes? Have you seen Him coming forth in the fullness of time wearing the robes of His priesthood, the anointed of the Father? Have you seen Him standing at the altar offering Himself as a victim, an anointed priest, anointed with the sacred oil by which God has made Him a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek? My soul, have you seen Jesus going within the veil, and speaking to Your Father, and to His Father as one whom the Father has accepted, of whom we can speak, in the language of David, as our shield and God's anointed? Oh, it is a delight, indeed, to receive Christ not as an unsent prophet, not as a man who came of His own authority, not as a teacher who spoke His own words, but as one who is *Christos,* the anointed, the anointed of God, ordained of the Most High, and therefore most certainly acceptable! As it is written, *"I* have laid help upon one who is mighty. *I* have exalted one chosen out of the people. It pleased the *Father* to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." Delightful is the contemplation of Christ under that aspect! Soul, do you thus receive the Messiah of God? But the text says, "Christ *Jesus."* Now Jesus means a Savior. *Christ* is His relation to God; *Jesus* His relation to *me!* Have I received Christ in His relationship to *me* as a Savior? My soul, has Christ saved you? Come, no "ifs" and "ands" about it. Have you received Him as your Savior? Could you say in that happy day when your faith closed with Him, "Yes, Jesus, You have saved me"? Oh, there are some professors of religion who do not seem to have received Christ as *Jesus.* They look upon Him as one who may *help* them to save themselves, who can do a great deal for them, or may *begin* the work, but not complete it! Oh, beloved, we must get a hold of Him as one who has saved us, who has finished the work! What? Don't you know that you are this day whiter than the driven snow because His blood has washed you? You are this day more acceptable to God than unfallen angels ever were, for you are clothed in the perfect righteousness of a divine one! Christ has wrapped you about with His own righteousness; you are saved! You have received Him as God's anointed. See that you receive Him as Jesus, your Savior!

Then, again, it is clear that saving faith consists also in receiving Him *as He is in Himself, as the divine Son.* "You have received Christ Jesus *the Lord."* Those who they say cannot believe in His Deity have not received Him. Others theoretically admit Him to be divine, but He is never a subject of confidence as such; *they* have not received Him. But I trust I speak to many hundreds this morning who willingly accept His Godhead, and say, "I entertain no doubt about His Deity and, moreover, on that I risk my soul! I take Him into my heart as being God over all, blessed for-

ever, Amen—I kiss His feet while I see His humanity; but I believe that, since those feet could tread the waters, He is divine. I look up to His hands, and as I see them pierced I know that He is human; but as I know that those hands multiplied the loaves and fishes till they fed five thousand, I know that He is divine. I look upon His corpse in the tomb, and I see that He is man; I see Him in the resurrection, and I know that He is God. I see Him on the cross, suffering, and I know that He is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; but I hear a voice which says, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him,' 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,' and I bow before Him, and say, 'Oh Lord, You Son of God, and son of Mary, I receive You as Christ Jesus *the Lord.'"*

Now, this is all very plain talking, you will say; and I remind you that souls are saved by very plain truths of God, and the dealings of men's souls with Christ are not carried on in learned or metaphysical terms! We do believe, and so take Christ Jesus the Lord into us, and by that act of faith, without any doing of our own, we are completely saved!

I shall only make this further remark here that the apostle speaks of this as a *matter of certainty,* and goes on to argue from it. Now, we do not argue from a supposition! I must have you clear, dearly beloved in the Lord, that this is a matter of certainty *to you*. We can hardly get to the next point unless you can say, "I have received Jesus." The verse runs, "As, or since, *you have* received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in Him." We must not alter it into, "Since *I hope* I have," "Since *I trust* I have." You either have or have not; if you have not, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and cry to Him for His great gift! But if you have, O dear friends, do not let it be a question with you, but say, "Yes, yes, yes, I can say, once and for all, I have received Him! Poor, weak, and worthless though I am, I do put my humble seal to the fact that God is true, and I trust in Him who is able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God by Him." This is the life of faith.

2. Now, in expounding the text, our second point was *the walk of faith*. "Since you have received Him, walk in Him." Walk implies, first of all, *action*. Do not let your reception of Christ be a mere thing of thought to you, a subject only for your chamber, and your closet, but act upon it all. If you have really received Christ, and are saved, act as if you were saved—with joy, with meekness, with confidence, with faith, with boldness! Walk in Him—do not sit down in laziness—but rise and act in Him! Walk in Him; carry out into practical effect that which you believe. See a man who has received an immense fortune; his purse is bursting, and his caskets are heavy. What does he do? Why, he behaves like a rich man! He sees a luxury which pleases him, and he buys it! There is an estate he desires, and he purchases it! He acts like a rich man. Beloved brothers and sisters, you have received Christ—act upon it! Do not play the beggar, now that boundless wealth is conferred upon you! Walking, again, implies *perseverance.* Not only being in Christ *today*—that would be standing in Him, and falling from Him—but being in Him tomorrow, and the next day, and the next, and the next, and the next—walking in Him all your walk of life! I remember Matthew Henry, speaking about

Enoch walking with God, says he did not only take a turn or two up and down with God, and then leave Him, but he walked with God 400 years! This implies perseverance. You have received Christ—persevere in receiving Him! You have come to trust Him—keep on trusting Him! You hang about His neck as a poor, helpless sinner—remain hanging there! In other words, abide in Him. Walking implies *habit*. When we speak of a man's walk and conversation, we mean his habits, the constant tenor of his life. Now, dear friends, if you and I sometimes enjoy Christ, and then forget Him; if sometimes we say He is ours, and soon loosen our hold, that is not a habit; we *do not walk* in Him. But if you have received Him, let it be your habit to live upon Him, keep to Him—cling to Him, never let Him go—live and have your being in Him! This walking implies a *continuance*. There is no notice given in the text of the suspension of this walking, but there must be a continual abiding in Christ. How many Christians there are who think that in the morning and evening they ought to come into the company of Christ, but then they may be in the world the rest of the day? Ah, but we ought *always* to be in Christ, that is to say, all the day long, every minute of the day! Though worldly things may take up some of my thoughts, yet my soul is to be in a constant state of being in Christ, so that if I am caught at any moment, I am in Him; at any hour, if anyone should say to me, "Now, are you saved?" I will still be able to say, "Yes." And if they ask me for an evidence of it, I may, without saying so, prove it to them by the fact that I am acting like a man who is in Christ, who has Christ in him, has had his nature changed by receiving Christ's nature, and has Christ to be his one end and aim! I suppose, also, that walking signifies *progress*. So walk in Him—proceed from divine grace to grace—run forward until you reach the uttermost limit of knowledge that man can have concerning our beloved. "As you have received Him walk in Him."

But now I want you to notice just this. It says, "Walk *in Him."* Oh, I cannot attempt to enter into the mystery of this text—"Walk *in* Him!" You know if a man has to cross a river, he fords it quickly and is out of it again at once. But you are to suppose a person walking *in* a certain element always, *in* Christ. Just as we walk in the air, so am I to walk in Christ! Not sometimes, now and then coming to Him, and going away from Him, but walking in Him as my *element*. Can you comprehend that? Not a soul here can make anything out of that but the silliest jargon; except the man who, having received the inner spiritual life, understands what it is to have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ! Dear friends, in trying to open up that point just for a moment, let us notice what this walking in Christ must mean. As Christ was at first when we received Him *the only ground of our faith;* as long as we live, we are to stand to the same point! Did you not sing the other day when you first came to Him—

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

Well, that is how you are to continue to the end! We commence our faith with—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,

Simply to the cross I cling."

When you are old with honors, when you are covered with fame, when you have served your Master well, still come in just the same way with—

"A guilty weak and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall,
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all!"

Let not your experience, your sanctification, your graces, your attainments, come in between you and Christ, but just as you took Him to be the only pillar of your hope at first, so let Him be even to the last. You received Christ, again, as *the substance of your faith*. The infidel laughed at you, and said you had nothing to trust to; but your faith made Christ real to you. Well, now, just as the first day when you came to Jesus, you no more doubted the reality of Christ than you did your own existence, so walk in Him! Well can I remember that first moment when these eyes looked to Christ! Ah, there was never anything so true to me as those bleeding hands, and that crown of thorns on His head. I wish it were always so, and indeed, it ought to be. As you have really received Christ, so keep on realizing and finding substance in Him. And that day, beloved, when Christ became to us *the joy of our souls!* Home, friends, health, wealth, comforts—all lost their luster that day when He appeared, just as stars are hidden by the light of the sun! He was the only Lord and giver of life's best bliss, the one well of living water springing up unto everlasting life! I know that the first day it mattered not to me whether the day itself was gloomy or bright. I had found Christ; that was enough for me. He was my Savior. He was my all. I do think that that day I could have stood upon the fire wood of Smithfield to burn for Him readily enough! Well now, just as you received Him at first as your only Joy, so receive Him still, walking in Him, making Him the source, the center, yes, and the circumference, too, of all your souls' range of delight, having your all in Him. So, beloved, that day when we received Him, we received Him as *the objective of our love*. Oh, how we loved Christ then! Had we met Him that day, we would have broken the alabaster box of precious ointment, and poured it upon His head; we would have washed His feet with our tears, and wiped them with the hairs of our head. Ah, Jesus, when I first received You, I thought I should have behaved far better than I did; I thought I would spend, and be spent for You, and should never dishonor You, or turn aside from my faith, and devotedness, and zeal. But ah, brothers and sisters, we have not come up to the standard of our text—walking in Him as we have received Him—He has not been by us so well beloved as we dreamed He would have been.

I take it, then, to be the meaning of our text, as Christ Jesus the Lord was at the first All-in-All to you, so let Him be while life shall last.

II. I shall be very brief upon THE ADVOCACY OF THIS PRINCIPLE, for surely you need no urgent persuasion to cleave unto such a Lord as yours!

In advocating this principle, I would say, first of all, suppose, my beloved, you and I, having been saved by Christ, should now begin to walk in someone else, what then? Why, *what dishonor to our Lord!* Here is a

man who came to Christ and says he found salvation in Him, but after relying upon the Lord some half-a-dozen years, he came to find it was not a proper principle, and so now he has begun to walk by feelings, to walk by sight, to walk by philosophy, to walk by carnal wisdom! If such a case could be found, what discredit would it bring upon our Holy Leader and Captain! But I am certain no such instance will be found in you, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Have you not up till now found your Lord to be a compassionate and generous friend to you, and has not simple faith in Him given you all the peace your spirit could desire? I pray you, then, unless you would stain His glory in the dust, as you have received Christ, so walk in Him!

Besides, *what reason have you to make a change?* Has there been any argument in the past? Has not Christ proven Himself all-sufficient! He appeals to you today—"Have I been a wilderness unto you?" When your soul has simply trusted Christ, have you ever been confounded? When you have dared to come as a guilty sinner, and believed in Him, have you ever been ashamed? Very well, then, let the past urge you to walk in Him! And as for *the present*, can that compel you to leave Christ? Oh, when we are hard beset with this world or with the severer trials within the Church, we find it such a sweet thing to come back and pillow our head upon the bosom of our Savior! This is the joy we have today, that if we are in trial, we are saved in Him, and if we find this today to be enough, why should we think of changing? I will not forswear the sunlight till I find a better, nor leave my Lord until a brighter lover shall appear; and, since this can never be, I will hold Him with an immortal grasp, and bind His name as a seal upon my arm! As for *the future*, can you suggest anything which can arise that shall render it necessary for you to tack about, or strike sail, or go with another captain in another ship? I think not! Suppose life to be long—He changes not. Suppose you die; is it not written that "Neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"? You are poor; what better than to have Christ who can make you rich in faith? Suppose you are sick; what more do you need than Christ to make your bed in your sickness? Suppose you should be maltreated, and mocked, and slandered for His sake—what better do you need then to have Him as a friend who sticks closer than a brother? In life, in death, in judgment—you cannot conceive anything that can arise in which you would require more than Christ bestows!

But, dear friends, it may be that you are tempted by something else to change your course for a time. Now what is it? Is it the wisdom of this world, the cunning devices and discoveries of man? Is it that which our apostle mentions as philosophy? The wise men of the world have persuaded you to begin questioning; they have urged you to put the mysteries of God to the test of common sense, reason, and so forth, as they call it, and not lean on the Inspiration of God's Word. Ah, well, beloved, it is wisdom, I suppose, which philosophy offers you. Well, but have you not that in Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and

knowledge? You received Christ at first, I thought, as being made of God unto you wisdom, and sanctification, and righteousness, and so on. Well, will you cast Him off when you have already more than all the wisdom which this philosophy offers?

Is it *ceremonies* that tempt you? Has the priest told you that you ought to attend to these, and then you would have another ground of confidence? Well, but you have that in Christ! If there is anything in the circumcision of the Jews, you have that, for you are circumcised in Him. If there is anything in Baptism—as some think that to be a saving ordinance—you have been buried with Him in baptism. You have that! Do you need life? Your life is hid with Him! Do you need death? You are dead with Christ, and buried with Him! Do you need resurrection? He has raised you up with Him! Do you need heaven? He has made you sit together in heavenly places in Him! Getting Christ, you have all that everything else can offer you; therefore, be not tempted from this hope of your calling, but as you have received Christ, so walk in Him.

And then, further, do you not know that your Jesus is the Lord from heaven? *What can your heart desire* beyond God? God is infinite; you cannot need more than the infinite. "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Having Christ, you have God; and having God, you have everything! Well might the apostle add to that sentence, "And you are complete in Him!" Well, then, if you are complete in Christ, why should you be beguiled by the witcheries of this world to want something besides Christ? If resting upon Him, God is absolutely yours, and you are, therefore, full to the brim with all that your largest capacity can desire, oh, why should you thus be led astray, like foolish children, to seek after another confidence and another trust? Oh, come back, you wanderer! Come back to this solid foundation and sing once again with us—

"On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand!"

