

FREEDOM AT ONCE AND FOREVER NO. 2371

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 29, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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*“To proclaim liberty to the captives.”
Isaiah 61:1.*

I DO not know whether you generally read the daily newspaper. I think we might get up a “Society for the Suppression of Useless Knowledge.” A great deal that appears in the newspapers amounts only to that, and much time is wasted thereon; but sometimes we get a gem among the news, and to my mind there was a gem contained in a Reuter’s telegram, from Rio Janeiro, May 10th—“The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies has voted the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery in Brazil.” My heart rejoiced as I read that paragraph. I hope it does not mean that this vote can be defeated in some other Chamber, or the abolition can be prevented by some other power; but if it means that slavery is to be immediately and unconditionally abolished in Brazil, I call upon you all to thank God, and rejoice in His name. Wherever slavery exists, it is an awful curse; and the abolition of it is an unspeakable blessing. All free men should praise God, and especially those whom Christ has made free, for they are “free indeed.”

I am not going to preach about the slavery in Brazil, and yet the message about its abolition will be a great part of my theme. There is another slavery, a slavery into which we were born, a slavery in which we have lived, and, alas, a slavery under which some of us still smart; and Jesus Christ has come, as the Great Liberator, “to proclaim liberty to the captives.” There is no question about that emancipation. It is not a Chamber of Deputies which has voted it, and it is not a thing which may be thrown out by another parliamentary body; but Jesus Christ, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, has Himself come, with divine authority—authority never to be questioned or disputed—to proclaim liberty from the slavery of sin. When there was a royal proclamation to be made in the olden times, they used to employ men to go with trumpets through the streets of the city, and to the villages and towns in the country, to summon the people to the market cross, to hear the king’s message. That is what I am here for tonight; to sound the gospel trumpet as best I can, and to make this proclamation: “O yes, O yes, in the name of the great King of kings, there is liberty for the bond slaves of Satan, deliverance for those who are under captivity to sin.” I am going to proclaim that good news with all my might, and with joyful earnestness to tell the slaves of sin and Satan that there is liberty for them through the Great Emancipator, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I. I shall begin by describing THE NATURE OF THIS LIBERTY. Let me turn to my newspaper paragraph again: “The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies has voted the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery in Brazil.”

So the proclamation which I have to make tonight concerns *immediate liberation*. You have been the slave of sin long enough; you need not be sin’s slave any longer. Christ has not come to work out for you a deliverance which will take hours, days, weeks, or months to complete; He has come to knock your fetters off with a single stroke, and to set you free at once. If His gracious power is manifested in this assembly, the former slave of sin will go out of the Tabernacle door free; not half-free, with one or two of his fetters broken, there shall be for him immediate liberty. It does not take any time to work in the human heart the great change which is called regeneration. There may be a great many things going before it, and coming after it, which take up much time; but to pass from death to life is the work of an instant. It must be so. If a man is dead, and he is made alive, there can be no interval between the state of death and the state of life. There must be a second in which the transition takes place. When a blind man’s eyes are opened, it may be that he does not see for some time very clearly, but there is an instant in which the first beam of light enters the eye, and falls upon the retina, and in which the eye become

conscious of the power of light. So, in a moment, while I am speaking, the Lord can save you. In an instant, you slaves of sin and Satan, He can make you free! It is the immediate abolition of slavery that I have to proclaim to you.

