

DEBTORS AND DEBTORS

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.”
Luke 7:41.*

I TRUST that the Lord has “somewhat to say” upon this subject to some who are like Simon the Pharisee; and if He has, I trust that those persons will be led by the grace of God to say, as Simon did, “Master, say on.” Be ready to hear what the Lord Jesus Christ will speak to you. There are some who cover up the windows of their hearts with the shutters of prejudice; they are only prepared to hear what will please them; but they cannot endure to listen to that which will grieve them, and humble them. How many there are who want the preacher to prophesy smooth things! If he will say what they can agree with, they will go away, and sing his praises, which is a poor result in any case. But let us be of a nobler sort than that; let us be like the Bereans, who, after they had heard Paul and Silas preach, “received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed.” Let us say, as Eli bade young Samuel do, “Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears.” Let us say to Him, “Even if You speak that which will lay me in the dust, I will hear it. If You say that which will condemn me to hell, I will give heed to it; for it is best for me to know the truth, that, by knowing it, I may be stirred up to flee from the wrath to come. Let me know the worst of my case, O Lord God of truth! ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’”

So far, I think, Simon the Pharisee may be an example to us. The Master said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you,” and his answer was, “Master, say on.”

I am not going to expound the whole parable at this time; we may, perhaps, go on with it on another occasion. I intend now to take only this one verse: “There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.” There are two lessons for us to learn from this text; the first is that *all sinners are debtors to God*; and the second is, that *some sinners are greater debtors to God than others are*: “The one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.”

I. First, ALL MEN ARE DEBTORS TO GOD. He is that “certain Creditor” mentioned in our text, of whom, I fear, many debtors think very little.

We are all indebted to God, first, in the matter of *obedience to Him, as His creatures*. He is our Creator, our Preserver, our Provider, our Benefactor. “It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.” He is “the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.” We owe to Him our continued existence; every breath of our nostrils is His gift. Therefore, by our very creation, we are bound to serve Him, according to the righteous demands of His holy law, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve;” and that other “first and great commandment,” “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This Law is not exacting; it does not go a hair’s breadth beyond the righteous claims of divine justice.

But, as we have not rendered to God the obedience which is due Him, we have become further indebted because of *the penalty incurred by us as sinners*. All the Ten Commandments stand up in the court as witnesses against us, for we have broken them all. We have been guilty of sins of omission altogether innumerable, and of sins of commission more than the hairs of our head. We are under obligation to obey

God's command even though we are unable to obey it; though we have not the power to keep God's law perfectly, that inability by no means removes from us the liability to do so. If a man is in debt, and cannot pay, the fact that he is unable to pay does not exonerate him from the duty of paying. He is still in debt. Debts are not discharged by pleading that you cannot pay them; that is no valid excuse; and we are all of us bound to obey God perfectly, notwithstanding all that has happened in the past. What a debt, then, we must owe Him—a debt that is every day increasing—a debt that is already past all reckoning—a debt that will go on swelling as long as we live unless it can be removed by some power higher than our own.

That debt of penalty involves tremendous results to the body and the soul of man. "Fear not them which kill the body," said Christ, "but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." You know that, among all the terrible words spoken concerning the penalty of sin, the most terrible are those which were uttered by our Lord Jesus Christ, the most loving and tender of all teachers. Measure not a man's true tenderness of heart by his avoidance of the subject of "the wrath to come." It may be only tenderness to himself, or a willingness to pander to the evil desires of sinful men, that prompts him to such action as that. But the Christ, who weeps over Jerusalem, does not hesitate to predict its dreadful doom; and He, who loved men so much as to lay down His life for them, was the one who spoke again and again of the place "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." Many such words fell from those loving lips that never would have invented an unnecessary terror, so we may be sure that the penalty of sin is a very terrible one. Every one of us, who is out of Christ, is under the death penalty: "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "The soul that sins, it shall die;" and what that death involves—what that existence must be which is but life in the midst of death, the life of an immortal being that is stripped of all possibility of well-being forever—I will not attempt to describe. But that is the penalty of sin, and that is due to God, to whom we are debtors indeed.

