

CHRIST MANIFESTING HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE

NO. 29

A SERMON
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 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON
 AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK

*“Judas said unto him, not Iscariot,
 Lord, how is it that you wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”
 John 14:22*

WHAT a blessed Master Jesus Christ was! How familiar did He allow His disciples to make themselves with Him! Though He was the Lord of life and glory, the great and mighty one, as well as the man of Nazareth, yet see how He talks with His poor disciples, the fishermen, just as if He had been one of the same class and order with themselves!

He was none of your dignitaries who pride themselves on that dignity—none of those ecclesiastics who love to carry much of formality about them, and to walk above other men, as if they were not indeed their fellows. But He talks to His disciples just as a father would to his children—even more kindly than a master might to his pupils. He lets them put the simplest questions to Him, and instead of rebuking them for their familiarity, He condescends to answer everything they please to ask Him.

Philip uttered a sentence which one would think no sensible man, who had been so long a time with Jesus, ever could have troubled Him with. He said, “Show us the Father and it sufficeth us.” A stupid idea! As if Jesus Christ could show the Father, that is to say, could show God to Philip! And Jesus kindly answered, “Hast thou been so long time with me, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

And now comes Judas (not Iscariot) and he also puts a very simple and easy question—one he needed not to have asked. But Jesus Christ, instead of rebuking him, simply passes on to another subject and forbears most wisely to answer the inquiry, because He would teach him more by silence than He could do by an explanation.

We must also notice here how very particular the Holy Ghost is that a good man should not be confounded with a bad one. He says, “Judas, not Iscariot.” There were two of the name of Judas. The one who betrayed our Lord and the other who wrote the epistle of Jude, who should properly have been called Judas.

Some of us, in reading the name, Judas, might have said, “Ah! it was that traitor Judas Iscariot that asked the question.” But the Holy Spirit would not allow this mistake to be made. This again should teach us that it is not an idle wish for us to desire that our name should be handed down to posterity. We ought all to wish to have an unblemished character. We ought to desire to have that promise fulfilled, “The memory of the just is blessed.”

I would not wish my name to be mistaken for that of some criminal who was hanged. I would not wish to have my name written even by mistake in the calendar of infamy. However much I may now be misrepresented, it will one day be known that I have honestly striven for the glory of my Master and God will say, “Judas, not Iscariot.” The man was no deceiver after all.

But we will now forsake Judas altogether and proceed to look at our text. It contains two things. First, *an important fact*. Secondly, *an interesting inquiry*. “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” Here is a fact and an inquiry concerning it.

I. First, then, here is A GREAT FACT that Jesus Christ does reveal Himself to His people, but He does not unto the world.

The fact is implied in the question, and even if Scripture did not declare it to be the truth, there are many of us who have a Scripture written in our hearts—the Bible of experience—which teaches us that it is true. Ask Christians whether they have not had manifestations of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in a peculiar and wonderful manner, such as they never felt when they were in their unregenerate state.

Turn to the biographies of eminent saints and you will find there instances recorded in which Jesus has been pleased, in a very special manner to speak to their souls, to unfold the wonders of His person, and let them discern the matchless glories of His office. Yea, so have their souls been steeped in happiness that they have thought themselves to be in heaven, whereas they were not there though they were well-nigh on the threshold of it—for when Jesus manifests Himself to His people, it is a young heaven on earth, it is a paradise in embryo, it is the beginning of the bliss of the glorified, yea, and it shall be the consummation of that bliss when Jesus Christ shall perfectly unveil Himself to the admiring eyes of all His people, and they shall be like Him, and shall see Him as He is.

We are about to talk somewhat this morning, then, concerning that special manifestation which Jesus Christ vouchsafes to His people, and to His people only. We will make four observations here. We will observe, first, something concerning the favored persons, “unto *us*,” “not unto the world.” Secondly, concerning special seasons, “How is it that thou *wilt*?” He was not doing it just then, but “thou wilt.” There are special seasons. Thirdly, some remarks concerning the wonderful display, “Thou wilt manifest *thyself* unto us, as thou dost not unto the world.” Then, fourthly, we shall dwell a little upon *the effects* which this manifestation will produce upon our souls.

