

DEATH AND ITS SENTENCE ABOLISHED

NO. 2605

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 15, 1899
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”
Colossians 2:13-14

IT tends to excite gratitude in our hearts if we remember what the Lord has done for us. It is not wrong for us to think of all that we still need from God, but it would be exceedingly ungrateful if we were to forget what we have already received. By far the greater part of salvation is ours already and though, in some respects, we have not yet attained, neither are already perfect, yet in other respects we are complete in Christ Jesus.

If we are truly believers in Christ, we are already saved. We are not merely in a salvable state, but we have really obtained salvation. In Christ, we are delivered from the curse of the law and we have an eternal inheritance already secured to us. I must not dwell on that blessed theme. I only just mention it, in passing, to remind you that it encourages our gratitude if we remember what the Lord has done for us.

It also stimulates us to hope for more blessings in the future. It puts a keener edge upon our prayers and helps us to plead with greater confidence, for we feel that, inasmuch as God has given us so much already and done so much for us, He will perfect that which concerns us and will not forget the work of His own hands.

The remembrance of what the Lord has done for us is quite sure also to inflame our love. We cannot be cold-hearted if we continue to recollect God's goodness to us. We must be glad in the Lord and with that gladness, there must come fervent love to Him who has wrought all these things on our behalf and brought us into the blessed estate of those who are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

This morning [Sermon #1744, Where the “If” Lies], I talked to those who were seeking the Savior. They had their turn then, so now I am going to speak to those who have found the Lord. Ah, dear friends, how precious He is to you! I want you to see what He has done for you—what God the everlasting Father has done for you through Jesus Christ His Son—that you may come and sit at His feet in adoring love and feel your hearts burn within you as you meditate upon the riches of His amazing grace.

Our text speaks of two things which God has done for us through Christ Jesus. First, there is *the removal of the death within us*, “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses.” The second thing is *the removal of the handwriting which was against us*. This we have in the fourteenth verse. “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

Before I come to the subject of my discourse, I want every child of God whom I am addressing to feel, “The preacher's talk is to be about me and about what Christ has done for *me*,” for, remember, dear friends, that the work of Christ is as distinctly on behalf of each believer as if he were the only object of divine love in the whole universe.

And while it is true that Christ's work concerns all His people—and it is a very great comfort that it is so—yet it is also true that it concerns each one of His people, and it is all the property of each one, and yet there is as much left for all of us who believe in Christ. I want you, just now, to eat your own morsel, to claim your own portion, and to take home to your own heart what God has given to you by a covenant of salt, and so given to you that it can never be taken away from you.

I. First, then, the Lord has done this for all of us who believe in Him—HE HAS REMOVED OUR INWARD SPIRITUAL DEATH.

Turn to the text to see *what this death was*, “You being dead in your sins.” We were all, then—the regenerate as well as the rest of mankind—“dead in trespasses and sins.” What kind of death was this? Certainly it was not physical death. We lived, and moved, and had our being. We exercised our wills and did as we pleased in our enmity and opposition to God. The Lord does not treat men as if they were stocks and stones, nor does He ever regard them as such. They are alive, and when they sin, they sin most sadly of their own accord.

Neither was our death a mental death, for the ungodly can think as well as others, and they have all the powers of reason unless, indeed, they have dulled and destroyed them by certain forms of sin which produce that result. Alas! there are some of the most acute minds in the world that are not reconciled to God.

The men are alive enough as to their minds, yet they are truly said to be dead. I could almost wish, for some people, that it was a mental death rather than the kind of death they have, since now the quickness of their intellect only helps them to increase their guilt and to multiply the reasons for their condemnation.

And yet again, as it is not a physical death, nor a mental death, so neither is it a moral death. Man is not so dead that he sins without guilt or lives without responsibility. No man who remains out of Christ is without guilt on that account. He who continues an unbeliever may not say that he cannot help it. It is his fault and his sin that he does not believe.

Indeed, our Lord told His disciples that the Comforter would convince the world of sin for this very reason, “Because,” said He, “they believe not on me.” To Nicodemus, our Lord also said, “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

O dear hearers, if I could believe that you were mere machines or that you had drifted along the stream of time like some stray timber on a Canadian river, if I believed that you could not in any way help yourselves, but were the mere creatures of your circumstances, then I might be comfortable concerning you, for you would be exempt from criminality.

But it is not so—you are men and women living before the living God, and you are responsible to Him for your actions, and your words, and even for the thoughts and imaginations of your heart. For every rejection of His Gospel you will have to give account at the last great day. And if you remain out of Christ, that account will seal your doom forever.