III. And now, last of all, a few words BY WAY OF APPLICATION.

"So walk in Him." one of the first applications shall be made with regard to some who complain of a lack of communion, or rather, of those of whom we ought to complain, since they injure us all by their distance from Christ! There are some of you who never have much communion with Christ. You are members of the church, and very decent people, I dare say, in your way; but you do not have communion with Christ. Ask some professors—"Do you ever have communion with Christ?" They would be obliged to say—"Well, I do not know that my life is inconsistent; I do not think anybody could blame me for any wrong act towards my fellow man; but if you come to that, whether I have ever had communion with Christ, I am compelled to say that I have had it now and then, but it is very seldom—it is like the angels' visits—few and far between." Now, brothers and sisters, you have received Christ, have you not? Then the application of the principle is as you have received Him, so walk in Him! If it were worth while for you to come to Him at first, then, it is worthwhile for you to always to keep Him. If it were really a safe thing for you to come to Him and say, "Jesus, You are the Way," then, it is a safe thing for you to do now; and if that were the foundation of blessedness to you,

to come simply to Christ, then it will be the fountain of blessedness to you to do the same now! Come, then, to Him *now*. If you were foolish in trusting Him at the first, then you are wise in leaving off doing so now; if you were wise, however, in approaching Christ in years gone by, you are foolish in not standing by Christ now! Come, then, let the remembrance of your marriage to the Lord Jesus rebuke you! And if you have lost your fellowship with Jesus, come again to His dear body wounded for your sake, and say, "Lord Jesus, help me from this time forth as I have received You day by day, to walk in You."

There are many of you who complain of *a lack of comfort*. You are not as comfortable as you would like to be, and why? Why, you have sinned! Yes, yes, but how did you receive Christ. As a saint? "No, no," you say, "I came to Christ as a sinner." Come to Him as a sinner now, then! "Oh, but I feel so guilty." Just so, but what was your hope at first? Why, that guilty though you were, He had made atonement, and you trusted in Him. Well, you are still guilty; do the same as you did at first—walk in Him! And I cannot imagine a person without comfort who continually makes this the strain of his life, to rest on Christ as a poor sinner, just as he did at first. Why, Lord, You know the devil often says to me, "You are no saint." Well, then, if I am not a saint, I must be a sinner—and it is written—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Then—

"Just as I am, and waiting not,
To rid my soul of one foul spot,
To Him whose blood can cleanse each blot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!"

Why, you cannot help having comfort if you walk with your Surety and Substitute as you did at the first, resting on Him, and not in feelings, nor experience, nor graces, nor anything of your own—living and resting alone on Him who is made of God unto you all that your soul requires!

There is yet another thing. There are many Christians whose lives really *are not consistent*. I cannot understand this if they are walking in Christ. In fact, if a man could completely walk in Christ, he would walk in perfect holiness. We hear an instance, perhaps, of a little shopkeeper who puffs and exaggerates as other shopkeepers do—he does not exactly tell a lie, but something very near it. Now I want to know whether that man was walking in Christ when he did that. If he had said to himself, "Now I am in Christ," do you think he would have done it? We hear of another who is constantly impatient, always troubled, fretting, and mournful. I want to know whether that man is really walking in Christ as he walked at first, even when he doubts the goodness, the providence, the tenderness of God. Surely he is not! I have heard of hard-hearted professors who take a Christian brother by the throat with, "Pay me what you owe!" Do you think they are walking in Christ when they do that? We hear of others, when their brothers and sisters have need, shut up the heart of their compassion—are mean and stingy—are they walking in Christ when they do that? Why, if a man walks in Christ, then he so acts as Christ would act; for Christ being in him, his hope, his love, his joy, his life—he is the image of Christ! He is the mirror into which Christ looks; and then the image of Christ is reflected, and men say of that

man, "He is like his Master; he lives in Christ." Oh, I know, dear beloved, if we lived now as we did the first day we came to Christ, we would live very differently from what we do! How we felt towards Him that day! We would have given all we had for Him! How we felt towards sinners that day! Lad that I was, I wanted to preach and—

"Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior I had found!"

How we felt towards God that day! When we were on our knees, what pleading there was with Him! What a nearness of access to Him in prayer! Oh, how different! How different with some now! This world has with rude hands brushed the bloom from the young fruit. Is it true that flowers of divine grace, like the flowers of nature, die in the autumn of our piety? As we all get older, ought we to be worldlier? Should it be that our early love, which was the love of our espousals, dies away? Forgive, O Lord, this evil, and turn us anew unto You—

"Return, O holy Dove! Return,
Sweet messenger of rest!
We hate the sins that made You mourn,
And drove You from our breast!
The dearest idol we have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help us to tear it from Your throne,
And worship only Thee!
So shall our walk be close with God,
Calm and serene our frame—
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads us to the Lamb."

"As you have received Him walk in Him," and if you have not received Him, oh, poor sinner, remember He is free and full—full to give you all you need—and free to give it even to you! Let the verse we sung be an invitation to you—

"This fountain, though rich, from charge is quite clear;
The poorer the wretch, the more welcome here—
Come, needy and guilty; come, loathsome and bare;
Though leprous and filthy, come just as you are!"

Trust in God's anointed—that is *receive* Him—and then, having trusted Him, still continue to trust Him. May His Spirit enable you to do it, and to His name shall be glory forever and ever! Amen.

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THE LORD—THE LIBERATOR
NO. 484

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 14, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners."
Psalm 146:7.

WHEN preaching last Tuesday in Dover, the mayor of the town very courteously lent the ancient town hall for the service, and in passing along to reach a private entrance, I noticed a large number of grated windows upon a lower level than the great hall. These belonged to the prison cells where persons committed for offenses within the jurisdiction of the borough were confined. It at once struck me as a strange combination, that we should be preaching the gospel of liberty in the upper chamber, while there were prisoners of the law beneath us! Perhaps when we sang praises to God, the prisoners, like those who were in the same jail with Paul and Silas, heard us; but the free word above did not give them liberty, nor did the voice of song loosen their bonds. Alas, what a picture is this of many in our congregations! We preach liberty to the captives; we proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord; but how many remain, year after year, in the bondage of Satan, slaves to sin? We send up our notes of praise right joyously to our Father who is in heaven, but our praises cannot give them joy, for alas, their hearts are unused to gratitude! Some of them are mourning on account of unpardoned sin, and others of them are deploring their blighted hopes, for they have looked for comfort where it is never to be found. Let us breathe a prayer at the commencement of the sermon this morning, "Lord, break the fetters, and set free the captives. Glorify Yourself this morning by proving Yourself to be Jehovah, who gives freedom to the prisoners."

The little circumstance which I have mentioned fixed itself in my mind, and in my private meditations it thrust itself upon me. My thoughts ran somewhat in an allegory, until I gave imagination its full rein and bid her bear me at her will. In my daydream I thought that some angelic warden was leading me along the corridors of this great world-prison, and bidding me look into the various cells where the prisoners were confined, reminding me, time after time, as I looked sorrowful, that "Jehovah gives freedom to the prisoners." What I thought of, I will now tell you. The drift of the sermon may be metaphorical; but my only aim is to utter comforting, substantial truths of God, and may the Master grant that some of you who have been in these prisons, as I have been, may this day come out of them, and rejoice that the Lord has given you freedom!

I. The first cell to which I went, and to which I shall conduct you, is called the *common prison.* In this common prison, innumerable souls are shut up. It would be useless to attempt to count them; they are millions.

This is the ward of SIN. All the human race have been prisoners here; and those who this day are perfectly at liberty, once wore the heavy chains, and were confined within the black walls of this enormous prison. I stepped into it, and to my surprise, instead of hearing, as I had expected notes of mourning and lament; I heard loud and repeated bursts of laughter! The mirth was boisterous and stubbornly defiant; the profane were cursing and blaspheming! Others were shouting as though they had found great spoil. I looked into the faces of some of the criminals, and saw sparkling gaiety—their aspect was rather that of wedding guests, than prisoners! Walking to and fro, I noticed captives who boasted that they were free! And when I spoke to them of their prison, and urged them to escape, they resented my advice, saying, "We were born free, and were never in bondage to any man." They bade me prove my words; and when I pointed to the irons on their wrists, they laughed at me, and said that these were ornaments which gave forth music as they moved! It was only my dull and somber mind, they said, which made me talk of clanking fetters and jingling chains. There were men fettered hard and fast to foul and evil vices, and these called themselves free-livers, while others, whose very thoughts were bound, for the iron had entered into their soul, with braggart looks cried out to me that they were free-thinkers! Truly, I had never seen such bond-slaves in my life, or any as manacled as these; but always did I mark, as I walked this prison through and through, that the most fettered thought themselves the most free, and those who were in the darkest part of the dungeon, thought they had the most light! And, those whom I considered to be the most wretched, and the most to be pitied, were the very ones who laughed the most, and raved most madly and boisterously in their mirth! I looked with sorrow, but as I looked, I saw a bright spirit touch a prisoner on the shoulder, who thereon withdrew with the shining one. He went out, and I knew, for I had read the text—"The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners"—I knew that the prisoner had been freed from the house of bondage! But, I noted that as he went forth, his late fellow prisoners laughed and pointed with their fingers, and called him sniveler, hypocrite, mean pretender, and all sorts of evil names, until the prison walls rang, and rang again with their mirthful contempt! I watched and saw the mysterious visitor touch another, and then another, and another, and they disappeared. The common conversation of the prison said that they had gone mad; that they had become slaves, or miserable fanatics; whereas I knew that they were gone to be free forever—emancipated from every bond! What struck me most was that the prisoners, who were touched with the finger of delivering love, were frequently the worst of the whole crew! I marked one who had blasphemed, but the Divine hand touched him, and he went weeping out of the gate. I saw another who had often scoffed the loudest when he had seen others led away, but he went out as quietly as a lamb. I observed some, whom I thought to be the least depraved of them all, but they were left, and oftentimes the blackest sinners of the whole company were first taken. And I remembered that I had somewhere in an old book read these words—"The publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of God before you."

As I gazed intently, I saw some of those men who had once been prisoners come back again into the prison—not in the same dress which they had worn before—but arrayed in white robes, looking like new creatures! They began to talk with their fellow prisoners, and, oh, how sweetly did they speak! They told them there was liberty to be had, that yonder door would open, and that they might escape; they pleaded with their fellow men, even unto tears. I saw them sit down and talk with them till they wept upon their necks, urging them to escape, pleading as though it were their own life that was at stake. At first I hoped within myself that all the company of prisoners would rise and cry, "Let us be free!" But no; the more these men pleaded, the harder the others seemed to grow, and, indeed, I found it the same when I sought myself to be an ambassador to these slaves of sin. Wherever the finger of the shining one was felt, our pleadings easily prevailed; but except in those who were thus touched by the heavenly messenger, all our exhortations fell upon deaf ears, and we left that den of iniquity crying, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Then I was cast into a state of meditation, as I considered what a marvel of mercy it was that I myself should be free; for well do I remember when I spurned every invitation of love; when I hugged my chains, dreamed my prison garb to be a royal robe, and took the meals of the prison! I grasped the pleasures of sin, and relished them as sweet, yes, dainty morsels, fit for princes! How it came to pass that sovereign grace should have set me free, I cannot tell. I know only this—I will sing forever, while I live, and when I die, that, "The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners." Our gracious God knows how to bring us up from among the captives of sin, set our feet in the way of righteousness and liberty, make us His people, and keep us so forever! Alas, how many have I now before me who are prisoners in this common prison?—

"Oh, sovereign grace, their hearts subdue;
May they be freed from bondage too!
As willing followers of the Lord,
Brought forth to freedom by His word!"

II. I asked the guide where those were led who were released from the common ward. He told me that they were taken away to be free, perfectly free; but that before their complete jail deliverance it was necessary that they should visit a house of detention which he would show me. He led me there. It was called *the solitary cell*. I had heard much of the solitary system and I wished to look inside this cell, supposing that it would be a dreadful place. Over the door was written this word—"PENITENCE," and when I opened it, I found it so clean and white, and so sweet and full of light, that I said this place was fitter to be a house of prayer than a prison! And my guide told me that indeed, so it was originally intended, and that nothing but that iron door of unbelief which the prisoners would persist in shutting fast, made it a prison at all. When once that door was open the place became so dear a place for prayer that those who were once prisoners in it were likely to come back to the cell of their own accord, and begged leave to use it, not as a prison, but as a closet for prayer all their lives long! He even told me that one was heard to say when he was dying, that his only regret in dying was that in heaven there would

be no cell of penitence! Here David wrote seven of his sweetest Psalms. Peter also wept bitterly here. And the woman who was a sinner, here washed the feet of her Lord. But this time, I was regarding it as a prison, and I perceived that the person in the cell did so consider it. I found that every prisoner in this cell must be there alone. He had been accustomed to mix with the crowd, and find his comfort in the belief that he was a Christian because born in a Christian nation; but he learned that he must be saved alone, if saved at all. He had been accustomed previously to go up to the house of God in company, and thought that going there was enough; but now every sermon seemed to be aimed at him, and every threat smote his conscience. I remembered to have read a passage in the same old book I quoted just now—"I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. And the land shall mourn, every family *apart;* the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart."

