

THE CLIMAX OF GOD'S LOVE

NO. 2571

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“And it shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me Ishi; and shall call Me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.”
Hosea 2:16, 17.

YOU who have been here, on recent Thursday nights, will remember how Israel was described at the time to which our text refers. [See Sermon #'s 2564 and 2569—*Strange Ways of Love*, and *The Backsliders Door of Hope*]. She was represented as a woman who had been false to her marriage vows, and had left her husband, and defiled herself in the most abominable way. Being greatly inflamed with evil passions, she had gone astray times out of number; and then the Lord Jehovah, who was Israel's true spiritual Husband, in the abundance of His love sought to bring her back again to Himself. He exercised her with severe discipline, taking away from her many things in which she delighted, till she became poor, and sick, and wretched. He hedged up her way with thorns, and put obstacles in her way, so that she could not find her paths; and when she went after her lovers, she could not overtake them. But, notwithstanding all that, she still continued to go further and further away from Him to whom her love was due—the God to whom she owed everything—the only living and true God who had been so gracious and true to her. At last, the Lord tried other means of bringing her back to Himself; instead of driving her from Him, or threatening her with destruction, He allured her into the wilderness; and there He manifested Himself to her in all the charms of His divine purity and beauty. He drew her away from all her old companions, brought her into a place of solitude, and then spoke to her very heart with a voice of infinite love, so that He won her again, and brought her back to Himself; and then it was that He gave her once more the joys which she had lost, and a great many others, and made her rich with everything that could cause her to be indeed blessed.

Now comes in this passage which I have just read in your hearing, and which appears to me to describe the climax of God's love. His infinite mercy at last taught Israel to know Him in deed and in truth, and by the mighty power of His grace she was clean delivered from all her former idolatrous lovers, and made to cleave in holy constancy to Jehovah her God. I want to speak to you about that work of love in the heart of these wanderers, which at last brought them to be right with their God; and my hope is that our meditation upon the text will be blessed in the same fashion to many others. When a man is truly right with God, he is right everywhere. As long as he is wrong with God, he may be right everywhere else, yet he is not right in the most important matter of all; but as long as he is right with God, everything is put in due order, and everything will go on well with him in all respects.

Coming closely to our text, I want you to notice, first, *the conquest of love*: “It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me Ishi;” that is, “my Husband.” Secondly, I shall say a little upon *the jealousy of love*: “At that day . . . you shall call Me no more Baali;” because that name had been defiled, and God would not have His servants use toward Himself a title which had been stained with sin. Then, thirdly, I shall speak of *the nearness of love*, which is a point that lies concealed within the text, but which I will try to bring out. And, fourthly, I shall speak upon *the vengeance of love*, for true love will

lead us to take vengeance upon that evil which has brought so much sorrow to our heart: "I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name."

I. First, then, let us think for a little while upon THE CONQUEST OF LOVE: "It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me Ishi;" that is, "my Husband."

They had not called God by that name before, they had stood in awe and dread of the Most High, but as to calling God their Husband, that, they had never done, though He was truly a Husband to them, for He lavished on them all the kindness and tenderness which a husband renders toward his beloved wife. Yet God's people had never given Him that love which was due in return; and they had never dared to call Him by so sweet and endearing a name as that of Ishi, "my Husband." But the Lord said, "At that day, you shall call Me Ishi." Grace has really won us when it has won our hearts; when we yield to God, not a mere external obedience, but the affection of our hearts, then all is won, and all is well.

Note, first, dear friends that these people were so truly won back to God that *they had a new name for Him*, a name which had never occurred to them before. They had called Him God; they had spoken to Him as Jehovah, or as El, or as Elohim; but they had never thought to call Him "Ishi." But now they understand Him better, and here is a new name for Him who is to them practically a new Being, a new Person. Alas! That, still, many men do not "know the Lord." There is a depth of meaning in that expression, and to multitudes God is quite unknown. It was said, long ago, that it is the highest wisdom for a man to know himself; but I deny that. The first, the highest, the best of all wisdom is for a man to know his God. As for himself, he is but a speck, an atom, a nothing; if he truly attains a knowledge of God, he will afterwards know himself in the best possible way. Pope said that "the proper study of mankind is man," but it is not so; his proper study is mankind's Maker, the God who made us all. But man, until he is divinely taught, knows not God; he has not, by nature, a name for God; he borrows a name out of the Bible, and calls Him "God"; that is, "good"; but he does not mean what he says, for, if he thought that God was good, he would love Him; but inasmuch as he does not love God, he does not, in the highest sense, know God. But when a man comes to know the Lord, when God, in all His wondrous majesty draws near the heart, and opens the eyes of the understanding till the man sees his Maker, and cries, "How dreadful is this place; this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven"—when he feels that the Lord is there, and he knows it, then, straightway, he uses a right name for God. That is a very precious name which Christ puts into our mouths when He bids us say to God, "Our Father, which are in heaven;" and there is a wonderful sweetness when we come to know that we may call Him our Husband. I do not like to compare the two, and say which title is to be preferred—whether Husband or Father—they are both unutterably sweet when they are enjoyed to the full.