The kind of death here spoken of is spiritual death—death as to higher things than can be grasped by the hand, or seen with the eye, or comprehended by the natural mind. Only the spiritual man knows what spiritual things are, for they have to be spiritually discerned. You would not think of teaching a horse the wonders of astronomy, because there is no mind in the horse that could learn that science. Neither can we, of ourselves, teach spiritual things to our fellow men, because until they are born again, born from above, they do not possess the faculty with which they can grasp spiritual things.

Our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh”—and therefore can only lay hold of the things that are fleshly. “And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”—and until a man is born of the Spirit, he is without the faculty of understanding and enjoying spiritual things. As far as spiritual things are concerned, man's understanding is dead. He can comprehend the highest and most

wonderful of sciences, but he cannot—or what is tantamount to it, he will not—understand the things of God. He turns on his heel and says, “I cannot make out what you mean.”

No, we know that you cannot and we are not surprised at your lack of apprehension, for it is just what the Bible leads us to expect. We even find those who consider themselves to be learned divines rejecting the Gospel and saying that it is not consistent with their philosophy. We never thought that it was, and we never imagined that they could receive the Gospel until they are converted and become as little children.

The great reason why men reject the Gospel is because they are not born again, because they have not received the life of God into their souls. If they had, they would understand it so as to delight in it, but the understanding, spiritually, is under a cloud of night, which the Word of God calls “death.”

So also is the human will dead to spiritual things. When a person is literally dead, he cannot will to come to life. Neither does any man ever will to come to Christ till the Spirit of God gives him that will, for his natural will is exerted in quite another direction, as our Lord said to the Jews, “Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.” The will is a slave, it is held in chains, it is set on mischief, and resolved not to subject itself to the will of the Most High. Not morally, nor mentally, but spiritually, the will of man is dead.

So, too, is it true of the affections that they are dead to spiritual things. Men, in their unregenerate state, will not love that which is good. Alas! they will not love Christ. He is altogether lovely, yet unrenewed men see nothing in Him that they should love. Holiness, purity, the will of God—all these things are worthy of being loved, yet men do not love them. Nay, they love the very opposite until the grace of God comes and quickens them.

Now, brothers and sisters, is not all this a true description of what we were before the Spirit of God begins to deal with us in His regenerating power? Were we not dead to all spiritual things? Some of you used to come to the house of God, but you were here just as so many corpses might have been. You used to visit where there were Christian people, but you could not understand what they said about their experience.

You had no enjoyment in their joys, neither did you sorrow in their sorrows. There was a deep gulf between you and them, and the secret was that you were natural men and they were spiritual men. You loved not the things which they loved, even as they took no delight in the things which charmed you, for you were in a condition of spiritual death.

Consider, next, dear friends, *what that spiritual death involved*. The text puts it thus, “You being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh.”

First, we were dead in sin. Nay, I quoted the text wrongly, for we were dead in our *sins*—the word is in the plural. They were our own sins, not the sins of our fate or destiny, or of our circumstances and surroundings, but our own sins. We willingly committed them. As the result of our death to everything that was holy, and good, and spiritual, we sinned and we took pleasure in sin. We repeated our old sins and we devised and invented new sins. They were, with an emphasis, *our* sins, our own actual, real, personal sins.

These sins were very varied, according to our condition and temperament. Some went after one sin, others after another. Some were quiet and gentle sinners, so that many persons thought that they were holy. Others were noisy outrageous sinners, who were a nuisance to the parish in which they lived. Some were sinners under some sort of fear, but they would have sinned more if they had dared to do so. Others had cast off all fear both of God and man, and plunged headlong into rioting, and wantonness, and all manner of unmentionable crimes.

All these sins were accompaniments of spiritual death. They were just what winding-sheets are to dead men. There, then, is the picture of what we were and of what the unregenerate are—“dead in trespasses and sins”—lying there wrapped in the grave clothes of sin, surrounded, covered with sin, getting ready in that condition soon to be carried out to the eternal burial, to the place “where their worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched.”

That is how I was by nature. That is how you were, brothers and sisters, who are now alive unto God. You may, perhaps, have seen an Egyptian mummy, bound from head to foot with the wrappings appertaining to death—so it was with you. Your sins were about your head, your heart, your hands, your feet. Sins surrounded you everywhere, and there you lay, as the text says—“dead in your sins.”