I believe that, in Brazil, they have been trying a system of apprenticeship. It was the Emperor's intention—and God bless that Emperor!—he thought that all slaves should be free; but he thought that a little time ought to be taken to prepare them for liberty, to educate them up to the state in which they could act as free men. So they were apprenticed, and liberation came gradually to certain of them after a period of servitude; but this act of the Deputies, if it is really carried, is for immediate abolition, and no apprenticeship. Now, I do not want any of you to be apprenticed, as it were, and to wait awhile before you get free. I know that, with regard to the slavery of drunkenness, men think that they will drink a little less and a little less, and gradually give it up. Do not drink any at all, have done with it directly; you ought not to want to have any apprenticeship to the evil thing. So is it with the lusts of the flesh; men suppose that they can gradually subjugate their passions, and lift themselves out of that slavery. No, dear sirs, it must be done at a stroke, and it will be, if it is really done. You shall be immediately and on the spot set free. That poor creature, who had left his father's house, and gone into a far country, and reduced himself to such poverty that he was feeding swine—degrading work for a Jew to perform—how did he get back to his father? He said, "I will arise, and go to my father. . .and he arose, and came to his father." If he had stopped, if he had reasoned with his master, if he had said, "You must set me to feed sheep, and not pigs," if he had asked for an increase of wages, he would have remained in the far country. He never gave his old master ten minutes' notice, but he ran to his father straight away. That is the only way to be saved, to run for it, just as Lot fled out of Sodom. There must be no hesitation, no staying, but a determined resolve immediately to quit the dominions of sin, and to fly to the shelter of God's grace. O great King of kings may it be immediate liberation to many here tonight, without any sort of apprenticeship! May they come to Christ, and at once find liberty!

There is a notion abroad that you cannot be sure that you are saved till you come to die. Is that the gospel? Am I to proclaim liberty only to men who are about to die? I will preach no such gospel. I come to proclaim, in my Master's name, immediate abolition, instantaneous pardon, a present change of heart, the breaking of the chain and setting the captive free at once. Do not believe that you are to go through all your life only hoping and fearing, doubting and hesitating. That is like the old Popish doctrine; but good, true, Protestant, Bible doctrine is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." The moment he believes, he has it; he has passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation. I am glad that I have to proclaim the immediate abolition of slavery to all who trust Christ. However badly I may tell it, it is such good news that any here, who feel their slavery, and long to be set free, will leap to hear the glad tidings.

But, in the next place, if I look at my paper again, I find that it says, "The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies has voted the immediate and *unconditional abolition* of slavery in Brazil." I like that word "unconditional." It demands no payment; it does not say, "You must bring so much, and then you shall be set free." No, if the slave has not a penny, if he is utterly bankrupt, he is set free by the decree of the Chamber. So, there is no payment for gospel liberty; but you are bidden to come, and take the free grace of God, "without money and without price." You could not bring sufficient to pay for salvation, if God were willing to sell it. It cost the Savior His life; you cannot have any price to match with that wondrous redemption money. That which only Christ could buy, and buy with His blood, you certainly cannot purchase with any merits of your own, even if God allowed you to do so. Come then, and take this liberty; it is unconditional, that is, without payment.

Unconditional also means that it is given without any promises on the slave's part. It might have been made a condition that he should be set free provided that he did so much at certain times, or if he promised this, and promised that. But no, this liberation in Brazil is unconditional. The man is free in the largest sense of the word; there is no mortgage upon him, to be paid off by and by; he is wholly, absolutely, and unconditionally free. What a gospel this is that we preach! It sets poor sinners free, without an "if" or a "but," asking nothing of them, giving everything to them. Even the requirements of grace are the gifts of grace. If you are bidden to repent, your repentance is given to you by Him who is exalted on high to give it. Faith is asked of you; but even faith is a gift of God, and the work of the Spirit of God. Salvation is unconditionally given to those whom God has chosen, who have proved their choice by hearing the Word with faith, and accepting it unconditionally.

It took me a long time to get hold of this truth. I kept thinking that I must do something, or that I would have to suffer something; I thought that I would be driven to despair, or be made to agonize, and so forth. God knows that I had enough of that experience; but I always kept thinking that my hope lay there. Oh, what a mercy it is to catch the meaning of this word “unconditional!” Whatever you may be or may not be, Jesus Christ comes to set poor sinners free; and when they believe on Him, they are set free without any condition. You see a horse in a meadow, sometimes, with a halter on; it is easy work to catch him. Ah, but God does not turn us out into a meadow with a halter on; he takes the halter off when He sets us at liberty, and the devil himself cannot catch us again! The Lord takes the fetters off the one whom He makes to be His child. He does not leave him with a long chain on one of his legs, and say, “You are free, all but that.” Oh no, it is unconditional emancipation! Who is there who will refuse to accept deliverance from slavery which is immediate and unconditional?