You see, then, dear friends, that grace had taught these people a new name for God. David said to the Lord, "They that know Your name will put their trust in You;" in another Psalm, the Lord's response is given: "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he has known My name." So was it in the day of which our text speaks.

Further, that name, Ishi, "my Husband," is *a name of love*. There is a mutual engagement between the true husband and wife; they are the complement of each other. So is it with Christ and His Church; yet, as I read of it in the Bible, it often astonishes me. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "It pleased the Father that in Him" (that is, in the Divine Husband, Christ Jesus), "should all fullness dwell." Then to the Ephesians he wrote, "And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all." It is marvelous that the saints should be to Christ a fullness; but so it is. He is to be to us as the Husband, and we are to be to Him as the dearly-beloved object of that love, desiring to return it as best we can, loving Him and Him alone with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. What a sweet name that is for our Divine Lord—our Husband! What but the grace of God could ever have given backsliding Israel courage to utter it? What but the grace of God could ever have taught us to know that we also might truthfully say it? Yet I trust that many of us do say of God in Christ Jesus, "He is our Ishi, our Husband." This name, then, is a name of love, suggesting the mutual engagement between Christ and His people.

It is also *a name of honor, involving obedience*: “for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church . . . Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” In the relationship between Christ and His people, everything is written in capital letters, for truly He is the Head of His body, the Church; therefore, dear friends, it is for us who belong to Him to be obedient to Christ in everything. It was a wise word that the mother of Jesus spoke to the servants at the marriage at Cana, “Whatsoever He says to you, do it.” That is exactly what we ought to do under all circumstances. Christ’s will is our law, His teaching is our doctrine, He Himself we call Lord, and we do well, for so He is. He has become everything to us now, as the true husband is to the true wife. It is a joy to us to obey Him. If a command comes to us from Christ, our feet have wings, like the fabled Mercury. If a word comes from Christ, our mind is wax to be stamped with it, as with a seal; and we desire never to lose the impression. If we know that Christ does but wish a thing, it shall be as the bonds of law to us. We wish to do—no, we long to do His will, and to have every thought brought into captivity to the law of Christ. I am sure, dear friends, it is a wonder of grace when we can say this, for there was a time when we never cared for Christ. A little while ago, some of us did not mind what His laws were, or what His teaching was, He was nothing at all to us. “He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.” But now, how different it is! The faintest accent that falls from His lips has in it a power and a majesty which we do not wish to deny. He is our Husband, and we are His obedient spouse.

Husband, again, is *a name of trust and expectation*. A wife expects her maintenance and all that she needs from her husband, and she ought to have it, too. It is the part of the husband to render to his wife all that he can for her necessity and her happiness. All our expectations are from Christ. Some wives bring their husbands a dowry, but we brought Christ nothing but our poor selves. Sometimes a wife has nothing but what she stands upright in, but we had not even that, for we could not stand upright at all. We were like that infant whom the Lord described by the pen of Ezekiel—cast out into the open field, neglected, unwashed, unclothed, left there to die; but when our Lord passed by, it was the time of love, and He said to us, “Live.” We had to be indebted to Him for life, and we have had to be indebted to Him for everything since that. I have no doubt that some wives think it is a fine thing to have their husband’s purse to draw from, but I know that it is glorious to have Christ’s purse to draw from. “Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace;” and we expect to receive a great deal more yet, and sometimes we sing about what we are to have by and by—

*“And a ‘new song’ is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set;
Glory to You for all the grace
I have not tasted yet.”*

Yes, this name of husband is a name of trust and expectation, and in God’s case, as the Husband of His people, the trust and the expectation are never disappointed.