And, my dear friends, it gives me great joy to add that, *if we are pardoned sinners*, we owe to God a deep debt of gratitude. If, through the blessed processes of grace, through the atoning sacrifice and mediation of our Divine Redeemer, we are delivered from the debt of sin, and the handwriting that was against us is taken away, and nailed to His cross; if, through the death of Christ, we are delivered from the death penalty of sin—as we certainly are, for Christ has forever cleared all believers by bearing their punishment in His body on the tree, then are we debtors to the infinite love and boundless compassion of our covenant-keeping God, His well-beloved Son, and the ever-blessed Spirit. In this debt, let us be willing continually to sink deeper and deeper. I would that, in this respect, my own soul were like a ship that had foundered at sea—and the sea should be the love of God—and I would go down into it over the masthead till I was completely submerged in the abyss of infinite love. And, in truth, that is just where we are if we are in Christ Jesus; and each one of us, slightly altering the poet's words, can say—

*“O love! You bottomless abyss!
My soul is swallowed up in you.”*

Which of us can ever fully tell what we owe to God for our election, our redemption, our effectual calling, our justification, our sanctification, and our promised glorification? Who can tell how much we owe for being preserved from sin, for being restored after we have fallen into sin, and for being enabled by grace to rise above sin? Who can tell how great is our debt for all the blessings laid up in store for us, which we shall enjoy by and by, but which are just as surely ours before we receive them—that grace we have not tasted yet, and that glory which we have scarcely dreamt of yet—that infinite happiness which is hidden in the closed hand of God until the day shall come when He shall manifest it to our wondering eyes? "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh;"—but debtors to the covenant love of God; and, therefore, debtors to our fellow men, realizing our obligation to show to them, according to our ability, the great love of God, and to testify to them concerning the way of eternal life.

So, you see, in some form or other, we are all debtors. I am not about to speak of that last kind of debt now, for it is not included in our Savior's parable; but I want to speak of the debt of obedience which has not been rendered, and the debt of penalty which has been incurred in consequence of our disobedience. I intend, as God shall help me, to say something about debtors; and if, in the use of the illustration, I should

seem to utter hard words about people who are in debt, I am not meaning to do that, and I hope they will not take it so. I am simply intending to use the illustration. If it happens to hit anybody, I cannot help that. If the cap fits anyone, let him wear it.

Now, first, a sinner is very much like a debtor in this respect—*he is very apt to get more deeply into debt*. If you owe a pound today, there is a great tendency to owe two pounds tomorrow. Getting into debt is a slippery process; and when your feet begin to slide, you are very apt to go deeper and deeper into the mire. And I am sure that this is the case with the Lord's two debtors—with the Lord's unnumbered millions of debtors—with all the Lord's debtors. People say, "Money makes money," and I suppose it does; but, certainly, sin makes sin. There is a cumulative force in evil, so that a sinner finds that it gets easier to sin, instead of becoming more difficult. While the man grows old, his sin does not; rather, it seems to grow younger, and to become more vigorous. Often times, a sinner will be a greater adept in guilt, and more inclined to evil, the further he advances in years. Certain sins may decline through the weakening of the flesh, but the sins of the heart do not; the power to sin may grow less, but the will to sin continues to increase as the sinner grows older. This is one of the terrible things about iniquity—that it breeds so fast. A man can never say to sin, "Hitherto shall you come, but no further: and here shall your proud waves be stayed." When the great flood tide of evil comes rolling in, there is no telling where it will be stopped. As debt leads to more debt, so sin leads to more sin, and hence it is that there is a parallel between the sinner and the debtor.

Further, *sin, like debt, causes uneasiness in a man if there is a spark of honesty about him*. Some men, who have no sense of honor, are quite happy while in debt. You may have read of a sale, that was to be held in Rome, on one occasion, when there were to be sold the goods of a man who had been for many years greatly embarrassed by debt, and the emperor said to one of his chamberlains, "Go to the sale, and buy that man's bed, for I cannot sleep at night; and, surely, I should be able to sleep on his bed, if he, being in debt, has been able to sleep so comfortably as I hear he has." Debtors ought not to have good sleep if they have wantonly plunged themselves into debt. Honest men are troubled, vexed, perturbed, if they feel that they cannot meet their obligations. Now, when a sinner is thoroughly awakened to his true position, this is just his case; he says, "I am in debt to God, and I cannot pay even a farthing in the pound. If He comes to call me to account, and asks me, 'How much do you owe unto your Lord?' what can I answer Him? I am full of confusion, and full of fear." Thus, you see, a sinner is like a debtor, because he has no rest.

