

# PRIDE CATECHIZED AND CONDEMNED

## NO. 1271

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 2, 1876,  
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive? Now if you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it?”  
1 Corinthians 4:7.***

PRIDE grows apace like other ill weeds; it will live in any soil; in the natural heart it flourishes, springing up without sowing, and growing without watering, and even in the renewed heart it all too readily takes root when Satan casts abroad a handful of its seed. Of all creatures in the world, the Christian is the last man who ought to be proud, and yet, alas, we have had mournful evidence both in past history, and in our own observation—and worst of all in our own personal experience that Christians may become lifted up to their own shame. Paul set himself very earnestly to deal with this disease when he saw it raging among the Corinthians. He felt it necessary to do so, for it was leading to other mischiefs of the most disgraceful kind; pride and self-conceit had led the members of the church in Corinth to choose for themselves distinct leaders, and to arrange themselves under separate banners—the followers of this man thinking themselves better than the followers of that. Thus the body of Christ was divided, and all sorts of ill feeling, jealousy, emulation, and envy sprang up in the church of God where all ought to have been mutual helpfulness, and loving unity.

Paul, earnestly and with great wisdom, assailed the spirit of pride; he was well aware of one fact, namely, that pride is shallow and superficial. It cannot endure honest questioning, and so Paul tried it by the Socratic Method, and put it through a catechism. He puts three questions to it in this verse, and these three all called upon his friends to go a little lower in their contemplation of themselves than their pride had before allowed them to go. Pride said, “I have such-and-such gifts,” but Paul replied, “What have you that you did not receive?” Thus he dug deeper and undermined pride. The receipt of those gifts from God, pride had forgotten altogether, therefore, by bringing that fact to mind, the Apostle took pride right under the root, and that is always the best way to destroy a weed! To cut off the green top, and leave the crown of the root, so that it may spring up in the next shower, or the next sunshine, is of no use; but to go deep down, and tear up the root is effective. This Paul did with pride by reminding the vainglorious Corinthians that the gifts which they possessed were no ground of glory, because they had received them as alms from the God's charity. Another truth of God is also illustrated by Paul's procedure, namely, that pride is always inconsistent with the true doctrine of the gospel. You may use this test concerning any preaching or

teaching that you meet with—if it legitimately and logically leads a man to boast of himself, it is not true! Our chemists use litmus to discover the presence of acid in any liquid submitted to them, for the paper then takes a reddish tint, and you may use this as your test, that when a doctrine makes you red with pride, it contains the acid of falsehood; that which puffs up is not of God, but that which lays a man low, and exalts Jesus Christ has at least two of the tokens of the truth of God.

That which glorifies man cannot have been revealed by God, for He has said that no flesh shall glory in His presence. Such teaching may appear very lustrous with affected Holiness, and very fascinating with pretended spirituality—and there may be much in your fondest desires which inclines your heart towards it, as there always is in the novelties of the present day—but try it whether it is of God by the test which is here suggested. If, with a sleek hand it brushes your feathers the right way, and makes you feel, “What a fine fellow I am,” you ought to flee from it at once! The very fact that it flatters you should be to you like a fog horn to warn you of danger! Say to every doctrine which fosters pride, “Get you behind me, Satan, for you smell not of the things that are of God and of truth, or you would not speak so well of me.”

My objective this morning shall be to attempt to do with our own pride what Paul sought to do with that of the Corinthians, namely, to go a little deeper than we generally go when measuring our own abilities; and then I shall try to use the silver spade of the doctrines of grace, so that this hemlock of pride may be taken up by the roots. Looking at the text I notice, first, *a question to be answered with ease*—“Who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive?” Secondly, *a question to be answered with shame*—“Now if you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it?” And then, thirdly, I shall occupy your attention a few minutes with *other questions which these questions suggest*. May the Holy Spirit graciously bless my words.

**I.** In a two-fold form the Apostle gives us A QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED WITH EASE. There may be some who would be puzzled with these questions, but I do not suppose there are any such people present. At any rate, there are no such members in our church. When we are asked, “Who makes you to differ from another?” our answer is immediately, “God, by His grace has made us to differ.” And if we are asked, “What have you that you did not receive?” we reply, “We have nothing but our sin, for every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.”

We are all the more glad to hear Paul say this, because he was what is nowadays styled a “self-made” man! It very frequently happens that a man who makes himself has very great respect for his maker; is it not natural that he should worship his creator? Paul was a man who, as far as the Christian church is concerned, had forced his way up without aid from others. He began in the church with no respect, and under very much suspicion; the brethren had heard that he persecuted the saints, so that at first they would scarcely receive him! His name was a terror rather than a pleasure! But Paul, with that high spirit, that consecrated

ardor, that indefatigable industry, that wondrous courage of his, backed of course by the grace of God, came to the front until he could honestly claim without egotism, that he was “not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles, though,” he said, “I am nothing.” Paul was a man who had not been borne upon the crest of the wave into an eminent position; he did not wake up one morning and find himself famous! He put forth all his powers in the struggle of life, and labored with persistent energy year after year. When he persecuted the saints of God, he did it ignorantly, in unbelief, and thought he did God a service; and all his life long, for him to know a thing to be right, was to strive after it! He had been kept from self-seeking and deceit; he had been an intensely active, strong-minded, high-souled, and he had done a grand lifework by which the church is still affected, and yet Paul himself had nothing of which to glory. His testimony of his own indebtedness to God’s grace is so plain, and given so many times over that we cannot mistake it. He says distinctly, “By the grace of God I am what I am.” He counted his own righteousness as worthless, and only desired that he might be found in Christ, arrayed in the righteousness which is of God by faith. Do we address today any self-made man, as the world calls men who have risen from the ranks? Have you taken credit to yourself, dear friend, for your success in life? Do you plume yourself upon your having risen by your own exertion? Then cease from such boasting, and in the spirit of the Apostle, ask yourself the question, “Who makes you to differ, and what have you that you did not receive?”

Our question is easy to answer, whether it is applied to natural gifts or to spiritual ones. There is a tendency to boast in *natural gifts*, but if questioned concerning them, we must give the self-evident answer that any natural gifts we possess are not to be set to *our* credit, but were bestowed on us by God. Some gifts come to us as the result of *birth*, and of course in that matter we had no hand. It may be we were born of Christian parents, and that pedigree is one for which we shall always be thankful—we had sooner number our parents with the saints of God than with the peers of the realm—but truly, brothers and sisters, we should be foolish to boast of godly ancestors, for we had not the choosing of them! Children of pious parents, you cannot look with disdain even upon those who are basely born, for you did not cause yourselves to be born any more than they did! From their birth some derive physical strength, but it always seems to me to be a very insane thing for a man to glory in his animal force, for there can be no merit in it; yet there are some who do so. In the strength of those brawny limbs of theirs, and those powerful muscles, some praise themselves abundantly, though the Lord takes not pleasure in the legs of a man, yet some count it a very wonderful thing that they can out jump or outrun their fellows! O athlete, though you are as strong as Samson, or swift as Asahel, what have you that you have not received? Had you been born with a tendency to consumption, or with some other hereditary *weakness*, could you have prevented it? And now that you are strong, are you to be praised for that any more than a horse or a steam engine?

The same is true of the beauty of a person which too frequently is the cause of vanity. Beauty is often a snare on this account; what if your features are delicately chiseled; what if your eyes are bright as the morning, and your countenance fair as the lily? What if there is a charm in your every glance? What have you in all these for which to praise yourself? Jezebel was fair to look upon, and is she to be praised? Is not your beauty the gift of God? Bless your Creator for it, but do not despise those who are less beautiful, for in so doing you will despise their Maker! How often do we hear a laugh behind their backs against persons who are somewhat grotesque, or it may be, deformed? But God made them, and who is he that shall dare to taunt the Maker with what He has done? What have you, O you fairest among women? What have you, O you most handsome among the sons of men, but what you have *received*? Cease then, those mincing airs, and tossing of the head. The same is true with regard to the rank which comes of birth. Some men are born—according to heraldic arrangements—noble. In what way is a new-born *baby* noble? Can true nobility arise out of anything but personal character? They are, however, born with the reputation of nobility, and are at once regarded with respect. Are they not our future rulers? Through no deed or desert, or talent or heroism of their own, some are as it were by accident, or rather by the sovereign ordinance of providence, placed above others. Why, then, should they glory in what is so purely a matter of *God's gift*? O you who are great and honorable among men, what have you but what you have received? Walk in lowly gentleness, and live with true nobility of character—and so make your rank a blessing!

Brothers and sisters, how much all of us owe in the matter of birth for which we sometimes take to ourselves credit! We have never fallen, perhaps, into the grosser immoralities, but could we not readily have done so if we had been huddled together in chambers where decency struggles for existence, or been compelled to take our walks abroad where blasphemy and vice contend with law and order, and are not to be subdued? If the worst of examples had been before us instead of the best, what might we not have become? We have sinned enough as it is, but very much of the fact that we have *not sinned more* must be laid to the account of our having commenced life under favorable circumstances than to any meritorious conduct of our own! In this respect, what have we that we did not receive? You have been honest; thank God for it! But you might have been a thief if your father had been so! You have been chaste and modest, be glad of it; you might not have been so had you been encompassed with other surroundings! You are at this time respected and reputable, and you carry on business in an upright manner; had you been as poor as some, you might have been tempted to do as dirty transactions as they are charged with! In these common matters of morality we cannot tell how much we owe to birth, and how little to ourselves; certainly self-applause ceases as we hear the question, “What have you that you did not receive?”

In the matter of *talent* there are very great differences. One man will very soon make his way in the world where others fail; put him where we

will, he will make his fortune—and his friends laughingly say that if he were transported to the Sahara Desert he would sell the sand at a profit! But who gave him that talent? What has he that he has not received? Another can study an art or a science, and become proficient in it in a short time—as a boy he is a leader at school, and as a man he is eminent in his sphere. Still, are not his wisdom and insight gifts from heaven? Another man has the gift of eloquence, and can speak well, while his fellow has the pen of a ready writer; in either of these gifts a man may take so much content as to become vainglorious, but the truth of God taught in our text ought always to prevent that folly: “What have you that you did not receive?” That which God gave to you He might have withheld, and the man whom you despise might have had your gifts! He would have been foolish to despise you if you had been without them, and you are now foolish to despise him! What differences there are, too, as to what men are helped to make of themselves by *education*. Nowadays there is a better opportunity of education for all ranks and conditions of men, for which I am earnestly thankful, and hope that true religion, will be connected with the advantage. But all boys trained in the same school do not leave it equally educated! One is quick, and another dull; one manages to place himself foremost, and another is doomed to be in the rear; whether the difference is in the original conformation of the man, or is the result of different teaching, the results must alike be subject for thankfulness to God, for whether it is natural talent or excellent education, both are *received!*

Equally so is it with *wealth*. I may address someone to whom God has given large substance, but, my dear friend, in the course of the accumulation of that substance you have had plenty of evidence that, “it is God that gives you power to get wealth.” There was a time when you had little enough, and it was a singular providence which put you in the way of rising. There have been times, too, when a little turn of the scale would have sent you into bankruptcy, but the markets went the other way, and you were made. You have seen others who were ahead of you in the race of prosperity left far behind, but God has prospered you! I know there have been anxious moments when you have had to lift up your eyes to the Most High, and beseech Him by His tenderness and mercy to help and deliver you. Well, inasmuch as this wealth is a blessing if you know how to use it rightly, credit the possession of it to God, who has made you His steward! Do you tell me that you have had a keener eye, and exercised more industry than others, as well as a better judgment? True, but who gave you the *judgment*, and who gave you the *health* with which to be industrious? Many men have been as industrious, and yet have failed! Many another has been as willing to work, but he has been disabled by sickness! Many another man has had as keen an eye, but alas, his judgment has been baffled by misfortune! Another man began life with as clear a brain as you, but now he is confined in the asylum, and you are still in possession of all your faculties! O sirs, never sacrifice to your own net and drag, and say, “We brought up these treasures from the deep,” but bless God who gave you all that you have of earthly

things, for what have you that you have not received? I would that you felt more than you do that you are only stewards, that your possessions are *lent* to you to be used for God's glory and the good of others, and neither to be squandered nor hoarded for yourselves.

But now, brothers and sisters, this is very emphatically true as to *our spiritual gifts*, and I invite you to consider this truth—"What have you that you did not receive?" There has long been a great Doctrinal discussion between the Calvinists and the Arminians upon many important points. I am, myself, persuaded that the Calvinist, alone, is right upon some, points and the Arminian, alone, is right upon others. There is a great deal of the truth of God in the positive side of both systems, and a great deal of error in the negative side of both. If I were asked, "Why is a man damned?" I should answer as an Arminian answers, "He destroys himself." I should not dare to lay man's ruin at the door of divine sovereignty! On the other hand, if I were asked, "Why is a man *saved*?" I could only give the Calvinistic answer, "He is saved through the sovereign grace of God, and not at all of himself." I would not dream of ascribing the man's salvation in any measure to himself! I have not found, as a matter of fact, that *any* Christian people seriously dare to quarrel with a ministry which contains these two truths in fair proportions. I find them kicking at the inferences which are supposed to follow from one or the other of them, and sometimes needlessly crying to have them "reconciled," but the two truths together, as a rule, commend themselves to the conscience, and I feel sure that if I could bring them both forward this morning with equal clearness, I should win the assent of most Christians.

At this time, however, I have to confine myself to the statement that all the grace we have is the gift of God to us, and I trust none will, therefore, suppose that I deny the other side of the question. I believe assuredly that we have nothing good in us but what we have *received*. For instance, we were dead in trespasses and sin, and we were quickened into spiritual life! My brothers and sisters, did that life spring out of the ribs of death? Did the worm of our corruption beget the living seed of regeneration? It is absurd to think so! God be praised for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sin, which led Him to quicken us by His grace! We have been forgiven our great sins—wholly forgiven—through the precious blood of Christ; we have been made clean! Did we deserve it? Does any man who professes to be a Christian say for a single moment, that he deserved the ransom paid by Christ, and deserved the pardon of his sins? It would be monstrous blasphemy even to *imagine* such a thing! Oh no, "By grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." God forgave us freely; there could not possibly have been any quality in sin which could have called forth the forgiving love of God; He had mercy upon us because He would have mercy upon us—not because we could claim anything at His hand!

Everything, dear friend that makes you to *differ from the common sinner* is the gift of God's grace to you! You know it is! You have faith in Christ, yes, but did not the Holy Spirit work it in you? Do you not cheer-

fully subscribe to the doctrine that faith is of the operation of *God*? You have repentance of sin, but is the repentance natural to you? Did you not receive it from Him who is exalted on high to give repentance? Is not your repentance His gift? “Truly,” one will say, “but the same gospel was preached to others as to us.” Precisely so; perhaps the very sermon which was the means of your conversion left others as they were! What made the difference? Do you reply, “We willed to believe in Jesus.” That is true—an unwilling faith would be no faith—but who influenced your will? Was your will influenced by some betterness of nature in *you*, so that you can claim credit for it? I, for one, reject with abhorrence any such an idea! Do you reply, “Our will was influenced by our understanding, and we chose what we knew to be best.” But then who enlightened your *understanding*? Who gave you the light which illuminated your mind, so that you chose the way of life? “Oh,” you say, “but our hearts were set towards salvation, and the hearts of others were not.” That, also, is true, but who set your hearts that way; who was the prime mover? Was it you, or God? There is the question, and if, my dear brother, my dear sister, you dare affirm that in the matter of your own salvation *you* were the prime mover, I am at a loss to understand you—and I hope there are few of your creed! Jesus is not Alpha to you; you do not love Him because He first loved you; you were evidently not converted, or turned at all—you turned yourself! You are not a new creature, but are *your own new-creator*!

Do you look to see the same thing in others? Why, then, do you act as you do? Why do you *pray* the *Lord* to turn others if you believe that He did not turn *you*? Do you pray the Lord to convert your children? Why do you do it? If it is left entirely to them to be the prime movers, why pray to God about them? “Ah,” says one, “God must treat all alike.” I ask again, why do *you* pray for your *children*? You ask God to do a wrong thing in blessing your children in preference to other people, if it is true that He is bound to treat all alike! When you go practically to work, these sentiments do not hold water! The man who knows that the Holy Spirit was first in his operations upon the mind, and who calls Christ Jesus the Alpha and the Omega of his salvation, is the man who can honestly go to the Lord and pray for the conversion of this man or that! And he is sure to give God all the glory of his salvation, and magnify and bless the grace of the Most High!