But, best of all, it is *a name of indissoluble union*. I could not trust myself to speak on this wondrous theme, for even Paul, when he wrote upon it said, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.” “This is a great mystery,” added the apostle, “but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” It is indeed a great mystery that Christ should have left His Father to become one flesh with His people. Think of Him here on earth, hungry, weary, toiling, and at last scourged, crucified, faint, and dying, because He took upon Himself our flesh, and became one with us; and now, there is such a union between every believer and Christ as can never be destroyed. Paul triumphantly asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” There is no possibility of divorce between Christ and the soul that trusts Him; for it is written, “The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away;” and therefore He will never practice it, nor will He ever banish from His heart one whom He has taken to be His own. “Your Maker is your Husband,” is a sentence full of comfort to everyone who can claim that blessed relationship. This union stands fast forever and ever. The Lord did not approve of giving a bill of divorcement in the olden days, although Moses permitted it because of the hardness of men’s hearts; and He will never do Himself what

He did not approve of, but He will cling to us forever. Once joined to Christ, we shall never be divided from Him, but shall ever be able to call Him, "Ishi, my Husband."

Is not this indeed a conquest of love that those who were utter strangers to Christ, that those who were downright enemies to Him—that those who lived year after year, and even when they did think a little, did not give Him a thought, or if they thought of Him, refused to yield to Him—is it not wonderful that even these should come to be as much in love with Christ as the newly-married wife is with her husband—and that these people should be linked with Christ so as never to be separated from Him, world without end? O beloved, I think I said nothing but the truth when I called it the conquest of love!

II. Now we come to the second part of the text, which speaks of THE JEALOUSY OF LOVE: "It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me Ishi; and shall call Me no more Baali."

What does "Baali" mean? It means, husband; it means the same thing as Ishi. I will show you the point of difference presently; but, speaking broadly, it is the same thing. Then, why not call Him Baali if it means the same thing? Was there anything wrong in the word Baali? No, nothing, for the Lord Himself uses it on other occasions. Why, then, does He say, "You shall call Me no more Baali," when He calls Himself so? Well, it was for this reason, they had used the name for false gods, they had called them Baal, therefore they were not to use that title any more for Jehovah. He said to them, "You have been accustomed to speak of Me as Baal, and to speak of this god, and that god, and all the gods as so many Baals, or Baalim; now, from this time forth, I will have a name to Myself, and it shall be Ishi, and you shall never again call Me Baali." This was the command of God; and, moreover, it met with His people's full consent. You may depend upon it that what God here orders, His people were willing to carry out. They would no more call Him by a name which had been dishonored by association with Israel's idolatries, and which therefore could not properly be applied to Jehovah.

I want you to listen very intently to what I am about to say. Some of you have lately united with the Lord's people; may God give you great love to Himself, and may that love have a holy jealousy associated with it! There are some things which, in themselves, may be right enough; but having become connected with wrong things, you must not meddle with them any more. If the word Ishi means, husband, and the word Baal also means husband, yet, inasmuch as that word Baal has been used concerning idols, and so has become defiled, and despoiled of its beauty and purity, you must not use it to God. There is nothing wrong in the word itself, but there is evil in its associations; therefore, drop it. There have been other words that have fallen in a similar fashion. The word "tyrant" used to mean a lord or king; there were so many little kings of Greece who were called tyrants, and who so misbehaved themselves, that at last nobody wished to wear such a name as that of tyrant. It is no longer applied to a king simply because he holds that office, but only to an oppressive tyrannical despot. So, in the Latin, there is a word which used to mean servant; but now, if you turn to the dictionary, you will find that it means a thief, and a servant is not called by that name; but it came to mean a thief because, I suppose, in those days, many servants were thieves. In this way, words get pulled down from their original meaning; and this word Baal was just one of them. It is no use saying, "Oh, but there was a time when it was a very proper word to use!" You have nothing to do with that matter; is it a proper word to use now? For, if it is not, do not touch it.

There are many things in the world of that sort. I am not going to mention them one by one, because you have your own senses, and you can apply a general rule to particular instances. There are a thousand things which, today, in your minds, and in the minds of all thinking persons, are connected with evil; and if you have a truly jealous love to Christ, you will say, concerning any of them, "I must not do this." Avoid the very appearance of evil, keep clear of it altogether. Just picture to yourself a true Ishmaelite kneeling down to worship Jehovah. I will suppose that he has been accustomed to speak of God, under that word Baal, as his Husband; and as he worships, with others, he cries, "O Baal, hear us!" I can imagine that, as God heard that prayer, He accepted it; the man meant it rightly enough, he worshipped God under a right name, one which the Lord had given to Himself. But supposing that a heathen happened to stand where he heard the Israelite pray; he would say to himself, "That man worships Baal the same as I