And, further, *debtors and sinners shun their creditors*; they do not want to meet them, they try to get out of their way. Some of us know what it is to have cleared ourselves of rather troublesome friends by lending them money. We have never seen them since, so we reckon that it was a good investment, perhaps. A man, who is in debt, does not want to see the person to whom he owes the money; he would rather go down another street than meet him. If there is a knock at the door, and the person who wants to come in is one who has called for a debt which the debtor cannot discharge, he would sooner jump out of the back window, and make his escape, than he would meet him. And this is precisely the case with the sinner, he is in debt to God, and he does not like to meet his great Creditor. He will not regard the call of the church bell, and he will not keep holy the Sabbath day; he would rather forget about all such things. To read his Bible, to attend a service where he shall be reminded of his obligations, is most objectionable to him; he does not want to be reminded of them. If there should come one, in the dead of night, and cry in his chamber, "Prepare to meet your God!" it would be more terrifying to him than an earthquake or the most terrific thunderstorm. He does not want to meet his God; he says, in his heart, if not in so many words, "No God! No God for me! I do not want a God;" and if it could be satisfactorily proved to him that God was dead, it would be one of the most joyful pieces of news that he had ever heard. He is so deeply in debt to God that he cries, "Where shall I flee from His presence?" He would take the wings of the morning, if he could, and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, if he thought that he could find some lonely spot where he would not be troubled by the fear of the presence of God. That is every sinner's condition; that is the condition of every unconverted person here; that was once my condition, and the condition of everyone who is now a child of God.

The sinner, too, like the debtor, is in great danger. I do not know what the laws of England are, just now, concerning debt. Putting them into very simple English, I think they mean that nobody needs pay anybody unless he likes, and we have plenty of people who are getting rich by paying nobody at all. When they fail altogether, they break, and so make themselves. But I shall talk of the laws of England as they used to be. When a man was in debt, in the olden times, he was always in fear of arrest. He could not tell when the sheriff's officer would lay his hand upon him. That is just your case, if you are an unforgiven, unpardoned sinner. You cannot tell when God will arrest you; but it is certain that, sooner or later—and even the later will not be long—you will have to stand before His judgment seat, and answer at the bar of inflexible justice for all your sins against Him. I would not like to have been a debtor who, wherever he went, was likely to be arrested. I have heard of one, who was so often in debt, and so frequently in prison in consequence, but who so regularly ran into debt after he was let out of jail, that, on one occasion, when his coat-sleeve caught on an area railing, he supposed it was the touch of the sheriff's officer, and, thinking that he was again arrested, he exclaimed, "At whose suit?" It was only an iron bar that held him, but he imagined that one of his many creditors had claimed him. That must be a wretched kind of life for anyone to live—to be always afraid of arrest. You smile at the idea; but if you were really in that condition, I do not suppose that you would smile then; and if you realized that, at any moment you might be arrested by the cold hand of death, smiles would be far enough from your countenance. A man may be sitting in one of these pews, and, before the clock ticks again, he may be in the world of spirits before his God. I am often hearing of persons, whom I have lately met, apparently in robust health, who have been suddenly called away. They are gone, but we are still spared. In thought, I saw a procession passing before me; at first, I imagined that it was flesh and blood marching down the street; but, as the procession passed me, I discovered that all who composed it were but shadows. I, who was looking on, am also a shadow, and I, too, shall pass away. O debtor to a righteous God, this thought should cause disquietude within your careless spirit—that, at any moment, you may be arrested at the suit of your great Creditor!

And then, mark you, according to the law of God, when arrested by death, you are cast into prison. You remember how our Savior put it: "Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Verily I say unto you, You shall by no means come out from there, till you have paid the uttermost farthing." Oh, what a dreadful prison that is into which souls will be cast, who die in debt to God! And, since they can never pay even a farthing off their debt, there can be no release for them. How long shall they lie there? Till they have paid the uttermost farthing? Why, that can never be! So, mind what you doing, you who are indebted to God, lest you be cast into that dreadful dungeon. Trifle not away your time, I pray you, but fly to Jesus, who alone can deliver you from this weight of debt, for your danger is imminent at this very moment.