But I notice, next, in my newspaper here, that “the Chamber of Deputies voted the immediate and unconditional *abolition of slavery*;” that is to say, that there is not to be any more slavery in Brazil. Slavery actually ceases to exist there; you cannot find a slave. Not only are slaves free, but slavery itself is abolished. Oh, is not this a wonderful fact? Sin is one great slavery, but Christ comes and pardons it, and He so pardons it that sin itself ceases to be. “In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none.” Part of the work of the Messiah, as revealed to Daniel, was, “To make an end of sins.” Well, if He makes an end of sins, there *is* an end of them, is there not? Jesus comes to drown our sins in the depths of the sea, to blot them out as a cloud is blotted out, so that they actually and absolutely cease to exist. He has come to remove from us the penalty and the guilt of sin so entirely that there is an abolition of the slavery of sin, and this abolition is immediate and unconditional.

Then the Lord Jesus Christ comes also to abolish the power of sin. He takes away from us our slavery to our passions, our lusts, our infirmities, our constitutional temperaments. “Oh!” says one, “I am glad to hear that. Do you mean to say that the Lord Jesus Christ can set me free from the power of sin?” Yes, I do mean to say that; and He can do it immediately, do it now, while you are sitting in that seat. If you have come in here fond of strong drink, the grace of God can make you go out hating the very sight of it. If you have come in here proud, the grace of God can make you go away broken-hearted and humble. If you have come in here lascivious, the grace of God can take out of your soul the impurity, and make you love that which is sweet, and pure, and holy.

“Well,” says one, “I do not believe in such wonderful changes.” I did not say that you did; but if you had ever felt them, you would believe in them. Some of us have experienced these changes; and there are many, now in heaven, who once were among the foulest of the foul; but the Lord Jesus came, and set them free from the power of their corrupt natures, and they became holy people, a people who were examples to others; and that same Lord Jesus Christ can give you immediate, unconditional deliverance from the power of sin.

I will tell you another thing. There is one power that sin has over us, and that is a feeling full of dread. Conscience co-operates with it; and sometimes very properly so. But these slaves in Brazil, when they are set free, will not have to come up once a month to have their backs made bare, and to receive twenty lashes apiece. Oh, dear no! It is unconditional abolition of slavery they are to have; and when the Lord sets His people free from the guilt and power of sin, He delivers them from the lash of sin, takes away the spirit of bondage, and gives them the spirit of liberty. They were afraid of God before, but now they come to Him, crying, “Abba, Father,” entering into His presence with joy and delight. It is wonderful how soon this unholy dread, this slavish fear, is cast out of the heart. Immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery means the removal, not only of sin, but also of the guilt, the penalty, the dread, and the bondage which come of sin. We have to proclaim that emancipation tonight.

These slaves in Brazil, if they are indeed set free, will not be slaves again. The decree of the Deputies is not that they are to be set free for six years, but forever. I hope that Brazil will be like our own country in this respect. You know how Cowper sang—

***“Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free.
They touch our country and their shackles fall.”***

Well, so it is in the kingdom of grace; there will be no going back to slavery if Christ once sets you free. “If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed,” and free forever.

The slaves in Brazil, if they are set free, will be emancipated lawfully; they will not have stolen their liberty. No, if anybody was to speak to one of these emancipated slaves, and say, "You have no right to be free," he would answer, "I have; I am authorized to be free by the highest authority; the rulers of the land have made me a free man." Oh, beloved, if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are set free from the law of sin and death by the highest possible authority! The law of God Himself has set us free. Justice demands our freedom, and mercy secures it. So, you see that it is immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery that we have to proclaim by the preaching of the gospel.