1. First, then, who are the favored people to whom Jesus Christ manifests Himself? “How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto *us*, and not unto the world?” It appears from the text that the persons to whom Jesus Christ shows Himself in this wonderful manner do not belong to the world. Who, then, are these people? I am sure it would be difficult for you or me to discover them.

I shall, therefore, this morning employ a fiction and shall bid some spirit from an unknown world point out these distinguished individuals. O spirit! I give you an errand. There are a certain number of people *in* this world who are not *of* it—go thou, search them out, and come back, and tell me what thou hast found.

We give the spirit time. He flies round the world and he returns. “I have seen,” says he, “a multitude of men. They are all pursuing one common path, with one object. I have seen them trampling on each other in the fury of their hot pursuit. I have seen them hurrying after something which each one desired for himself, but in the midst of the throng, I saw a few marching in the opposite direction, who with much elbowing and strong opposition were going exactly contrary to the stream. I saw written on the foreheads of those who were proceeding with the crowd, the word ‘Self,’ but I marked those who were proceeding in the other direction, and behold, they had inscribed upon their brows, ‘Christ.’”

“And as I listened to them frequently in their soliloquies, I heard them say, ‘For us to live is Christ, for us to die is gain.’ I marked these men. I saw them constantly pursuing their way in the teeth of all defiance, going against every opposition. I wondered where they were going. And I saw that before them was a wicket gate and on it the words, ‘Mercy for the chief of sinners.’ I saw them enter there. I marked them as they ran along the walls of salvation, and tracking them along to their destination, I saw them at last fold their arms in death, shut their eyes with tranquility. While I heard angels sing their requiem and a voice shouted, ‘Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.’ Surely these must be the persons who are not of the world.”

You have spoken rightly, O spirit. These are the individuals. What did you see of them, O spirit? Did they assemble and congregate together, or did they mix with the rest of humanity? “Why,” says he, “I noticed that once in the week they crowded to a certain place they called the house of God. I heard their songs of praise. I saw them bend their knee in reverence, not only in that house, but in private. I witnessed their groanings, their strugglings, and their agonies. I knew that they were men of prayer and men that loved God. I saw them gather in secret assemblies, to tell what the Lord had done for their souls. I marked that they would not be found with the wicked. I saw some houses that they would not

enter. At the corner of the street there stood a house, well-lighted up with many a lamp, and there were on its front some mystic cabalistic signs, the marks of woe and ill-doings. I saw the wicked there, reeling to and fro. I observed them in their drunkenness. But I marked how the Christian man put up his hand before his eyes and passed by that place.

“I saw too another haunt of hell, where there were enacted scenes that eye should not have beheld—where shouts of revelry and mirth, but not songs of holiness, were heard. I looked round that theater and I discerned not a single one of these blessed persons. They would not run in the ways of the wicked, nor sit in the seat of the scorner, nor stand in the council of the unrighteous. I marked that like ‘birds of a feather they would flock together’—that they found their mates and there they went—that they built their nest in the same tree and would make their habitation beneath the selfsame roof.”

“Yea,” said the spirit, “I heard one of them exclaim, ‘He that telleth lies shall not abide in my sight.’ I saw him drive the liar from his house and bid the profligate depart from him. I marked them. They were a select and separate people, and I said, surely these are the men of whom it is written, ‘They shall dwell alone, they shall not be numbered among the people.’”

Well, spirit, rightly have you described them. I wonder how many there are here? The men to whom God will reveal Himself and not to the world. They are men who are not worldly in principle, in action, in conversation, in desires, in object, or in end. These are the persons. Do not tell me anything about universal grace or universal manifestations, while I have the power, I will proclaim free grace to peculiar characters, as long as I find it written, “Thou wilt manifest thyself to *us*, but not to the world.”