Now let us see *how we were delivered*, and as we lay our hands on our hearts and think of what God has done for us, let us prepare to bless and magnify His name. “You, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened”—He has made you to live—“You hath he quickened together with him.”

God, by His grace, has made you to live in Christ. Do you not feel the difference between what you were and what you now are? Can you imagine what a change there would be if a dead man, who had been lying in his grave clothes, could suddenly sit upright or rise out of the shell in which the undertaker had placed him? What a contrast between the state of death and the state of life!

That is a very faint figure of the difference between what we now are and what we used to be. Do you not realize it, brothers and sisters? The things you once despised, you now value. And the things you then passed by with a sneer, you would now live for and die for. You used to hear about these things and it often seemed dull work to listen to a sermon, but now there is music in it from the first word to the last.

That Bible of yours used to be like an old will to you, and old wills are very dry reading. But now you have found the record of a great legacy left to yourself and oh! it is blessed work to read the will now—you could sit and study it all day long.

Praying, also, used to be hard work. You managed to mutter, in a dead way, a few dead words, but prayer is now quite another thing with you, your whole spirit is alive when you draw near to God in supplication. In fact, you are a changed man altogether.

I suppose that if you were to meet your old self, he would hardly know you, for you are so greatly altered. I daresay he would say to you, “Come, old fellow, let us go to the theatre, or turn into this beer-shop, or let us go home and find some way of amusing ourselves.” You would reply, “No, sir. I cut your acquaintance a long time ago and I do not mean to have anything further to do with you, so you may go about your business as soon as you like. I am not what I was, for I have been crucified with Christ, and I am dead, and my life is hid with Christ in God.”

There was one of the old saints who used to keep company with a woman in his ungodly days, and when he was converted, she met him in the street and said to him, “Austin, you know me.” “Well,” he said, “yes, I do. But I am not Austin any longer. At least, I am not the person that I used to be.”

Oh, it is a blessed thing when we can feel that we are not what we once were! True, we are not yet what we want to be and we are not what we shall be, but we are not what we used to be and we shall never again be what we used to be. The grace of God will prevent that now that we have been quickened.

But how are we quickened? Paul says that God has quickened us together with Christ, and by this he means, first, that we have been quickened mystically by Christ’s resurrection. That morning, when Christ Jesus rose from the dead, all His people rose in Him. The sun was not yet up, but the Prince of life and glory had lingered long enough in the sepulchre. So, awaking into life through the divine power, He began to unwrap Himself from the grave clothes of the tomb.

He laid the napkin by itself for your use and mine, that we may wipe our eyes when our dear friends are taken away, but He took the grave clothes and put them together, that He might leave the house ready furnished against the time when we should be carried there—our last bed being thus supplied by Him with all the furniture we shall need when our time comes to sleep in it.

Then He waited a while till the sheriff’s officer came down to set the hostage free, for the angel descended from heaven, the stone was rolled away, and Jesus breathed again the sweet morning air. He that had been dead arose and left the tomb, no more to die. And in that hour, every one who is in Him was virtually made to rise. The resurrection of all whom He represented was guaranteed by His

resurrection, as He said to His disciples, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” That is the result of the mystical union between Christ and His people.

But as a matter of fact, and practically, you and I began to live, spiritually, *when we became united to Christ by faith*. Do you remember that glad hour when you first believed in Him, trusted Him, put your soul into His hands? Ah! then it was that you began to really live. Oh, what a difference that saving faith makes in us!

In our Savior’s parable about the two builders, there is one expression that seems to me very significant. Luke’s account of it runs thus, “Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”

Did you notice, as I quoted the words, that in the second instance Christ left out all about coming to Him? Yet that coming to Him is the essential thing. If you come to Him, and hear His words, and do them, you will have a rock for the foundation of your eternal building, and it will stand any storm that may beat upon it.

But if you do not come to Christ, even though you do hear His words, that hearing can be of no permanent profit to you. Indeed, it will really increase your condemnation. It is the coming to Him, the getting into union with Him, which settles and decides the all-important point in connection with our new life.

So, then, it was when we became one with Christ by an act of living faith that we were quickened, blessed be His holy name forever and ever! If we do indeed possess this new life, let us show it. Let us prove, by our conduct and conversation, that we are no longer numbered among the dead, that we have risen with Christ, and cannot go back to the tomb, and cannot enjoy the tomb any more.