There is this about our debt to God—that it will never be forgotten by Him. I did once know a man, who was much troubled by a debt, but his creditor was not; for many years had passed, and he had never mentioned it; in fact, it had entirely slipped from his memory. I do not think such a case as that often happens, but I remember that one; but it will never happen with God. Nothing will ever slip from His memory. Sin is irrevocable and eternal. There is one process that can blot it out, or cast it into the depths of the sea, and make it cease to be; there is but one such process, and the Christ of God can tell you what that is. But, apart from His atoning sacrifice, there is no hope that the debt will ever be forgotten or forgiven.

And there is no protection for those who are in debt to the great Creditor. Protection is sometimes given to an insolvent debtor; and, in the olden times, there used to be places of sanctuary to which men fled, and so were free from liability to be arrested. Even now, men flee across the seas to avoid arrest; they cross the narrow channel that parts us from the Continent, and there they are secure. But there is no such way of escape for those who are in debt to God. If you are one of His debtors through sin, there is no protection for you unless you flee to Christ. There is no distance of space or lapse of time, no repentance or tears that can blot out your transgressions. There they stand, indelible; neither can you escape from the righteous hand of God in the day when He shall visit you for them.

This makes our indebtedness to God assume a very terrible shape; and if we have not been delivered from it by Christ, what can we do? For, no composition can be taken in part payment of our enormous debt. Even if it could be, we could not offer it; and there is no friend who can give to God a ransom for us, or stand in our stead. No, let me correct myself. There is one Friend, and never let us forget Him—One who became Surety for His people, and who was made to smart for it in that day when He paid their debts, to the uttermost farthing, by laying down His life for them. But, dear friends, if there is anyone among us here, who is still in debt to God on the matter of obedience, and who cannot present to Him the righteousness of Christ on His own behalf; and who, in the matter of penalty, cannot bring to God the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, and plead that it was offered for him, his case is a very sad and wretched one indeed. The Lord deliver all such in His great mercy!

I have been speaking figuratively, but there is truth at the back of it all. It is no figure, no emblem, no fancy, but a dread and terrible reality that all sinners are in debt to God.

II. Now comes the second thought, which will have much soul-searching power about it if God the Holy Spirit blesses it; and that is, that **SOME SINNERS ARE GREATER DEBTORS TO GOD THAN OTHERS ARE:** “The one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.”

We have all sinned, so we are all debtors to God; but we have not all sinned to the same degree, therefore we are not all debtors to the same extent. There are some sins that are greater than other sins; and, both in this world and in the next, punishments are to be measured out proportionately. There are some to whom it will be more tolerable in the Day of Judgment than it will be to others. Our Lord said even to Pontius Pilate, “He that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin;” so, clearly, one sin is greater than another. Every sin is great enough to ruin a soul forever, but there are some sins that have a peculiar crimson about them—a special venom and heinousness of offense against the majesty of God. What constitutes, then, the five hundred pence debtor? Who are the people that are greater sinners than others?

I answer, first, that there are *some who have greater capacity than others*. There are some men and women who have but very little intellectual power. Their minds are narrow, their power of thought is limited; they cannot, under any circumstances, commit the transgressions which are easy enough to men of great thought, imperious, masterly minds, with much inventive power and strong passions. Judge you as to your own condition in this respect. Some of you may know that you are very differently constituted from some of your neighbors. You may even have been tempted, in a moment of pride, to look upon them as very commonplace sort of folk; and you are quite aware, without any pride, that you are a person of far greater ability than they are. Very well, then it is possible for you to be a far greater sinner than they can be; you can throw more force and energy, more devilry, into your life than they can. I have no doubt that there are many people, who slip through life with little mind, little mental force, and with comparatively little sin. They know but little, and think but little, and their condemnation will be little compared with that of greater sinners. But persons of great intellect, and vast powers of mind, and thought, and understanding, cannot sin as those feebler ones do.