I noticed that the penitent, while thus alone, and apart in his cell, sighed and groaned a lot, and now and then mingled with his penitential utterances, some words of unbelief. Alas, were it not for these, that heavy door would long ago have been taken from its hinges! 'Twas *unbelief* that shut the prisoners in, and if unbelief had been removed from this cell, I say it had been a prayer room for heaven, and not a place for disconsolate mourning and lamentation! As the prisoner wept for the past, he prophesied for the future, and groaned that he should never come out of this confinement, because sin had ruined him utterly, and destroyed his soul eternally! How foolish his fears were, all men might see, for as I looked round upon this clean and white cell, I saw that the door had a knocker inside, and that if the man had but the courage to lift it, there was a shining one standing ready outside who would open the door at once! Yes, more, I perceived that there was a secret spring called *faith,* and if the man could but touch it, though it were but with a trembling finger, it would make the door fly open! Then I noticed that this door had on the lintel and on the two side posts the marks of blood, and any man who looked on that blood, or lifted that knocker, or touched that spring, found the door of unbelief fly open, and he came out from the cell of his solitary penitence to rejoice in the Lord who had put away his sin and cleansed him forever from all iniquity! So I spoke to this penitent and bade him trust in the blood, and it may be that through my words the Lord afterwards freed the prisoner; but this I learned, that no words of mine alone could do it, for in this case, even where repentance was mingled with but a little unbelief, it is the Lord, the Lord alone, who can free the prisoners!

III. I left that cell, though I would have been content to linger there, and I stopped at another; this, also, had an iron gate of unbelief, as

heavy and as ponderous as the former! I heard the warden coming, and when he opened the door for me, it grated horribly upon its hinges, and disturbed the silence, for this time I had come into *the silent cell*. The wretch confined here was one who said he *could not pray*. If he could pray he would be free. He was groaning, crying, sighing, and weeping because he could not pray! All he could tell me, as his eyeballs rolled in agony, was this—"I would, but cannot, pray; I would plead with God, but I cannot find a word! My guilt has smitten me dumb." Back he went, and refused to speak again, but he kept up a melancholy roaring all the day long. In this place no sound was heard but that of wailing; all was hushed except the dropping of his tears upon the cold stone, and his dreary sighs and groans. Verily, I thought, this is a sad and singular case, yet I remember when I was in that cell myself I did not think it strange. I thought that the heavens were brass above me, and that if I cried ever so earnestly the Lord would shut out my prayer! I dared not pray, I was too guilty, and when I did dare to pray, it was hardly prayer, for I had no hope of being heard. "No," I said, "it is *presumption!* I must not plead with Him!" And when at times I would have prayed, I could not; something choked all utterance, and my spirit could only lament, and long, and pant, and sigh to be able to pray! I know that some of you have been in this prison, and while I am talking to you this morning, you will remember it, and bless God for deliverance. Perhaps some of you are in it now, and though I say I think your case is very strange, it will not seem so to you. But, do you know, there was a little table in this cell, and on the table was a key of promise, inscribed with choice words. I am sure the key would unlock the prison door, and if the prisoner had possessed skill to use it, he might have made his escape at once! This was the key, and these were the words thereon—"The Lord looked down from the height of His sanctuary: from heaven did the Lord behold the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to free those who are appointed to death." Now, thought I, if this man cannot speak, yet God hears his groans! If he cannot plead, God listens to his sighs, and beholds him all the way from heaven, with this purpose, that He may catch even the faintest whisper of this poor man's broken heart and set him free; for though the soul feels it can neither plead nor pray, yet it *has* prayed, and it shall prevail! I tried to catch the ear of my poor friend a little while, and I talked to him, though he would not speak with me. I reminded him that the book in his cell contained instances of dumb men whom Jesus had taught to speak, and I told him that Christ was able to make him speak plainly, too. I turned to the book of Jonah, and read him these words—"Out of the belly of hell cried I and You heard me." I quoted the words of Elijah, "Go again seven times." I told him that the Lord needed no fine language, for misery is the best argument for mercy, and our wounds the best mouths to speak to God's ear. Besides, I told him, we have an Advocate with the Father who opens His mouth for the dumb, so that those who cannot speak for themselves have one to speak for them! I told the man that whether he could pray or not, he was bid to look at the blood marks over his door; I told him that the publican was justified by the blood, though he could only cry, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." I

pleaded with him to receive the Lord's own testimony that the Lord Jesus is "able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God by Him," that He waited to be gracious and was a God ready to pardon; but after all, I felt that the Lord, alone, must free His prisoners. O, gracious God, free them now!

IV. We had not time to stay long at any one place, so we hastened to a fourth door. The door opened and shut behind me, and I stood alone. What did I see? I saw nothing! It was dark, dark as Egypt in her plague! This was the black hole called *the cell of ignorance*. I groped as a blind man gropes for the wall. I was guided by my ear, by sobs and moans, to a spot where knelt a creature in an earnest agony of prayer. I asked him what made his cell so dark. I knew the door was made of unbelief, which surely shuts out all light, but I marveled why this place should be darker than the rest. Then I recollected to have read of some that sat, "in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron." I asked him if there were no windows to the cell. Yes, there were windows, many windows, so people told him, but they had been stopped up years ago, and he did not know the way to open them. He was fully convinced that they never could afford light *to him!* I felt for one of the ancient light holes, but it seemed as if, instead of giving light, it emitted darkness! I touched it with my hand, and it felt to me to have once been a window such as I had gazed through with delight. He told me it was one of the doctrines of grace which had greatly perplexed him; it was called *Election*. He said he should have had a little light had it not been for that doctrine, but since God had chosen His people, and he felt persuaded that He had not chosen *him,* he was lost forever, since if he were not chosen, it was hopeless for him to seek for mercy! I went up to that window and pulled out some handfuls of rags—filthy rotten rags which some enemies of the doctrine had stuffed into the opening—caricatures and misrepresentations of the doctrine maliciously used to injure the glorious truth of divine sovereignty! As I pulled out these rags, light streamed in, and the man smiled as I told him, "It is a mercy for you that there is such a doctrine as election, for if there were no such doctrine, there would be no hope for you. salvation must either be by God's will or by man's merit; if it were by man's merit, you would never be saved, but since it is by God's will, and He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, there is no reason why He should not have mercy on you—even though you may be the chief of sinners! Meanwhile He bids you believe in His Son, Jesus, and gives you His divine word for it, that, "Him that comes unto Him, He will in no wise cast out."

The little light thus shed upon the poor man led him to seek for more, so he pointed to another darkened window which was called—The Fall—or *Human Depravity*. The man said, "Oh, there is no hope for me, for I am totally depraved, and my nature is exceedingly vile! There is no hope for me!" I pulled the rags out of this window, too, and I said to him, "Do you not see that your ruin fits you for the remedy? It is because you *are* lost that Christ came to save you! Physicians are for the sick, robes for the naked, cleansing for the filthy, and forgiveness for the guilty." He said but little, but he pointed to another window, which was one I had long

looked through and seen my Master's glory by its means. It was the doctrine of *Particular redemption*. "Ah," he said, "suppose Christ has not redeemed me with His precious blood? Suppose He has never bought *me* with His death?" I knocked out some old bricks which had been put in by an unskillful hand, which yet blocked out the light, and I told him that Christ did not offer a mock redemption, but one which did really redeem, for "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses *us* from all sin." "Ah," he said, "but suppose, I am not one of the 'us'?" I told him that he who believes and trusts Christ is manifestly one of those whom Jesus came to save, for he is saved! I told him that inasmuch as universal redemption manifestly does not redeem all, it was unworthy of his confidence; but a ransom which did redeem all *believers* who are the only persons for whom it was presented, was a sure ground to build upon. There were other doctrines like these. I found the man did not understand one of them; that the truths of God had been misrepresented to him, and he had heard the doctrines of grace falsely stated and caricatured, or else had never heard them at all. He had been led by some blind guide who had led him into the ditch, and now when the windows were opened, and the man could see, he saw written over the door, "Believe and live!" And in the new light of God which he had found, he trusted his Lord and Savior, and walked out free, marveling that he had been so long a slave! I marveled not, but I thought in my heart how accursed are those teachers who hide the light of God from the eyes of men so that they understand not the way of life! Ignorant souls, who know not the plan of salvation, will have many sorrows, which they might escape by instruction. Study your Bibles well; be diligent in attending upon a free grace ministry—labor after a clear apprehension of the plan of salvation, and it will often please God that when you come to understand His truth your spirits will receive comfort, for it is by His truth that, "the Lord gives freedom to the prisoners."

V. I passed on and came to another chamber. This room, marked number five, was large, and had many persons in it who were trying to walk to and fro, but every man had a chain round his ankle, and a huge cannon ball fixed to it—a military punishment, they said, for deserters from the ranks of virtue. This *clog of habit* troubled the prisoners much. I saw some of them trying to file their chains with rusty nails, and others were endeavoring to fret away the iron by dropping tears of penitence on it; but these poor men made but little progress at their work. The warden told me that this was the chain of *Habit,* and that the ball which dragged behind was the old propensity to lust and sin. I asked him why they did not get the chains knocked off, and he said they had been trying a long time to be rid of them, but they never could do it in the way they went to work, since the proper way to get rid of the chain of habit was, first of all, to get out of prison—the door of *unbelief* must be opened, and they must trust in the one great deliverer, the Lord Jesus, whose pierced hands could open all prison doors. After that, upon the anvil of divine grace, with the hammer of love, their fetters could be broken off. I stayed awhile, and I saw a drunkard led out of his prison, rejoicing in pardoning grace. He had previously labored to escape from his drunkenness, but

some three or four times he broke his pledge, and went back to his old sin. I saw that man trust in the precious blood, and he became a Christian, and becoming a Christian, he could no more love his cups! At one stroke of the hammer, the ball was gone forever! Another was a swearer. He knew it was wrong to blaspheme the Most High, but he did it still, till he gave his heart to Christ—and then he never blasphemed again—for that foul thing was abhorred. I noticed some, and I think I am one of them myself, although they had the ball taken away—yet, on their hands there were the remains of old chains. Like Paul, in another case, when we rejoice in all things, we have to say, "Except these bonds." Once we were chained with both hands together; the divine hammer has smitten off the connecting links, but still some one or two are left hanging there. Ah, often has that link made me cry out—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Though I am free, yet still the iron clings to its hold, and will hang there till I die. "When I would do good, evil is present with me." O that old Adam nature, the corrupt flesh! Would God we were rid of it! Blessed be the Lord, as the pulse begins to beat high with heaven's glory, the band will burst, and we shall be perfect forever! There is no way of getting rid of the links of old habits but by leaving the prison of unbelief, and coming to Christ, then the evil habits are renounced as a necessary consequence, though the temptation will remain. Though sometimes we have to feel a link of the chain, it is a subject of unbounded thankfulness that the link is not fastened to the ball. We may sometimes feel it dragging behind, enough to trip us up, so that we cannot run in the path of obedience as swiftly as we would, but the ball is not there now! The bird can fly—though there is a remnant of its cord about its foot it mounts up to heaven, singing its song of praise. The Lord must free prisoners from their evil habits. He can do it! A drop of Jesus' blood can eat the iron away, and the file of His agonies can cut through the chain of long-acquired sins and make us free. "The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners."

VI. I must take you to another cell. In almost all prisons where they do not want to make vagabonds worse than when they entered, they have hard labor for them. In the prison I went to see in my daydream, there was a *hard-labor room*. Those who entered it were mostly very proud people; they held their heads very high, and would not bend; they were birds with fine feathers, and thought themselves quite unfit to be confined, but being in confinement, they resolved to work their own way out. They believed in the system of human merit, and hoped in due time to purchase their liberty. They had saved up a few old counterfeit farthings with which they thought they could, by-and-by, set them free, though my bright attendant plainly declared their folly and mistake! It was amusing and yet sad, to see what different works these people were about. Some of them toiled at a treadmill. They were going to the stars, they said, and there they were, tread, tread, tread, with all their might! But though they had been laboring for years, and were never an inch higher, yet still they were confident that they were mounting to the skies. Others were trying to make garments out of cobwebs; they were turning wheels, and spinning at a great rate, and though it came to nothing, they worked on. They

believed they would be free as soon as they had made a perfect garment, and I believe they will! In one place a company labored to build houses of sand; and when they had built up to some height, the foundation always gave way—but they renewed their efforts—for they dreamed that if a substantial edifice were finished, they would then be allowed to go free. I saw some of them, strangely enough, endeavoring to make wedding garments out of fig leaves, by sewing them together, but the fig leaves were of a sort that were shriveled every night, so that they had to begin their hopeless toil again, the next morning! Some, I noticed, were trying to pump water out of a dry well. The veins stood out upon their brows like whipcords while they worked on without result, as they labored, like Samson, when he was grinding at the mill! I could hear the crack of whips upon their backs. I saw one ten-thronged whip called *the Law*, the terrible Law—each lash being a commandment—and this was laid upon the bare backs and consciences of the prisoners. Yet still they kept on—work, work, work—and would not turn to the door of divine grace to find escape! I saw some of them fall down fainting, whereupon their friends strove to bring them water in leaking vessels, called ceremonies; and there were some men called priests, who ran about with cups which had no bottoms in them, which they held up to the lips of these poor fainting wretches to give them comfort. As these men fainted, I thought they would die, but they struggled up again to work! At last they could do no more, and fell down under their burdens utterly broken in spirit.

Then I saw that every prisoner who at last so fainted as to give up all hope of his own deliverance by merit, was taken up by a shining spirit, and carried out of the prison and made free forever! Then I thought within myself, "Surely, surely, these are proud self-righteous persons who will not submit to be saved by divine grace, therefore He brought down their heart with labor. They fell down and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses." I rejoiced and blessed God that there was such a prison to bring them to Jesus—yet, I mourned that there were so many who still loved this house of bondage—and would not escape, though there stood one with his finger always pointing to the words—"By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." And to these other words, "By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." I had seen enough of that prison, for I remember being there myself, and I have some of the scars upon my spirit now. I desire not to go back to it, but as I have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so will I walk in Him, knowing that if the Son makes me free I shall be free, indeed!