Perhaps, my dear brother, there is a difference *between you and other saints*. I am sure there is reason for some saints to eclipse others, for some professors are indeed very poor things. Well, brother, you have a great deal more faith than others—where did you get it? If you received it from anywhere but from God, you had better get rid of it! Dear brother, you have more joy than some, and possibly you feel ashamed of your fellow Christians who are so doubting and sad—beware that you do not become vain of your joy! And remember, if your joy is *true* joy, you *received* it of the Lord. Are you more useful than others? You cannot help looking at certain professors who are idle, and wishing that you could stir them up; I know I do! I would put a sharp pin into their downy cushions if I

could, but, for all that, who gives us activity? Who gives us usefulness? Who gives us zeal? Who gives us courage? Who gives us *everything*? If you, dear friend, get into such a condition that you begin to whisper to yourself, “I have improved my gifts and graces at a very noble rate, and am getting on exceedingly well in spiritual things,” you will soon have to come down from your high places! If you register yourself A-1 at Lloyd’s, I will not sail with you, brother, for I fear your proud ship will tempt the tempest! I would rather sail with some poor Christian whose weather-beaten vessel would go to the bottom if Jesus were not on board; for I am persuaded he or she is safe. “Blessed is the man that fears always.” Blessed is the man who lies low at the foot of the cross, and who, concerning everything that he has, whether temporal or spiritual, ascribes *all* to the Giver of all Good!

Now we must pass on, briefly, to think of the second point.

**II. THERE IS A QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED WITH SHAME.** “If you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it?” If any of us have fallen into vainglory, and we all have more or less done so, let us answer this question with confusion of face. Brother, sister, have you gloried in anything you have received? Then think about how wrongly you have acted, for you have robbed God of His honor; to glory in man is altogether inconsistent with glorying in God! Depend upon it; every particle of praise we take to ourselves is so much stolen out of the revenues of the King of kings! Will a man rob God? Will a *redeemed* man rob God? Will a poor sinner snatched from between the jaws of death and hell by undeserved mercy, rob God? Lord have mercy on us! When we boast, we also leave our truthful position, and every Christian ought to be ashamed to stand anywhere but in the truth of God. When I confess myself to be weak, helpless, and ascribe all I have to grace, then I stand in the truth, but if I take even the remotest praise to myself, I stand in a lie. The Lord have mercy upon us if we have dared to lie in His presence! Let us also remember that whenever we prize ourselves highly, we are sure to esteem our Lord less.

Do you see any *spiritual* beauty in yourself? Then it is because you do not know what true beauty is! Do you say, “I am rich and increased in goods”? Then you know nothing, or very little, of what true wealth is; you have mistaken gilt for gold, and rags for raiment. I counsel you; buy of Jesus gold tried in the fire, and fine linen with which you may be clothed. Depend upon it, our judgment is very much like a pair of scales—if Christ goes up, self goes down, and if self rises, Jesus falls in our esteem! No man ever sets a high price upon self and Christ at the same time—

**“The more Your glories strike my eyes  
The humbler I shall be,”**

is a rule without exception! Besides, if you and I have gloried in what we possess, we have undervalued our fellow Christians, and that is a great sin; they are very dear to Jesus, and He accounts even their deaths precious. “Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones that believe in Me.” If we overestimate ourselves, the natural consequence is

that we underestimate others. Have I ever thought, "I am a rich man, and these poor people, though good Christians, are nobodies compared to me; I am of far more consequence to the church"? Have I conceived, because I have a measure of talent, that those holy men and women who cannot speak for Christ are of no great account? Or have I, because I happened to be an old, experienced Christian, snuffed out the young ones, and said, "They are only a pack of boys and girls"? Is this the way to speak of those who were bought with the blood of Christ, and are members of Christ's body? It will not do for us to despise the least saint!

I believe there are many who are now pushed into the background, and shoved into any hole and corner, which Christ looks upon with special delight, and will place first when He comes. Verily I say unto you, "There are first that shall be last, and there are last that shall be first." Besides, all this honoring of ourselves generally puts us off from the right course as to our gifts, and makes us forget that these things are only lent to us, to be used for our Master! It is required of stewards that they are found faithful, not that they praise themselves, and deck themselves in their Master's goods; we have too much to do, to afford to boast! Look at yonder young soldier who has just received his armor and his helmet; he has just entered the service; look with what pleasure he sees his handsome face reflected in his breastplate! How much he admires his plume—he thinks how grand he shall look in such gear. My dear fellow, all this while you have forgotten that to wear these things in the thick of the battle, where they will bear the dint of the sword, is what awaits you! And you better consider *that*, not your gallant appearance—your valor is what we want to see! When a man exalts himself because of what he *possesses*, he does not act as a soldier of the cross should do.

Here we will insert an illustration or two. There is a tendency in some to exalt themselves because God has placed them in *office*. They are ministers, deacons, elders, superintendents, or something. What mighty airs they give themselves! "Honor to whom honor is due"—they seem to have learned the phrase by heart, and to have seen a *personal* reference in it! Have you ever seen the footmen of princes when they are playing the great man? What wonders of nature and art they often are! I was admiring one of them the other day with all the reverence due; the vision of his pomp quite staggered me, for he was so gorgeous to look upon; I feel sure that that nothing could compare to his royal master, and certainly nothing could have been more pompous or aristocratic! While I was looking on with due wonder and reverence, somebody cruelly remarked, "What a flunky!" This was a most irreverent observation, and yet very natural. My brothers, whenever you and I, because we have our best clothes on, and are ministers, or deacons, or elders, act as if we were very great men, somebody or another is to call us flunkies! Not, perhaps, exactly in so many words, but in language to the same effect. Do not let us expose ourselves to such contempt! And if ever we have done so, let us be rebuked at once by the thought of what we have seen in others. Some persist in boasting about their experience. This also is vanity. Suppose a man here, who is a great pedestrian, has been over the Alps, and trav-

ersed Europe? Here is his walking stick, and it boasts, "I am the most traveled walking stick in creation; I have climbed the craggy brows of the Alps, and bathed myself in the Nile." "Well," says one, "but wherever you have gone, you have been carried by a power beyond yourself." So let the man who boasts in experience remember that in the paths of peace he has gone nowhere except as the Lord's hand has borne him onward! He has been nothing but a staff in God's hands—and while he should be *grateful*, he should never be proud.

I was in a beautiful garden the other day, upon the rocks, where the choicest of flowers and tropical plants are growing, while all around the rocks it was bare with scarcely a trace of vegetable life. Now, suppose that garden were proud, and boasted of its fruitfulness? The answer would be, "Every basketful of earth had to be carried up to you, and you would not bear fruit if it were not for the stream of water that is turned on and tracked through many little mazes, and brought to the root of each plant you bear. You would be only a rock, again, in a few months if you were left to yourself; therefore let the gardener of the garden rejoice in his work, but the garden, itself, may not glory." That is what the most fruitful believer would be if God left him alone—a barren rock, a wilderness! Suppose I address some Christian who is happy, joyous, and cheerful? And suppose he has such dainty bits sent home to him out of the promises, such precious words from Scripture applied to his heart? Dear friend, are you apt to think that there is something especially good about you because you get all these remarkable enjoyments? Then let me clear your mind; it is your *weakness* which gets you these favors! When you are living in a hotel you will remark that certain persons have their dinners sent upstairs. Why? Oh, that is because they are ill; if you are well you must go down to the *table d'hote* with the rest—but if you are ill they will send it upstairs, and pay you extra attention. These very comforts that God gives you ought to make you inquire whether there is not something wrong with you, and instead of thinking you are strong and well, you should search and see if there is not some weakness which the Lord, in His mercy, intends to remove by the double comforts which He gives to you! Nothing in the world ought to be a cause of self-exaltation; nothing that our God gives us ought to make us think highly of ourselves!

Lower down, brother, lower down, and so you will rise; the way to heaven is downhill, not uphill! As Christ went down to the grave that He might come up, again, and fill all things, so must you go to the cross—and down to the grave of self, and be buried with Christ, and learn the meaning of your baptism, and make it true that you are buried with Him to all the world, and to yourself also, for so only can you rise into the fullness of the new life.

**III. OTHER QUESTIONS WHICH THESE QUESTIONS SUGGEST** shall now, in the third place, occupy our attention. What are they? The first is this. *Have I ever given to God His due place in the matter of my salvation?*—A question that I may very well put, for I remember when I was converted to God, and truly converted too, but I did not know that it was

the work of the Spirit in my heart. I did not understand that it was the result of special grace; I had heard the gospel generally preached, but I had not learned the peculiar doctrines of grace. And I remember very well sitting down and thinking to myself, "I am renewed in my mind; I am forgiven; I am saved! How came that about?" And I traced it to this that I had heard the gospel, but as I knew that many never had an opportunity of hearing it, I saw special grace in my having had the opportunity to hear it. But then I said, "There are others who have heard it, but it was not blessed to them—how came it to be blessed to me?" And I thought for a while whether it could be something good in me that made the gospel useful to me, for if so, I deserved to have credit for it! Somehow the grace which God had given me made me fling that theory to the winds, and I came to this conclusion, "It must be *God* that made the difference," and having got that *one* thought into my mind, the doctrines of grace followed as a matter of course! Only by experimentally knowing that there has been a special work of grace in your own soul will you be likely to place the Lord where He should be in your creed, for some provide a very inferior place for the Lord in the matter of their salvation. With them, man is very great, and God is made little; but true theology makes God the very sun of the system, the center, the head, the first and chief! Have *you* done so? If not, correct your views, and get a clearer view of the gospel of grace! May the Holy Spirit help you to do it! To know the doctrines of grace will be much to your comfort, will tend to your stability, and will also lead you to seek the glory of God.

The next question is this. Have I, this morning, the spirit of humble gratitude? How do I feel? Do I take God's mercy as a matter of course, and view my own gifts without thankfulness? Then I act like the brutes that perish! Let us pray this morning that humble, lowly gratitude may daily rule our spirits; such gratitude will make us cheerful; it will make us earnest; it will in fact, be an atmosphere in which all Christian graces will grow by the blessing of God's Spirit! Next, seeing I have been a *receiver*, what have I done towards giving out again? It cannot have been intended that I should receive and never give out, for if that is the case, there is a sad lot for me. You know they used to make, and do still make in the North of England, earthenware saving boxes for children. You can put what you like in, but you cannot get it out until you break the box! And there are persons of that sort among us; some have died lately, and their estates have been reported in the Probate Court—there were plenty put in to them, but you could never get anything out, and consequently they had to be broken up! I only hope when they were broken up, the gold and silver went the right way. What a pity to be like money boxes—to be of no good until you are broken up! One would like to get and give at the same time; we ought not to be as a stagnant pond, a Dead Sea which receives from rivers all the year round, but gives forth no stream in return, and so becomes a stagnant, putrid lake. Let us be like the great lakes of America which receive the mighty rivers, and pour them out again, and consequently remain fresh and clear.

The next question is. Since what I have, I have received by God's grace, might I not receive more? Come, brothers and sisters, with regard to gracious things I want you to be covetous! Covet earnestly the best gifts! If you have had faith, why should you not have more? If God gave you hope, joy, experience; why not more? You are not straitened in Him—you can only be straightened in yourself! Try to remove those hindrances, and ask the Lord to give you more grace. One other question; if all that Christians have, they have received; sinner, why should *you* not receive as well as they? If it were true that Christians took these good things *out of themselves*, then you, poor sinner, might despair, for you know you have no good thing in *you*! But if the best of saints, the best Christian in heaven, has not *anything* but what he *received*, why shouldn't *you* receive? To receive, you know, is never a difficult thing. I guarantee you that out of all the people in London, there is not a man but what could receive! Try it on the present occasion. Let it be a thousand pounds, and see how many among us would be unable to receive. If there is a person about who would not receive, I tell you who it is—it is the man who thinks himself so rich that he does not care to have any more! Even so the proud, self-righteous Pharisee cannot receive—but you poor, good-for-nothing, empty sinners can receive, and here is the promise—“To as many as *received* Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name.”

Open that empty hand! Open that empty heart! God grant they may be opened, now, by His own divine Spirit, and may you receive, and then I know you will join with us in saying, “Of His fullness have we all received, and grace for grace.”

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
PSALM 103; 1 CORINTHIANS 4.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—108, 233, 235.**

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# A GOD READY TO PARDON NO. 1272

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
JANUARY 9, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“You are a God ready to pardon.”  
Nehemiah 9:17.*

WHEN a man's conscience is so awakened to the existence of sin that he cannot perceive any plea for God's mercy within himself, it is his wisdom to look for a plea in the nature and character of God. Now, brothers and sisters, if we search ourselves through and through, we cannot find anything in our fallen nature which can recommend us to the Most High; if we think that we have a claim upon God's goodness, we are in darkness and deceive ourselves; when the true light of God comes, it reveals our bareness of all merit or excuse, and shows that there is nothing in human nature but that which provokes the Lord. This is the fact as to our condition while we are unregenerate, and oftentimes the true believer, when darkness gathers around him, finds himself to be in much the same condition. His evidences burn dimly, the candle of the Lord seems quenched within his spirit, and worst of all the sun of divine favor is not discernible! Then, groping all around, he can discover nothing in himself but that which causes him to sigh and groan, and in such a plight he should cast overboard the great anchor of faith, and escape from *himself* to his God. It is well for him to *always* do so, but especially in the cloudy and dark day. To whom should he turn for light but to the Sun of Righteousness? Where look for grace but to the God of all grace? Where for all but to the all-in-all? If what I am makes me despair, let me consider what *God in Christ* is, and I shall have hope! That God is merciful becomes to sinners the first point upon which they can fix their hope! That the mercy of God endures forever affords to the saints a most blessed stronghold when inward sin assails the soul!

But from where do we learn this supremely consoling truth of God? How do we know that God is merciful? I scarcely think we could have inferred from His worlds the readiness of God to show His mercy. I have heard a great deal about the attributes of God in nature—I have indeed heard a great deal more than I have ever been able to see! To “go from nature up to nature's God” is a very common expression, but it is a very long step, mark you, from the highest Alp of nature to the footstool of the throne of God! It will be found much easier to go *down* from God to nature, when you once know the Lord, than ever it can be to ascend from the works *to* the Maker. It is more than questionable whether the best instructed mind could have discovered much of God's nature from the universe around—His goodness to obedient creatures we might have gathered, but His mercy to the guilty is there but dimly revealed. Look at

this visible universe, and you perceive that it is governed by certain fixed laws. If a man offends these laws, do the laws bend and make allowance for his mistake? Not so—they operate immutably, and every violation of them is avenged! The captain makes a mistake of a few points in his steering—there is a current which he has not perceived, or perhaps his compass itself is out of gear; he is without any fault on his part, drifted upon a rock! Does the rock move, or is it softened? Or when the ship strikes, is there some miracle by which the timbers are held together? Does some angelic hand undergird the ship and preserve the precious lives? No, amidst the howling of the pitiless storm, the vessel breaks up, and those who struggle best are unable to survive the fury of the sea! Is there any sign of God's mercy here?

Or take another case—the simple countryman, in his ignorance of the laws of electricity, is overtaken by a pelting storm, and to escape from the drenching rain he runs beneath some lofty tree to screen himself beneath its spreading branches. It is a law of nature that elevated points should attract lightning, but the man does not know this; he does not intend to defy his Maker's natural law—but for all that, when the death-dealing fluid splits the tree, it leaves a senseless corpse at the foot of it. The law does not suspend its operations though that man may be the husband upon whose life the bread of many children may depend; though he may have been one of the most guileless and prayerful of mankind; though he may have been utterly unconscious of having exposed himself to the force of a physical law of God, yet still he dies, for he has placed himself in the way of a settled law of nature! There is scant trace of God's mercy here! Or it may be that a physician in the pursuit of discoveries which shall alleviate pain, with no ambition except to serve his fellow creatures, no mercenary motive swaying him, endeavors to penetrate into the secrets of nature, and imbibes or inhales a certain noxious drug or pernicious vapor. Will the noxious drug or destructive gas stay its deadly office because of the generosity of the motive of the man who exposes himself to its influence? Ah, not so! The precious life is sacrificed, and we hear the sad news that a great physician is no more; nature having stood fast and firm, and no mercy having been shown to the breaker of her laws.