Some are great sinners *because they are placed in positions of great trust*. He who has but one talent can only sin with regard to that one talent; but he who has ten talents, is ten times as unrighteous in the sight of his Master. A man, who is but a house servant, or a day laborer, may be unfaithful to his worldly master; and, so far, he will be wrong. But think of the position of a minister of the gospel, the man to whom the souls of men are committed. If he is unfaithful to his Master, what terrible consequences are involved! And, as his reward is higher than the wages of the man that tills the soil, so shall his punishment be greater. Mark the difference of the sacrifice for a priest compared with the offering for a woman’s purification. She might come with a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, but not so the sons of Aaron. Their office was higher; and, if they sinned, their iniquity was, in consequence, all the greater; and there must be presented, in the type, a costlier sacrifice, in recognition of the greater guilt in their case. You, fathers and mothers, can sin more than your children can. Masters, you can sin more than your servants can. Men of wealth, you can sin against every pound you have, if you use it wrongfully. Men who occupy high places, your sin may be like that of David, who greatly disgraced the name of God before men.

Because of your exalted position, you can do so much more mischief; and your sin, therefore, is reckoned at a proportionately higher rate.

Sin, too, becomes greater *in proportion to a man's light and knowledge*. A young man, blessed with godly parents, brought up from his childhood in the midst of prayer and holiness, can sin much more than poor children taken out of the back slums, and who, from their very babyhood, have heard words of blasphemy, and seen deeds of filthiness. Oh, when some of us, whose privilege it was to hear the name of Jesus mingled with the first hush of our lullaby—when we sinned against God, there was an intensity of blackness about our sin that could not be found in the poor heathen, or in such sinners, in this land, as are left in ignorance. The more you know—the more you understand of the mind and will of God—the greater is your transgression when you sin against Him.

Sin, too, is very largely increased *by tenderness of conscience*. There are some persons who must know that this assertion is true, if they have looked into their own hearts and lives; for they were very tender-spirited in their youth, and, as they grew up, they retained much of that tenderness. There are some coarse, rough, brutal men, who could almost commit murder, and not feel it; but some of us can remember the horror which came upon us when, for the first time, we used or heard an ill word. You remember how the breach of the Sabbath cut you to the quick when it was only a small matter about which others thought nothing. You recollect also how, when you found yourself out in having told a lie, perhaps, unintentionally, you could not sleep, you felt so mean and miserable. Well, now, if you have forced yourself to sin in spite of such a check as this—if you have, as it were, gone over hedge and ditch in order to get to hell—if you have throttled and strangled your better self with stern resolve that you would do evil—then you have sinned indeed.

There are some such sinners, and there may be some such here, *who have suffered through sin, and yet have gone back to it*. In the summer and autumn evenings, it is one of the miseries of a man who sits writing to find how the poor gnats and the “daddy long legs” will fly to the lamp, and get burned to death. You try to drive them away; you take the trouble to pick them up after they have burnt themselves; but back they come again, and their folly is a true and melancholy picture of the way in which some men return to their vices, again and again, even after they have suffered greatly through indulgence in them. Even *delirium tremens* will not suffice to save some men from continuing to be drunkards; and the rottenness of their bones has not been sufficient to keep others back from the house of the strange woman. Oh, how horrible is this; and how it adds to the guilt of sin, and puts upon it a certain degree of presumptuousness which provokes God beyond the ordinary transgressions of common sinners.

Does this truth come home to the conscience of anyone whom I am now addressing? Then I go back to my preface, and ask such a one to say, with Simon the Pharisee, “Master, say on.” There is always a great intensity about sin when it is practiced for a long time. The sinner who is sixty years old, is a greater sinner than a mere youth can well be; and the man who has spent three-score years and ten without remembering his God—the man, whose life lease has run out, and yet who, all the while, has spent his vigor in the service of Satan—has become one of the greatest of sinners—one of the five-hundred pence debtors.