do." Well, if it had been my case, and I had risen from my knees, and heard such a remark as that, I would have said, "I see that the title I have used is calculated to mislead: I will never use it again, but what word shall I put in its place?" The Lord here answers the question: "It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me Ishi; and shall call Me no more Baali," because the name Baali was likely to be misunderstood. For God's sake be pure, for nothing but purity ought to appear in His presence. For your own sake, be very careful; you cannot be too precise and particular. Your tendencies are toward evil, keep them in check; and, for the sake of others, who, if they see you take an inch, will take a yard, be you doubly careful, and let not even a name, which to you may have been sacred and holy, come upon your lips if it has been used in an unholy manner, and would suggest a sinful idea to the minds of others. That is the drift of the subject; that a man who loves Christ should be jealous of himself to the last degree.

I never knew anyone who was too precise or too Puritan; I have heard some people say that of certain men, and whenever I have come to know those who have been so described, I have found them such godly people that I have wished to be like them. It is always better to be too precise than to be too lax; our chastity of love to Christ is a thing that must not be questioned. Caesar's wife must not only be beyond blame, but she must be above suspicion; and so must Christians try to be. Oh, that we did always guard ourselves most jealously, lest in anything, we should grieve our Lord! Better that I deny myself a thousand things which I might take than that I should mislead one person, and lead him into sin. "If meat makes my brother offend, I will eat no flesh while the world stands," said the apostle Paul. He might lawfully have eaten meat, and he said that he felt free in his own conscience to do as he pleased in that matter; but he had regard to the conscience of others who might be caused to stumble through him. Therefore, he made himself weak that he might gain the weak; and lest haply another man, doing what he might safely do, might be lost through doing it. Take care, then, dear friends, as to your influence upon other people; do not be among those who say, "We shall still use the title Baali; we always did use it, and it is a very proper title. God has applied it to Himself, and we are not going to say anything else. What if other people do misuse it? We cannot help that; we are not our brother's keepers." That is the way Cain talked: "Am I my brother's keeper?" If there is such a man among us, I hope he will be very uncomfortable until he has come to a better state of mind; our feeling is that we are our brothers' keepers, and we desire, as much as lies in us, only to do that which will be safe for others to imitate. God help us to put the spirit and teaching of this passage into constant practice in our daily life!

III. Now, thirdly, I want to prove to you that, in our text, there is a reference to THE NEARNESS OF LOVE. It lies hidden there, as honey is concealed within a flower, and the bee must dive right into the flower to find it.

It appears, dear friends, according to a great number of commentators that those two words, Ishi and Baali, though they both mean husband, yet mean husband in a very different way. If a husband were to command his wife in an imperious fashion, as I suppose the Oriental husbands usually did, then the spouse might say, "My lord," or, "Baali;" but when the husband was kind, and tender, and loving, his wife might say, "Ishi." Baali means, "my husband," "my lord," as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him, "My lord," or, "Baali." Yes, but Ishi means "My husband," "My well-beloved," "My man," in that genial, loving, tender sense in which that expression is used by a loving wife. Let us be astonished as we learn that God would have His people call Him no more "Baali," or "Lord," but "Ishi," "My Man," "My Husband."

God is thus revealed to His people as *ruling them not so much by law, as by love*. It is no longer "You shall," and, "You shall not;" but a sweet constraint is upon them by which they delight to do His will. When the worldling dreads sin, it is because he is afraid of hell; but the Christian is delivered from all fear of hell, and he hates sin itself because he fears to grieve the God he loves. In the Church of God, the great rule is not, "Do this, and you shall be rewarded; do the opposite, and you shall be punished." That is the way Hagar ruled Ishmael, but that is not the way in which Sarah governed Isaac. The Lord does not put us upon legal terms with Him. He does not say, "You must do this and that, or else you

shall have no grace from Me, and I will cast you off, and destroy you.” Nothing of the sort; you who believe in Jesus are not under the law, but under grace; you are under the sweet and blessed rule of gracious and generous love—

*“Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move.”*

The law drives and scourges, but it gets nothing out of us; but love comes, with its abundant gifts of all-sufficient grace, and straightway we say, “Lord, enable us to serve You, help us to be obedient to You.” Love accomplishes what law never can; and when we view God as love, then He is Ishi; and no longer do we look upon Him as ruling us by law, for then His name would be Baali.