Now, seeing that these laws move on immutably like the great wheels of a mighty machine, and he that is entangled in those wheels is ground to powder, it does seem as if we had little or no evidence of the mercy of God if we look to nature, alone; certainly not enough to calm the conscience or allay the fears of the guilty! We admit that there are some tokens for good to the offender, even in nature, for does not the Lord teach man to set up his beacons upon the headland, and anchor his light ships near the sands? And has He not led us up to the formation of lifeboats whereby multitudes of lives have been saved? In the case of death by lightning there is reason to believe that the death is more certainly painless than any other, and again, loftiness need not remain a danger, for the lightning rod has warded off the bolt of heaven from multitudes of elevated buildings! In the case of most poisons there are antidotes which save lives if they are taken speedily enough, and even the poisons in cer-

tain compounds, turn out to be healing medicines; so there *are* traces of the pardon of offenses in the mitigating or the removing of penalties even under the iron rule of natural law! Never is a law changed, mark you, in nature except in the few instances of *miraculous interpositions*. And in the *moral* universe never is a law changed at all, for heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or one tittle of the law shall fail! Still, there are laws which full frequently counteract the roughness and the crushing power of other laws, and these, like their counterparts in the moral universe, prove that God is merciful. But all this being allowed, the light which nature affords us upon this subject is rather conjecture than assurance; my brothers and sisters let us thank God we are not left to mere guesses upon this point; be thankful we are not left to the sun and to the moon to give us light upon this matter! No, we have a more sure word of testimony from which you do well if you take heed as unto a light that shines in a dark place! We have this book of Holy Scripture, written by the pen of the Holy Spirit, which tells us over and over again that the God whom we have offended is a God ready to pardon, a God whose mercy endures forever!

I would call your attention to the expression, "*a God ready to pardon.*" Not a God who may *possibly* pardon, neither a God who upon strong persuasion, and earnest pleading may, at length, be induced to forgive; not one who perhaps at some remote period, after we have undergone a long purgation, may manifest a mercy which is now in the background, but a God "ready to pardon!" He is a God willing, and more than willing—ready, standing prepared, or to use another Scriptural expression, "waiting to be gracious." We have a God who stands like a host at a festival which is all provided and prepared, saying, "My oxen and My fatlings are provided, all things are ready, come to the supper." Not only are all things ready, but God Himself is ready! His own heart and hands are ready to bestow pardon upon the guilty ones who come before Him! There is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared! *This blessed truth of God*, in the first place, *was remarkably seen in the story of Israel*—on that we will dwell; and secondly, *it is equally true of the Lord at all times*. May the Holy Spirit, in His mercy, lead us to feel the power of His mercy while we speak thereon.

**I.** First, then, I shall ask your attention to THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL AS SINGULARLY ILLUSTRATING THE READINESS OF GOD TO PARDON. Brethren, the Israelites seem to have been set forward as a picture of all God's people. As the foot of the altar was made of the mirrors of the women, the polished brass of the mirrors being melted down, so it seems to me as if Israel was intended to be a mirror in which every one of us might look and see his own image. I am sure that when I speak of Israel you will perceive that the record speaks of you, and draws your portraits to life.

They were, in the first place, *a people very specially favored, but they were a people as equally ungrateful*. To what other nation did God give the oracles of His truth? What other tribes did He separate unto Himself to be a people in whose midst He would show forth His glory? What other

nation did He bring forth out of the house of bondage with a high hand, and an outstretched arm? For what other people did He pour out of heaven the dread artillery of all His plagues, striking their foes with judgments most terrible? For what other race did He divide the sea that He might lead them through the deep as through a wilderness? What other armies of men had food to eat which dropped from heaven? What other hosts were led and guided for 40 years, and supplied without their own labor, without sowing or planting, or reaping, or gathering into barns? Surely the Lord Himself was with them, and they were favored above all the rest of mankind! Who is like unto you, O Israel, a people chosen of the Lord?

But they were just as equally sinful. It scarcely seems to us as if any other nation ever existed who provoked the Lord so much, for they transgressed against His light and love, against instruction and illumination, against wooing and warning, against entreaty and rebuke; they rebelled though they knew that they were highly favored, and were conscious that they were a distinguished and elect people. Their iniquities were committed against a God whose hand they had seen, and whose voice they had heard, as He spoke to them from the top of Sinai! They lived amid a blaze of miracles, and walked a pathway of marvels; God was in their camp! His glory shone forth between the cherubim, and under the symbol of the fiery cloudy pillar His presence was revealed to them all; God was round about them for a wall of fire, and as the glory in their midst! And yet, with the Lord before their eyes, they refused to see Him, and with all His wonders before them they refused to believe! You know, dear friends, that we are always particularly wounded by the unkindness of any to whom we have been especially attentive and generous. We complain, "It was not an enemy, for then I could have borne it, but it was you, a man, my acquaintance, my friend." It hurts to be injured by a child for whom you have endured much self-denial, and to whom you have rendered tender love. "Sharper than an adder's tooth is an unthankful child." After this fashion Israel offended, and speaking after the manner of men, the Lord felt it keenly. He was grieved at His heart because His great goodness to them had been so basely misused. He cries, "O that they had hearkened unto Me"; and in another place, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." Such is the language which Scripture puts into the mouth of the Lord, and yet He forgave His provoking people times without number—was He not, indeed, ready to pardon?

Again, the Israelites were *absolutely dependent upon God for everything, and yet they were proud*. Read in the 16<sup>th</sup> verse, "They and our fathers dealt proudly." If any people in the world ought to have been humble, surely the Israelites were they! They had been slaves in Egypt, and lay among the pots in degraded bondage—brick makers all of them; their backs were raw with the lash of the slave driver, and they cried out under the sore oppression. The Lord chose them in the ignorance and debasement which always comes with slavery; when He brought them out, they had no treasures but such as they had demanded of their former

masters. Their stock of food was very slender, and they had to traverse the arid wilderness; tied up in bundles on their shoulders, they carried a little food, but that was soon spent, and every day they had to receive bread fresh from God's own ovens, while as for water they would have perished had it not been for the Rock, whose streams followed them all their way. They were not a people acquainted with commerce; they had no opportunities for hunting; there were no means for farming, and therefore, if day by day the manna had not fallen, they would have utterly starved! Yet though they were pensioners upon the daily charity of God, and were both fed and clothed by His bounty, still they were proud! I know some others who are much in the same condition, and perhaps they are proud too; paupers and yet proud! living on alms and yet boastful! Ah, brothers and sisters, this in Israel was very provoking to God, even as it is in us! Those vagrant mendicants thought themselves something, and when they were a little tried, they began to murmur against Moses, and to accuse their God of bringing them out into the desert to die! They were a proud lot, and with full stomachs they rebelled against Moses and their God—though the food in their stomachs was a gracious gift! They refused to do menial tasks as though they were some great ones, while all the while they were no better than so many birds of the air, which have to gather what God's generous hand is pleased to scatter for their daily food. Was He not a God ready to pardon, to have mercy upon a proud people? Is it not always very hard to forgive a haughty-spirited offender? If the offender will humble himself before you, there is less difficulty, but if being absolutely dependent upon you for everything, the offender nevertheless insults you with high words; it becomes very difficult to keep your temper with him! Pride is irritating, yes, abominable! O Lord, when You did forgive the haughtiness of Your erring people, You were indeed ready to pardon!

These people *deliberately rebelled*, for the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> verses tell us they, "hardened their necks, and hearkened not to Your commandments, and refused to obey." It was not that they made mistakes; it was not that they fell into errors or were misled; they did not *want* to do right, and *refused* to know what God's will and mind were! They stopped their ears, and closed their eyes! When they asked that the words which the Lord spoke from Sinai might not be spoken to them any more, it was but natural that they should dread the terror of the trumpet sound; but deep down in their hearts there was also distaste for a law so pure, so holy. Their hearts were set on mischief, and they were not to be led in the way of obedience; they had a ready ear for Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who preached sedition; they were ready to be led into idolatrous ceremonies and lustful acts by Moabite women; but before the Lord they were as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke! Anybody and everybody they would listen to, except their God! To Him they had such small regard that they cast His ordinances and precepts behind their backs, and sinned again and again with resolute deliberation. They often went astray though often reproved; it was not mere error and mistakes—the set and current of their heart was towards evil! Deliberation adds greatly to the heinous-

ness of sin, and it is a sad thing when we have to charge ourselves with this; the repetition of the same offense also shows a state of heart very near akin to determination, for it has all the appearance of a deliberate refusal to watch against temptation, and of a fixed resolve to treat the voice of God with indifference! Alas, that we should be so readily decoyed by the baits of evil, and so feebly held by the cords of goodness! Lord, when we provoke You in this way, be pleased to show Yourself a God ready to pardon!

More than this, we are told that the Israelites were *unmindful of what the Lord had done for them*—“Neither were mindful of Your wonders that You did among them.” They were, by this unmindfulness, led into the great crime of *unbelief*. You think, my brothers and sisters, that if you had seen the Red Sea divided, and Israel’s hosts led through, while Pharaoh’s army was drowned, you would have trusted God all your life! “Oh,” you say, “if I had been present and really gathered the manna and eaten it, I could not, I am sure, with such a demonstration before my eyes, have ever fallen into unbelief again.” well, I leave that question, whether you would or not, having a very shrewd suspicion that your heart is by no means better than that of the ancient unbelievers! At any rate, Israel soon fell back into her chronic unbelief; within a few days after they had seen the whole host of Pharaoh destroyed, they began to murmur against God and against Moses, and though every day they ate the manna, and drank the miraculously given water, yet continually they asked, “Is the Lord among us or not?” And they were perpetually putting questions such as made Moses demand of them, “Is the Lord’s hand waxed short?” They were cankered to the heart with unbelief! For a moment they had a sort of faith, but in another moment they relapsed into infidelity—

**“Now they believe His Word,  
While the rocks with rivers flow.  
Now with their lusts provoke the Lord,  
And He reduced them low.”**

At the slightest peril, the slightest trouble to themselves, they began to think that now they were come to a difficulty out of which the Lord could not deliver them, and they cried, “Surely, He means to destroy us! He will never bring us into the promised land.” Do you know any other people like this? I only need to put out my hand to touch one of the same order! At any rate, since the Lord forgave His people Israel, though they angered Him with their ungenerous mistrust, we see most clearly that He is “a God ready to pardon.”

Further on we read that these people *committed, in spirit an act of utter apostasy*. They made unto themselves a captain to return to their bondage; they said they would go back to Egypt since there was no hope of their ever conquering Canaan, for the Canaanites were too strong for them. What? Will you go back to slavery? Will you go back to back to making bricks without straw? Will you leave God and His tabernacle, and the glory of His presence? What do you think they would go back for? What was the attractive bait which lured them? They would return to their taskmasters for the sake of the *leeks*, and the *garlic*, and the *onions*, the flavor of which was still in their mouths! Their soul lusted after

the fleshpots of Egypt, and they would, to sit down by those savory cauldrons, go back to the ignoble condition of slavery again, and leave the Lord and all His guardian care! They would forego the goodly land which was but a little way beyond! O foolish people! Ah, brethren, this is madness, but alas, is there not in us, even in *us*, an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God? And have there not been times when we also have been tempted to return to the beggarly elements of the world, and seek contentment in the groveling joys of earth? Perhaps it was worst of all that the Israelites *did accidentally fall into shameful idolatry*. They set up the figure of a calf to represent God! They compared their glory unto the image of an ox that eats grass, and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt." God was incensed at this, as well He might be; nevertheless, at the entreaty of Moses, He did not utterly destroy them. Oh, brothers and sisters, it is a shameful thing when we love the creature more than the Creator, and dare to set up anything which is dear to us in Jehovah's place! "Little children keep yourselves from idols," but if you have had idols, and have been forgiven, then you can see in this history, and in your own experience, that the Lord is ready to pardon.

For a minute I desire to show you the opposite side, namely, the divine *goodness*. While God forgave this people, He showed His readiness to pardon in the following ways. First, *He continued while they were in all these sins to guide them both by night and by day*. The 19<sup>th</sup> verse says, "Yet You in Your manifold mercies, forsook them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light and the way wherein they should go." Only think of it, that very day they made a calf, when the sun went down the fiery pillar still lit up the camp! At that very hour in which they said, "We will make to ourselves a captain, and go back to Egypt," the cloud was covering the camp and screening them from the burning heat of the sun! They sinned beneath the shade of most special mercy! Oh, if the Lord had said, "Now I will leave you; I will give you no more guidance; since you will not follow My commandments, go which way you will," would you have wondered? If He had left them to faint in the heat of the day, and grope in the darkness of the night, would you have been surprised? Ah, but let us wonder to think that the Lord has guided *us* as pilgrims through this desert land! He has still been both sun and shade to us, even to this day, notwithstanding all our sins! Had he deserted us, what countless evils had befallen us! Blessed be His mercy which fails not!

Another marvelously gracious fact was that *He still continued to teach them*. I am more surprised at this than at the other. Read the 20<sup>th</sup> verse—"You also gave Your good Spirit to instruct them." I should have thought He would have said, "Moses, take down the tabernacle, roll up the curtains, put away the ark; no more morning sacrifices, no more evening lambs! Aaron, go home, take off your breastplate and your ephod, and all your garments which were made for glory and for beauty. This people shall be taught no longer; they are incorrigible! It is in vain

that I dwell among them and walk among them.” No, but still He made known His ways among them, and maintained the testimony of His servant, Moses, and continued to give them those matchless types which set forth so fully the way of salvation. My brothers and sisters, also bless the Lord that though He has often chastised you, and given you the bread of affliction, and the water of affliction, yet He has not taken away your teachers from you, nor quenched the light of Israel! Still does His good Spirit enlighten and instruct the people! Is He not a God ready to pardon?

Nehemiah also notices that *God did not stint them in their daily provisions*, notwithstanding their offenses. “Yes,” he says, “You withheld not Your manna from their mouths, and gave them water for their thirst.” I am struck with wonder to think that God should have caused His manna to continue to fall! They provoked Moses, and they set up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, but that *very morning* God’s bread was in their mouths! They came up to speak against God and against His servant, and their tongues would have been cleaving to the roof of their mouths for thirst if that very morning they had not drunk of the water which God had given them! When dependent persons will persist in disregarding our complaints, and violating our rules, we are driven to stop the supplies; but the Lord did not stop the supplies even in this urgent case! Would not famine and drought have brought them to their senses? If there had been no food for the women and children, and no drink for the strong men, would not *that* have tamed them? Even lions and savage beasts may thus be subdued, but no, their bread was given them, and their water was sure! Was He not a God ready to pardon? One other remark here, and it is this—*He did sustain them to the end, and ultimately bring them into the land of promise*. “Yes, 40 years did You sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing: their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. Their children, also, You multiplied as the stars of heaven, and brought them into the land, concerning which You had promised to their fathers that they should go in to possess it.”

Yes, and I know a people who, despite their sins, have already taken possession of many a gracious promise, so that they already dwell in the midst of Covenant blessings! I know a people, too, who notwithstanding their sins, shall enter into rest. “He shall surely bring them in,” for He will bring His chosen into His glory, and they shall see His face with joy! Is He not a God ready to pardon? My tale is all too long for me to tell it. I must cease from this portion of the history, and ask you to meditate upon it. And as you do so, I ask you to admire our pardoning God!

**II.** Secondly, IT IS EQUALLY TRUE THAT THE LORD AT ALL TIMES IS A GOD READY TO PARDON. It is true of Him *by nature*, for mercy is an essential attribute of God. We must never think that our Lord Jesus died to *make* God merciful—on the contrary, the death of the Lord Jesus is the *result* of the mercy of God. When man sinned, God was willing enough to pardon him, for the death of a sinner is no pleasure to Him. Judgment is His strange work.