2. Our next remark is concerning *special seasons*. These highly-favored men do not always see Jesus Christ alike. They do not always dive in the sunshine of His countenance. There are special times when God is pleased to reveal Himself to His people. And these seasons are generally of two kinds—times of duty and times of trial.

I never found a lazy or indifferent Christian have a manifestation of Jesus Christ. I never heard one who gave himself wholly to business talk much of spiritual manifestations. No, poor soul, he had got religion enough to save him, but not enough to make him realize the spiritual and special blessings of a Christian. Those who do but little for Christ, Christ does but little for them in the way of special favors. Those who sit down, fold their arms, eat, drink, and are satisfied, are not the men who enter into the secret chamber of the Most High and enjoy the presence of the Almighty.

The men who are the most zealous for their Master discern the most of His lovingkindness and enjoy the richest blessings from the Lord. Ask a Christian when he is the happiest, he will say when he works the most. I know *I* am. I have not tried rest yet and no doubt I shall find it anything but rest when I have it. When I pass a day without preaching my Master’s name, I feel that I have not done what I ought to have done and I do not rest satisfied till I am within the four boards of a pulpit again.

When we work the hardest, we feel grace the most plentiful. When we dig the deepest we get the sweetest water. He who toils the most has his bread the most sweetened. And depend upon it, drops of sweat are blessed things to make dry bread go down. We shall always have more happiness the more we labor for Christ.

As for Issachar, who is a strong ass, crouching down between two burdens—the man who is doing little—the promise is, “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool’s back.” The man who is idle must have chastisement, but he who serves his God may rejoice, for God will treat him with dainties. He will give him his portion mixed with honey. He will say, “I have taken your bread and dipped it in My own dish. Take it and eat it, for you are one who works in My own vineyard.”

It will be in seasons of duty, or as I have said, in seasons of trial, for you must not suppose when a Christian is laid aside from duty that he is doing nothing. Do not imagine that the time of your sickness has been lost to you. You were not only profiting yourselves, but actually serving God by your suffering, if you bore it patiently. Don’t you know the text, “We fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, for his body’s sake, which is the church.”

Christ's mystical body, you are aware, is made up of the Head and all the members. The Head had a certain amount to suffer—that is all finished. But the body has a measured portion to endure also, and the more *you* suffer, so much the less suffering there is for somebody else. There is a certain quantum of trial which the whole church has to sustain before it gets to heaven.

For as Jesus Christ was afflicted, even so the whole of His people must have fellowship with His sufferings. There is a cup that is full of mixture and the righteous must drink it. We must all have a sip thereof, but if one of us can take a deep draught, and do it patiently, there is so much the less for our fellows. Let us not complain, then, for it is in the time of trouble we see most of Jesus.

Before Israel fought Amalek, God gave them water from the rock and sent them manna from heaven. And before Jacob met Esau, the angel of God wrestled with him at the brook Jabbok and hosts of angels met him at Mahanaim. Previous to trial, you may generally expect a season of joy, and when that season of joy is over, you may say, "We must expect some danger now, for we have received too much delight."

But when the trial comes, then expect to have delight with it. For our troubles are generally proportioned to our joys and our joys are usually proportioned to our troubles. The more bitter the vessel of grief, the sweeter the cup of consolation. The heavier weight of trial here, the brighter the crown of glory hereafter.

In fact, the same word in Hebrew signifies "weight" and "glory." A weight of trouble is a glory to a Christian, for it is an honor to him. And glory is a weight, for it often bows him down and makes him lie low at his Master's feet. I appeal to my brothers and sisters and ask them when it is they have seen most of Jesus—when they have been walking in the garden of delights or when the bitter medicine has been in their mouth?

Have you not had better visions of Jesus when you have been racked with pain, than when you have been elevated by prosperity? When the barn has been full, the oil vat has been bursting, and the wine has been running over, it is often then that the sanctuary of God has been forsaken and the cabinet of God's lovingkindness is nearly disregarded. But when the fig tree does not blossom and when there are no herds in the stalls, then it is that God often comes nearest to His children and most reveals Himself to them.