And listen once more. This proclamation is *universal* throughout all Brazil. Some slaves are very black, but nowadays some slaves are nearly white. I have heard of a good many who were in slavery, and who had not a discernible tint of black about them, and yet they were slaves. Well, there is liberty for the whitest, and for the blackest, too. I do not know whether you are whites or blacks; it may be that you are very black, that you have gone very far into sin; but there is liberty even for you. It may be that you are not so very black; you are a brown sort of sinner, neither very good nor very bad; or it may be that you are nearly white. Well, well, the same Christ gives liberty to all who put their trust in Him. Some of these slaves in Brazil are probably very young; perhaps some of them were only born a day or two ago, but they are free now. O you young children, boys and girls, young men, young women, you cannot be free too soon! You cannot obtain the liberty with which Christ makes His people free too early in your lives. A young slave is a dreadful sight; it is sad to think that, while he is yet so young, he should have lost his liberty; God set you young slaves free! But if there is a man in Brazil who is a hundred years old, and he is a slave, this proclamation makes him free. So, if you have lived a long while in sin, Jesus is able to set you free from it. He can take away your old habits. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin or the leopard his spots; but Christ can wash Ethiopian sinners white, and He can change leopard sinners so as to make them gentle as fawns. Do not doubt Christ's power because of your age. You are neither too young nor too old to have the liberty that He gives to all who trust Him.

Slaves in Brazil were generally born slaves; and you also were born slaves. But the Lord Jesus Christ can deliver you from the mischief worked by Adam, and set the home-born slaves at liberty from original sin. Some become slaves willingly. I do not suppose that many literally do so; but we have all of us willingly bowed our necks to the yoke of sin. This is the worst part of the slavery, that it is the slavery of our wills. We have willed to sin, and we have taken pleasure in it; but, beloved, even if it is so, Christ is able to set us free. Perhaps some men swore to their masters that they would never leave them, that they always would be with them as their slaves; but this decree of the Deputies has set them free. There may be somebody here—I hope there is not—but there may be a man here who has sold himself to the devil; there may be some woman here who has given herself up body and soul, to work iniquity. Even if it is so, the Lord can say, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." You never were your own, so you could not give yourself to Satan; you are released from all your rash promises and your wicked oaths; you cannot be bound by any covenant that you have made with the devil and with sin. Come and be free, for thus says the Lord, there is immediate, unconditional emancipation for all such as desire to be delivered from sin, and to have the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free.

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, I am going to speak upon THE METHOD OF LIBERATION. I have described the nature of the liberty; now let me tell you the method of liberation.

It is not thus in Brazil; but what I am going to speak about has to do with the kingdom of God's grace. Listen and learn. This is the method of liberation. First, *heaven provided a ransom*. When our slaves in Jamaica were set free, it was a glorious act; and you remember that the English nation paid many millions of pounds to the owners of the slaves. There has been a ransom paid for the sons of men; Jesus Christ bore on the tree the ransom for me and for you also if you believe in Him. This is the basis of our liberty, that Christ has bought us with a price, and set us free.

The next thing is that *sovereign grace proclaims the blood-bought sinner free*. God from the throne declares that those for whom Christ has died shall live, that those whom He has bought shall be His in that day when He makes up His jewels. God, the all-glorious Jehovah, proclaims the blood-bought sinner free, and free he is.

But, next, *almighty grace secures the believing one's emancipation*. Grace comes to the soul, and finds it a captive; but grace resolves that it shall be free. At first, the sinner does not care for freedom; he hugs his chains, like the Israelites did in Egypt, when they cried, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." God will not have it so. He turns the heart of the Egyptians against Israel, and they oppress