The way in which He came to Adam, at the first, showed His mercy. He came, if you remember, in the cool of the day—not at the instant the crime was committed. God is not in a hurry to accuse man or to execute vengeance upon him. He therefore waited until the cool of the day. He did not address rebellious man in the language of indignation, but He kindly said, “Adam, where are you?” And when he had questioned the guilty pair, and convicted them, and the sentence was passed, it was certainly terrible, but oh, how mildly tempered! The curse was as much as possible made to fall indirectly—“Cursed is the ground for your sake.” Though the woman was made to feel great sorrows, yet those were connected with a happy event which causes the travail to be forgotten. There was tenderness in the dread utterances of an offended God, and mainly so because almost as soon as He declared that man must labor and die, He promised that the, “seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.” Assuredly, the Lord our God is by nature very pitiful and full of compassion! This truth is evident when we remember that God was abundantly ready to pardon, for *He Himself removed the impediment which lay in the way of forgiveness!* Being Judge of all the earth, it was essential to Him in that office that sin should never be treated as a light thing, but should be duly punished, lest others rush into it, hoping to escape judgment. For the good of all His creatures, as well as for the glory of His own character, God must not allow sin to go unpunished! A judge may be willing enough to pardon the culprit, but He is *the* Judge, and as such He must condemn the guilty. The readiness of God to pardon was seen in this that on His own He provided a way by which His mercy might be consistent with His justice. From His own bosom He took His only-begotten Son, Himself, for He is One with Him, and God in the person of His Son, suffered that which has honored justice, vindicated the law, and enabled God to be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Oh, as I see the adorable Father giving up His well-Beloved to bleed and die for men, I know beyond all question that He is a God ready to pardon!

And now, *the atonement being made*, and justice being unable any longer to offer any protest to boundless mercy, *God stands ready to pardon!* By the blood of His dear Son, He is able to blot out offenses; through the sweet savor of the sacrifice of Jesus He smiles on guilty men; He now delights to blot into oblivion the transgressions of all them that seek His face!

The Lord’s readiness to pardon is very conspicuous to sinners because He sends His message of love to them while they are yet in their sins; He presents perfect pardon through Jesus Christ to them even while they are sinners, for “Christ died for the ungodly.” I love to think that the gospel does not address itself to those who might be supposed to have helped themselves a little out of the mire—to those who show signs of lingering goodness—but it comes to men ruined in Adam, and doubly lost by their own sin! It comes to them in the abyss where sin has hurled them, and lifts them up from the gates of hell! “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Jesus Christ’s salvation is like the good Samari-

tan—it goes where the wounded man is, and pours in its oil and wine into his bleeding wounds. The readiness of God to pardon is to be seen in the fact that He makes no hard conditions with sinners. He does not say, “I will pardon if you suffer this or endure that penance; I will pardon if you perform this act of heroism, or that deed of consecration.” No, He says, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Receive what is freely given—that is the gospel precept, and nothing else! Only confess your transgressions, or, in other words, admit your emptiness, and then trust your Savior, and you are saved!

That He is ready to forgive appears in this yet more glorious fact, that what God demands of man by the gospel, He also works in him by His Spirit! As for confession of sin, He puts the words into the sinner’s mouth; as for repentance, He works in it the sinner’s heart; and His own Spirit creates saving faith in the sinner’s soul! Is He not ready to forgive when even what might be called the condition of pardon in one light is under another aspect a *gift* of free grace? See you not His readiness to forgive when He accepts even the very lowest grade of the necessary graces? Of repentance, so long as it is sincere, He accepts a tear or a sigh; of faith, though it is but as a grain of mustard seed, He accepts it if it is but true; and notwithstanding all the faults that are in the sinner—though his heart is neither as tender as it ought to be, nor his knowledge as clear, nor his eye of faith as bright, nor his conversion as complete as it should be—yet God looks not at any of these faults except to forgive them! The ignorance and shortcoming, God winks at; He only looks at what He can see of Christ in the sinner! The sinner’s plea on his lips is, “for Jesus’ sake.” The sinner’s hope in his heart is, “for Christ’s sake”—and it is *this* that the Father looks at! When He sees that the poor trembling soul has embraced Jesus, His own dear Son, the Father puts the sin away at once without a word, and says, “Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you; go in peace.” Oh, He is indeed a God ready to pardon!!

Dear child of God, this text has a bearing upon you, and you can see it in yourself. Observe how the Lord chastens you. “Why is that?” you ask. Why, because you have been offending Him! You are His child, and He is your Father, and He desires to forgive you, but there is a hindrance! Have you never felt a difficulty about expressing forgiveness to your own child when he has done wrong again and again? There is no difficulty in your heart, for you love him well, but still, you do not wish him to think lightly of the fault, and you are afraid that if you at once tell him that you forgive him, he may perhaps, think that he may transgress with impunity. Therefore you chasten him so that after the chastening has been endured it may be safe for you to pardon—I mean safe as far as *he* is concerned! He will not be tempted to go into the sin through the readiness with which you forgive him, for he will remember the smarts which your love inflicted. Look upon *your* chastening as a proof that God is ready to forgive because He executes, in His Wisdom, that discipline which is necessary for a safe forgiveness. Think too, how lightly He chastens—

**“He will not always chide,  
And when His strokes are felt,**

***His strokes are fever than our crimes,  
And lighter than our guilt.***

That rod of His, ah, He never loves it. He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, but when He does use it, how quickly He puts it up again! Brothers and sisters, note how ready the Lord is to pardon us, for when we have sadly fallen, He graciously sets us on our feet again; “He restores my soul.” If you have wandered like Noah’s dove flying over the waste of waters, the Lord will receive you, even as Noah received the weary bird! Noah put out his hand at once, and plucked her in unto him, into the ark, and even thus does the good Spirit pluck us in to Himself. He fills our empty spirits again, revives our dying hope, relights the candles of our joy, and makes us, once again, what we had been, and perhaps more. And then He comes and restores to us His own presence, oh so soon! He says, “For a small moment have I forsaken you, but in great mercy will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting mercy will I have pity upon you.” Very loath is He to hide His face, but very swift is He to come on wings of mercy to restore joy to His mourners! Is He not ready to pardon?

I have almost done when I have answered a question on the behalf of the unconverted, and the same on behalf of the children of God. A poor seeker says to me, “You tell us God is ready to pardon; why is it then that I have prayed so long for His mercy and have not found it?” That was a question I asked once, when my prayers went up to heaven and seemed to strike upon a dome of brass, and were reverberated in years! Do you know to what God has promised to give pardon? Do you answer, to prayer? I think if you will read aright, He promised pardon to *confession*, to *repentance*, and to faith. Have you acknowledged your iniquity? Will you renounce your sins? Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? Come, will you now trust Jesus Christ? If so, you shall have pardon *now!* But if your prayers are unbelieving prayers, you are going the wrong way to work! You may as well hope to win heaven by your works as by your prayers, for indeed your prayers are but a kind of work—salvation is by *believing*—not by praying! If *faith* is mixed with your prayers, then you will succeed. Believing is essential, and if you believe, you shall have His mercy *now!* “Still,” says another, “I *have* believed in Jesus Christ, and I hope I am saved from guilt, but how is it, if God is ready to pardon, that I am still suffering from the result of sin.” This, my friend, you must bear as long as God wills it. God does not make a man healthy if he has brought his body to sickness by sin; neither does He fill a man’s pocket if he has spent his money in profligacy. This, my brothers and sisters, is left to be a thorn in your side—not as a token of *anger*—but because you are not to be trusted with health or wealth, and therefore God will not lead you into temptation again. Accept this from the Lord’s hand as a gentle chastening! Remember, if He saves your soul, it little matters about the rest, for it will be better for you to enter into life crippled or maimed than to have all your limbs and the entire world, and lose your soul! Accept sickness, or whatever else comes as the result of sin, and do

not think it by any means proves that God has not pardoned you—on the contrary it may be that He loves you enough to chasten you.

A child of God now says to me, “If God is so ready to pardon, how is it I am still a sufferer; I am still poor, and so on?” Ah, my dear friend, perhaps that is not a rod at all, for remember, “Every branch that bears fruit, He purges it.” Not because it did *not* bear, but to make it bring forth *more* fruit. You are God’s child, and you have a cross to carry; do not look at it as a token of anger. Was God angry with Simon, the Cyrene, who carried Christ’s cross after Him? No, He was conferring an honor upon him—

**“Shall Simon bear the cross alone,  
And all the rest go free?  
No, there’s a cross for everyone,  
And there’s a cross for me.”**

Take it up, for, “through much tribulation” we shall “inherit the kingdom.” Look at affliction in this light, and you will see that there is nothing of anger in it.

“But,” says one child of God, “I am under a cloud; I cannot see the face of God. Why does He hide Himself from me?” Not because He is not ready to pardon, but perhaps because you are not ready to forsake the sin which He is aiming at. Perhaps you have not searched your heart; there is still hidden under the camel’s furniture, some idol or other. Make Rachel get up, and search even in the secret places! Cry, “Why do You contend with me?” for if like David and Job you have to say that you are chastened every morning, and plagued every evening, there is a reason for it. If you have walked contrary to God, He is walking contrary to you. Take your Achan, and stone him, and then the Lord will come into the camp again. Tear down the idol, and you shall have Jehovah’s presence once more! But mark my word—whatever your experience may be, *this* is true—He delights in mercy, and He is a God ready to pardon. May the Holy Spirit bless this truth of God to your souls, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

## **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—NEHEMIAH 9.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—907, 106, 101.**

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# THE OIL OF GLADNESS

## NO. 1273

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
JANUARY 16, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“You love righteousness, and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God,  
has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.”  
Psalm 45:7.***

WE know that the anointing received by our Lord Jesus Christ was the resting of the Spirit of God upon Him without measure. We are not left to any guesswork about this, for in Isaiah 61:1 we are told, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me.” Our Lord appropriated these very words to Himself when He went into the synagogue at Nazareth, and opened the book at the place wherein these words are written and said, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.” The Apostle Peter, also, in Acts 10:38, speaks of, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit, and with power,” so that we know, both on Old and New Testament authority, that the anointing which rested upon the Lord Jesus Christ was the unction of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, by the “oil of gladness” which we have before us in the text, it is intended the Holy Spirit Himself, or one of the gracious results of His sacred presence. The divine Spirit has many attributes, and His benign influences operate in different ways, bestowing upon us benefits of various kinds, too numerous for us to attempt to catalog them! Among these is His comforting and cheering influence. “The fruit of the Spirit is joy.” In Acts 13:52, we read, “The disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Spirit.” Wherever He comes as an anointing, whether upon the Lord or upon His people—upon the Christ or the Christians, upon the Anointed or upon those whom He anoints—in every case the ultimate result is joy and peace! On the head of our great High Priest, He is joy, and this oil of gladness flows down to the skirts of His garments. To the Comforter, therefore, we ascribe “the oil of gladness.”

From this great Truth we learn another, namely, the perfect co-operation of the three persons of the blessed Trinity in the work of our redemption. The Father sends the Son; the Son with eagerness comes to redeem us, and the Spirit of God is in Him, so that Father, Son, and Spirit have each a part in the saving work—and the one God of heaven and earth is the God of salvation! A very interesting subject is the work of the Spirit upon the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We see the Holy Spirit mysteriously operating in the formation and birth of the holy child, Jesus, for by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit was He born of a woman. This work of the Holy Spirit was manifested to all believing eyes when the Lord Jesus came out of the waters of the Jordan after His baptism, and the Holy Spirit descended, like a dove, and rested upon Him.

Before, He was said to “wax strong in spirit,” but afterwards He is described as, “full of the Holy Spirit.” Then was He led of the Spirit, and inspired by His divine energy. And this was shown throughout the whole of His life, for the Spirit was with Him in innumerable miracles, and in the demonstration and power which followed His words, so that He spoke as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. In Him was abundantly fulfilled the prophecy which said, “And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. And shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.” The Holy Spirit also had a peculiar interest in His resurrection, for He was, “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead.” He was “put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” That same Spirit worked even more fully when the Lord ascended up on high, and led captivity captive. Then, succeeding His ascension, the gifts of the cloven tongues of fire, and the rushing mighty wind were witnessed by His disciples, for the Spirit of God was given abundantly to the church in connection with the ascension of the Redeemer. Oh, how sweetly does the Spirit co-operate with Christ at this very day, for it is He that takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them to us! He is the abiding witness in the church to the truth of the gospel, and the worker of all our gifts and graces. Jesus gives repentance, but the Spirit works it! Faith fixes upon Christ, but the Spirit of God first *creates* faith, and opens the eyes which look to Jesus! The whole of this dispensation, through it, is the peculiar office of the Spirit of God to be revealing Christ to His people, Christ *in* His people, and Christ in the midst of an ungodly and gainsaying generation for a testimony against them! Blessed be the name of the Holy Spirit, that He is the divine anointing, and so proves His hearty assent to the great plan of repentance.

We now come, however, more closely to the text. The Spirit of God is here considered in one of His influences or operations as, “the oil of gladness.” We shall speak of this in the following way. First, *the Savior’s anointing with gladness*; secondly, *the reason for the bestowal of this oil of joy upon Him*, and thirdly, *the manner of the operation of this sacred anointing upon ourselves*.

**I.** Let us carefully consider THE SAVIOR’S ANOINTING WITH GLADNESS. We are perhaps, surprised to read of our Lord in connection with gladness. Truly He was the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief, yet this sorrowful aspect was that which He presented to the superficial outside observer. Those who look within the veil of His flesh know well that a mystic glory shone within His soul. Did not David say of Him as the King of Israel—“He is great in Your salvation: honor and majesty have You laid upon Him. For You have made Him most blessed forever: You have made Him exceedingly glad with Your countenance”? I fully believe that there was never on the face of the earth a man who knew so pro-

found and true gladness as our blessed Lord. Did He not desire that His Joy might be in His people, that their joy might be full? Does not benevolence beget joy—and who as kind as He? Is it not a great joy to suffer self-sacrifice for beloved ones? And who so disinterested as He? Is there not sure to be happiness in the heart where the noblest motives are paramount, and the sweetest graces bear sway? And was not this preeminently the case with our Lord?

Let us see. The gladness of our Lord Jesus may be viewed first as the gladness which He had *in His work*. The Son of God delighted in the work which His Father had given Him to do. This delight He declared as God in the old eternity! “Lo I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O God.” This delight He had shown as man even before His great public anointing, for when He was yet a child He said, “Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?” Evidently, even while yet a youth, He anticipated with delight the great business which He had to do for His Father, and commencing in a measure to do it among the doctors in the temple at Jerusalem. But the day came in which He had reached the appointed age, and He at once went forth to John to be baptized by Him in the Jordan, being eager to fulfill all righteousness. Then the Spirit of God came down upon Him, and He was openly and visibly anointed—and you see from that moment He began to stand before the public eye, and with what eagerness He pursued His lifework! We find Him fasting, but He has been speaking to a woman by the well’s brink—and the joy which He has felt, while blessing her, has made Him quite forget the necessity for food, for He tells His disciples, “I have meat to eat that you know not of.” He felt great gladness in that woman’s joy as she believed in Him, and in the expectation of yet more numerous converts from those who were flocking from Samaria, of whom He said, “Lift up, now, your eyes, for behold the fields are white already unto the harvest.” That joy in His work made Him abhor all idea of turning from its awful consummation, and led Him to say to Peter’s suggestion, “Get you behind Me, Satan.”

We see it also, in such expressions as this, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it is accomplished.” We read that when the time came that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. His frequent allusions to His own decease by a shameful death all showed that He viewed with intense satisfaction the great objective after which He was reaching. Once indeed His joy flowed over, so that others could see it, when He said, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes.” “At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit.” Let it never be forgotten that we must not expect to see in the life of Christ, great outpourings of manifest exultation; remember, He was sent on purpose to bear our sicknesses, and to be “stricken of God and afflicted.” His deep joy was concealed by His many griefs, even as the inner glory of the Tabernacle of old was hidden beneath coverings of badgers’ skins. He was the sun under a cloud, but He was still the sun!