3. The next thought is, *the wondrous display itself*. Jesus Christ manifests *Himself*. There are many manifestations of God to His children, but this is the most precious of all. Some manifestations we never wish to have again. We do not want to have that discovery which we had of our sinfulness, when first we were awakened—we will leave it to God, but we will never pray for it.

But here is a manifestation we should like to have every day. "I wilt manifest myself to him." He does this in different ways. I have had, for a long while a manifestation of His sufferings in Gethsemane. I have been for months musing on His agonies. I think I have even eaten the bitter herbs that grow there and drank of that black brook Kidron.

I have sometimes gone up stairs alone, to put myself in the very posture Jesus Christ was in, and I thought I could sympathize with Him in His sufferings. Methought I saw the sweat of blood falling down to the ground. I had so sweet a view of my Savior in His agonies, I hope that one day I may be able to accompany Him still further, and see Him on Calvary, and hear His death shriek, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"

Some of you, I know, have seen Jesus with the eye of faith quite as plainly as if you had seen Him with your natural eyes. You could see your Savior hanging on the cross. You thought you saw the very crown of thorns on His head and the drops of blood streaming down His face. You heard His cry. You saw His bleeding side. You beheld the nails, and before long, you could have gone and pulled them out, and wrapped Him up in linen and spices, and carried His body, and washed it with tears and anointed it with precious ointment.

At other times, you have had a manifestation of Christ in His gifts. You have seen that mighty sacrifice He offered, the pile smoking up to heaven, and all your sins burnt up with it. You have seen

clearly the justifying righteousness He has put upon you. And as you have looked at yourselves you have said—

*“Strangely, my soul, are thou arrayed.
By the great sacred Three;
In sweetest harmony of praise,
Let all my powers agree.”*

There are times when you have felt much joy at the exaltation of Jesus Christ as displayed in His gifts.

Then again, you will see Him in His triumph, with one foot upon Satan and the other upon death. You will be able to behold Him marching up the sky, with all the glittering hosts behind Him. And in due time you will have a manifestation of Him to your soul, as sitting on His Father’s throne until His enemies are made His footstool.

And faith will sometimes so outsoar the wings of time that we can bring futurity to the present, and see that great and pompous appearance, when on the great white throne the King shall sit and grasp His sceptre, and when His saints before Him shall shout His praise. If I were to go much farther, I should be accused of fanaticism and so it may be.

But yet I will believe and must believe that there are seasons when the Christian lives next door to heaven. If I have not gone within an inch of the pearly gates, I am not here. If I have not sometimes snuffed the incense from the censers of the glorified and heard the music of their harps, I think I am not a living man. There have been seasons of ecstatic joy, when I have climbed the highest mountains and I have caught some sweet whisper from the throne.

Have you had such manifestations? I will not condemn you if you have not, but I believe most Christians have them, and if they are much in duty and much in suffering they will have them. It is not given to all to have that portion, but to some it is and such men know what religion means.

I was reading a short time ago of a Mr. Tennant. He was about to preach one evening and thought he would take a walk. As he was walking in the woods, he felt so overpoweringly the presence of Christ and such a manifestation of Him, that he knelt down and they could not find him at the hour when he was to have preached.

He continued there for hours, insensible as to whether he was in the body or out of the body. And when they wakened him, he looked like a man who had been with Jesus and whose face shone. He would never forget, he said, to his dying day, that season of communion, when positively, though he could not see Christ, Christ was there, holding fellowship with him, heart against heart, in the sweetest manner.

A wondrous display it must have been. You must know something of it, if not much, otherwise you have not gone far on your spiritual course. God teach you more and lead you deeper! “Then shall ye know, when ye follow on to know the Lord.”

4. Then *what will be the natural effects of this spiritual manifestation?* The first effect will be *humility*. If a man says, “I have had such and such spiritual communications, I am a great man,” he has never had any communications at all. For “God has respect unto the humble, but the proud he knoweth *afar off*.” He does not want to come near them to know them and will never give them any visits of love.