the Israelites, and make them hate their bondage. Oh, it is a blessed thing when God begins to make you feel uneasy in your slavery! Some of you have got on very well under the dominion of the devil up till now; but you begin to fret a little, you do not enjoy sin as you used to do, you have been gathering in part of the wages of sin, which is death. Some receive these wages in their bodies, others receive them in their minds when they begin to feel despondency and despair creeping over them. The prospect of death is unpleasant to you; sin begins to be a burden hard to bear. I am glad of it. The greatest, hardest work of grace is to make the slave of sin willing to be set free. Grace is doing that; and, having gone so far that it has made you hate your chains, and long for liberty, it will bring you out of captivity. You may be a long time before you see the outer gate of the prison, and escape from the house of bondage; but you shall see it. If you see it tonight, I pray the living God to help you to run through that open gate, and to be free tonight, *tonight*, for I cannot help desiring that my subject, the immediate abolition of slavery, may come home with saving power to some heart. Oh, you young men, and lads of fifteen, I recollect when I came into a house of prayer—a very small one it was—and sat under the gallery with all my fetters on; but then I did want to be free! I longed to be set at liberty; and when I heard that blessed message, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,” I did look; and I tell you it was my surprise, and it is my surprise still, that my fetters were all gone in a moment. They seemed to be of iron, and of iron they were; but they melted as the morning frost melts in the sun, when the beams of the grace of God, in the glorified and exalted Savior, came streaming in upon my soul. I was free in a moment. It was immediate, unconditional abolition of slavery. Grace had done it, grace had done it; O Lord, let Your grace do the like for others now!

Often, when I come in at the door, and my eye falls on this vast congregation, I feel a tremor go through me to think that I should have to speak to you all, and be in some measure accountable for your future state. Unless I preach the gospel faithfully, and with all my heart, your blood will be required at my hands. Do not wonder, therefore, that when I am weak and sick, I feel my head swim when I stand up to speak to you, and my heart is often faint within me; but I do have this joy at the back of it all, God does set many sinners free in this place. Some people reported that I was mourning that there were no conversions. Brethren, if you were all to be converted tonight, I should mourn for the myriads outside. That is true; but I praise the Lord for the many who are converted here. When I came last Tuesday to see converts, I had twenty-one whom I was able to propose to the church; and it will be the same next Tuesday, I do not doubt. God is saving souls, I am not preaching in vain; I am not despondent about that matter; liberty is given to the captives, and there will be liberty for some of them tonight. I wonder who it will be. Some of you young women over yonder, I trust; some who have dropped in here tonight for the first time. Oh, may this first opportunity of your hearing the Word in this place be the time of beginning a new life, which shall never end—a life of holiness, a life of peace with God!

This, then, is how sinners are liberated. Christ pays the ransom price, the Father declares them free, the grace of God secures their liberty; and, further, if they are once made free, then *a righteous law protects them*. The masters in Brazil cannot get back their slaves. There is an old villain who used to flog his slave; he said that he had the right to beat his own Negro as much as he liked; but when once the Negro is free, he dare not touch him. He would like to get him back again; but what would the black man do if his master tried to make him a slave again? Why, he would appeal to the law; and so will we! If Christ has made us free, we will appeal to the law of God; we will go to the High Court of Justice, and say to the Judge of all, “Lord, You have made me free; will You not preserve to me my liberty?” It is God that justifies; who is he that condemns? Who can make him a slave whom God declares to be free? Oh, that you might all know this liberty, and enjoy it! God grant it to you, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake!

III. I finish with the third point, which is this: THE PERSONS WHO OBTAIN THIS LIBERTY. I will say only a very little upon this head, but I am hoping that many here will be able to say, “I belong to that lot, the persons who obtain this liberty.”

First, *they were once slaves*. These Brazilian Deputies cannot set a man free if he is not a slave. The grace of God cannot heal a man who is not sick. God Almighty cannot make a man alive who is not dead. It is essential to us that we be in slavery, or else we cannot be liberated. Come now, what do you say to this? Does anyone of you answer, “I was born free, and was never in bondage to any man. I am as good as my neighbors, yes, and better than most of them”? I have nothing to say to you. “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.” There is no Christ for you who have no sin; there is no salvation for you who never dreaded condemnation; how could there be? Does Christ come

to give clothes to those who are well clad already? Does He come to feed those who are already feasted, or to enrich those who are increased in goods, and have need of nothing? Not He; He comes to preach repentance to the sinner, and pardon to the guilty. You must be a slave, or there is no freedom for you.