If you have a small burden to carry, you may have an excess of strength which you can display in leaping or running; but if you have an enormous load to sustain, your steady bearing of it may be an equally sure proof of your strength. So also, if your trials are light, your joyous spirits may vent themselves in smiles and songs, but if you are severely afflicted, it will need all your joyfulness to keep you from sinking. Our blessed Lord had a load upon Him infinitely transcending any weight of sorrow ever borne by the most burdened of His people, and it needed the wonderful joy which I feel sure we are justified in ascribing to Him to balance the marvelous grief which He had to endure. The uplifting influence of this joy sufficed to bring Him into a condition of calm, quiet, serene majesty of spirit. Nothing strikes you more in the Savior than the quiet peacefulness with which He pursues the even tenor of His way. Now, if He had not possessed great stores of secret joy, His spirit would have been famished for need of sustenance; you would have found Him constantly sighing and weeping; His words and tones would have become a terror to those around Him, and His whole appearance would have appeared melancholy and depressing to the last degree, whereas His manner was cheerful and attractive—let the little children who thronged around Him bear witness to that! He was the man of Sorrows, but He was not a *preacher* of sorrows, neither does his life or his discourses leave an unhappy impression upon the mind. The fact probably is that He was both the greatest rejoicer, and the greatest mourner that ever lived—and between these two there was an equilibrium of mind kept up so that wherever you meet Him, with the exception of His agony in the garden—He is peaceful and serene.

You neither see Him dancing like David before the ark, nor yet like David bewailing the loss of one he loved with a, “Would God I had died for you.” He does not, like Elijah, run before the king’s chariot, nor lie down under the juniper to die. He neither strives nor cries, nor causes His voice to be heard in the streets. His peace is like a river, and His heart abides in the Sabbath of God. We see, then, that *in* His work our great High Priest was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, but we also note that those who are His fellows do in their degree, partake in this oil of gladness, and are enabled to feel joy in the work which is appointed them of the Lord. While our King is anointed with the oil of gladness it is also written of the virgin souls who wait upon His church, “With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought, they shall enter into the king’s palace.” If any professing Christian here is engaged in a work which he does not feel glad to do, I question if he is in his right place. Occasional fits of depression there may be, but these are not because we do not love the work, but because we cannot do it as well as we would desire. We are tired in the work, but not tired of it. The Lord loves to employ willing workmen; His army is not made up of pressed men, but of those whom grace has made volunteers. “Serve the Lord with gladness.”

Our Lord does not set us task work, and treat us like prisoners in jail, or slaves under the lash. I sometimes hear our lifework called a *task*. Well, the expression may be tolerated, but I confess I do not like it to be

applied to *Christians*. It is no task to me, at any rate, to preach my Master's gospel or to serve Him in any way! I thank God every day that, "to me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." You teachers in the school, I hope your labor of love is not a bondage to you! An unwilling teacher will soon make unwilling scholars. Yes, I know that those of you who serve the Lord find a reward in the work itself, and gladly pursue it. I am sure you will not prosper in it if it is not so. If you follow your work unwillingly, and regret that you ever undertook it, and feel encumbered by it, you will do no good. No man wins a race who has no heart in the running! In this respect, the joy of the Lord is your strength—and as your Master was anointed with the oil of gladness in His work—so must you be! Yet, beloved fellow laborer, you will never be as glad in your work as He was in His, nor will you ever be able to prove that gladness by such self-denials, by such agonies, and such a death! He has proved how glad He was to save sinners because, "for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." Blessed Emanuel, You are justly anointed with the oil of gladness above Your fellows!

We further note that our Lord had this oil of gladness *from His work*. Even while He was engaged in it, He derived some joy from it, though it was but as the gleanings of the vintage compared with the results. He did reap in joy as well as sow in tears, for many became His disciples, and over each one of these He rejoiced. It was impossible that the Good Shepherd should have saved so many sheep as He did without rejoicing when He threw them on His shoulders to bear them to the fold! Assuredly He rejoiced that He had found the sheep which He had lost, but the *fullness* of His joy was left till after He had ascended on high! Then, indeed, was He anointed with the oil of gladness, and the voice was heard, "Go forth, O you daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." My brothers and sisters, the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ, now that He knows His beloved are securely His, and no longer the slaves of sin, and heirs of wrath, is too great to be measured! He has redeemed unto Himself a people in whom His soul delights! For them the price is fully paid! For them the penalty has been completely endured! For them all chains are broken, and for them the prison is razed to its foundation! For them has He bruised the serpent's head! For them has He, by death, destroyed death, and led captive him that had the power of death, even the devil—

***"All his work and warfare done,  
He into His heaven is gone,  
And before His Father's throne  
Now is pleading for His own."***

He now continues to receive into His joy the multitudes that the Spirit brings to Him, for whom of old He shed His precious blood. You cannot estimate the gladness of Christ! If you have ever brought one soul to Christ, you have had a *drop* of it, but His gladness lies not only in *receiv-*

ing them, but in actually being the author of salvation to every one of them!

The Savior looks upon the redeemed with an unspeakable delight! He thinks of what they used to be; He thinks of what they would have been but for His interposition; He thinks of what they now are; He thinks of what He means to make them in that great day when they shall rise from the dead, and as His heart is full of love to them, He joys in their joy, and exults in their exultation! Their heavens swell their Mediator's heaven, and their myriad embodiments of bliss, each one, reflects His own happiness! And so, (speaking after the manner of men), increases it, for He lives thousands of lives by living in them, and joys unnumbered joys in their joys. I speak with humblest fear lest in any word I should speak amiss, for He is God as well as man, but this is certain, that there is a joy of our Lord into which He will give His faithful ones to enter—a joy which He has won by passing through the shame and grief by which He has redeemed mankind! The oil of gladness is abundantly poured on that head which once was crowned with thorns!

Now, brothers and sisters, you also can be partakers in this joy! When He makes you, in your little measure, to be instrumentally, saviors of others, then you, also, partake of His gladness! But as I have said before, you cannot know its fullness, for He is, in this respect, anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save; I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Me." Returning from the battle and the spoil, He has a joy with which none can intermeddle, for His own right hand and His holy arm has gotten Him the victory. Again, our Lord Jesus has the oil of gladness poured upon Him in another sense, namely, because *His person and His work are the cause of ineffable gladness in others*. Oh, I wish I had a week in which to talk upon this point—a week? one could scarcely enter upon the theme in that time! We sang just now—

***"Jesus, the very thought of You  
With sweetness fills my breast."***

The oil of gladness upon Him is so sweet that we have only to *think* upon it, and it fills us with delight! There is gladness in His very name—

***"Exult all hearts with gladness  
At sound of Jesus' name;  
What other has such sweetness,  
Or such delight can claim?"***

What gladness He created when here below! His birth set the skies ringing with heavenly music, and made the hearts of expectant saints leap for joy! In later days a touch of the hem of His garment made a woman's heart glad when she felt the issue of her blood stanching! And a word from His lips made the tongue of the dumb to sing! For Him to lay His hand upon the sick was to raise them from their beds of sickness, and deliver them from pain and disease! His touch was then gladness, and a *spiritual* touch is the same now!

Today to preach of Him is gladness! To sing of Him is gladness! To trust Him is gladness! To work for Him is gladness! To have communion with Him is gladness! To come to His Table, and there to feast with Him is gladness! To see His Image in the eyes of His saints is gladness! To see that Image only as yet begun to form in the heart of a young convert is gladness! EVERYTHING about Him is gladness! All His garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia; nothing comes within a mile of Him but what it makes you glad to think that He has been so near it! The very print of His feet has comfort in it, and the wounds in His hands are windows of hope! I have known some who have had to carry a cross for His dear sake, and they have kissed and hugged that cross, and gloried in their tribulations because they were borne for Him! Fellowship with Him has turned the bitterest potion into generous wine! Beloved, if these distant glimpses are so precious, what must it be to see Him face to face? I have tried to conceive it, and I declare that even in *attempting* the conception, my spirit seems to swoon at the prospect of such supreme delight! Only to hear the music of His footsteps on the other side of the partition wall raises longings in my heart too strong, too eager to be long endured! What? Death, are you all that divides me from seeing my Lord? I would gladly die a million deaths to see Him as He is, and to be like He! What? A slumber in the grave for this poor body! Is that all I have to dread? Then let it slumber, and let the worms consume it, for "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth—and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Oh, what will it be to see Him; to see HIM that loved us so; to mark the wounds with which He purchased our redemption; to behold His glory; to listen to that dear voice of His, and to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." To lie in His bosom forever! Truly neither eye has seen, nor ear heard the likes of this bliss! More than the bride longs for the marriage day, do we expect the bridal feast of heaven! But of all the dainties on that royal table there will not be one that will be equal to Himself, for to see *Him* will be all the heaven we desire! He is better than heaven's harps or angels, and the cause of greater gladness than streets of gold or walls of jasper! Brothers and sisters, can we share this power to distribute joy? Assuredly we can! If the Lord Jesus is with us, we can *give* joy to others. I know some whose very presence comforts their fellows! Their words are so full of consolation, and their hearts so overflowing with sympathy that they make gladness wherever they go! Yes, but the best of you, you sons of consolation, are not anointed with the oil of gladness to the same extent as He was! Above His fellows, even above Barnabas, the son of consolation—above the best and the tenderest sympathizers is He thus anointed, and from Him there pours forth a continuous stream of effectual consolation which becomes the oil of joy to those who wear the garments of heaviness!

Thus much upon the first point, the Savior's anointing of gladness.

**II.** Let us now consider THE REASON FOR THE BESTOWAL OF THIS ANOINTING UPON HIM. It is given in the text. He is anointed above His

fellows because it is said of Him, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness." The perfect righteousness of Christ has brought to Him this gladness, because there must be perfect holiness before there can be perfect happiness. Sin is the enemy of joy; let the sinner say what he likes, sin can no more dwell with real joy than the lion will lie down with the lamb! To be perfectly glad you must be perfectly cleansed from sin, for until you are so cleansed, you cannot possess the oil of gladness to the measure that Christ possessed it. As the believer is delivered from the power of sin, he is brought into a condition in which the joy of the Lord can more and more abide in him.

Now, in every way Jesus loved righteousness intensely, and hated wickedness intensely; He died that He might establish righteousness, and that He might destroy wickedness from off the face of the earth. Therefore it is that He has greater gladness, because He had greater holiness. Moreover, you know that in any holy enterprise, if the business succeeds, the joy of the worker is proportionate to the trial it has cost him. In the great battle of righteousness, our Lord has led the van; in the great fight against wickedness, our Savior has borne the brunt of the battle; therefore because He to the death loved righteousness, and to the agony and bloody sweat strove against sin, the accomplished conquest brings Him the greatest joy! He has done the most for the good cause, and therefore He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Now, note there is another reason why He is anointed, and there is another view of the anointing. He is anointed above His fellows, which shows that those who are in fellowship with Him are anointed, too! You observed in our reading that the high priest had the oil poured on his head, but the sons of Aaron who were minor priests, were sprinkled with this same oil mixed with the blood of the sacrifice. On Christ this anointing is poured above His fellows, and then upon His fellows in communion with Himself, there comes the sprinkling of the oil. We have our measure—He has it without measure! Now, beloved, Christ is anointed above His fellows that His fellows may be anointed with Him; even as He ascended above all things that He might fill all things, so is He anointed above His fellows that He may anoint His fellows—and through the power of the anointing we are told that His people come into the same condition of righteousness as Himself.

Turn to Isaiah 61:3, which passage we have already had before us, and you find as follows—"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that"—mark this—"that they might be called trees of righteousness." Now, observe, that we first read, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness, therefore God has anointed You with the oil of gladness." And then we meet with the parallel with reference to ourselves, "The oil of joy for mourning, that they may be called trees of righteousness." He is anointed because He is righteous! We are anointed that we may be righteous, and thus in Christ we come into the condition in which it is safe for us to be glad, and possible for joy to dwell in us! To the unrighteous the oil of gladness does not come, but to the righteous

there arises light even in darkness! “There is no peace, said my God, unto the wicked.” The holy oil was forbidden to be placed upon a stranger to God’s holy house, and upon man’s flesh it could not be poured, because man’s flesh is a corrupt, polluted thing! This oil of gladness comes only on those who are born into God’s Israel by regeneration, and are delivered from walking after the flesh; the Lord makes these to be as “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”

See, then, the two reasons why Christ has received the anointing—first because He is righteous, Himself; and secondly, that He may make others righteous. Therefore is the Spirit of the Lord God upon Him that He may give the oil of joy to His own chosen, and make them righteous, even as He is righteous, glad as He is glad!

**III.** We will now meditate upon THE MANNER OF THE OPERATION OF THIS OIL OF GLADNESS UPON US. Jesus is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Now, we have to show that His fellows are anointed with the oil of gladness, too. Did not David say, “You anointed my head with oil; my cup runs over”? So that we can say of ourselves what we say of our Lord, we are anointed, for He was anointed. Now, in what respects does the anointing of the Holy Spirit give us gladness? I shall notice eight things, and touch but very briefly on each.

First, we, too, through Jesus Christ, are *anointed to an office*, “for He has made us”—whisper it to one another in the joy of delight—“He has made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever.” When the oil went on Aaron’s head, you know how it ran down his beard, even Aaron’s beard, unto the skirts of his garments, and now this day, this anointing oil, which made the king and the priest, has fallen upon us too! Blessed be His name, shall we not be glad? It is very inconsistent with our position if we are not! Are you a king and do you not rejoice?—

**“Why should the children of our King  
Go mourning all their days?  
Sweet Comforter, descend and bring  
Some unction of Your grace.”**

May the gladness now come to you; you are priests to God. Shall the anointed priests serve their Lord with gloomy countenances? No! Rejoice in the Lord always, all you priests of His that are anointed to this blessed work. “Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron.”

We too are *consecrated to the Lord*, for the oil poured upon the priest was the oil of *consecration*. From that time forward he was a dedicated man; he could not serve anyone but God. He, above all the rest of the congregation, was the man of God forever, as long as ever he lived! So, beloved, we have been consecrated—the Spirit of God has sanctified us, and set us apart unto the Lord, as it is written, “You are not your own; you are bought with a price.” Our Lord said in His matchless prayer, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” “Sanctify them,” He said, “by Your truth, Your word is truth.” Yes, blessed be God, we are consecrated men and women—we belong to the Lord, and are vessels for the Master’s use, hallowed from all other uses to be the Lord’s.

“For I will be to them a God; they shall be to Me a people.” Does not this make you glad? Are you really set apart to be the Lord’s own sons and daughters, and hallowed to be used by Him in His service both here and hereafter, and do you not rejoice? O my soul, do you not feel the trickling of the consecrating oil down your brow even now, and does it not make your face shine, and make your heart happy because you are now the Lord’s?

Thirdly, by this oil we are also *qualified for our office*. You see the Spirit descended upon Christ that He might have the spirit of wisdom and power, and so be strengthened and qualified to discharge His sacred work. Now, the Spirit of God is upon every believer in this sense! Remember how in his First Epistle, 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, and 20<sup>th</sup> verse, John says, “You have unction from the Holy One, and you know all things,” or, “You are able to *discern* all things.” And further on, in that same chapter, he says, “This anointing teaches you all things.” Well, if we are to serve the Lord, a main gift is knowledge, for how can we instruct the ignorant, or guide the perplexed unless we know ourselves? And it is this anointing which teaches us, and makes us fit for the service to which the Master has called us. Oh, does the Holy Spirit then lead us into all truth, and give us knowledge, and shall we not rejoice? Ignorance means sorrow, but the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ means joy! O brothers and sisters, will you not bless God today for what the Spirit of God has taught you? If you do not, what must you be made of, for He has taught you such wonderful lessons so full of joy? Even if He has never taught you more than this, that whereas you were once blind now you see, He has taught you enough to make your heart rejoice as long as you live! Is He not the oil of gladness?

Fourthly, the Spirit of God *heals us of our diseases*. The Eastern mode of medicine was generally the application of oil, and I should not wonder if in the course of years it should be discovered that the modern pharmacy, with all its drugs, is not worth as much as the old-fashioned method! Certainly when the Holy Spirit spoke concerning sick men, and advised that medicines should be used, and prayer for their restoration, He prescribed anointing with oil! I suppose that anointing with oil was mentioned because it was the current medicine of the times, but it could not have been injurious or altogether absurd, or the Holy Spirit would not in any measure have sanctioned it! I will not raise the question however. But a frequent medicine of the olden time was undoubtedly anointing with oil, and it is well known that olive oil does possess very remarkable healing qualities. I have read in books of one or two instances of the bites of serpents having the venom effectually removed by the use of olive oil. It is more commonly used in countries where it grows than here, and it is in many ways, a very useful medicine. Certainly the Holy Spirit is that to us! What wounds and bruises have been healed with this oil! Before the Spirit came, they were putrefying—they had not been bound up nor mollified with ointment, but now this ointment, mixed after the art of the apothecary with the costliest spices, has effectually healed us, and what remains of the old sores and wounds it still continues to heal! And so

wonderful is its power, it will ultimately take out every scar, and we shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing through its healing power! Shall we not therefore be glad and rejoice in the Lord, for if restoration to health makes us happy, surely the renewal of our *spiritual* health should make our hearts jump for joy? Thus also, we are *made flexible and softened*. Oil applied to the body softens, and believe me, brothers and sisters, nothing is more akin to joy than softness and tenderness of heart.