We will have nothing to do with whitewashing the outside of our old sepulchre. We have left the outside and the inside, too, and now we live unto God and have done forever with the old state of death. I have set forth all too feebly the great work of God in removing the death that was within us, but if you feel that my words are true concerning you, your heart will beat high with devout thanksgiving to the quickening Spirit who has wrought this great miracle in you.

II. Now I come, secondly, to notice the great deed of Christ in THE REMOVAL OF THE HANDWRITING THAT WAS AGAINST US.

Consider, dear friends, *what this handwriting was*. When a man has some charge or insinuation against him merely whispered about and floating in the air, he hardly knows what it is, and perhaps, if he is a sensible man, he does not care much what it is, but he lets it fly about till it flies away. But when he has an accusation made against him in black and white, when there is a handwriting against him, a charge written down and laid before the court, an indictment upon which he is to be tried—that is a more serious matter.

Handwriting, especially in legal matters, is generally more accurate than mere speech. And there is, against every ungodly man, something written with the finger of God, which he cannot deny, for it is absolutely true. Handwriting also abides. The old Latin proverb says, “*Litera scripta manet*,” that which is written remains.

Be very careful as to what you put into black and white, because it may be brought against you many years after you have written it, when you may think very differently concerning it. There is, against every unconverted man, a handwriting which will remain and which will be brought up against him at the great day of judgment. It is not a mere baseless rumor floating about, but something tangible which will last and which cannot be removed except by the almighty power of God.

What is meant, in our text, by “*the handwriting of ordinances that was against us*”? I cannot give all the meaning in a word, but does it not mean, first, that the moral law, which we have broken, has written

out a curse against us? Each of the ten commandments has, as it were, united with the rest to draw up an indictment against us.

The first commandment says, “He has broken me.” The second cries, “He has broken me.” The third, “He has broken me,” and the whole ten together have laid the same charge against each one of us. That is the handwriting of the law condemning every man of woman born while he remains in a state of nature.

The Jews, you remember, came under another law—the ceremonial law. Did that ceremonial law draw up an indictment against them? Was it not intended to rid them of sin? I answer, No. There was a lamb slain every morning and that sacrifice must have reminded at least some of them that a perpetual atonement was provided.

But as with an undertone of thunder, it also reminded them all that such an atonement was still needed, that, after a thousand years of the offering of lambs, sacrifices were still required. There was ordained a day of atonement with specially solemn ceremonies, but what did that day say to the Jews? That an atonement was provided? No, but that an atonement was still needed, for, as soon as ever that year was up, the atonement had not been made and they must have another day of atonement.

The apostle Paul expressly says, “But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” There was a perpetual remembrance of sin in every one of the offerings under the ceremonial law.

I need not stay to speak of them in detail, but they were intended—the most of them, at any rate—continually to remind men that sin was not washed away. Thus all the ceremonies drew up a handwriting and said to the Jews, and to us, too, “You need an atonement by blood. You are guilty and there is no hope of your ever coming to God except by a sacrifice which these rams and bullocks represent, but the place of which they cannot possibly fill.”

Then there is another “handwriting of ordinances that was against us.” I think there is written across the very face of nature the great truth that man has sinned. Sin has so marred the world which God made perfect that none can go through it without feeling inconvenience, and often sorrow and pain. There are some men who pass through the world as though it were a burning fiery furnace threatening their destruction.

Why howls the blast upon the sea and dashes the galleon upon the rocks? Why have we earthquake, tornado, cyclone, and the like? Why, because man is a sinner and there is a handwriting in the very ordinances of nature written, as it were, mystically upon the wall, as it was at Belshazzar’s feast, and this is what it says, “Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.”

There is also another handwriting to the same effect—for God’s works always sing to the same tune—that is, the handwriting of conscience within the heart. Conscience writes, “You have sinned. You have done the things which you ought not to have done and you have left undone the things which you ought to have done.”

And if conscience be permitted to write in its own bold text-hand, it sets down this terrible message, “You are lost, ruined, and undone. The wrath of God has gone out against you.” This is “the handwriting of ordinances” which is in every part of God’s creation, though, alas! many are unable or unwilling to read it.

Now let us ask, concerning this “handwriting of ordinances,” *what is to become of it?* It will certainly be impossible for us to answer it, for “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” There may be some men here who know of little pieces of handwriting that have cost them a great deal of trouble.

A so-called friend came to see you—it would have been a good thing for you if it had been your worst enemy, for you might have been more on your guard against him. Your friend wanted just a little help for a time, he could not meet a certain liability just then, so he asked you merely to put your name on the back of a piece of paper. You would never see that document again, he would be quite able to meet it in three months, there was really no risk in the matter.