It will give a man *happiness*, for he must be happy who lives near to God. Again, it will give a man *holiness*. A man who has not holiness has never had this manifestation. Some men profess a great deal, but do not believe any man unless you see that his deeds answer to what he says. “Be not deceived, God is not mocked.” He will not bestow His favors upon the wicked, for while He will not cast away a perfect man, neither will He respect an evil doer.

Thus there will be three effects of nearness to Jesus, all beginning with the letter *h*—humility, happiness, and holiness. May God give them to us!

II. Now for the second point AN INTERESTING INQUIRY.

Judas said, “How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” How was this inquiry suggested and how was it answered?

First, it was suggested by *ignorance*. Poor Judas thought, “How can Jesus manifest Himself to us and not to the world? Why, if He comes down again, the world will see Him as well as we. How can He do it? Suppose He appears in a chariot of fire or descends in a cloudy pillar—if we see Him, the world must see Him, too.” So, poor thing, he very ignorantly said, “How can it be, Lord?”

Perhaps, too, the question was put by reason of his *great kindness*. “Ah! Lord,” said he, “how can it be that You will manifest Yourself to us and not unto the world?” He was slightly an Arminian—he wanted it all to be given to everybody, and he said, “How is it that You will manifest Yourself to us and not unto the world?” “O Lord!” he said, “I wish it were for everybody. I wish it were—my benevolence bids me wish it.”

Ah! my beloved, we never need be more benevolent than God is. Some say, “If all sinners were saved, it would glorify God more.” Certainly God knows better than we do how many sinners will glorify Him, and we had better leave the number to Him, and not get to meddling with what we have no business with. It says in Scripture, “Fools will be meddling,” and fools they are who go meddling with what is no concern of theirs. But however this was, Judas said, “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”

Perhaps, again, it was *love to His Master* that made him put the question. “O Lord, I thought You would come and be king over all the world, and now it appears that You are only to be king over some.” He wished Christ’s dominion might be universal. He wanted to see every heart the Savior’s throne. He desired everyone to bow to Him, and a very just and laudable wish it was. And so he asked Christ, “How can it be, Lord, that You will not conquer all?” Jesus never answered the question. It was right to ask it, but we shall never get the solution of it till we get up yonder. Perhaps not there.

Yet again, perhaps the question was proposed by *admiration*. “Oh!” he said, “how is it that thou wilt manifest to *us* and not unto the world?” Why, he might have said of himself, “What am I? What is my brother Peter here? Nothing but a fisherman. What is John? Nothing but a fisherman. And as for Matthew, he was a publican and cheated hundreds. And Zaccheus, how many widows’ houses did he devour! And yet You say You wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? There stands Mary the sinner—what did she do that You should manifest yourself to her? And there is Mary Magdalene—she had seven devils. Lord, how is it that you wilt manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world?”

Is not this a question we have often had to ask of our own souls?

*“Pause, my soul, adore and wonder;
Ask, O why such love to me?”*

And the only answer we could give was

*“Grace hath put me in the number
Of the Saviour’s family.”*

Come to me and ask me, “Sir, why am I a Christian? Why does God love me?” I must reply, “Because He does love you.” “But why does He love me?” The only answer I can give you again is, “Because He would love you.” For it is written, “He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.” Surely we might admiringly stand here and say, “Lord, why, Lord, why do You manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world?” “Yes,” but some would say, “because you are better than the world. That is the reason.”

A fine lot better by nature, certainly! Better than the world by nature? Why, some of us were rather worse. There are some of you here who once indulged in every form of vice, who would blush to stand up here and tell the sins you have committed. But God has manifested Himself to you as He does not unto the world. Surely we shall have a perpetual cause of wonder in the doings of sovereign grace.

But *what is the answer?* Why does Christ manifest Himself to some as He does not unto the world? The question was not answered, for it was unanswerable. Our Lord went on to say, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” He did not tell him why He would manifest Himself unto them and not unto the world.