And, as far as my newspaper is concerned, the slaves who are set free must be slaves in Brazil, that is, for the time being, *slaves under the reign of grace*. If they are not in Brazil, the Brazilian Deputies cannot set them free; and you must come into the kingdom of Christ if you would be emancipated. O you slaves, you must come under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ; you must be willing henceforth to call Him King, to obey Him, and to abide by His laws; you must come to Him just as you are, and quit your life of sin, and love Him, and love His holiness, and seek to serve Him! If you come under the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ, then there is absolutely proclaimed to you tonight, immediate, unconditional abolition of slavery. God grant that you may obtain this priceless gift!

And, once more, *this emancipation is for all who will accept it unconditionally*. Now, one would think that, when the freedom is to be given unconditionally, everybody would say, "That suits me; if there are no conditions, I am sure that I do not want any, for if there were conditions, I might not be able to comply with them." But I find that every man will have conditions. One says, "Yes, yes, I would like to be saved; but then I do not want to give up my sins." Do you not? Then you must remain a slave. "Well," says another, "I would like to give up most of my sins; but there is one which I could not give up. The fact is, I have to make my living through it; I cannot give that up." You must either remain a slave, or you must come to be unconditionally set free. "But I do not wish to be set free by grace," says a third, "I should like to do something towards my salvation." I know you would; you would like to have some of the honor of it, but it will never be written up, "Christ and Company, Saviors, Limited." It would be very "limited," I am sure, if it were so. You must have all Christ, or no Christ; Christ must save you from the A to the Z of the alphabet, or else you will never be saved at all. Will you surrender unconditionally, since God gives His grace unconditionally? Away with all terms and conditions. Come as you are; come now; come immediately; come unconditionally; and you shall be saved. The Lord grant you grace to yield to His mercy, and to yield at once!

"What shall I do?" says one. "I think I will go home, and pray." Well, you may do so, if you like, but the gospel message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Still, do pray, for God does hear prayer. That is a wonderful story that came to us lately; you may have seen it, perhaps, in the paper. There was picked up, on the shore of Western Australia (I forget the town for the moment), an albatross; it was dead on the beach, and on the bird's neck was a card tied with a string. The man who picked up the card took it to someone in authority, for on it was written, "Thirteen of us sailors cast away on the Crozets." These are a number of rocky islands in the far south of the Indian Ocean. The ship in which these men had sailed had been wrecked, and they were left with a certain quantity of biscuits on the Crozet Islands. I do not know how they caught the albatross; but it shows the genius of man and the love of life, for they managed to catch this great strong-winged bird, and fastened the card about his neck, and he must have taken a flight of nearly two thousand miles, and have fallen down on the shore with the shipwrecked mariners' message. The French Government dispatched a man-of-war to the Crozets, and so did the English Government. These poor fellows had not only sent tidings by the albatross, but they had also gathered a great pile of stones, and put a flag on the top, to attract the attention of any who might pass that way. Nothing has been seen of them, for they did not wait long enough; they put out to sea in the two boats in which they reached the islands, and they have never been heard of since, so far as I know; but see what efforts they made! They piled the stones to attract the attention of passing sailors, and they hung the card about the neck of the albatross. Why, there did not seem one chance in a thousand that the bird would ever go to a shore where that message would be read; yet the men did what they could. Now, I do exhort you, if you are dying and perishing, do anything that you can that may bring you relief; send a petition up to heaven. Though it may seem as if you hung your prayer upon a poor bird's neck, send it flying; pile up the stones, with the flag on the top—your groans, and cries, and tears—that you may attract attention to your desperate state. Yet you are not, after all, driven to such bare chances as these; you may pray as much as you like, but the gospel message is, "Believe, and live." Hear the royal proclamation, and ask for nothing more. There is redemption; the ransom price is paid; the slave is free. Believe it; accept it; act upon it; go forth, and prove it to be true. Oh, that some soul would do that tonight! Believe that God has provided for your emancipation, and accept the liberty Christ has purchased. Why should you quarrel with it? I know that sinners do try to find reasons why they should not be saved. If there is a person in prison tonight, condemned to be hanged, and if I were to

go to him, and say, "I have every reason to know that your life will be spared," I do not believe that he would sit down and try to prove to me that it could not be so; I do not think that he would attempt to argue that he should be hanged; at any rate, I would not talk that way myself if it were my case. As far as ever my logic would carry me, I would try to argue my neck out of the hangman's noose, not into it. O poor soul, do not argue yourself into hell, do not argue against divine mercy! As we sang just now—

*"Take salvation;
Take it now, and happy be."*

Say to yourself, and say to your God, "I believe it; I accept it; I will go my way made free by sovereign grace, and I will act as a free man should, to the praise of my great Master, and to the glory of His grace."