VII. We must not leave these corridors till we have peered into all the cells; for we may not come here again. As I passed along, there was another cell, called *the low dungeon of despondency*. I had read of this in the book of Jeremiah—a pit wherein there was no water, of which the prophet said, "He has led me and brought me into darkness and not into light." I looked down. It was a deep, dark, doleful place; down in it I saw by the gloomy light of the warden's lantern, a poor soul in very deep distress, and I bade him speak to me, and tell me his case. He said he had been a great offender, and he knew it; he had been convicted of sin; he

had heard the gospel preached, and sometimes he thought it was for him, but at other times he felt sure it was not. There were seasons when his spirit could lay hold of Christ, but there were times when he dared not hope. Now and then, he said, some gleams of light did come; once a week when he had his provision sent down, a little fresh bread and water, he did feel a little encouraged, but by the time Monday came—for his provision was always sent down on Sunday—he felt himself as low and miserable as ever! I called out to him that there was a ladder up the side of the prison and if he would but climb it, he might escape. But the poor soul could not feel the steps. I reminded him that he need not be where he was, for a divine hand had let down ropes to draw him up, with soft cushions for his armholes; but, I seemed as one who mocked him, and I heard some who tormented him, bid him call me "liar." These were two villains called Mistrust and Timorous, who were bent upon keeping him here, even though they knew that he was an heir of heaven, and had a right to liberty! Finding myself powerless, I thus learned, the more fully, that the Lord must free these prisoners or else they must be prisoners for many a day. Yet, it was a great comfort to remember that no soul ever died in that dungeon if it had really felt its need of Christ, and cried for mercy through His blood! No soul ever utterly perished while it called upon the name of the Lord! It might lie in the hold till it seemed as if the moss would grow on its eyelids, and the worms eat its mildewed corpse—but it never did perish, for in due time it was brought by simple faith to believe that Christ is "able to save, even to the uttermost." And then, by God's grace, they come up, O how quickly, from their low dungeon, and they sing more sweetly than others—"He has brought me up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay; he has set my feet upon a rock, and put a new song in my mouth, and established my going."

VIII. Shudder not at the clinging dampness, for I must take you to another dungeon deeper than this last; it is called *the inner prison*. Paul and Silas were cast into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, yet they sang in their prison; but in this dungeon no singing was ever heard. It is the *hold of despair!* I need not enlarge much in my description. I hope you have never been there; and I pray you never may. Ah, when a spirit once gets into that inner prison, comforts are turned at once into miseries, and the very promises of God appear to be in league for the destruction of the soul! John Bunyan describes old Giant Despair and his crab tree club better than I can do it. Sorrowful is that ear which has heard the grating of the huge iron door, and full of terror is the heart which has felt the chilly dampness of that horrible pit! Are any of you in that dungeon today? Do you say, "I have grieved the Spirit, and He is gone; my day of grace is over. I have sinned against light and knowledge. I am lost"? O, where are you? I must have you free! What a splendid trophy of divine grace you will make! My Master loves to find such great sinners as you are, that He may exhibit His power to save! Oh, what a platform for my Lord to raise the standard of His love upon, when He shall have fought with you, and overcome you by His love! What a victory this shall be! How will the angels sing unto Him who loved the vilest of the vile, and ransomed the despairing one out of the hand of cruel foes. I

have more hope for you than I have of others; for when the surgeon enters the hospital after an accident, he always goes to the worse case first! If there is one who has only broken his finger, "Oh, let him be," they say, "he can wait." But if there is a poor fellow who is much mangled, "Ah," says the surgeon, "I must see to this case at once." So is it with you; but *the Lord* must free you! *I cannot*. Only this I know, if you would but believe me, there is a key which will fit the lock of your door of unbelief! Come, look over this bunch of keys—"He is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "He who believes on Him is not condemned." "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Brothers and sisters, this inner dungeon can be opened by the Lord Jesus—

"The gates of brass before Him burst, the iron fetters yield!"

IX. I am getting to the end of this dark story, now, but let us tarry a moment at the grating of *Satan's Torture Chamber*, for I have been in it. Yes, I have been tormented in it, and therefore I tell you no dream! I tarried in it till my soul melted because of agony, and therefore speak what I know, and not what I have learned by report. There is a chamber in the experience of some men where the temptations of the devil exceed all belief. Read John Bunyan's *"Grace Abounding"* if you would understand what I mean. The devil tempted him, he says, to doubt the existence of God; the truth of Scripture; the manhood of Christ; His Deity; and once, he says, he tempted him to say things which he will never write, lest he should pollute others. Ah, I remember a dark hour with myself when I, who do not remember to have even heard a blasphemy in my youth, much less to have uttered one, heard rushing through my soul an infinite number of curses and blasphemies against the Most High God, till I put my hand to my mouth lest they should be uttered, and I was cast down, and cried to the merciful God that He would save me from them! Oh, the foul things which Satan will inject into the spirit! The awful, damnable things, the offspring of his own infernal den—which he will foist upon us as our own thoughts, in such hosts, and so quickly one after the other—that the spirit has hardly time to swallow down its spittle, and though it hates and loathes these things, still it cannot escape from them, for it is in prison! Ah, well, thank God no soul ever perished through such profanities as those, for if we hate them, they are none of ours; if we loathe them it is not our sin, but Satan's, and God will, in due time, bring us to be free from these horrors. Though the hosts of hell may have ridden over our heads, let us cry, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, though I fall, yet shall I rise again." Use your sword, poor prisoner! You have one. *"It is written"*—"the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God." Give your foe a deadly stab! Tell him that, "God IS, and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him," and you may yet see him spread his dragon wings and fly away! This, too, is a prison in which unbelief has confined both saint and sinner—and the Lord Himself must free these prisoners!

X. Last of all, there is one dungeon which those confined in it have called *the condemned cell*. I was in it once. In that room the man writes

bitter things against himself; he feels absolutely sure that the wrath of God abides on him; he wonders the stones beneath his feet do not open a grave to swallow him up! He is astonished that the walls of the prison do not compress and crush him into nothingness; he marvels that he has his breath, or that the blood in his veins does not turn into rivers of flame. His spirit is in a dreadful state; he not only feels he shall be lost, but he thinks it is going to happen now. The condemned cell in Newgate, I am told, is just in such a corner that the condemned can hear the building of the scaffold. Well do I remember hearing my scaffold put up, and the sound of the hammer of the coffin, as piece after piece was put together! It appeared as if I heard the noise of the crowd of men and devils who would witness my eternal execution, all of them howling and yelling out their accursed things against my spirit. Then there was a big bell that tolled out the hours, and I thought that very soon the last moment would arrive, and I must mount the fatal scaffold to be cast away forever. Oh, that condemned cell! Next to hell, there can be no state more wretched than that of a man who is brought here! And yet, let me remind you that when a man is thoroughly condemned in his own conscience, he shall never be condemned! When he is once brought to see condemnation written on everything that he has done, though hell may flame in his face, he shall be led out—but not to execution! Led out, but not to perish—"he shall be led forth with joy, and he shall go forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before him into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." As we read in history of one who was met with a pardon just when the rope was round his neck, just so does God deal with poor souls; when they feel the rope about their necks, acknowledge that God's sentence is just, and confess that if they perish they cannot complain, it is *then* that sovereign mercy steps in and cries, "I have blotted out like a cloud your iniquities, and like a thick cloud your sins; your sins which are many are all forgiven you."

And now, my glorious Jehovah, the Liberator, unto You be praises! All Your redeemed bless You, and those who are today in their dungeons cry unto You! Stretch out Your bare arm, mighty Deliverer! You who did send Your Son Jesus to redeem by blood, send now Your Spirit to set free by power, and this day, even this day, let multitudes rejoice in the liberty where You make them free! And unto Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Israel's one Redeemer, be glory forever and ever! Amen.

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NO ROOM FOR CHRIST IN THE INN
NO. 485

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 21, 1862,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And she brought forth her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."
Luke 2:7.

IT was necessary that it should be distinctly proven, beyond all dispute, that our Lord sprang out of Judah. It was necessary, also, that He should be born in Bethlehem-Ephratah, according to the Word of the Lord which He spoke by His servant Micah. But how could a public recognition of the lineage of an obscure carpenter and an unknown maiden be procured? What interest could the keepers of registers be supposed to take in two such humble persons? As for the second matter, Mary lived at Nazareth in Galilee, and there seemed every probability that the birth would take place there. Indeed, the period of her delivery was so near that, unless absolutely compelled, she would not be likely to undertake a long and tedious journey to the southern province of Judea. How are these two matters to be arranged? Can one turn of the wheel effect two purposes? It can be done! It shall be done! The official stamp of the Roman Empire shall be affixed to the pedigree of the coming Son of David, and Bethlehem shall behold His nativity. A little tyrant, Herod, by some show of independent spirit, offends the greater tyrant, Augustus. Augustus informs him that he shall no longer treat him as a friend but as a vassal; and albeit Herod makes the most abject submission, and his friends at the Roman court intercede for him, yet Augustus, to show his displeasure, orders a census to be taken of all the Jewish people, in readiness for a contemplated taxation, which, however, was not carried out till some ten years after. Even the winds and waves are not more fickle than a tyrant's will! But the Ruler of tempests knows how to rule the perverse spirits of princes. The Lord our God has a bit for the wildest war horse, and a hook for the most terrible leviathan! Autocratic Caesars are but puppets moved with invisible strings, mere drudges to the King of kings! Augustus must be made offended with Herod; he is constrained to tax the people; it is imperative that a census be taken—no, it is of necessity that inconvenient, harsh and tyrannical regulations should be published, and every person must repair to the town to which he was reputed to belong. Thus, Mary is brought to Bethlehem, Jesus Christ is born as appointed, and, moreover, He is recognized officially as being descended from David by the fact that His mother came to Bethlehem as being of that lineage, remained there, and returned to Galilee without having her claims questioned, although the jealousy of all the women of the clan would have been aroused had an intruder ventured to claim a place among the few females to whom the birth of Messiah was now, by express prophecies, confined. Mark here the wisdom of the God of providence, and believe that all things are ordered well!

When all persons of the house of David were thus driven to Bethlehem, the scanty accommodation of the little town would soon be exhausted. Doubtless, friends entertained their friends till their houses were all full, but Joseph had no such willing kinsmen in the town. There was the caravanserai, which was provided in every village, where free accommodation was given to travelers; this, too, was full, for coming from a distance, and compelled to travel slowly, the humble couple had arrived late in the day. The rooms within the great brick square were already occupied with families; there remained no better lodging, even for a woman in travail, than one of the meaner spaces appropriated to beasts of burden! The stall of the ass was the only place where the child could be born. By hanging a curtain at its front, and perhaps tethering the animal on the outer side to block the passage, the needed seclusion could be obtained. And so, here, in the stable, was the King of glory born, and in the manger was He laid.

My business, this morning is to lead your meditations to the stable at Bethlehem, that you may see this great sight—the Savior in the manger, and think over the reason for this lowly bed—"because there was no room for them in the inn."

I. I shall commence by remarking that THERE WERE OTHER REASONS WHY CHRIST SHOULD BE LAID IN THE MANGER.

1. I think it was intended thus *to show forth His humiliation*. He came, according to prophecy, to be "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He was to be "without form or comeliness," "a root out of a dry ground." Would it have been fitting that the man who was to die naked on the cross should be robed in purple at His birth? Would it not have been inappropriate that the Redeemer, who was to be buried in a borrowed tomb, should be born anywhere but in the most humble shed, and housed anywhere but in the most ignoble manner? The manger and the cross standing at the two extremes of the Savior's earthly life seem most fit and congruous the one to the other. He is to wear through life a peasant's garb; He is to associate with fishermen; the lowly are to be His disciples; the cold mountains are often to be His only bed. He is to say, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." Nothing, therefore, could be more fitting than that in His season of humiliation, when He laid aside all His glory, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and condescended even to the meanest estate, He should be laid in a manger.

2. By being in a manger, *He was declared to be the king of the poor*. They, doubtless, were at once able to recognize His relationship to them, from the position in which they found Him. I believe it excited feelings of the tenderest brotherly kindness in the minds of the shepherds, when the angel said—"This shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the child wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger." In the eyes of the poor, imperial robes excite no affection—a man in their own garb attracts their confidence! With what perseverance will workingmen cleave to a leader of their own order, believing in him because he knows their toils, sympathizes in their sorrows, and feels an interest in all their concerns! Great commanders have readily won the hearts of their soldiers by sharing their hardships and roughing it as if they belonged to the ranks. The King of men, who was born in Bethlehem, was not exempted in His in-

fancy from the common calamities of the poor, no, His lot was even worse than theirs! I think I hear the shepherds' comment on the manger-birth, "Ah," says one to his fellow, "then He will not be like Herod the tyrant; He will remember the manger, and feel for the poor. Poor helpless infant, I feel a love for Him even now. What miserable accommodation this cold world yields its Savior; it is not a Caesar that is born today. He will never trample down our fields with His armies, or slaughter our flocks for His courtiers! He will be the poor man's friend, the people's monarch; according to the words of our shepherd-king, He shall judge the poor of the people; He shall save the children of the needy." Surely the shepherds and such as they—the poor of the earth—perceived at once that here was the lowborn-King—noble in descent, but still, as the Lord has called Him, "One chosen out of the people." Great Prince of Peace! The manger was Your royal cradle! Therein were You presented to all nations as Prince of our race, before whose presence there is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free! But You are Lord of all. Kings, your gold and silver would have been lavished on Him if you had known the Lord of Glory, but inasmuch as you knew Him not, He was declared with demonstration to be a leader and a witness to the people. The things which are not, under Him, shall bring to nothing the things that are, and the things that are despised, which God has chosen, shall under His leadership break in pieces the might, and pride, and majesty of human grandeur!