The plausible man said, “You have only to put your name there, you will never be called upon in the least degree. I have plenty of money and have only to call it in when I want any, so it will be all right.” You were persuaded by him, and like a fool, put your name at the back of his bill. You knew that you had not the money guaranteed by that paper, yet you promised to pay it.

You did not believe that text in the Bible which tells you that, “He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it; and he that hateth suretyship is sure.” I do not know when that bill will come due, perhaps it will be next week, but I know that you are feeling uncommonly uncomfortable about it as you sit there in your pew and well you may.

You say that you will never do such a thing again. It is not likely that you will have the opportunity to do so, but you will find that it is sufficient to have that one piece of handwriting against you—your own handwriting, too. It will be brought home to you sooner or later, you will see it again. Do not comfort yourself with the foolish idea that you will get off scot free, for you will not. Such a case as that rarely or never occurs.

You have given the bond and the man who holds it will, like Shylock, demand his pound of flesh. And the worst of it is that the bond is one of your own making and you voluntarily incurred the debt. I wish I could tell you how to get clear of it, but I am glad that I can tell you how to get free from a worse bond even than that—one into which you have entered through your sin—the bond of your own indebtedness to the infinite justice of God for all your rebellions against His law, all your breaches of His divine covenant. You have sinned against Him and it is all down in black and white in the handwriting that is against you.

Now listen, dear friends. The Lord Jesus Christ has done this for all of us who are believers in Him. First, He has taken that handwriting and He has blotted it out, as our text says, “blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us.” The Greek original has the meaning of smearing over or expunging the handwriting, so as to make it illegible as a document to be produced against us.

With His own atoning blood, the Lord Jesus Christ has discharged all our debt. As believers in Him, there is nothing whatever due from us to the justice of Almighty God, for Christ has paid it all. We cannot, therefore, be punished for our sin, for that would be unjust, since God will not and cannot punish, first the Substitute, and then the sinners for whom that Substitute bled and died. God’s justice cannot demand the payment twice,—

*“First at my bleeding Surety’s hand,
And then again at mine.”*

Christ became the Surety of all who believe in Him and He was made to smart for it. But by the carrying out of His suretyship, He discharged all your liabilities at the bar of God if you are a believer, and hence He smeared over, expunged, erased, obliterated, the handwriting of ordinances that was against you and it can never again be laid to your charge. This was the truth that inspired that brave challenge of the apostle Paul, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”

Christ has done something more than this for us. Look at the text again—“blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way.” First, it is blotted out. Then it is taken away, lest the blotting out should not prevent it from being read—for you can sometimes trace through an erasure what was written there, and you say, “Oh, yes! I see what the entry was—‘So-and-so, so many pounds in debt.’”

Ay, but Christ says, “You need not worry yourselves about that handwriting, for I will take it away.” So He removes the document itself out of sight. It lay in the court against you, but Christ first obliterated it and then took the accusation itself—the indictment, the charge upon which you were to be tried—and put it out of the way.

Perhaps someone says, “But possibly, after all, He may bring the accusation up again. He may only have hidden it for a while and laid it by that He may bring it out against me some other day. And when it

is produced, some expert will examine it with his glass, and through all the blotting he will make out the original charge and say, ‘This man was guilty of such and such crimes.’”

“No,” says Christ, “He shall not do that, for I will let you see where I put the handwriting. I will take it quite out of the way, but I will fasten it up where you can see it”—“nailing it to his cross.” Ah, that is glorious! Just as Christ was fastened to the tree by those dreadful Roman nails, so has He nailed up all the sins of His people and all that could be laid to their charge.

I have heard that they used to drive a nail through the Bank of England notes when they were cashed—a hole was made right through the center and they could never be used again. And our blessed Lord has driven the nails right through the accusation that was against His people and there you can see the handwriting hanging up upon His cross.

First, He blotted it out. Then He took it out of the way, and finally, He nailed it up to his cross, and there it is still, its accusing and condemning power forever gone. Now, child of God, sit down and say to yourself, “As to all the sins I have ever committed, whatever they may have been, inasmuch as I believe in Jesus, the record is crossed out, and consequently, the very parchment upon which it was written (to use that figure) has been taken out of the way. And that I may be quite sure that an end has been made of it, once for all—my Lord has nailed it, as a crucified thing which He has put to death with Himself upon the tree of sacrifice, and now it has no power to alarm or annoy me.”