Further, this nearness of love *changes servitude into honor*. When we are under the law, and call God Baali, life is servitude. Look at some who are trying to serve God without really knowing Him; they must do so much, they must feel so much, they must pray so much, they must work so much, they must go through such-and-such ceremonies, and all they do is looked upon as being something required at their hands by a stern taskmaster. Rowland Hill tells the story of one who said that she had been preparing herself for the sacrament; she took a week to do it, and then she found out that she had mistaken the day, and she said that, through her mistake, she had lost the whole week. That is the way they act and speak to whom God is Baali; but the child of God, when he comes to the communion table, if he thinks it right to spend the whole week in getting himself in a right condition of heart for so doing, would say, if the table were not spread, “Well, I have had a blessing even in preparing for it; even if I cannot just now observe the outward ordinance, I have been waiting upon God, and so I have drawn near to Him in spirit and in truth.”

It is one of our highest pleasures to attend a place of worship; yet to some people it is a self-denial. Well, I do not say to them, “Do not go to the house of prayer;” but I do say, “You are not going in the right spirit.” I like to see the people coming here on the Lord's-day, or on a week-night, either; I can almost tell them by the way they walk. They trip along joyously as if they were pleased to come, and as if they came to enjoy themselves, as I believe they do. That is how God would have you worship Him, in the spirit of freedom, and not in the spirit of slavery. Does He want slaves to grace His throne? In the old days of Legree and the slave-drivers, a man might be thought great who had all his slaves bowing down before him as he walked along; but what true man wishes for that sort of servitude? To rule over free men, should be the ambition of a monarch; and God will rule over spirits that love Him, that delight in Him, that are perfectly free, and that find their freedom in doing His will. You shall call Him no more Baali, counting it as servitude to wait upon Him; but you shall call Him Ishi. It shall be a joy and an honor to serve your beloved Lord. You know how a loving wife waits upon her husband; it is never slavery to her, but always a delight. She thinks of a hundred things that she can do for his comfort—some of them, things that are perfectly unnecessary, they would never be commanded by any kind of law; but her loving heart suggests to her that she should do them so as to give him pleasure. So is it with the child of God; he tries to think of what he can do for Jesus, and he never imagines that he can do enough for the Savior who has loved him, and died to save him. Had he ten thousand hearts and lives, he would like to spend them all, and the help they bring with them, and the force they have in them, for His dear Lord and Master.

The name Ishi, instead of Baali, further means that, henceforth, *the Believer's life is not one of fear, but one of confidence*. The slave is afraid of the crack of the whip; see how the blood flies from his poor cheek, lest he should feel the cruel lash. That is the condition of the man who thinks that his eternal safety depends upon his own watchfulness, his own prayerfulness, his own doings, and his own will. But the child of God says, “I am trusting in Christ, I am everlastingly saved, and have no need to fear;” and he adds—

*“Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count but loss,
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His cross.”*

He is not at all afraid now. What! Not afraid of sinning? Yes, he is; but not on legal ground. The true Christian reminds me of a little boy who had a very kind and loving father, and he was very fond of his father, too. One day, some boys agreed to go and rob an orchard, and they said to him, "Jack, you come with us." "No," he answered, "I cannot go with you, for it would grieve my father." "Oh, but!" they said, "your father loves you, and he won't beat you as our fathers will if they find out." "Ah!" he replied, "that is the very reason why I could not go—because he never beats me; he is so kind and loving that I will not do anything to grieve him." That is just the spirit that animates true Christians. If we live unto God, we cannot bear to do what is wrong; immortal principles forbid the child of God to sin; he must be holy. Love binds him fast, crucifies him, makes him dead to what he once loved, and makes him live in newness of life. You, who prefer the bondage of the law, may have it if you please. You, who like the crack of that whip, may live under it if you will. But oh, if you once really knew the love of God, you would never want to go back to that servitude again! You would never say, "Baali," and crouch down, like a poor woman before a husband who was about to strike her; but you would come to your Lord in loving confidence, and say to Him, "Offend You, my Lord? I cannot do it, I love You too well for that. I would give all I am, and all I have, that I might give You pleasure, for You are my Ishi. O Christ, by your bleeding wounds and bloody sweat, by Your death and resurrection, You are my Man, my Husband! You are Man, and You have become Man for me—My Man, to whom my soul is married, once and for all, and I must love You, and serve You till life's last hour."—

*"I will love You in life, I will love You in death,
And praise You as long as You lend me breath;
And say, when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
'If ever I loved You, my Ishi, 'tis now.'"*

IV. So to close, I want you, for a minute or two, to notice, in the fourth place, THE VENGEANCE OF LOVE, for, when jealousy is stirred up, love makes a clean sweep of everything that comes in its way: "I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name."