3. Further, in thus being laid in a manger, He did, as it were, *give an invitation to the most humble to come to Him*. We might tremble to approach a throne, but we cannot fear to approach a manger! Had we seen the Master at first riding in state through the streets of Jerusalem with garments laid in the way, and the palm branches strewed, and the people crying, "Hosanna," we might have thought, though even the thought would have been wrong, that He was not approachable. Even there, riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass, He was so meek and lowly, that the young children clustered about Him with their boyish "Hosannas." Never could there be a being more approachable than Christ! No rough guards pushed poor petitioners away; no array of officious friends were allowed to keep off the persistent widow or the man who clamored that his son might be made whole! The hem of His garment was always trailing where sick folk could reach it, and He, Himself, had a hand always ready to touch the disease, an ear to catch the faintest accents of misery, a soul going forth everywhere in rays of mercy, even as the light of the sun streams on every side beyond that orb itself. By being laid in a manger, He proved Himself a priest taken from among men, one who has suffered like His brethren, and therefore, can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Of Him, it was said, "He does eat and drink with publicans and sinners." "This man receives sinners and eats with them." Even as an infant, by being laid in a manger, He was set forth as the sinner's servant! Come to Him, you who are weary and heavy laden! Come to Him, you who are broken in spirit, you who are bowed down in soul! Come to Him, you who despise yourselves, and are despised of others! Come to Him, publican and harlot! Come to Him, thief and drunkard! In the manger, there He lies, unguarded from your touch, and unshielded from your gaze! Bow the knee, and kiss the Son of God; accept Him as your Savior, for He puts Himself into that manger that you may approach Him! The

throne of Solomon might awe you, but the manger of the Son of David must invite you!

4. I think there was yet another mystery. You remember, brothers and sisters, that this place was free to all. It was an inn, and please remember, the inn in this case was not like our hotels, where accommodation and provision must be paid for. In the early and simple ages of the world, every man considered it an honor to entertain a stranger. Afterwards, as traveling became more common, many desired to shift the honor and pleasure upon their neighbors—why should they engross all the dignity of hospitality? Further on still, some one person was appointed in each town and village, and was expected to entertain strangers in the name of the rest. But, as the ages grew less simple, and the pristine glow of brotherly love cooled down, the only provision made was the erection of a huge square block, arranged in rooms for the travelers, and with lower stages for the beasts. And here, with a certain provision of water, and in some cases, chopped straw for the cattle, the traveler must make himself as comfortable as he could. He had not to purchase admittance to the caravanserai, for it was free to all, and the stable especially so. Now, beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ was born in the stable of the inn to show how free He is to all comers! The gospel is preached to every creature and shuts out none. We may say of the invitations of Holy Scripture—

"None are excluded but those
Who do themselves exclude;
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude.
Though Jesus' grace can save the prince,
The poor may take their share;
No mortal has a just pretense
To perish in despair."

Class exclusions are unknown here, and the prerogatives of caste are not acknowledged. No forms of etiquette are required in entering a stable! It cannot be an offense to enter the stable of a public caravanserai. So, if you desire to come to Christ, you may come to Him just as you are. You may come *now*. Whoever among you has the desire in his heart to trust Christ is free to do it. Jesus is free to you; He will receive you; He will welcome you with gladness, and to show this, I think, the young child was cradled in a manger. We know that sinners often imagine that they are shut out. Oftentimes the convicted conscience will write bitter things against itself, and deny its part and lot in mercy's stores. Brothers and sisters, if *God* has not shut you out, do not shut yourself out! Until you can find it written in the Book that you may not trust Christ; until you can quote a positive passage in which it is written that He is not able to save you, I pray you take that heavenly word wherein it is written—"He is able to save unto the uttermost, them who come unto God by Him." Venture on that promise! Come to Christ in the strength and faith of it, and you shall find Him free to all comers!

5. We have not yet exhausted the reasons why the Son of Man was laid in a manger. It was at the manger that *the beasts were fed*. And does the Savior lie where weary beasts receive their provender, and shall there not be a mystery here? Alas, there are some men who have become so brutal through sin, so utterly depraved by their lusts, that to their own consciences everything manlike has departed! But even to such, the remedies of Jesus, the Great Physician, will apply. We are constantly

reading in our papers of men who are called incorrigible, and it is fashionable just now to demand ferociously that these men should be treated with unmingled severity! Some few years ago, all the world went mad with a spurious humanity, crying out that gentleness would reform the brutal thief whom harsh punishments would hopelessly harden; now, the current has turned, and everybody is demanding the abandonment of the present system! I am no advocate for treating criminals daintily; let their sin bring them a fair share of punishment; but if by any means they can be reformed, pray, let the means be tried! The day will come when the eruption of this suffocating fever is over, and we shall blush to think that we were frightened by silly fears into a dangerous interference with a great and good work, which up to now, has been successfully carried on. It is a fact that under the present system, which (abating some faults that it may be well to cure) is an admirable one, crime is growing less frequent, and the class of gross offenders has been materially lessened. Whereas in 1844, 18,490 convicts were transported, in 1860 the corresponding number was 11,533 and that notwithstanding the increase of the population. The ticket-of-leave system, where the public would employ the convicts, and so give them a chance of gaining a new character, worked so well that little more than one percent in a year were reconvicted, and even now, only five per cent per annum are found returning to crime and to prison! Well, now, if the five percent receive no good, or even become worse, ought we not to consider the other ninety-five, and pause awhile before we give loose to our vengeance and exchange a Christian system of hopeful mercy for the old barbarous rule of unmitigated severity? Beware, fellow citizens, beware of restoring the old idea that men can sin beyond hope of reformation, or you will generate criminals worse than those which now trouble us! The laws of Draco must ever be failures, but fear not for the ultimate triumph of plans which a Christian spirit has suggested! I have wandered from the subject—I thought I might save some from the crime of opposing true philanthropy on account of a sudden panic; but I will return at once to the manger and the babe. I believe our Lord was laid in the manger where the beasts were fed, to show *that even beast-like men may come to Him and live*. No creature can be so degraded that Christ cannot lift it up! Fall it may, and seem to fall most certainly to hell, but the long and strong arm of Christ can reach it even in its most desperate degradation; He can bring it up from apparently hopeless ruin. If there is one who has strolled in here this morning whom society abhors, and who abhors himself, my Master in the stable with the beasts presents Himself as able to save the vilest of the vile, and to accept the worst of the worst even now! Believe on Him and He will make you a new creature!

6. But as Christ was laid where beasts were fed, you will please remember that after He was gone, *beasts fed there again*. It was only His presence which could glorify the manger, and here we learn that if Christ were taken away, *the world would go back to its former heathen darkness*. Civilization itself would die out, at least that part of it which really civilizes man, if the religion of Jesus could be extinguished! If Christ were taken away from the human heart, the most holy would become debased again, and those who claim kinship with angels would soon prove that they have relationship to devils! The manger, I say, would be a manger for beasts still, if the Lord of Glory were withdrawn, and we would go

back to our sins and our lusts if Christ should once take away His divine grace and leave us to ourselves. For these reasons which I have mentioned, I think, Christ was laid in a manger.

II. But still the text says that He was laid in a manger because there was no room for Him in the inn, and this leads us to the second remark, THAT THERE WERE OTHER PLACES BESIDES THE INN WHICH HAD NO ROOM FOR CHRIST.

The palaces of emperors and the halls of kings afforded the royal stranger no refuge? Alas, my brothers and sisters, seldom is there room for Christ in palaces! How could the kings of earth receive the Lord? He is the Prince of Peace, and they delight in war! He breaks their bows and cuts their spears in sunder; He burns their war chariots in the fire. How could kings accept the humble Savior? They love grandeur and pomp, and He is all simplicity and meekness! He is a carpenter's son, and the fisherman's companion. How can princes find room for the new-born monarch? Why, He teaches us to do to others as we would that they should do to us, and this is a thing which kings would find very hard to reconcile with the cunning tricks of politics, and the grasping designs of ambition! O great ones of the earth, I am but little astonished that amid your glories, and pleasures, and wars, and councils, you forget the Anointed, and cast out the Lord of All! There is no room for Christ with the kings. Look throughout the kingdoms of the earth now, and with here and there an exception, it is still true—"The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed." In heaven, we shall see here and there a monarch; but ah, how few; indeed a child might write of them, "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen." State-chambers, cabinets, throne-rooms, and royal palaces are about as little frequented by Christ as the jungles and swamps of India by the cautious traveler! He frequents cottages far more often than regal residences, for there is no room for Jesus Christ in regal halls—

"When the Eternal bows the skies
To visit earthly things,
With scorn divine He turns His eyes
From towers of haughty kings!
He bids His awful chariot roll
Far downward from the skies,
To visit every humble soul
With pleasure in His eyes."

But there were *senators, there were forums of political discussion, there were the places where the representatives of the people make the laws,* was there no room for Christ there? Alas, my brethren, none! And to this day there is very little room for Christ in parliaments. How seldom is religion recognized by politicians! Of course a State religion, if it will consent to be a poor, tame, powerless thing, a lion with its teeth all drawn, its mane all shaven off, and its claws all trimmed—yes, that may be recognized! But the true Christ, and they who follow Him, and dare to obey His laws in an evil generation, what room is there for such? Christ and His gospel—oh, this is sectarianism, and is scarcely worthy of the notice of contempt! Who pleads for Jesus in the senate? Is not His religion, under the name of sectarianism, the great terror of all parties? Who quotes His golden rule as a direction for prime ministers, or preaches Christ-like forgiveness as a rule for national policy? One or two will give Him a good

word, but if it is put to the vote whether the Lord Jesus should be obeyed or not, it will be many a day before the *ayes* have it. Parties, policies, place-hunters, and pleasure-seekers exclude the Representative of heaven from a place among representatives of earth!

Might there not be found some room for Christ *in what is called good society?* Were there not in Bethlehem some people who were very respectable, who kept themselves aloof from the common multitude; persons of reputation and standing? Could not they find room for Christ? Ah, dear friends, it is too much the case that there is no room for Him in what is called good society! There is room for all the silly little forms by which men choose to shackle themselves—room for the vain niceties of etiquette, room for frivolous conversation, room for the adoration of the body; there is room for the setting up of this, and that, as the idol of the hour—but there is too little room for Christ—and it is far from fashionable to fully follow the Lord! The advent of Christ would be the last thing which society would desire; the very mention of His name by the lips of love would cause a strange sensation. Should you begin to talk about the things of Christ in many a circle, you would be tabooed at once. "I will never ask that man to my house again," So-and-So would say—"if he must bring his religion with him." Folly and finery, rank and honor, jewels and glitter, frivolity and fashion—all report that there is no room for Jesus in their abodes!

But is there not room for Him *on the exchange?* Cannot He be taken to the marts of commerce? Here are the shop-keepers of a shop-keeping nation—is there not room for Christ here? Ah, dear friends, how little of the spirit, and life, and doctrine of Christ can be found here! The trader finds it inconvenient to be too scrupulous; the merchant often discovers that if he is to make a fortune, he must break his conscience! How many there are—well, I will not say they tell lies directly but still, still, still—I had better say it plainly—they do lie indirectly with a vengeance! Who does not know, as he rides along, that there must be many liars abroad, for almost every house you see is, "The cheapest house in London," which can hardly be—full sure they cannot all be the cheapest! What sharp practice some indulge in; what puffery and falsehood; what cunning and sleight of hand! What woes would my Master pronounce on some of you if He looked into your shop windows, or stood behind your counters! Bankruptcies, swindling, frauds are so abundant that in hosts of cases there is no room for Jesus in the market or the shop!

Then, there are *the schools of the philosophers*, surely *they* will entertain Him. The wise men will find in Him incarnate wisdom; He, who as a youth is to become the teacher of doctors, who will sit down and ask them questions and receive their answers, surely He will find room at once among the Grecian sages, and men of sense and wit will honor Him! "Room for Him, Socrates and Plato? Stoics and Epicureans give way! And you, you teachers of Israel, vacate your seats; if there is no room for this child without your going, go! We must have Him in the schools of philosophy, even if we have to put you all away." No, dear friends but it is not so; there is very little room for Christ in colleges and universities, very little room for Him in the seats of learning. How often learning helps men to raise objections to Christ! Too often learning is the forge where the nails are made for Christ's crucifixion; too often, human wit has become the craftsman who has pointed the spear, and made the shaft with which

His heart should be pierced. We must say it—philosophy, falsely so called, (for true philosophy, if it were handled aright, must always be Christ's friend)—philosophy, falsely so called, has done mischief to Christ, but seldom has it served His cause! A few with splendid talents, a few of the scholarly and profound have bowed like children at the feet of the Babe of Bethlehem, and have been honored in bowing there, but too many, conscious of their knowledge, stiff and stern in their conceit of wisdom, have said—"Who is Christ, that we should acknowledge Him?" They found no room for Him in the schools.

But there was surely one place where he could go—it was *the Sanhedrin*, where the elders sit. Or could He not be housed in the priestly chamber where the priests assemble with the Levites? Was there not room for Him in the temple or the synagogue? No, He found no shelter there; it was there, His whole life long, that He found His most ferocious enemies! Not the common multitude, but the priests were the instigators of His death! The priests moved the people to say, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" The priests paid out their shekels to bribe the popular voice, and then Christ was hounded to His death. Surely there ought to have been room for Him in the Church of His own people; but there was not. Too often in the priestly church, when once it becomes recognized and mounts to dignity, there is no room for Christ. I allude not now to any one denomination, but take the whole sweep of Christendom! It is strange that when the Lord comes to His own, His own receive Him not. The most accursed enemies of true religion have been the men who pretended to be its advocates! It is little marvel when bishops undermine the popular faith in revelation; this is neither their first nor last offense. Who burned the martyrs, and made Smithfield a field of blood, a burning fiery furnace, a great altar for the Most High God? Why, those who professed to be anointed of the Lord, whose shaven crowns had received Episcopal benediction! Who put John Bunyan in prison? Who chased such men as Owen and the Puritans from their pulpits? Who harried the Covenanters upon the mountains? Who, sirs, but the professed messengers of heaven and priests of God? Who have hunted the baptized saints in every land, and hunt them still in many a continental state? The priests! The priests; there is no room for Christ with the prophets of Baal, the servants of Babylon. The false hirelings, that are not Christ's shepherds and love not His sheep, have always been the most ferocious enemies of our God and of His Christ. There is no room for Him where His name is chanted in solemn hymns, and His image lifted up amid smoke of incense! Go where you will, and there is no space for the Prince of peace but with the humble and contrite spirits which by divine grace He prepares to yield Him shelter!