Yes, there are degrees of sin. Sometimes a man recognizes that he has *distinctly sinned against God in an especially personal way*. David seemed to feel his sin thus when he said to the Lord, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.” Usually, unenlightened men think most of an offense against their fellow men. It is very curious that it should be so, but so it is. If I were to charge any man here with the commission of a crime against his fellows, he would probably knock me down if he could; but if I charged him with a sin against God, he would say, “Oh, yes, yes! We are all sinners,” and think that it was nothing to be a sinner, because it was only against God! Thus men turn things upside down, and an offense against our fellow worm is reckoned to be a greater evil than an offense against the Judge of all the earth; but it is not so. It is that sinning distinctly against God that has the most evil about it; and hence it is that there is but one sin that is unpardonable, and that is a willful sin against the Holy Spirit, one Person of the blessed Trinity. It is because it is so especially and so designedly against Him that no repentance ever comes to the man who has committed it; for he has sinned the sin which is unto death, and he remains in his death-state, so that he never repents of the iniquity, and finds no forgiveness

for it. Beware, I pray you, of sins distinctly against God, especially such sins as that of blasphemy, of murmuring against God, of infidelity, of a denial of His existence, of Socinianism, which is a robbing of Christ of His Deity, and so of His highest glory; for those sins which are most distinctly against God stand first in the dread catalog of iniquity. Remember how the prophet Samuel said to Saul, “Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” Witchcraft was thought to be one of the worst of sins, and rebellion against God is put side by side with it.

And, last, I do believe that the greatest sin of all—that which, like a giant, rises head and shoulders above the rest—is *the sin of unbelief, or rejection of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus*. If any man here shall say, “I am no drunkard; I am no whoremonger;” well, sir, suppose you are not; but are you an unbeliever in Christ? Then, you shall have the same portion as they have; for, when God says, “I will give My only-begotten Son to die to save sinners,” and yet men say, “We will not have Your Son as our Savior, but we will reject Him. ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours;’”—when God takes out of His own bosom the darling of His heart, the very glory of heaven, and sends Him here in human flesh and blood to bear shame, and suffering, and death for guilty men, and they say that they will not believe on Him; then, this is the sin that turns the key of heaven against them, and dooms them to eternal destruction. Remember the solemn words of our Lord Jesus Himself: “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” Hear again to these familiar words: “He that believes not is condemned already.” Why is he condemned already? He is living, he is laughing, he is sporting, he is merry-making; yet he is condemned already, “because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” That is the sin which, above all others, drops the black wax upon his death warrant, and sets the seal of divine wrath there so that he must die.

O my dear hearers, our text says that one of the debtors owed five hundred pence; and, surely, that is the man who has heard the gospel and yet has refused it. It is you who have been coming to this place, or to other houses of prayer, and who have been warned, and invited, and entreated, for months and years, I know not how long, to believe in Jesus. If such is the case with any of you, put yourself down, not as a fifty pence debtor, but as a five hundred pence debtor. No, I think I must liken you to him who owed his master ten thousand talents. How can you ever pay it? There is no hope of your ever paying it. You can have it all frankly and freely forgiven. If you go to Christ, and plead perfect poverty, you shall then be set free at once through faith in His dear name. But if not, you must be delivered over to the keeper of the terrible prison house of which I spoke to you, and you can never come out thence. God grant that it may not be so with any of you, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—377, 543, 544.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *ROMANS 15:13-33.*

Verses 13-27. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not worked by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yes, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation: but as it is written, To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having*

no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it has pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It has pleased them verily; and their debtors they are.

For these Achaeans and Macedonians had received the gospel from the saints in Jerusalem. The Gentiles had been made partakers of their spiritual things, so it was their duty to minister to the poor Christian Jews in carnal things.

27, 28. *For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit,—*

That is, “when I have delivered the money, and obtained a receipt in full for it; when I have discharged my duty in this matter,”—

28, 29. *I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

He was sure of that, but he did not know how he would go in other respects. He did not know that he would go to Rome as a prisoner; he could not foresee that he would be sent there as an ambassador in bonds; and little, I think, did he care in what manner he would go, so long as he had the absolute certainty that he should go “in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.”

30, 31. *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;—*

For there were some saints in Jerusalem who were very narrow-minded, and who hardly thought it right to accept anything from Gentiles. They had not got clear of their Jewish bonds, and Paul was a little afraid lest what he was taking to them might not be acceptable, so he asked the Romans to pray about that matter. Is there anything about which believers may not pray? If there are, then we have no right to have anything to do with it. Bring everything before God in prayer, for all right things may lawfully be prayed about. So Paul asked the Christians in Rome to pray about that matter of his journey to Jerusalem, and also to pray for his return,—

32, 33. *That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

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