What better way can there be of abolishing a debt than by paying it? And Christ has paid your debts and mine. What better way can there be of putting an end to sin than by bearing the punishment which was due to sin? The punishment which was due to sin was for us to lie forever under the wrath of God, but owing to the majesty of Christ’s divine person, the suffering which He endured upon the cross was accepted as an equivalent for all that suffering which we deserved to endure forever.

All the wrath due to Christ’s people was condensed into that one cup of which He began to drink in Gethsemane. As He put His lip to it, and tasted it, so terrible was it that it covered Him with a bloody sweat, but He never ceased to drink until He turned the chalice upside down, and not one black drop was found lingering there. At that one tremendous draught of love, the Lord had drunk damnation dry for all His people, and “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” How could there be any when Christ endured it all?

O beloved friends, go you in thought to Calvary and with joyful hearts trust in the Crucified! The great transaction is done and done forever. He has blotted out the handwriting that was against you and put it away, “nailing it to his cross.” All this is true of everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, trust yourself with Him now, and my text shall be true of you at this moment and true forever. “You, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

God bless you all, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—307, 430, 406

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

COLOSSIANS 2:6-23 AND 3:1-3

Colossians 2:6. *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:*

That is, keep on as you began. Christ was enough for you when, as poor, guilty sinners, you came and trusted Him, so keep on trusting Him in the same way as you did at the first. Do not try to live by feeling, after having lived by faith. Do not begin to live upon outward forms and ceremonies, after having found salvation by grace through faith. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”

7. *Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

Christians are to make progress in the heavenward road, but they are not to have any other foundation for their faith than they had at the beginning of their Christian career. We are still to stand fast as we stood at the first. We are to be rooted, grounded, “stablished in the faith,” keeping to the old truth that saved our souls and laying hold upon the same Savior with greater tenacity every hour of our lives. We are not to be like chaff driven before the wind—forever moving, but to be like the cedars of Lebanon, firmly rooted and withstanding the heaviest storms.

8. *Beware lest any man spoil you—*

Or “rob you”—

8. *Through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

Cleave to Christ, beloved. Go no further than He leads you and turn not away from Him either to the right hand or to the left. In Him are contained all the riches of grace and all the treasures of knowledge. If you would become truly wise, seek to know more of the wisdom of God in Christ Jesus.

9-10. *For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:*

You have everything in Christ that you ought to want. You are fully furnished, completely supplied and equipped for all future service. You need not go to Christ for the supply of some of your needs and then go elsewhere for the supply of other needs, but “ye are complete in him.”

11. *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:*

Anything good that there was in Judaism, you have secured to you in Christ. Whatever there was of blessing and privilege in the covenant mark in the flesh of those whom God made to be His people in the olden time, you have handed on to you by the death of Christ.

12-15. *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

The Lord Jesus Christ has done everything for His people—fought their battle, won their victory, and on their behalf, celebrated the triumph in the streets of heaven, “leading captivity captive.” What more, then, do we want? Surely Christ is enough for us.

16. *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:*

Do not put yourself under the bondage of any rules and regulations that may be made by men. If you choose to do anything or to abstain from something else, because you judge it to be right and beneficial, do so. Christ is your only Ruler and Leader—and if He does not command anything, let it not signify to you who does command it.

17. *Which are a shadow of things to come;*

All this regard for meats, and drinks, and holy days, and new moons, is but a shadow—what is the great substance that is all-important?

17-18. *But the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels—*

Do not be beguiled by those who tell you that you ought to pay reverence to angels, and saints, and I know not what besides. One day is called St. Matthew’s and another is St. Michael’s, and one, I suppose, is St. Judas’s day. There are all sorts of supposed saints, some of whom are never mentioned in

the Bible, and about whom nobody ought to care at all. “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels,”

18-20. *Intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,*

Such ordinances as these,—

21-22. *(Touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?*

I have actually seen this text quoted as though it stood as a matter of teaching—“Touch not; taste not; handle not”—whereas the apostle here means, “Why are you subject to such ordinances of men when Christ has set you free from them all? If, with a view to the good of your fellow men, you choose not to touch, or taste, or handle, you will act very wisely. But as far as your own conscience is concerned, do not submit to any merely human regulations as to your manner of life.”

23. *Which things have, indeed, a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.*

Colossians 3:1 *If ye then be risen with Christ,—*

Leave all these outward rituals, and formalities, and ordinances of men,—

1-3. *Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.