I have often been asked this question myself, “You say God manifests Himself to some and not to others—can you tell me why?” Well, Jesus Christ did not and I cannot be expected to do it any more than He did. But I will ask you whether you have any objection to it. Is it not enough that He should do so? He has declared that He has “power over the clay, to make of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor.” And if anyone finds fault, He says, “Who are thou, O man? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?”

What man shall ask of his father, “Why have you begotten me?” “Am I not God and can I not do what I will with my own?” “But,” says the objector, “is it not unjust for God to manifest Himself to one and not to the other?” God replies, “Do you charge Me with injustice? In what respect? Do I owe you anything? Bring the bill and I will pay it. Do I owe you grace? Then grace would not be grace. It would be a debt. If I owe you grace, you shall have it.”

“But why should my brother have it? He is equally as bad as I.” “Surely,” replies the King, “I may give as I please.” You have two beggars at your door, have you not a right to turn one away and give the other something? And can I not do as I will with my own? “I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy and to whom I will I give it.”

“Well,” says the objector, “suppose I ask and plead for it, shall I not have it?” “Yes, you shall,” says God, for so the promise runs, “Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” “But I cannot have it unless it is written that I shall have it.” “Yes, but if you ask, it is written that you shall ask. And the means are as much ordained as the end—you could not ask unless I inclined you and now do not talk to Me of injustice. I ask you to find the passage in My Word where I ever promised to give grace to everyone. Vile wretch! Have you not rebelled against Me? Your doom is to be sent to hell forever. Do you not deserve it?”

“Yes.” “Then who are you that dare to accuse Me of injustice? If I have fifty men on a scaffold to be hanged, have I not a right to pardon which I will and give the punishment to all the rest? Will you not yield to it?” “No,” says the objector, “I will never yield to it.” “Then, my friend, expect not salvation till you do.”

Is there a man here who kicks against divine sovereignty? It is a testing doctrine. And if he does not receive it, it shows that his pride is not out of him. If we do but preach divine sovereignty, some will say, “That man is an Antinomian and a hyper.” We disdain your slander and remind you that the accusation might more properly be made against yourself. It is you that are the Antinomian, in rebelling against divine sovereignty.

But a man who receives the doctrine of sovereignty will go to the throne of God, saying,

*“Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer:
But if I perish I will pray,
And perish only there.”*

And now, what do you say to this, my friends? I know what some would say. They would cry, “Nonsense! We believe religion is a thing very good to keep people in order. But as to these manifestations and these ecstasies, we do not believe in them.” Very well, beloved. I have just proved the truth of what the text says. He does not manifest Himself unto the world, and you have proved yourself that you are one of the world, because you have not any manifestations.

But there are some Christians here who say, “We do not know much about these manifestations.” No, I know you do not. The church has been getting for the last few years into a lean, starved state. God has sent very few preachers who would preach up these special things, and the church has been getting lower and lower.

And what would become of us, I cannot tell, if there were not saved a little salt, which God has scattered over the putrefying mass. Some of us have been living on low ground, when we might have been standing on high places. We have been tarrying in the valley of Baca, when we might as well have been living on the top of Carmel.

I would not choose to dwell in a valley, if I might build my house on the delectable mountains. O Christian! Up this morning! Let your feet be shod with light once more. Trip lightly across the plain of trouble—get to the side of Calvary, ascend to the very summit. And from Calvary, I tell you, you can see across the plain as far as heaven itself. If you can but get to Pisgah's top, you shall sing,

*“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green.”*

And your spirit shall become like the chariots of Amminadib. Seek, my brethren, such spiritual manifestations, if you have never experienced them. And if you have been privileged to enjoy them, seek more of them, for what is there that can so certainly make life happy and so fit you for the sky, as these revelations of Jesus Christ?

Oh! you who despise what *we* enjoy, from the depths of my soul I pity you. Take heed, lest the first revelation you have of Christ be when He shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on His enemies, for if He is not revealed in mercy, He will be in justice. God give you grace to see Him on Calvary before you see Him on Sinai, to behold Him as the Savior of sinners, before you see Him as the Judge of the quick and dead.

God bless you and lead you back to these manifestations constantly! Amen.

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.