III. But now, for our third remark, THE INN ITSELF HAD NO ROOM FOR HIM; and this was the main reason why He must be laid in a manger.

What can we find in modern times which stands in the place of the inn? Well, there is *public sentiment free to all*. In this free land, men speak of what they like, and there is a public opinion upon every subject. And you know, there is free toleration in this country to everything—permit me to say, toleration to everything, but Christ! You will discover that the persecuting spirit is now as much abroad as ever. There are still men at whom it is most fashionable to sneer. We never scoff at Chris-

tians now-a-days; we do not sneer at that respectable title, lest we would lose our own honor. We do not now-a-days talk against the followers of Jesus under that name. No—but we have found out a way of doing it more safely. There is a pretty word of modern invention—a very pretty word—the word *"Sectarian."* Do you know what it means? A sectarian means a true Christian—a man who can afford to keep a conscience, and does not mind suffering for it. A man or woman who, whatever he finds to be in that old Book, believes it and acts upon it and is zealous for it. I believe that the men aimed at under the term, "sectarians," are the true followers of Christ, and that the sneers and jeers and all the nonsense that you are always reading and hearing, is really aimed at the Christian, the true Christian, only he is disguised and nicknamed by the word *sectarian*. I would give not a farthing for your religion, no, not even the turn of a rusty nail, unless you will sometimes win that title! If God's Word is true, every atom of it, then, we should act upon it! And whatever the Lord commands, we should diligently keep and obey, remembering that our Master tells us if we break one of the least of His commandments, and teach men so, we shall be least in His kingdom. We ought to be very jealous, very precise, very anxious, that even in the least significant of our Savior's laws, we may obey, having our eyes up to Him as the eyes of servants are to their mistresses. But if you do this, you will find you are not tolerated, and you will get the cold shoulder in society. A zealous Christian will find as truly a cross to carry now-a-days, as in the days of Simon the Cyrenian! If you will hold your tongue; if you will leave sinners to perish; if you will never endeavor to propagate your faith; if you will silence all witnessing for the truth of God; if, in fact, you will renounce all the attributes of a Christian, if you will cease to be what a Christian must be, then the world will say, "Ah, that is right! This is the religion we like!" But if you will believe, believe firmly, and if you let your belief actuate your life, and if your belief is so precious that you feel compelled to spread it, then, at once, you will find that there is no room for Christ even in the inn of public sentiment, where everything else is received! Be an infidel, and none will treat you contemptuously; but be a Christian, and many will despise you. "There was no room for Him in the inn."

How little room is there for Christ, too, *in general conversation,* which is also like an inn; we talk about many things; a man may now-a-days talk of any subject he pleases; no one can stop him and say, "There is a spy catching your words; he will report you to some central authority." Speech is very free in this land; but, ah, how little room is there for Christ in general talk! Even on Sunday afternoon, how little room there is for Christ in some professed Christian's houses! They will talk about *ministers,* tell strange anecdotes about them—perhaps invent a few, or, at least, garnish the old ones, and add to them, and make them a little more brilliant. They will talk about the Sunday school, or the various agencies in connection with the Church—but how little they say about Christ! And if someone should in conversation make this remark, "Could we not speak upon the Godhead and manhood, the finished work and righteousness, the ascension, or the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Why we should see many, who even profess to be followers of Christ, who would hold up their heads and say, "Why, dear, that man is quite a fanatic, or else he would not think of introducing such a subject

as that into general conversation." No, there is no room for Him in the inn; to this day He can find but little access there.

I address many who are working men. You are employed among a great many artisans day after day; do you not find, brethren—I know you do—that there is very little room for Christ *in the workshop?* There is room there for everything else; there is room for swearing; there is room for drunkenness; there is room for lewd conversation; there is room for politics, slanders, or infidelities—but there is no room for Christ! Too many of our working men think religion would be an encumbrance, a chain, a miserable prison to them! They can frequent the theater, or listen in a lecture hall, but the house of God is too dreary for them! I wish I were not compelled to say so, but truly, in our factories, workshops, and foundries, there is no room for Christ. The world is elbowing and pushing for more room, till there is scarcely a corner left where the Babe of Bethlehem can be laid.

As for the inns of modern times—who would think of finding Christ there? Putting out of our catalog in those hotels and roadside houses, which are needed for the accommodation of travelers, what greater curse have we than our taverns and saloons? What wider gates of hell? Who would ever resort to such places as we have flaring with gas lights at the corners of all our streets to find Christ there? As well might we expect to find Him in the bottomless pit! We would be just as likely to look for angels in hell, as to look for Christ in a gin palace! He who is separate from sinners finds no fit society in the reeking temple of Bacchus! There is no room for Jesus in the inn. I think I would rather rot or feed the crows, than earn my daily bread by the pence of fools, the hard earnings of the poor man, stolen from his ragged children, and his emaciated wife. What do many publicans fatten upon but the flesh and bones, and blood and souls of men? He who grows rich on the fruits of vice is a beast preparing for the slaughter! Truly, there is no room for Christ among the drunks of Ephraim! They who have anything to do with Christ should hear Him say—"Come you out from among them, and be you separate. Touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters." There is no room for Christ now-a-days even in the places of public resort.

IV. This brings me to my fourth head, which is the most pertinent, and the most necessary to dwell upon for a moment. HAVE YOU ROOM FOR CHRIST? HAVE *YOU* ROOM FOR CHRIST?

As the palace, and the forum, and the inn have no room for Christ, and as the places of public resort have none, have *you* room for Christ? "Well," says one, "I have room for Him, but I am not worthy that He should come to me." Ah, I did not ask about *worthiness!* Have you room for Him? "Oh," says one, "I have an empty void the world can never fill!" Ah, I see you *do* have room for Him. "Oh, but the room I have in my heart is so base!" So was the manger! "But it is so despicable!" So was the manger a thing to be despised! "Ah, but my heart is so foul!" So, perhaps, the manger may have been! "Oh, but I feel it is a place not at all fit for Christ!" Nor was the manger a place fit for Him, and yet there He was laid. "Oh, but I have been such a sinner; I feel as if my heart had been a den of beasts and devils!" Well, the manger had been a place where beasts had fed. *Have you room for Him?* Never mind what the past has been; He can forget and forgive. It matters not what even the present

state may be if you mourn it! If you have but room for Christ, He will come and be your guest! Do not say, I pray you, "I hope *I shall have* room for Him." The time is come that He shall be born. Mary cannot wait months and years. Oh, sinner, if you have room for Him, let Him be born in your soul today! "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation." "Today is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation." Room for Jesus! Room for Jesus, now! "Oh," says one, "I have room for Him, but will He come?" Will He come, indeed! If you but set the door of your heart open, and say, "Jesus, Master, all unworthy and unclean, I look to You; come, lodge within my heart," He will come to you, and He will cleanse the manger of your heart. No—He will transform it into a golden throne, and there He will sit and reign forever and forever!

Oh, I have such a free Christ to preach this morning! I wish I could preach Him better; I have such a precious, loving, Jesus to preach! He is willing to find a home in humble hearts. What? Are there no hearts here this morning that will take Him in? Must my eye glance around these galleries and look at many of you who are still without Him, and are there none who will say, "Come in, come in"? Oh, it shall be a happy day for you if you shall be enabled to take Him in your arms and receive Him as the consolation of Israel! You may then look forward even to death with joy, and say with Simeon—"Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation." My Master wants room! Room for Him! Room for Him! I, His herald, cry aloud, Room for the Savior! Room! Here is my royal Master—have you room for Him? Here is the Son of God made flesh—have you room for Him? Here is He who can forgive all sin—have you room for Him? Here is He who can take you up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay—*have you room for Him?* Here is He who, when He comes in will never go out again but abide with you forever to make your heart a heaven of joy and bliss for you—have you room for Him? It is all I ask. Your emptiness, your nothingness, your need of feeling, your need of goodness, your need of grace—all these will be but room for Him! *Have you room for Him?* Oh, Spirit of God, lead many to say, "Yes, my heart is ready." Ah, then He will come and dwell with you—

"Joy to the world the Savior comes,
The Savior promised long;
Let every heart prepare a throne
And every voice a song!"

V. I conclude with the remark, that if you have room for Christ, then, from this day forth, remember THE WORLD HAS NO ROOM FOR YOU; for the text says not only that there was no room for Him but look—"There was no room *for them"*—no room for Joseph, nor for Mary—any more than for the baby. Who are His father, and mother, and sister, and brother but those who receive His Word, and keep it? So, as there was no room for the blessed Virgin, nor for the reputed father; remember, from now on, there is no room in this world for any true follower of Christ! There is no room for you to take your *ease;* no, you are to be a soldier of the cross, and you will find no ease in all your life-warfare. There is no room for you to sit down *contented with your own attainments,* for you are a traveler, and you are to forget the things that are behind, and press forward to that which is before. No room for you *to hide your treasure* in,

for here the moth and rust do corrupt. No room for you *to put your confidence,* for, "Cursed is he who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm." From this day, there will be no room for you *in the world's good opinion*—they will count you to be an offscouring; no room for you in the world's *polite society*—you must go outside the camp, bearing His reproach. From this time forth, I say, if you have room for Christ, the world will hardly find room of tolerance for you! You must expect now to be laughed at; now you must wear the fool's cap in men's esteem; and your song must be at the very beginning of your pilgrimage—

"Jesus, I Your cross have taken,
(by Your grace)
All to leave and follow Thee;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
You from now my all shall be."

There is no room for you in the worldling's love. If you expect that everybody will praise you, and that your good actions will all be applauded, you will be quite mistaken. The world, I say, has no room for the man or woman who has room for Christ! If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you." "You are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world." Thank God, you need not ask the world's hospitality. If it will give you but a stage for action, and lend you for an hour a grave to sleep in, it is all you need! You will require no permanent dwelling place here, since you seek a city that is to come, which has foundations, and whose builder and maker is God! You are hurrying through this world as a stranger through a foreign land, and you rejoice to know that though you are an alien and a foreigner here, yet you are a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God.

What do you say, young soldier, will you enlist on such terms as these? Will you give room for Christ when there is to be from now on no room for *you*—when you are to be separated forever, maybe cut off from among the world's kith and kin—cut off from carnal confidence *forever*? Are you willing, notwithstanding all this, to receive the traveler? The Lord help you to do so, and to Him shall be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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

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THE SINNER'S END
NO. 486

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 28, 1862,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely You did set them in slippery places: You cast them down into destruction."
Psalm 73:17, 18.

A LACK of understanding has destroyed many. The dark pit of ignorance has engulfed its thousands. Where the lack of understanding has not sufficed to slay, it has been able to seriously wound. Lack of understanding upon doctrinal truth, providential dealing, or inward experience, has often caused the people of God a vast amount of perplexity and sorrow, much of which they might have avoided had they been more careful to consider and understand the ways of the Lord. My brothers and sisters, if our eyes are dim, and our hearts forgetful as to eternal things, we shall be much vexed and tormented in mind, as David was when he understood not the sinner's end; for, indeed, it is a great mystery to ordinary reason to see the ungodly prospering and pampered, while the righteous are chastened and afflicted! Let us, however, receive a clear understanding with regard to the death, judgment, and condemnation of the proud sinner, then at once our sorrows and suspicions are removed, and petulance gives place to gratitude. See the ox paraded through the streets covered with garlands—who envies its lot when he remembers the axe and the altar? The child may see nothing but the flowers, but from the man of understanding, no childish ornament can conceal the victim's misery!

The best place in which to be instructed with heavenly wisdom is the sanctuary of God. Until David went there, he was in a mist—but entering its hallowed portals, he stood upon a mountain's summit, and the clouds floated far beneath his feet. You ask me what there could have been in the ancient sanctuary, which could have enlightened David as to the end of the wicked. It may be, my brothers and sisters, that while he sat before the Lord in prayer, his spirit had such communion with the unseen God, that he looked into unseen things and saw, as in an open vision, the ultimate doom of the graceless; or it may be, that the hallowed songs of Israel's congregation foretold the overthrow of the enemies of Jehovah, and stirred the royal soul. Perhaps on that holy day, the priests read in the scanty pages of the then written work, some ancient story, such as refreshed the Psalmist in his happier seasons. It may have been that they rehearsed, in the ears of the people, the years beyond the flood, and the universal death, which swept a world of sinners to their eternal prisons with a flood of wrath. Or, it may be that they read concerning Sodom and

Gomorrah, and the fiery shower which utterly consumed the cities of the plain. It is not impossible that the theme of meditation led the devout monarch back to the plagues of Egypt, and the day of the Lord's vengeance, when He overthrew proud Pharaoh and his hosts in the midst of the Red Sea. The book of the wars of the Lord, is full of notable records, all revealing most clearly, that the right hand of the Lord has sooner or later dashed in pieces all His enemies!