What a *sweeping vengeance* it is! "I will take away the names of Baalim." The very name of the one we once loved shall be taken away from us. One good effect of the long captivity of the Jews was that, after they returned to their own land, they never fell into idolatry again, and I do not believe they ever will. They are clean cured of that evil; I should think it is the rarest thing in the world to find a Jew to become a Romanist, because it seems contrary now to the very nature of Israel to bow down before a visible emblem. But what did the Jews do? They took the name that they used to give to their false god, Baal, and they applied it to the devil, hence you get the term Beelzebub, or Baalzebub, the god of flies, the god of dung—a caricature name which they applied to the devil himself. So, the things you loved when you were in the world, and made your god, are to you like the devil now. What a change the grace of God makes when it enters the heart! Has your false god become your devil, and what you despised become your God? That is the meaning of the promise of the text: "I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth." When we pronounce the word that once was sweet to us, it shall positively mean something else; it shall be bitter to us even to think of it. There are some words which were in our vocabulary when we were ungodly, but we never use them now; or, if we do use them, they mean the very opposite to what they meant before we came to love the Lord. There are professors who talk a great deal about some things that are better not mentioned; Paul says, "It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." I always regret, when a person tells the story of his past life, when he seems to think it necessary to drag in some of the black bits. If you do so, my brother, mind that you rub in plenty of salt before you put any of the unsavory meat out; otherwise it may leave a bad smell behind. There may be mischief done even by those who fancy that they are magnifying the grace of God. It is sometimes necessary to tell what we were in our unconverted state, but if we do so, we must be very careful not to take the name of Baalim on our lips while we are trying to glorify our God.

The fact is, dear friends, the Lord makes *such a thorough change, such a spiritual change*, that it is true of past things, "they shall no more be remembered by their name." That is the last clause of the text. You cannot help remembering the things in which you delighted in the days of your ignorance, you cannot quite blot them out of your memory, even though you have forsaken them long ago; but you do not remember them by their old name, and you do not call them by that name now. You have learned to call a spade a spade, and you do not know it now except by that name. People talk about "seeing life," but if they were to say to a Christian man that he had been seeing life, he would not understand them. He would say, "You do not see life in the places where you go, you see corruption; but to see life, is to live unto God." "Oh, but!" says one, "I have been enjoying myself, I have been having pleasure." But, to the Christian man, those words do not mean what they mean to the ungodly man, for sin would be no pleasure to him, it would be utter misery. The swine find great pleasure in a few inches of filthy mud; but if you could change them into men, and put them to sleep in nice soft beds, I guarantee you that then they would have a good night's rest. I daresay the devil finds himself at home in Hades, or wherever his dwelling place may be; but if he could be converted into a seraph, he would not stay in hell for an hour. He would never want to go there again for pleasure; of that I am certain. And when a man, who professes to be converted, says that he goes into the world, and into sin, for pleasure, it is as if an angel went to hell for enjoyment. The Lord give you grace, dearly-beloved, so to love Him, and to find such perfect liberty in His service, that though you may be tempted to sin, you will not yield, for love invincible binds you to His heart, and holds you fast forever!

Paul said, and it was a grand utterance, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." When a Roman had a slave, whom he did not mean ever to sell, or to part with, in his cruelty he branded him with his own name. Suppose that it was Caesar, he took his slave, and burned the name of Caesar right into his flesh; so, the apostle says, "I bear in my body the marks"—the brand—"of the Lord Jesus. I am His forever; I never wish to run away from Him, nor can I." There are some friends about to be baptized. I only trust that they will receive the spiritual brand right into their soul. What a brand this baptism is to a man! You see, it is not on his arm; so he cannot cut it off, it is all over him. It is a water-mark that cannot be removed from him. You may go into sin, but you have been baptized, and that fact shall rise against you in judgment. Whatever you do, you have been professedly buried with Christ; and if you are not dead, you have no business to be buried; but if you have lied unto God, and during the rest of your life, if you turn away from Him, yet still that mark is upon you. Woe unto you; for you have been a deceiver! But the true and genuine Christian does not mind what mark he has to tell to whom he belongs. "Set it on my forehead," he says, "for there I hope to wear it by and by." "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads." God grant that we may all come to that glorious condition, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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