If ever you meet with a hard-hearted, proud man, he is not a happy man. And if he should *seem* to be happy in his pride, it is a dangerous and deadly happiness—the sooner it is taken away the better. Where God dwells is heaven, and where does He dwell? With the humble and the contrite heart! That is a beautiful expression of David's; I have drunk joy out of it, "Make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which you have broken may rejoice." Oh, there is never a bone in manhood's system that knows how to rejoice till God has broken it! And when it is broken, then comes the mighty Physician, and applies the oil, and restores the bone to infinitely more than its former strength—and then the bones which had been broken become, each one, so many new arguments for gratitude—and all our healed wounds become mouths of praise unto the Most High! We are thus softened and gladdened. By the oil of the Holy Spirit we are also strengthened. Oil well rubbed into the system was anciently assumed to be a great strengthener, and I suppose it was. Certainly the Holy Spirit is the strength of Christians, and where He is the strength, there is sure to be joy. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Oil, too, is a beautifier. The Easterns did not think themselves fit for their banquets till they had washed their face, and anointed themselves with perfumed oil. They were very fond of locks dripping with oil, and faces shining with oil. Certainly there is a beauty which the Spirit gives to men which they can never obtain in any other way. Oh, the excellence of the character that is formed by the hand of the Spirit of God! It is a beautiful thing which even God Himself delights to look upon! It is a thing of beauty, and in the most emphatic sense, a joy forever. He that is made comely with the comeliness which the Holy Spirit gives must be a happy man! Other beauty may bring sorrow, but the beauty of holiness makes us akin to angels!

Once more, it becomes a *perfume*. When oil was poured on a man, his presence scented the air around him, and when the Spirit of God is given to us, it is perceived by other spiritual minds. Cannot you detect in a brother's prayer that he has been with Jesus? Do you not know by the lives of some of Christ's dear saints, that He is very familiar with them? Do you not perceive that they have had a special anointing? The ungodly world cannot tell it, but saints discern it. The nostril of the wicked is only pleased by the leeks, the garlic, and the onions of Egypt, but the believing nostril has been sanctified—it perceives the delicate myrrh, cinnamon, and sweet calamus and cassia which make up the anointing oil! The rare combination of sacred qualities which make up a holy character will be seen in the believer in whom the Holy Spirit displays His power, and as a consequence, he will be glad at heart. Furthermore, I have

many things to say to you, but you cannot hear them now, for the time is spent. Therefore I will only say, I pray brothers and sisters that the anointing may be ours in all the various senses I have mentioned. I should like all of you to go away happy; you children of God, be as glad as ever you can be! I would to God that a sacred gladness rang through this house like a marriage peal! Yet for all that, do not forget that Jesus has joy above you all. You may be very glad, but *He* is gladder! You may sing His praises, but He leads the sacred orchestra of heaven! “In the midst of the congregation will I praise You,” He said. Rejoice in His joy!

I have often thought it did not matter any more what became of me so long as *He* is victorious. A soldier in battle, sorely wounded, lies bleeding in a ditch, but he hears the sound of the trumpets, and they tell him the commander is coming along, the King for whom his loyal heart is willing to bleed, and he inquires, “Have they won the day?” “Oh, yes,” they say, “he has won the day, and the enemy is fleeing before him.” The soldier exclaims, “Thank God; now I can die.” It is the soldier’s joy to die with victory ringing in his ears! Our Lord is glad, and therefore we are glad—

***“Let Him be crowned with majesty  
Who bowed His head to death,  
And be His honor sounded high  
By all things that have breath.”***

If it is so, we will be content to say like David, “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.” We have no more to pray for; we have done with the world, done with wishing, done with everything if Christ reigns, and all things are under His feet! May this joy be yours. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
EXODUS 30:22-33; 29:5-7, 21; PSALM 45:1-8; ISAIAH 61:1-3.  
(The reader is earnestly requested to read these passages).**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—PSALM 45, 438, 786.**

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# FOR THE SICK AND AFFLICTED

## NO. 1274

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not teach You me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.”  
Job 34:31, 32.***

EVEN when addressing our fellow men there should be flatness about our speech. Therefore Solomon represents the preacher as seeking out acceptable words, or words meet for the occasion. When we approach those who are high in authority, this necessity becomes conspicuous, and therefore men who are petitioners in the courts of princes are very careful to order their language aright. Much more, then, when we speak before the Lord ought we to consider, as the text does, the correctness of our words. Some language must never be uttered in the divine presence, and even that which is allowed must be well weighed and set forth with solemn humbleness. Hence Elihu does well to suggest in the text, language that is “meet to be said unto God.” May our lips always be kept as by a watchful sentinel, lest they allow anything to pass through them dishonorable to the Most High. In the divine presence—and we are always there, it is incumbent upon us to set a double watch over every word that we utter. Remember that *thought* is speech before God; thought is not speech to man, for men cannot read one another’s thoughts until they are set forth by words or other outward signs, but *God*, who reads the heart, regards that as being speech which was never spoken, and He hears us say in our souls many things which were never uttered by our tongues!

Beloved, there are thoughts which are not meet to be thought before the Lord, and it is well for us, especially those of us who are afflicted, to be very watchful over those thoughts lest the Lord hear us say in our hearts things which will grieve His Spirit, and provoke Him to jealousy. O saints of God, since you never think except in the immediate presence of your heavenly Father, make every effort that your thoughts are pure lest you sin in the secret chambers of your being, and charge God foolishly. Elihu tells us what it would be proper for us to think and say, “It is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not teach You me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.” We will use the text mainly at this time *in reference to those who are being chastened*, and afterwards we shall see if there is not teaching in it, even to those who at present are not smarting under the rod. Thirdly, *we shall find a word of our text to those who are not the children of God, and therefore know nothing of the smarting rod of fatherly correction*. Perhaps to them God may also speak through this text. O that His Holy Spirit may deign to do so!

I. But first, dear friends, let us commune together upon the text in its more natural application as addressed TO THE AFFLICTED. The instruction of the wise man is especially for them, and there are three duties here prescribed for them, or rather three *privileges* suggested which they should pray the Holy Spirit to enable them to enjoy. The first lesson is *it is meet for them to accept the affliction which the Lord sends*, and to say to God, “I have borne chastisement.” We notice that the word “chastisement,” is not actually in the Hebrew, though the Hebrew could not be well interpreted without supplying the word. It might exactly and literally be translated, “I bear,” or “I have borne.” It is the softened heart saying to God, “I bear whatever You will put upon me; I have borne it; I still bear it, and I will bear it—whatever You may ordain it to be. I submit myself entirely to You, and accept the load with which You are pleased to give me.”

Now, we ought to do this, dear friends, and we *shall* do it if we are right at heart. We should cheerfully submit because no affliction from which we suffer has come to us by chance; we are not left to the misery of believing that things happen of themselves, and are independent of a divinely controlling power. We know that not a drop of bitter ever falls into our cup unless the wisdom of our heavenly Father has placed it there; we are not even left in a world governed by angels, or ruled by cherubim—we dwell where everything is ordered by God Himself! Shall we rebel against the Most High? Shall we not let Him do as seems good in His sight? Shall we not cover our lips in silence when we know that the evil is of the Lord? Shame upon us, if we are His children, if this is not the prevalent spirit of our mind—“It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him.” Moreover, we should not only bear all things because the Lord ordains them, but because He orders all things for a wise, kind, benevolent purpose. He does not afflict willingly; He takes no delight in the sufferings of His children; whenever adversity must come, it is always with a purpose, and if a purpose of God is to be subserved by my suffering, would I wish to escape from it? If His glory will come of it, shall I not crave the honor of being the agent of His glory, even though it is by lying passive, and enduring in anguish?

Yes, beloved, since we know that God can only grieve His regenerated creatures for some purpose of love, we should willingly accept whatever sorrow He pleases to put upon us. And besides, we have His assurance that all things work together for our good; our trials are not merely sent with a good objective, but with an objective good towards ourselves, a design which is being answered by every twig of our heavenly father’s rod! “The cup which our Father has given us, shall we not drink it?” It is healing medicine and not deadly poison, therefore let us put it to our lips without a murmur, yes, drink it to its very dregs, and say, “Not as I will, but as You will.” A constant submission to the divine will should be the very atmosphere in which a Christian lives; he should put an earnest negative upon his self-will by crying, “*Not my will,*” and then he should with holy warmth, beseech the Lord to execute His purpose, saying, “The will of the Lord be done.” He should throw the whole vigor of his soul into the Lord’s will, and exhibit more than submission, namely, a devout acquiescence in whatever the Lord appoints! Beloved friends, we must not

be content with bearing what the Lord sends; with the coolness which says, "It must be, and therefore I *must* put up with it." Such forced submission is far below a Christian—for many a *heathen* has attained it! The stolid stoic accepted what predestination handed out to him, and the Muslim still does the same. We must go beyond unfeeling submission; we must not so harden our hearts against affliction as not to be affected by it. That chastisement which does not make us smart has failed of its end; it is by the blueness of the wound, says Solomon, that the heart is made better, and if there is no real blueness—if it is merely a surface bruise, little good will come of it. "For a season we are in heaviness," says the Apostle, "through manifold trials," and not only the trial, but the heaviness which comes of it is necessary to us!

God would not have His children become like the ox or the ass, which present hard skins to hard blows, but He would have us tender and sensitive. There is such a thing as despising the chastening of the Lord by a defiant attitude which seems to challenge the Lord to draw a tear, or fetch a sigh from us. Against this let us be on our guard! Neither, on the other hand are we to receive affliction with a rebellious spirit. It is hard for us to kick against the pricks, like the ox, which when goaded, is irritated and strikes out, and drives the iron into itself deeper than it went before! We can easily do this by complaining that God is too severe with us; in this spirit we may "take arms against a sea of troubles," but by opposing we shall not end them, but increase their raging! By a proud murmuring spirit we only bring upon ourselves trial upon trial—"The Lord resists the proud," and a high spirit challenges His opposition. Neither, dear friends, as believers in God are we to despair under trouble, for that is not bearing the cross, but lying down under it! We are to *take up* our appointed burden and *carry it*, and not sit down in wicked sullenness and murmur that we can do no more! Some are in a very evil frame of mind; their moody spirits mutter that if God will be so severe with them, they must yield to it, but they have lost all heart and all faith—and all they ask for is leave to die. A child of God must not repine! He has not yet "resisted unto blood, striving against sin," and if he has he should still say, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him."

Since Jesus, the Man of Sorrows never murmured, it ill becomes any of His followers to do so! We must in patience possess our souls. Perhaps you think it easier for me to say this than it would be to practice it, and yet, by Almighty grace a saint can bear to the utmost of bearing; to the utmost of suffering he can suffer; to the utmost of loss he can lose, and even to the uttermost of death itself, he can die daily, and yet triumph through the divine Life, for God who works in us to will and to do, is Almighty, and makes our weakness strong. The Christian then, is not to treat the cross which God puts upon him in any such way as I have described, but he is to accept it *humbly*, looking up to God, and saying, "Much worse than this I might reckon to receive even as Your child, for the discipline of Your house requires the rod, and well might I expect to be chastened every morning." The child of God should feel that it is in very faithfulness that the Lord afflicts him, and that every stroke has His love in it! Anything over and above the lowest abyss of hell is a great

mercy to us! If we had to lie ill for 50 years and scarcely have a minute free from pain, yet since the Lord has pardoned our sins, and accepted us in Christ Jesus, and made us His children, we should be grateful for every pain, and still continue to bless the Lord upon our beds, and sing His high praises in the midst of the fires! Humbly, therefore, as sinners deserving divine wrath, we are bound to accept the chastening of the Lord.

We should receive chastisement *with meek submission*, presenting ourselves to God that He may still do with us as He has dealt with us—not wishing to start aside to the right hand or to the left, asking Him, if it may be His will, to remove the load, to heal the pain, to deliver us from the bereavement and the like, but still always leaving ample margin for full resignation of spirit. The gold is not to rebel against the goldsmith, but should at once yield to be placed in the crucible, and thrust into the fire! The wheat, as it lies upon the threshing floor, is not to have a will of its own, but is to be willing to endure the strokes of the flail, that the chaff may be separated from the precious wheat. We are not far off being purged from dross, and cleansed from chaff when we are perfectly willing to undergo any process which the divine wisdom may appoint us. Self and sin are married, and will never be divorced, and till our self-hood is crushed, the seed of sin will still have abundant vitality in it. But when it is, “not I,” but, “Christ that lives in me,” then have we come near to that mark to which God has called us, and to which by His Spirit, He is leading us! But we ought to go farther than this; we should accept chastisement *cheerfully!* It is a hard lesson, but a lesson which the Comforter is able to teach us—to be *glad* that God should have His way!

Do you know what it is sometimes, to be very pleased to do what you do not like to do? I mean you would not have liked to do it, but you find that it pleases someone you love, and straightway the irksome task becomes a pleasure? Have you not sometimes felt, when one whom you very much esteem is sick and ill, that you would be glad enough to bear the pain, at least for a day or two, that you might give the suffering one a little rest? Would you not find a pleasure in being an invalid for a while to let your beloved one enjoy a season of health? Let the same motive in a higher degree sway your spirit! Try to feel, “If it pleases God, it pleases me; if, Lord, it is *Your* will, it shall be *my* will; let the lashes of the scourge be multiplied, if so You shall be the more honored, and I shall be permitted to bring You some degree of glory.” The cross becomes sweet when our health is so sweetened by the Spirit that our will runs parallel with the will of God. We should learn to say in the language of Elihu, “I have borne; I do bear; I accept it all.” To be as clay on the potter’s wheel or as wax in the sculpture’s hand should be our great desire! That is the first business of the sufferer. *The next duty is to forsake the sin which may have occasioned the chastisement.* “It is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement; *I will not offend any more.*”

There is a connection between sin and suffering in every case; it would be very wrong for us to suppose that every man who suffers is therefore guiltier than others—that was the mistake of Job’s friends—a mistake too commonly made every day. But it is right for the sufferer himself, to

judge his own case by a standard which we may not use toward him. *He* should say, "Is there not some connection between this chastisement and *sin* that dwells in me?" And here he must not judge himself unrighteously, even for God, lest he plunge himself into unnecessary sorrow. There are afflictions which come from God, not on account of past sin, but to prevent sin in the future; there is also sharp pruning which is intended to make us bring forth more fruit—it is not sent because we have brought forth *no* fruit, but because we are fruitful branches, and are worth pruning! "Every branch in Me that bears fruit He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit." There are also afflictions which are sent by way of test, trial, and proof, both for God's glory, and for the manifestation of His power—as also for the comforting of others that trembling saints may see how weak and feeble men can carry the heaviest cross for Christ's sake, and can triumph under it! We are not to be sure that every sorrow comes to us because of any sin actually committed, yet it will be best for us to be more severe with ourselves than we would think of being with others. We should always ask, "Is there not some cause for this chastisement? May there not be something of which God would rid me of, or something which has grieved Him which has caused Him to grieve *me*?"

Brothers and sisters, I charge you never be lenient with yourselves; the best of us are men at the best, and at our best we have much to mourn over in the presence of the Most High! It is good to be always dissatisfied with ourselves, and press forward to something yet beyond; always praying that Christ's likeness may be completely formed in us. Thorns are often put in the nest that we may search for hidden evils. "Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you?" Has there been a defeat at Ai? May there not be an Achan in the camp? Has not a traitor concealed in some secret place, a goodly Babylonian garment, and a wedge of gold? Does not trial give a hint that there may be something amiss? Beloved, I ask myself, and I ask you to look not only to your outward character, but to your more private life, and to your walk before God and see if there is not some flaw. Is there trouble in the family? Have you always acted towards the children and the servants as you should have done as a master and a father? Question yourself! The child is grieving you; have you, good mother, always been as prayerful about that child as you should have been? May not your child's conduct to you be a fair reflection of your own conduct towards your heavenly Father? I do not mention any of these things to increase your grief, but in order that you may put your finger on the evil which provokes the Lord God and may put it away!