The Lord bless you, dear friends, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *Luke 4:14-32.*

Verse 14. *And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee:*

Ah, dear brethren, if our Lord Jesus needed "the power of the Spirit," how much more do you and I need it! We have no power of our own; but He was the Son of God. He was a divine Teacher; and yet, when He went to His work, it was "in the power of the Spirit." Tarry, brother, till you have that power; it is of no use for you to go without it.

14, 15. *And there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.*

There was a wondrous power about His teaching: "Never man spoke like this man." Perhaps His hearers did not understand what the power was; but they glorified the new Teacher who had come into their midst.

16. *And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up:*

It is always a difficult thing for a young man to begin preaching in his own native town. A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, yet Jesus "came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up."

16. *And, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.*

It was the custom to read parts of Holy Writ in the synagogue, and then to say a few words by way of exposition; and this the Savior did.

17. *And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book,*

That is, unrolled the parchment containing Isaiah's prophecy—

17. *He found the place where it was written,*

You will find the passage in the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah.

18, 19. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

There He stopped; it was all of the passage that then seemed suitable.

20. *And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down.*

In those days, the preacher sat down, and those who listened stood up. I daresay that practice tended to keep the hearers awake, and it was all the easier for the speaker. Well might the Savior sit down, weighted as He was with a burden of holy instruction that He was about to impart to the people; or, perhaps, sitting down as if Himself at rest, He appeared the more ready to give rest to them also.

20. *And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him.*

The young Nazarene, who had left them for a while, and had come home again, was the center of His fellow-townsmen's attention.

21. *And He began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

He thus declared that He was the anointed Messiah.

22. *And all bore Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.*

They did not at first quibble at or deny what Jesus said; His doctrine was pleasing and comforting, and they were ready to accept it.

22. *And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?*

Now they began to question: "Is not this the son of the carpenter?"

23. *And He said unto them, You will surely say unto Me the proverb, Physician, heal yourself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.*

"You have been doing great things over yonder at Capernaum; do the same at Nazareth. You should not leave Your own native town without working miracles here." Now there was an opportunity for Jesus to ingratiate Himself with the people, and win their good word. If He would only perform miracles among them, He would be highly exalted in their esteem.

24, 25. *And He said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in His own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;*

Many husbands died, and many widows in Israel were left desolate in those terrible days of trial.

26. *But unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.*

This was as much as to say, "It is not because I lived here that I shall work miracles in this place. There were many widows round about Elijah, but he was not sent to one of them; he was sent to a widow in Sarepta, a city of Sidon, a heathen woman in another country." Mark the sovereignty of God; He bestows His mercy where He wills, according to His declaration to Moses, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." We dare not ask God why He does this, "for He gives not account of any of His matters." He acts wisely; but He acts according to the good pleasure of His own will.

27. *And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.*

He, too, was a heathen from a distant country. Healing came to him, but to none of the lepers of Israel. God will do as He pleases with His own mercy and grace. The question that He asks is, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?" "This doctrine of divine sovereignty was not according to the taste of these people; they did not like it, and some of you, I fear, do not like it. They grew very angry, they began to gnash their teeth, and to say, "This young man must be silenced; we will not listen to such doctrine as this from Him."

28. *And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath.*

They did not mind hearing the first part of His teaching; but now that He exalts the sovereignty of God, and lays the sinner low, He speaks too plainly for them: "They were filled with wrath."

29, 30. *And rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong. But He passing through the midst of them went His way.*

They could not destroy Him at that time. His work was not done, and He was immortal till it was fully accomplished.

31, 32. *And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for His word was with power.*

God grant that His Word may be with power tonight! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—357, 497, 552.

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