Possibly, when David went into the sanctuary of God, *the Law* was read in his ears. He heard the blessings for obedience, the curses for rebellion; and as he listened to the thundering anathemas of the law, which curses none in vain, it may be that he said, "Now I understand their end." Certainly a due estimate of the law of God, and the justice which maintains its dignity, will clear up all fears concerning the ultimate escape of the wicked. Such a law and such a Judge allow not the slightest suspicion that sin will always prosper. Moreover, beloved, David could not well go up to the sanctuary without witnessing a *sacrifice,* and as he saw the knife uplifted and driven into the throat of the victim, and knew that he, himself, was preserved from destruction by the sufferings of a substitute, represented by that lamb, he may have learned that the wicked, having no such sacrifice to trust to, must be led as sheep to the slaughter, and as the bullock is felled by the axe, so must they be utterly destroyed! By some of these means, either by the sight of the sacrifice, or by his own meditations, or by the word read and the expositions given by prophets or priests in the sanctuary—it was in God's own house that he understood the end of the wicked. I trust, beloved, if you lack understanding in any spiritual matters, you will go up to the house of the Lord to inquire in His temple. The Word of God is to us as the Urim and Thummim of the High Priest, prayer asks counsel at the hand of the Lord, and often the lips of the minister are God's oracle to our hearts. If you are vexed at any time, because providence seems to deal indulgently with the vile, and harshly with you, come to the spot where prayer is likely to be made, and while learning the justice of God, and the overthrow which He will surely bring upon the impenitent, you shall go to your houses calmed in mind and disciplined in spirit. May you sing as Dr. Watts puts it—

"I saw the wicked rise,
And felt my heart repine,
While haughty fools, with scornful eyes
In robes of honor shine.
The tumults of my thought
Held me in dark suspense,
Till to Your house my feet were brought,
To learn Your justice from there.
Your Word with light and power
Did my mistakes amend—
I viewed the sinner's life before,
But here I learned their end!"

This morning, we have selected our subject for many ends, but more especially, with the anxious desire that we may win souls for Christ, that we may see a feast of ingathering at the end of the year; that this may be

the best of days to many, the birthday of many immortal souls! The burden of the Lord weighs down my soul this morning; my heart is filled even to bursting with an agony of desire that sinners may be saved! O Lord make bare Your arm this day, even this day!

In enlarging upon our solemn subject, first, *let us understand the sinner's end;* secondly, *let us profit by our understanding of it;* thirdly, let us, having received this understanding, *anxiously and earnestly warn those whose end this must be, unless they repent!*

I. First, then, gathering up all our powers of mind and thought, LET US ENDEAVOR TO UNDERSTAND THE SINNER'S END. Let me rehearse it in your ears.

The end of the sinner, like the end of every man in this world, is *death.* When he dies, it may be that he will die gently, for often, there are no hindrances in their death, but their strength is firm. A seared conscience gives quietude of stupidity, just as a full forgiveness of sin gives a peacefulness of perfect rest! They talk about another world, as though they had no dread; they speak of standing before God, as though they had no transgression. "Like sheep they are laid in the grave," "He fell asleep like a child," say his friends. And others exclaim, "He was so happy, that he must be a saint!" Ah, this is but their *apparent* end. God knows that the dying repose of sinners is but the awful calm which heralds the eternal hurricane! The sun sets in glowing colors, but O, the darkness of the black tempestuous night! The waters flash like silver as the soul descends into their bosom, but who shall tell the tenfold horrors, which congregate within their dreadful deeps? Frequently, on the other hand, the death of the wicked is not thus peaceful. Not always can the hypocrite play out his game to the end; the mask slips off too soon, and conscience tells the truth. Even in this world, with some men, the storm of everlasting wrath begins to beat upon the soul, before it leaves the shelter of the body. Ah, then, the cries, the groans! What dread forebodings of the unquiet spirits! What visions of judgment! What anxious peering into the midnight of future banishment and ruin! Ah, then the cravings after a little longer span of life, the clutching at *anything,* for the bare chance of hope! May your ears be spared the dreadful outcry of the spirit, when it feels itself seized by the invisible hand and dragged downward to its certain doom! Give me sooner to be shut up in prison for months, and years, than to stand by dying beds, such as I have myself witnessed. They have written their memorial on my young heart; the scars of the wounds they gave me are still there! Why, the faces of some men, like mirrors, reflect the flames of hell, while yet they live! All this, however, is but of secondary importance compared with that which follows death. To the ungodly there is awful significance in that verse of the Revelation, "I looked and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was *Death, and hell followed with him."*

One woe is past, but there are other woes to come. If death were all, I were not here this morning; for it little matters in what style a man dies, if it were not that he shall live again! The sinner's death is *the death of all in which he took delight.* No cups of drunkenness for you again, no violin,

no lute, no sound of music, no more the merry dance, no more the loud lascivious song, no jovial company, no high-sounding blasphemies! All these are gone forever! Dives, your purple is plucked from off you; the red flames shall be your mantle. Where now is your fine linen? Why is your nakedness thus revealed to your shame and contempt? Where now are your delicate tables, O, you who did fare sumptuously every day? Your parched lips shall crave in vain, the blessed drop to cool your tongue. Now where are your riches, you rich fool? Your barns are, indeed, pulled down—but you need not build greater—your corn, your wine, your oil have vanished like a dream, and you are poor, indeed, cursed with a depth of poverty such as the dog-licked Lazarus never knew! Death removes every delight from the graceless. It takes away from his eyes, his ears, his hands, and his heart, everything which might yield him solace! The cruel Moabites of death shall cut down every fair tree of hope, and fill up with huge stones every well of comfort; there shall be nothing left for the spirit, but a dreary desert, barren of all joy or hope, which the soul must traverse with weary feet forever and ever!

Nor is this all. Let us understand their end yet farther. No sooner is the sinner dead, than *he stands before the bar of God* in his disembodied state. That impure spirit is set before the blazing eyes of God! Its deeds are well known to itself; it needs no opening of the great books as yet. A motion of the eternal finger bids it go its way. Where can it go? It dare not climb to heaven. There is but one road open—it sinks to its appointed place! The expectation of future torment plagues the soul with a self-kindled hell, conscience becomes a never-dying, ever-gnawing worm. Conscience, I say, cries in the souls of men, "Now where are you? You are lost and this, your lost estate, you have brought upon yourself! You are not yet judged," says conscience, "yet you are lost, for when those books are opened, you know that their records will condemn you." Memory wakes up and confirms the voice of conscience. "It is true," she says, "it is true." Now the soul remembers its thousand faults and crimes; judgment also shakes off its slumber, holds up its scales, and reminds the man that conscience clamors not amiss. Hope has been smitten down, but all the fears are living and full of vigor—like serpents with a hundred heads, they sting the heart through and through! The heart bowed down with unnumbered dread moans within itself—"The awful trumpet will soon sound, my body will rise. I must suffer both in body and in soul, for all my sins; there is no hope for me, no hope for me! Would God I had listened, when I was warned! Ah, would to God that I had turned at the faithful rebuke, that when Jesus Christ was presented to me in the gospel, I had believed on Him! But no, I despised my own salvation! I chose the fleeting pleasures of time—and for that poor price, I have earned eternal ruin! I chose rather to drown my conscience, than to let it lead me to glory; I turned my back upon the right, and now here I am, waiting like a prisoner in a condemned cell, till the great judgment shall come and I shall stand before the Judge."

Let us go on to consider their end. *The day of days, that dreadful day has come.* The millennial rest is over, the righteous have had their thou-

sand years of glory upon earth. Listen! The dread trumpet, louder than a thousand thunders, startles death and hell! Its awful sound shakes both earth and heaven; every tomb is rent and emptied; from the teeming womb of earth, that fruitful mother of mankind, up stand multitudes upon multitudes of bodies, as though they were new-born! Lo, from Hades come the spirits of the lost ones—and they each enter into the body in which once it sinned, while the righteous sit upon their thrones of glory, their transformed bodies made like unto the glorious body of Christ Jesus the Lord from heaven! The voice of the trumpet waxes exceedingly loud and long, the sea has given up her dead, from tongues of fire, from lion's jaws, and from corruption's worm, all mortal flesh has been restored, atom to atom, bone to bone! At the decree of omnipotence, all bodies are refashioned. And now, the great white throne is set with pomp of angels. Every eye beholds it. The great books are opened, and all men hear the rustling of their awful leaves. The fingers of the hands that once were crucified, turns leaf after leaf and names of men are sounded forth—to glory, to destruction—"Come you blessed." "Depart you cursed." These are the final arbiters of glory or of ruin! And now where are *you,* sinner, for your turn is come? Your sins are read and published! Shame consumes you; your proud face now mantles with a thousand blushes. You would cover yourself, but you cannot and, most of all, you are afraid of the face of Him, who *today* looks on you with eyes of pity, but *then,* with glances of fiery wrath—the face of Jesus, the face of the Lamb, the dying Lamb—then enthroned in judgment! Oh how ashamed you will be to think you have despised Him, to think that though He died for sinners, you did scorn and scoff Him, did malign His followers, and slander His religion! How piteously will you crave a veil of granite, to hide your shameful face from Him! "Rocks hide me! Mountains fall upon me! Hide me from the face of Him who sits upon the throne." But it must not—it must not be—

"Where now, oh, where shall sinners seek
For shelter in the general wreck?
Shall falling rocks be over them thrown?
See rocks, like snow, dissolving down."

O, sinner, this is but the beginning of the end, for now your sentence is read out, your doom pronounced! Hell opens her wide jaws, and you fall to destruction. Where are you now? Body and soul, remarried in an everlasting union, having sinned together, must now suffer together, and that forever! I cannot picture it; imagination's deepest dye paints not this tenfold night. I cannot portray the anguish, which both soul and body must endure—each nerve a road, for the hot feet of pain to travel on—each mental power a blazing furnace, heated seven times hotter with raging flames of misery! Oh, my God, deliver us from ever knowing this in our own persons!

Let us now pause and review the matter. It behooves us to remember concerning the sinner's latter end, that *it is absolutely certain.* The same word which says, "He who believes shall be saved," makes it also equally certain and clear, that, "he who believes *not* shall be damned." If God is true, then sinners must suffer. If sinners suffer not, then saints have no

glory, our faith is vain, Christ's death was vain, and we may as well abide comfortably in our sins. Sinner, whatever philosophy may urge with its syllogisms, whatever skepticism may declare with her laughter and sneers, it is absolutely certain, that dying as you are, the wrath of God shall come upon you to the uttermost! If there were but a thousandth part of a fear, that you or I might perish, it were wisdom to fly to Christ; but when it is not a, "perhaps," or a, "maybe," but an *absolute certainty,* that he who rejects Christ must be lost forever, I do plead with you, if you are rational men, see to it and set your houses in order, for God will surely smite, though He tarry ever so long! Though for 90 years you avoid the arrows of His bow, His arrow will in due time find you, and pierce you through—and where are you then?

And as it is certain, so let us remember, that to the sinner it is often *sudden*. In such an hour as he thinks not, to him the Son of man comes. As pain upon a woman in travail, as the whirlwind on the traveler, as the eagle on his prey, so suddenly comes death; buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, chambering and full of wantonness, the ungodly man says, "Go your way for this time, when I have a more convenient season, I will send for you." But, as the frost often comes when the buds are swelling ready for the spring, and nips them all of a sudden, how often does the frost of death nip all the hopeful happiness of ungodly men, and it withers once and for all? Have you a lease on your life? Lives there a man, who can insure that you shall breathe another hour? Let but your blood freeze in its channels; let but your breath stop for a moment, and where are you? A spider's web is a strong cable, when compared with the thread on which moral life depends! We have told you a thousand times, till the saying has become so trite, that you smile when we repeat it—life is frail, and yet you live, O men, as though your bones were brass, and your flesh were adamant, and your lives like the years of the Eternal God. As breaks the dream of the sleeper, as flies the cloud before the wind, as melts the foam from the breaker, as dies the meteor from the sky—so suddenly shall the sinner's joys pass forever from him—and who shall measure the greatness of his amazement?

Remember, O sons of men, how *terrible* is the end of the ungodly! You think it is easy for me to talk of death and damnation, and it is certainly not very difficult for you to hear, but when you and I shall come to die, ah, then, every word we have uttered, shall have a weightier meaning than this dull hour can gather from it! Imagine the sinner dying. Weeping friends are about him; he tosses to and fro upon yonder weary couch. The strong man is bowed down. The last struggle is come. Friends watch the glazing of the eyes; they wipe the clammy sweat from the brow. At last they say, "He is gone! He is gone!" Oh, my brothers and sisters, what amazement must seize upon the unsanctified spirit then! Ah, if his spirit could then speak, it would say, "It is all true that I was known to hear. I spoke ill of the minister the last Sunday in the year, for trying to frighten us, as I said, but he did not speak half as earnestly as he ought to have done! Oh, I wonder why he did not fall down upon his knees, and beg me to repent? But even if he had, I would have rejected his entreaties. Oh, if

I had known! If I had known! If I had known all this; if I could have believed it; if I had not been such a fool as to doubt God's word and think it all a tale to frighten children with. Oh, if I had known all this! But now I am lost! Lost! Lost *forever!"* I think I hear that spirit's wail of utter dismay, as it exclaims, "Yes, it *has* come; the thing I was told—it has all come to pass! Fixed is my everlasting state; no offers of mercy now; no blood of sprinkling now; no silver trumpet of the gospel now—no invitations to a loving Savior's bosom now! His terrors have broken me in pieces, and as a leaf is driven with the whirlwind, so am I driven, I know not where! But this I *do* know, I am lost, lost, lost beyond all hope." Horrible is the sinner's end! I shudder while thus briefly I talk of it. O, believer, take heed that you understand this well!