Have there been losses in business? Are you sure, brother, that when you were making money you always used it for God as you should? Were you a good steward? Did you give the Lord His full portion—the sacred tithe of all that you have? Or may you not have been too selfish—and may not *that* be the cause why you must now be reduced from wealth to comparative poverty? Is that so? Does the affliction scourge your body? Then has there been anything wrong with your habits? Has the flesh predominated over the spirit? Has there been a failure of the entire con-

secration of the vessel unto the Lord? Does the trial occur in the person of some dear one? You may not be conscious of any wrong there, but still look dear friends! Search the whole of your conduct as the spies searched Canaan of old; if your sin is glaring, there is little need of a chastisement to point it out to you, for you ought to see it without that! But there may be a secret sin between you and your Lord for which He has sent you chastisement—and after this you must raise a hue and cry. You know I do not mean that the Lord is *punishing* you for sin as a judge punishes a criminal, for He will not do that since He has laid the punishment of sin upon Christ, and Christ has borne it as a matter of punitive justice. He, as a Father *chastens* His child, but never without a cause! I am urging you to see whether there may not be some cause for the present painful discipline. Never fall into the mistake of some who suppose that sin in God's children is a trifle. Why, if there is any place where sin is *horrible*, it is in a child of God! Therefore the text puts it "I will not *offend* any more." Sin is an offensive thing to God; He cannot bear it. I should dislike a plague spot on anybody's face, but I should tremble to see it, most of all, upon my own child's face! Sin is more visible in a good man than in any other; I may drop a spot of ink upon a black handkerchief and never see it, but on a white one you will perceive it directly, and see it the more because of the whiteness of the linen which it defiles.

Child of God, you know that just in proportion as you are sanctified—in proportion as you live near to God, sin will be grievous to the Most High. It is gloriously terrible to live near to God! I wonder if you understand me, all of you? To walk as a favored courtier with a monarch is a very delicate matter. Favorites have to pick their steps, for though they stand near a king, they well know how soon they may fall from their high position. We serve a jealous God! That is a wonderful question, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" *God* is that consuming fire! *God* is the everlasting burnings! Who among us shall dwell with *Him*? The answer is, "He that has clean hands and a pure heart, he shall dwell on high. His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks"—but it is only the man who is very jealous of himself who will be able to bear that fierce light of God which beams around the throne of God—that devouring flame which God Himself is! As said the Apostle—"Even our God is a consuming fire." Caesar's wife must not only be without fault, but she must be above suspicion, and such must be the character of the child of God, who like Moses lives in the inner circle; who stands on the mountaintop; who knows what the peaks of Sinai mean, and what it is to be 40 days in fellowship with the Most High! Beloved friends, I urge upon you a very close search into what the transgression may be which has brought correction upon you, for it may be in you an offense which would scarcely be sin in anybody else! Another person might fall into your fault as a sin of ignorance, but since you know better, the sin is all the blacker in you. The Lord will be sanctified in them that draw near to Him, but woe to them if they defile themselves!

The third lesson in the text to the afflicted clearly teaches them that *it is their duty and privilege to ask for more light of God*. The text says, “That which I see not, teach You me. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.” Do you see the drift of this? It is the child of God awakened to look after the sin which the chastisement indicates, and since he cannot see all the evil that may be in himself, he turns to his God with this prayer, “What I see not teach You me.” Beloved friends, it may be that in looking over your past life, and searching through your heart, you do not see your sin, for perhaps it is where you do not suspect. You have been looking in another quarter. Your own opinion is that you are weak in one point, but possibly you are far weaker in the opposite direction! In nothing do men make more mistakes than concerning their own characters. I have known a brother confess that he was deficient in firmness, when, in my opinion, he was about as obstinate as any man I knew! Another man has said that he was always lacking in coolness, and yet I thought that if I needed to fill an ice-well, I had only to put him into it! Persons misjudge themselves. Unfeeling people say they are too sensitive, and selfish persons imagine themselves to be victims to the good of others. So, it may be *you* have been looking in one quarter for the sin, while your fault lies in the opposite point of the compass! Pray then, “Lord, search me and try me, and that which I see not teach You me.”

Remember brothers and sisters, that our worst sins may lurk under our holiest things. Oh, how these evils will hide away—not under the docks and nettles of the dunghill, not they, but under the lilies and the roses of the garden! In the cups of the flowers they lurk; they do not flit through our souls like devils with dragons’ wings—they fly as angels of light with wings tinted as the rainbow! They come as sheep and a very fat sort they seem to be, but they are wolves in sheep’s clothing! Watch therefore, very carefully against the sins of your holy things. In our holy things we are nearer to God than at any other time, and therefore such defilement soon brings upon us the stroke of our heavenly Father’s rod. Perhaps your sin is hidden away under something very dear to you. Jacob made a great search for the images—the teraphs which Laban worshipped; he could not find them. No, he did not like to disturb Rachel, and Laban did not like to disturb her either—a favorite wife and daughter must not be inconvenienced! She may sit still on the camel’s furniture, but she hides the images there! Even thus you do not like to search in a certain quarter of your nature—it is a very tender subject—something you feel very grieved about when anybody even hints at it! It is just there that the sin is harbored! My brothers and sisters, let us be honest with the Lord; let us really wish to know where we are wrong, and heartily long to be set right! Do you think we all honestly want to know our errors? Are there not chapters of the Bible which we do not like to read? If there are—if any text has a quarrel with you, quarrel with yourself, but yield *wholly* to the Word of God! Is there any doctrine which you almost think is a truth of God, but your friends do not believe it, and they might perhaps think you heretical if you were to accept it—and therefore you dare not investigate any further?

Oh, dear friends, let us be rid of all such dishonesty! So much of it has got into the church that many will not see things that are plain as a pikestaff! They will not see because the truth of God might cost them too dearly! They cover up and hide away some parts of Scripture, which it might be awkward for them to understand, because of their connection with a church, or their standing in a certain circle. This is hateful, and we need not wonder if God smites the man who allows himself in it! Be true, brother! Be true, sister! You cannot deceive God! Do not try it! Ask Him to search you through and through; let your desire be, “Refining fires go through my heart with a mighty flame that shall devour everything like a lie, everything that is unholy, selfish, and earthly, that I may be fully consecrated unto the Lord my God.” This is the right way in which to treat our chastisements. “If I have done iniquity, I will do no more; that which I see not, teach You me.” “Alas,” somebody says, “we cannot say that we will do no more iniquity.” Yes, we can *say* it a great deal more easily than we can *practice* it, and therefore, it is a pity to say it except in the evangelical spirit, leaning entirely on the divine strength. He who says, “I will do no more iniquity” has then and there perpetrated iniquity if he has vowed in his own strength, for he has exalted himself into the place of God by self-confidence! Yet we must feel in our inmost hearts that we *desire* to depart from all iniquities! There must be an earnest and hearty intent that as Paul shook off the viper into the fire, so will we, as God helps us, shake off the sin, whatever it may be, which brings us the trial or that causes the Lord to take away the light of His countenance from us!

Oh, how earnestly would I urge my dear tried brothers and sisters to seek after this excellent fruit of affliction! May it come to every one of us according as the affliction comes, that we may never miss the sweet fruit of this bitter tree! God bless you who are tried, and may He support you under your griefs. But, above all, may He sanctify you through tribulation, for that is the main point—and it little matters how sharp the flames if you are purified by the fire!

**II.** And now, briefly, I am going to use the text for THOSE OF US WHO MAY NOT HAVE BEEN AFFLICTED. What does the text say to us if we are not afflicted? Does it not say this—“If the afflicted man is to say, ‘I bear,’ and to take up his yoke cheerfully, *how cheerfully ought you and I to take up the daily yoke of our Christian labor*”? Brother, sister, do you ever grow weary? Does the Sunday school tax you too much? Is that Bible class becoming somewhat heaviness? That house-to-house visitation—has it become drudgery? That distribution of tracts—is there a great sameness and tedium about it?

Now look, my brothers and sisters, look at yonder dear saint of God who has been for months upon his bed till the feathers have grown hard beneath him! He shifts from side to side, but finds no relief—no sleep at night, no respite by day. Would you like to change places with him? Yet hear how he praises God amidst his many pains, and abundant weaknesses and poverty! Do you prefer your lot to his? Well then, in the name of everything that is good, accept your portion with joy, and throw your soul into the Lord’s service! The great Captain might say to you, “What?

Tired of marching? I will send you back to the trenches, and let you lie there till you feel sick at heart of your inactivity. "What? Weary of fighting? You shall be put into the hospital with broken bones, and made to lie there, and pine and see what you think of enforced inactivity." If I have any message to give from my own bed of sickness, it would be this—if you do not wish to be full of regrets when you are obliged to lie still, work while you can! If you desire to make a sick bed as soft as it can be, do not stuff it with the mournful reflection that you wasted time while you were in health and strength! People said to me years ago, "You will break your constitution down with preaching 10 times a week," and the like. Well, if I have done so, I am glad of it! I would do the same again! If I had 50 constitutions, I would rejoice to break them down in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ! You young men who are strong, overcome the wicked one, and fight for the Lord while you can! You will never regret having done all that lies in you for our blessed Lord and Master! Crowd as much as you can into every day, and postpone no work till tomorrow! "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might."

We have yet another remark for those that are strong. *Should not the favors of God lead us to search out our sins?* Chastisement acts like a black finger to point out our failures—ought not the *love* of God to do the same with its hand glittering with jewels? Lord, do You give me good health? Lord, do You spare my wife and my children? Do You give me of substance enough, and to spare? Then, Lord, is there anything about me that might grieve You? Do I harbor anything in my soul that might vex Your Spirit? Let Your love guide me that I may escape from these evils. It is a sweet text—"I will guide you with My eyes. Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you." Your child only needs a glance of the eye, and he runs to you; but your horse and mule will not do that—you must put a bit into their mouths, and some of them must have very hard bits, and their mouths must be made very tender before they can be guided. You are men; do not be as the beasts are! Yet some of God's own children are very brutish; they will not obey His Words, and so their God has to give them blows, for He will have His children obey Him! If they will be drawn with cords of love, so shall they be, but if they will not, they shall be driven with the rod! If you make yourselves horses and mules, He will treat you like horses and mules, or you will have reason to think so! Perhaps the best way to prevent your becoming altogether mulish is to treat you as if you *were* a mule, and so drive you out of it by letting you see the effect of your folly. Let our mercies act as a sweet medicine, and then we shall not need bitter potions.

Once again, do you not think that while enjoying God's mercy we should be anxious to be searched by the light of the love of God? Should we not wish to use the light of the divine countenance that we may discover all our sin and overcome it? I know some Christians who will not come to this point. They have an ugly temper, and they say, "Well, you know, this is constitutional." Away forever with such wicked self-excusing! It is idle to say, "I cannot help it, it is my temperament." Your temperament will destroy you, as surely as you live, if the grace of God

does not destroy your temperament! If such excuses were permitted, there would be no crime, however abominable, for which temperament might not be pleaded! Thieves, harlots, drunks, murderers might all set up this justification, for they all have their evil temperaments! Do you find in the law that any sin is excused upon the ground that it is “constitutional?” Do you find anything in the example of Christ, or in the precepts of the gospel, to justify a man in saying, “I must be treated with indulgence, for my nature is so inclined to a certain sin that I cannot help yielding to it?” My brother, my sister, you must not talk such nonsense! Your first business is to conquer the sin you love best! Against it all your efforts and all the grace you can get must be leveled! Jericho must be first besieged, for it is the strongest fort of the enemy, and until it is taken nothing can be done.

I have generally noticed, in conversion, that the most complete change takes place in that very point in which the man was constitutionally most weak. God’s strength is made *perfect in our weakness!* “Well,” cries one, “suppose I have a besetting sin; how can I help it?” I reply if I knew that four fellows were going to beset me tonight on Clapham Common, I would take with me sufficient policemen to lock the fellows up! When a man or woman knows that they have besetting sin, it is not for them to say, “It is a besetting sin, and I cannot help it.” They must, on the other hand, call for heavenly assistance against these besetments! If you have besetting sins, and you know it, fight with them, and overcome them by the blood of the Lamb! By faith in Jesus Christ, besetting sins can be led captive, and they *must* be led captive, for the child of God must overcome, even to the end! He is to be more than conqueror through Him that has loved Him! Let the love of God then, lead you to search yourselves, and say, “That which I see not teach You me. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.”

**III.** The last remark I have to make is to THE UNCONVERTED. Perhaps there are some here who are not the people of God, and yet they are very happy and prosperous. They have all that heart can wish, and as they hear me talk about God’s children being chastened, they say, “I do not want to be one of *them*, if such is their portion.” You would rather be what you are, would you? “Yes,” you say. Listen! We will suppose that we have before us a prince of the blood who will one day be a king. He has been doing something wrong, and his father has chastened him with the rod. There stands the young prince with tears running down his cheeks, and over yonder is a street Arab who has no father that he knows of—certainly none that ever chastened him for his good. *He may do what he likes*—use any sort of language; he may steal, lie, swear if he likes, and no one will chasten him! He stands on his head, or makes wheels in the streets, or rolls in the dirt, but no father ever holds a rod over him. He sees this little prince crying, and he laughs at him, “You don’t have the liberty I do! You are not allowed to stand on your head as I do! Your father wouldn’t let you beg for coppers by the side of the omnibuses as I do! You don’t sleep under an arch all night as I do! I would not be you to catch that thrashing! I would sooner be a street boy than a prince!” Your little prince very soon wipes his eyes and answers, “Go along with you.

Why, I would rather be chastened every day, and be a prince and heir to a kingdom, than I would be you with all your fine liberty!" He looks down upon the ragged urchin with the greatest conceivable pity, even though he is smarting from the rod!

Now, sinners, that is just what we think of you and your freedom from heavenly discipline! When you are merriest and happiest, and full of your joy, we would not be *you* for the world! When you have been electrified by that splendid spectacle at the theater, or have enjoyed yourself so much in a licentious dance, or perhaps in something worse, we would not be as you are! Take us at our worst—when we are most sick, most desponding, most tried most penitent before God—we would not exchange with you at your *best*! Would we change with you for all your mirth and sinful hilarity? No, *that* we would not! Ask the old woman in the winter time who has only a couple of sticks to make a fire with, and has nothing to live upon but what the tender mercy of the parish allows her. Ask *her* if she would change with Dives in his purple and fine linen! Look at her! She puts on an old red cloak to shelter her poor limbs, which are as full of rheumatism as they can be; the cupboard is bare; her poor husband lies in the churchyard, and she has not a child to come and see her! Ah, there she is; you say, "She is a miserable object." Here is the young squire in his top boots, coming home from the hunt. He is standing in front of her! He might say to her, with all his large possessions and broad acres, "You would change with me, mother, would you not?" She knows his character, and she knows that he has no love for God, and no union to Christ, and therefore she replies, "Change with you? No, that I would not for a thousand worlds!"—

***"Go you that boast of all your stores,  
And tell how bright they shine;  
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,  
But my Redeemer's mine!"***

I have yet another word for you that fear not God. I wish you would reflect for a moment, what will become of you one of these days. God loves His dear children very much; He loves them so much that Jesus died to save them; and yet He does not spare them when they sin, but He chastens them with the rod of men. Now, if He does so with His *children*, what will He do with you who are His *enemies*? If Judgment begins at the house of God; if when His anger does but gently smoke it is so hot; what will it be when the winds of justice fan it to a furious flame? As when the fire sets the forests of the mountains burning, or as when the vast prairie becomes one sheet of fire, so shall it be in that dread day when God shall launch all His vengeance against the sins of the ungodly! I beseech you, think of this! He spared not His own Son, but put Him to a cruel death upon the tree for the sins of others! Will He spare His enemies, do you think, you who have rebelled against Him and rejected His mercy, when He visits them for their own personal sins? "Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you."