Do not fail to remember, that the horror of the sinner's end will consist very much in the reflection that he will *lose heaven*. Is that a little? The harps of angels, the company of the redeemed, the smile of God, the society of Christ—is this a trifle—to lose the saint's best rest, that heritage for which martyrs wade through rivers of blood, that portion which Jesus thought it worthwhile to die that He might purchase? They lose all this, and then they earn in exchange, the *pains of hell,* which are more desperate than tongue can tell! Consider a moment! He who indicts the punishment is *God*. What blows must He strike! He did but put out His finger and He cut Rahab and wounded the dragon in the Red Sea. What will it be, when stroke after stroke, shall fall from His heavy hand? Oh, omnipotence, omnipotence, how dreadful are Your blows! Sinner, see and tremble—God Himself comes out in battle against you! Why, the arrows of a man, when they stick in your conscience, are very sharp—but what will the arrows of God be? How they will drink your blood and infuse poison into your veins! Even now, when you feel a little sickness, you are afraid to die; and when you hear a heart-searching sermon, it makes you melancholy! But what will it be when God dressed in thunder, comes out against you, and His fire consumes you like stubble? Will God punish you? O sinner, what punishment must that be which He inflicts? I tremble for you! Flee, I pray you, to the cross of Christ, where shelter is prepared!

Remember, moreover, it will be a God without mercy, who will then dash you in pieces. He is all mercy to you *today,* O sinner. In the wooing words of the gospel, He bids you live! In His name, I tell you, as God lives, He wills not your death, but would rather you should turn unto Him and live! But if you will not live; if you will be His enemy; if you will run upon the point of His spear, then He will be even with you in the day when mercy reigns in heaven, and justice holds its solitary court in hell. O that you were wise and would believe in Jesus to the salvation of your souls!

I would have you know, O you who choose your own destruction, that you shall suffer *universally*. Now, if our head aches, or if our heart is palpitating, or a member is in pain, there are other parts of the body which are at ease; but then, every power of body and of mind shall suffer at one time. All the chords of man's nature shall vibrate with the discord

of desolation! Then shall suffering be *unceasing*. Here we have a pause in our pain, the fever has its rests, and fits of agony have their seasons of quiet. But there, in hell, the gnashing of teeth shall be unceasing; the worm's gnawing shall know no cessation! On, on forever—forever a hot race of misery!

Then, worst of all, it shall be *without end*. When ten thousand years have run their course, you shall be no nearer to the end than at first; when millions have been piled on millions, still the wrath shall be to come—to come, as much as if there had been no wrath at all! Ah, these are dreadful things to talk of, and you who hear or read my sermons, know that I am falsely accused when men say that I dwell often upon this dreadful theme; but I feel as if there is no hope for some of you, unless I thunder at you. I know that often God has broken some hearts with an alarming sermon, who might never have been won by an inviting and wooing discourse. My experience goes to show, that the great hammer of God breaks many hearts, and some of my more terrible sermons have been even more useful than those, in which I lifted up the cross and tenderly pleaded with men. Both must be used—sometimes the love which draws—and another, the vengeance which drives. Oh, my hearers, I cannot bear the thought that you should be lost! As I meditate, I have a vision of some of you passing away from this world, and will you curse me? Will you curse me as you go down to the pit of hell? Will you accuse me, "You were not faithful with me; pastor, you did not warn me! Minister, you did not strive with me"? No, by the help of my Lord, through whose divine grace I am called to the work of this ministry, I must, I will, be clear of your blood! You shall not make your bed in hell, without knowing what an uneasy resting place you choose! You *shall* hear the warning. It *shall* ring in your ears. "Who among us shall dwell with everlasting fire? Who among us shall abide with the eternal burnings?" I assure you, a true love speaks to you in every harsh word I utter—a love that cares too much for you to flatter you; a love which must tell you these things without mitigating them in any degree, lest you perish through my trifling. "He who believes not shall be damned." "Turn you, turn you, why will you die?" Why will you reject His mercies? God help you by His Holy Spirit to understand your latter end and lay hold on Jesus *now!*

II. This brings us to our second remark—if we have understood the sinner's end, LET US NOW PROFIT BY IT. How can we do this?

We can profit by it, first, by *never envying the ungodly again*. If at any time, we feel with the Psalmist that we cannot understand how it is that the enemies of God enjoy the sweets of life, let us cease at once from such questions, because we remember their latter end. Let David's confession warn us—

"Lord, what a thoughtless wretch was I
To mourn and murmur and repine,
To see the wicked placed on high,
In pride and robes of honor shine!
But oh, their end! Their dreadful end!
Your sanctuary taught me so—

On slippery rocks I see them stand,
And fiery billows roll below.
Now let them boast how tall they rise,
I'll never envy them again;
There they may stand with haughty eyes,
Till they plunge deep in endless pain."

If the sinner's end is so terrible, *how grateful* ought we to be, if we have been plucked from these devouring flames! Brothers and sisters, what was there in us why God should have mercy on us? Can we ascribe the fact that we have been washed from sin in Jesus' blood, and made to choose the way of righteousness—can we ascribe this to anything but divine grace—free, rich, sovereign grace? Come then, let us with our tears for others, mingle joyous gratitude to God, for that eternal love which has delivered our souls from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling! Above all, let us prize the sufferings of Christ beyond all cost. Oh, blessed cross, which has lifted us up from hell. Oh, dear wounds, which have become gates of heaven to us, can we refuse to love that Son of man—that Son of God? Will we not today, at the foot of His dear cross, give ourselves to Him anew, and ask Him to bestow on us more grace, that we may live more to His honor, and spend and be spent in His service? Saved from hell, I must love You, Jesus; and while life and being last, I must live and be prepared to die for You.

Again, beloved friends, how such a subject as this should lead you, who profess to be followers of Christ, to *make your calling and election sure!* If the end of the impenitent is so dreadful, let nothing content us but certainties, with regard to our own escape from this woe! Have you any doubts this morning? Have no peace of mind till those doubts are all solved! Is there any question upon your spirit as to whether you have real faith in the living Savior? If so, rest not, I pray you, till in prayer and humble faith you have renewed your vows and come afresh to Christ! Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith—prove yourselves—build on the rock—make sure work for eternity, lest it should happen, after all, that you have been deceived! Oh, if it should turn out so, alas, alas! Alas, for you to have been so near to heaven and yet to be cast down to hell!

Now, this subject should teach Christians to *be in earnest about the salvation of others*. If heaven were a trifle, we need not be zealous for the salvation of men; if the punishment of sin were some slight pain, we need not exercise ourselves diligently to deliver men from it; but oh, if "eternity" is a solemn word, and if the wrath to come is terrible to bear, how should we be instant in season and out of season, striving to win others from the flames! What have you done this year, some of you? I fear, brother and Sister Christians, some of you have done very little! Blessed be God, there are many earnest hearts among you; you are not all asleep; there are some of you who strive with both your hands to do your Master's work—but even you are not as earnest as you should be! The preacher puts himself here in the list, mournfully confessing that he does not preach as he desires to preach. Oh, had I the tears and cries of Baxter, or the fervent seraphic zeal of Whitefield, my soul were well content,

but, alas, we preach coldly upon burning themes, and carelessly upon matters which ought to make our hearts like flames of fire! But I say, brothers and sisters are there not men and women here, members of this church, doing *nothing* for Christ? No soul saved this year by you? Christ unhonored by you? No gems placed in His crown? What have you been living for, you cumber-ground? Why stand you in the church, you fruitless trees? God make you—oh, you that do little for Him—to humble yourselves before Him, and to begin the next year with this determination—that knowing the terrors of the Lord, you will persuade men, and labor and strive to bring sinners to the cross of Christ!

III. But, we must leave that point of instruction and come to our last and pleading point, and that is very earnestly, to WARN THOSE WHOSE END THIS MUST BE UNLESS THEY REPENT.

And who are they? Please remember, we are not speaking now of people in the street—of drunks, and harlots, profane swearers, and such like—we know that their damnation is sure and just—but, alas, I need not look far! If I glance along these seats, and look into faces upon which my eye rests every Sunday, there are some of you, some of you who are still unconverted! You are not immoral, but you are unregenerated; you are not amiable, and you are ungracious; you are not far from the kingdom of God, but you are not *in* the kingdom! It is *your* end I speak of now, *yours,* you sons of godly mothers; *yours,* you daughters of holy parents—*your* end, unless God gives you repentance! I want you to see where you are standing today. *"Surely You did set them in slippery places."* If it has ever been your lot to tread the glaciers of the Alps, you will have seen upon that mighty river of ice, huge wave like mountains of crystal, and deep fissures of unknown depth, and of an intensely blue color. If condemned to stand on one of these icy eminences, with a yawning crevasse at its base, our peril would be extreme. Sinner, it is on such slippery places you stand; only the danger is far greater than my metaphor sets forth!

Your standing is smooth; pleasure attends you; yours are not the rough ways of penitence and contrition—sin's road is smooth—but ah, how slippery from its very smoothness! O, be warned, you must fall sooner or later—stand as firmly as you may! Sinner you may fall *now,* at once. The mountain yields beneath your feet, the slippery ice is melting every moment. Look down and learn your speedy doom. Yonder yawning gulf must soon receive you, while we look after you with hopeless tears. Our prayers cannot follow you; from your slippery standing place you fall and you are gone forever. *Death* makes the place where you stand slippery, for it dissolves your life every hour! *Time* makes it slippery, for every instant it cuts the ground from under your feet. The *vanities* which you enjoy make your place slippery, for they are all like ice which shall melt before the sun. You have no foothold, sinner, you have no sure hope, no confidence! It is a melting thing you trust! If you are depending on what you mean to do—that is no foothold! If you get peace from what you have *felt* or from what you have *done*—that is no foothold—it is a slippery place where you stand! I read yesterday of the hunter of the

chamois, springing from crag to crag after the game he had wounded. The creature leapt down many a frowning precipice, but the hunter fearlessly followed as best he could. At last, in his hot haste, he found himself slipping down a shelving rock. The stone crumbled away as it came in contact with his thickly-nailed shoes, which he tried to dig into the rock to stop his descent. He strove to seize on every little inequality, regardless of the sharp edges; but as his fingers, bent convulsively like talons, scraped the stone, it crumbled off as though it had been baked clay, tearing the skin like ribbons from his fingers, and cutting into his flesh. Having let go of his long pole, he heard it slipping down behind him, its iron point clanging as it went; and then it flew over the ledge bounding into the depths below. In a moment he must follow, for with all his endeavors he is unable to stop himself. His companion looks on in speechless horror! But heaven intervenes. Just as he expects to go over the brink, one foot is arrested in its descent by a slight inequality. He hardly dares to move lest the motion might break his foothold, but gently turning his head to see how far he is from the brink, he perceives that his foot has stopped not a couple of inches from the edge of the rock—those two inches further—and destruction had been his lot!

Ungodly man, ungodly woman, in this mirror see yourself! You are sliding down a slippery place; you have neither foothold, nor handhold. All your hopes crumble beneath your weight. The Lord alone knows how near you are to your eternal ruin. Perhaps this morning you are scarcely two inches from the edge of the precipice. Your drunken companion who died a few days ago has just now gone over the edge. Did you not hear him falling? And you, yourself, are about to perish. Good God! The man is almost gone! Oh that I could stop you in your downward course! The Lord alone can do it, but He works by means. Turn round and gaze upon your past life; behold the wrath of God which must come on account of it! You are sliding down the slippery places to a fearful end—but the angel of mercy calls you—and the hand of love can save you! Hear how Jesus pleads with you—"Put your hand in Mine," He says, "you are lost, but I can save you *now."* Poor wretch! Will you not do it? Then you are lost! Oh why will you not, when love and tenderness would woo you? Why will you not put your trust in Him? He is able and willing to save you, even now! Believe in Jesus, and though you are now in slippery places, your feet shall soon be set upon a rock of safety. I know not how it is, the more earnestly I long to speak, and the more passionately I would set forth the danger of ungodly men, the more my tongue refuses! These weighty burdens of the Lord are not to be entrusted; it seems, to the power of oratory. I must stammer and groan them out to you. I must in short sentences, tell out my message and leave it with you. I have the solemn conviction this morning, that there are scores, and hundreds of you who are on the road to hell! You know you are! If conscience speaks truly to you, you know you have never sought Christ, you have never put your trust in Him, and you are still what you always were—ungodly, unconverted! Is this a trifle? Oh, I ask you—I put it to your own judgments—is this a thing of which you ought to think carelessly? I pray you,

let your hearts speak! Is it not time that some of you began to think of these things? Nine years ago, we had some hopes for you; those hopes have been disappointed up till now. As each year rolls around you promise yourself that the next shall be different; but there has been no change yet. May we not fear that you will continue entangled in the great net of procrastination, until at last, you will have eternally to regret that you kept deferring and deferring and deferring, till it was too late? The way of salvation is not hard to comprehend. It is no great mystery, it is simply, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Trust Christ with your soul, and He will save it! I know you will not do this unless the Holy Spirit compels you, but this does *not remove your responsibility*. If you reject this great salvation, you deserve to perish! When it is laid so clearly before you, if you refuse it, no eye can pity you among all the thousands in hell or all the millions in heaven—

"How they deserve the deepest hell
Who slight the joys above!
What chains of vengeance must they feel
Who break the cords of love."

May I ask all Christian people to join in prayer for the ungodly? When I cannot plead as a preacher, I bless God I can plead as an intercessor! Let us spend, all of us, a little time this afternoon in private intercession. May I ask it of you as a great favor—occupy a little time this afternoon, each child of God, in praying for the unconverted among us. Conversion work does go on; there are many always coming to be united to the church, but we want more! And we shall have more, if we pray for more!

Make this afternoon a travailing time, and if we travail in birth, God will give us the spiritual seed. It is to the Holy Spirit we must look for all true regeneration and conversion; therefore let us pray for the descent of His influence, and depend upon His omnipotence—and the great work must, and shall be done! Could I address you in the tones of an angel, yet I could not have more to say than this, "Sinner, fly to Christ!" I am glad I am weak, for now the Master's power shall be the better seen. Lord, turn the sinner! Turn and make him feel the danger of his state, and by Your grace find in Christ a ransom and a rescue—and to Your name be glory! 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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