One more thought, for I must not send you away with that terrible warning, and no gospel encouragement! Learn a lesson from the Lord's children. When His children are chastened, they submit—and when they submit they obtain peace. Sinner, I pray you, learn wisdom! And if you

have been troubled of late, if you have had trials from God, yield to Him! Yield to Him! Old Master Quarles gives a quaint picture of a man who is striking at an enemy with a flail. The person assaulted runs right into the striker's arms, and so escapes the force of the stroke! And Quarles adds the remark, "The farther off, the heavier the blow!" sinner, run *in, run into God's bosom tonight!* Say, "I will arise and go unto my Father." God will not smite you if you come there. How can He? The Lord says, "Let him take hold of My strength." When that arm is lifted to scourge you, lay hold of it! Lay hold upon that arm of strength as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, for in Him, God has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the people!

Hang on the arm that otherwise might smite you! Trust in the Lord, sinner, through Jesus Christ, the Atoning Sacrifice, and you shall find peace with Him! Ask Him with humble submission to put away the sin that has made you suffer and has nearly cost you your soul! Pray Him to search you, and find out the sin; repent and believe the gospel! Forsake evil and cling to the Savior, the great Physician who heals the disease of sin, and you shall live! Come, now, to your Father's home. Those rags, that hungry belly, those swine and filthy troughs, those citizens that would not help you, that blindest of all citizens, whose only kindness lay in degrading you lower than you were before—all these are sent to fetch you home! Believe it, soul, and say, "I will arise and go unto my Father, and will say unto Him, Father I have sinned." And while you are yet saying it, you shall have the kiss of His love, the embraces of His affection, the robe of His righteousness, and the fatted calf of spiritual food! And there shall be merriment concerning you, both on earth, and in heaven! The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOB 34.**

### **HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—91, 701.**

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# ONE GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE

## NO. 1275

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 23, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple."  
Matthew 12:6.*

OUR Lord intended, of course, to assert that He was greater than the temple, but He used the most modest form of putting it. When in the interests of truth He is obliged to speak of Himself, His meekness and lowliness are always apparent in the mode in which He makes the personal allusion. Everyone can see that He does not seek His own glory, or desire the praise of man. In the instance before us He says, "In this place is one," or, as some read it, "is *something* greater than the temple." He who is truly meek and lowly is not afraid to speak honestly about himself, for he has no jealousy about his reputation for humility, and is quite willing to be thought proud by the ungenerous, for he knows that he only speaks of himself in order to glorify God. There is a native peculiarity in true lowliness which shows itself in the very form of its utterances, and wards off the imputation of boasting.

We do not find the passage now before us in any other gospel but that of Matthew. It is so important, so energetic, and in addition must have been so startling to those who heard it, that we should not have been astonished if we had found it in all the four evangelists. Only Matthew records it, and he most fittingly, since he is, in some respects, the evangelist of the Hebrews, for as you know, he began his book by saying, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham"—he evidently adapted his gospel to the Jews. As the Jews would be the last to receive teaching which in any way lowered the temple, it is all the more remarkable that Matthew inserted our Lord's words in the gospel which he designed to be read by them. Though the words occur but once, we must not therefore regard them as being any the less weighty, for the sentence comes with a preface which shows the force our Lord intends to throw into it. The declaration is prefaced by, "I say unto you." Here is the authority before which we all bow—*Jesus says it!* He does not merely proclaim the truth of God, but He sets His personal stamp and royal seal upon it: "I say unto you"—I who cannot lie, who speak the things which I have received of My Father, upon whom the Spirit of God rests without measure—I say unto you. He speaks as one having authority, and not as the scribes. With a verily, verily of certainty, He teaches, and therefore let us unquestionably accept His declaration, "I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple."

Let us now meditate upon this truth of God, first observing the fact *that our Lord is greater than the temple*; secondly, remarking *that He*

ought to be so regarded, and thirdly, *suggesting and urging home some few reflections which arise out of the subject.*

I. First, then, OUR LORD JESUS IS GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE. *He is so manifestly because He is God, "God over all, blessed forever."* He who dwells in the house is greater than the house in which he dwells, so that as God, our Lord Jesus is greater than the temple. It needs no arguing that it must be so—the divine must be infinitely greater than anything which is of human workmanship—the self-existent must infinitely excel the noblest of created things. The temple was many years in building; its huge stones were quarried with enormous labor, and its cedar beams were shaped and carved with matchless skill. And though no hammer or tool of iron was used upon the spot, yet by the strength of men were the huge stones laid each one in its place. It stood upon Zion a thing of beauty, and a joy forever, but still a work of men's hands, a creation of human strength, and human wisdom. Not thus is it with the Christ of God. Of Him we may truly say, "From everlasting to everlasting You are God." "And You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands." The temple being created, and having a beginning was a thing of *time*, and therefore had an end. The things which are seen, whether they are temples or taverns, are temporal, and must pass away; in due time the firebrand in the hand of the Roman soldier reduces to ashes a building which seemed as lasting as the rock upon which it stood! Go now to the place where Zion once stood, and mark well how the glory is departed, even as it departed from Shiloh of old. Deep down in the earth, the base of the mighty arch which formed the ascent to the house of the Lord has been uncovered from the mountain of ruins, but scarcely will you find one stone left upon another which has not been thrown down! These masses of marble were so huge that it is an ordinary circumstance to find a stone 24 feet in length, and nine feet in breadth! And sometimes they are even found 40 feet in length, weighing as much as one hundred tons, yet have they been flung from the seats as stones are cast upon the king's highway! Thus has the temple disappeared, and thus shall all Your creation pass away, but You, O Lord, abide! "They shall perish; but You remain; and they all shall wax old as does a garment; and as a gesture shall You fold them up, and they shall be changed: but You are the same, and Your years shall not fail."

The temple was no rival of Jehovah, but derived all its glory from His deigning to reveal Himself therein! Exceedingly magnificent as it was, it was far below the divine greatness, and only worthy to be called His footstool. If we were to dwell on any one of the attributes of His Godhead, it would be clearer that Christ is greater than the temple; but the point is one which none of us doubt. After all, the temple was but a *symbol*, and Jesus is the *substance*; it was but the *shadow* of which He is the *reality*. Although every Hebrew heart leaped for joy when it thought of the tabernacle of the Lord of Hosts, and even this day every Jewish spirit laments the departed glories of Zion, yet was the holy and beautiful house a figure of good things *to come*, and not the very image of the covenant bless-

ings. It was not essential to the world's well-being, for lo, its disappearance has brought light and life to the Gentiles! It is not necessary to true religion now, for the time is come when they that worship Jehovah adore Him in no consecrated shrines, but worship Him in spirit and in truth! But our Lord Jesus is truth and substance; He is essential to our light and life, and could He be taken from us, earth's hope would be quenched forever! Emmanuel, God with us, You are greater than the temple!

This fact it was necessary for our Lord to mention in order to justify His disciples in having rubbed ears of corn together to eat on the Sabbath. He said, "The priests in the sanctuary profane the Sabbath, and are blameless." They were engaged in the labors of sacrifice and service all through the Sabbath, yet nobody accused them of breaking the law of the Sabbath because the authority of the temple exempted its servants from the letter of the law. "But," said our Lord, "I am greater than the temple; therefore I surely have power to allow My servants who are about My business to refresh themselves with food, now that they are hungry; and since I have given them My sanction to exercise the little labor involved in rubbing out a few grains of corn, they are beyond all censure." If the sanction of the temple allows the greater labor, much more shall the sanction of one who is greater than the temple allow the less! As the Son of God, Christ is under no law; as man He has kept the law, and honored it for our sakes, because He stood as our surety and our substitute. But He, Himself, in the essence of His nature, is the lawmaker, and above all law. Who shall arraign the eternal Son, and call the judge of all the earth to account? "Woe unto him that strives with his Maker; let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth."

But now we must pass on to other meanings, and view our Lord in His blessed personality as the Son of man as well as the Son of God. He is greater than the temple, for *He is a more glorious enshrinement of Deity*. The temple was great above all buildings because it was the house of God, but it was only so in a measure, for the eternal is not to be contained within walls and curtains! "However," says Stephen, "the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands; as said the prophet, heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will you build Me, said the Lord: or what is the place of My rest? Have not My hands made all these things?" How remarkably Stephen does, as it were, pass over the temple with a mere word! He merely mentions it in a sentence, "But Solomon built Him a house," as if no stress needed to be laid upon the circumstance. It is remarkable that from the moment the temple was built, true religion in Israel began to decline, and the abominable shrines of heathen idols were set up in the holy land! The glory of even an allowed ritualism is fatal to spiritual religion! From a pompous worship of the true, to the worship of the false, the step is very easy. When God dwelt in the tent, in the days of David, religion nourished far better than in the days when the ark abode in a great house garnished with precious stones for beauty, and overlaid with pure gold! Still, within the holy of holies the Lord peculiarly revealed Himself, and at the one temple upon Zion, sacrifices and offerings were presented, for God was there. The

presence of God, as you know, in the temple and the tabernacle, was called the Shekinah, the bright light shining between the wings of the cherubim over the ark of the covenant. We often forget that the presence of God in the most holy place was a matter of faith to all but the high priest. Once a year the high priest went within the awful veil, but we do not know if he ever dared to look upon the blaze of splendor. God dwells in light that no man may approach; the smoke of the incense from the priest's censer was needed to partly veil the exceeding glory of the divine presence, lest even those chosen eyes should suffer blindness! No one else went into the hallowed shrine, and only he once a year. That symbolical pavilion of Jehovah is not for a moment to be compared with our Lord Jesus who is the true dwelling place of the Godhead, for "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." What a masterly sentence that is! None but the Holy Spirit could have compacted words into such a sentence—"In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." The manifestation of the Godhead in Christ is not unapproachable, for we may freely come to Jesus—a voice out of the excellent glory bids us come boldly unto the throne of the heavenly grace! We cannot come too often, nor be too long in our approaches unto Jesus, the true mercy seat! The atonement has been offered, and the veil of the temple, that is to say, the flesh of Christ, has been torn, and now we may approach the Godhead in Christ Jesus without trembling. Verily, as I think of God, incarnate God in Jesus Christ, dwelling among the sons of men, I feel how true it is, "In this place is one greater than the temple."

Another sense of the words is this—*Our Lord is a fuller revelation of the truth of God than the temple ever was!* The temple taught a thousand truths of which we cannot now particularly speak; to the instructed Israelite there was a wealth of meaning about each court of the temple, and every one of its golden vessels. Not a ceremony was without its measure of instruction. If the Spirit of God opened up the types of the holy and beautiful house to him, the Israelite must have had a very clear idea of the good things to come. Still, there was nothing in the temple but the *type*—the *substance* was not there. The blood of bulls and goats was there, but not the atonement that takes away sin; the smoke of the holy incense from the golden censor was there, but not the sweet merits of the great law-fulfiller; the seven-branched candlestick was there, but the Spirit of God was not yet given; the showbread stood on the holy table, but food for *souls* could not be found in the finest of the wheat! The temple had but the *types*, and Christ is greater than the temple because in Him we have the realities, or, as Paul calls them, "the very image of the things." "The figure for the time then present" had its uses, but it is by no means comparable to the actual covenant blessing! The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ! There were some truths, however, and these among the most precious, which the temple did not teach at all. I do not know, for instance, where we can read *adoption* in the symbols of the temple, or the great truth of our *union* with Jesus, and other priceless doctrines which cluster around the cross and

the resurrection. But in the person of Jesus we have the exceeding riches of divine grace, and see by faith the inexhaustible treasures of the covenant. In Jesus we see at once, "our kinsman and our God." In the person of Christ we read the infinite eternal love of God towards His own redeemed ones, and the intimate union which this love has established between God and man. Glimpses of this, the temple, may perhaps have given, for it did intimate that the Lord would dwell among His people, but only to eyes anointed seven times with the oil of the Spirit would these high mysterious doctrines have been visible! The fundamental truths of the everlasting gospel are all to be seen in Jesus Christ by the wayfaring man—and the more He is studied, the more plainly do these matchless truths of God shine forth! God has fully revealed Himself in His Son; there is, in fact, no wisdom necessary to our soul's welfare but that which shines forth in Him; and nothing is worth learning but that which the Spirit of God teaches us concerning Him, for He is to the full, "The wisdom of God." Know Christ, and you know the Father! Does He not say, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father"?

Again, the Redeemer is greater than the temple because He is a more abiding evidence of divine favor. God forever dwells in Christ Jesus, and this is the eternal sign of His favor to His people. There were some things in the first temple which were rich tokens of good to Israel, but none of these were in the temple to which our Lord pointed when He uttered the words of our Text. Remember, He looked at Herod's temple, the temple which you may call the *second*, but which in some respects, was more truly a *third* temple. In Solomon's temple there were four precious things which were absent in Christ's day. First there was the ark of the covenant, which precious chest was above all other things, the token of Israel's high relationship to God, and the assurance of the Lord's grace to His covenanted people. The ark was lost at the Babylonian destruction of the city, and thus the holy of holies lost its most sacred piece of furniture—the throne of the great king was gone! There were no wings of cherubim above the mercy seat of pure gold, no tables of stone engraved by the divine hand were within the golden coffer, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the pot of manna were both gone. Now, in our blessed Lord you find the covenant, itself, and all that it contains, for thus said the Lord, "Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." His blood is "the blood of the everlasting covenant" and He, Himself, is given for "a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles" (Isa 42:6). Jesus Christ is the covenant between God and His redeemed! He is its substance, its seal, its surety, its messenger, and its all; in our Lord we see the fullness of covenanted blessing; His are the covering wings beneath which we dwell in safety, and His is the propitiatory, or mercy seat, whereby we draw near to God. In Him we see the tables of the law honored and fulfilled priestly authority exercised with a living and fruit-bearing scepter, and heavenly food laid up for the chosen people! It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell, and all the promises are yes and amen in Him. Thus in Jesus we find what the temple had lost.

The second temple also lacked the *Shekinah*; the throne being gone, the symbol of the royal presence also departed. The supernatural light did not shine forth within the holy place in Herod's temple. The glory had departed, or at least that particular form of it, and though the second temple became more glorious than the first because the Messiah Himself appeared within it, it missed that symbolic splendor of which the Israelite was known to say, "You that dwell between the cherubim shine forth." But in our Lord Jesus we may always see the brightness of the Father's glory, the light of Jehovah's smile, for around His brow abides the light of everlasting love. Have you not seen the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?

They had also lost from the second temple, the Urim and the Thummim. Precisely what the Urim and the Thummim may have been, we do not know, but this peculiar mystery of blessing had a connection with the breastplate, and with the high priest who wore it, so that when men went up to the temple to inquire, they received answers as from the sacred oracle, and whatever cases were spread before the Lord, an answer was given by the high priest, through the lights and perfections, or the Urim and Thummim with which the priest was girded. That was lost after the Babylonian captivity. But in Jesus Christ the lights and perfection always abide, and if any man would know anything, let him learn of Him, for He, by the eternal Spirit, still guides His children into all truth, solves their difficulties, removes their doubts, and comforts their hearts, giving to them light and perfection, each one according to their measure as he is able to bear it, and preparing for each one the unclouded light and the spotless perfection of eternal glory!

The second temple had also lost the sacred fire. You remember when the temple was opened, the fire came down and consumed the sacrifice—a fire from heaven which was carefully watched both night and day, and always fed with the prescribed fuel, if, indeed, it needed to be fed at all. This the Jews no longer had, and they were compelled to use other fire to burn upon the altar of God, fire which they had probably consecrated by rites and ceremonies, but which was not the same flame which had actually descended from heaven. Behold, beloved, how far our Lord Jesus is greater than the temple, for this day is that word fulfilled in your ears—"He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." He has now given to His church the privilege to be immersed in the fiery element of His Spirit! She dwells in the everlasting burnings of the divine power; the Lord Himself has exalted her to this. Now are her lamps kindled by flames from heaven, and her sacrifices are consumed by consecrated flames, while around that same Spirit is a wall of fire to preserve the chosen from their enemies! In the perpetual baptism of the Holy Spirit, the saints find power and life, so everything which of old was regarded as a special token of God's love to Israel, though missing from the second temple, is in reality to be found in Jesus Christ our Lord—and so He is greater than the temple!

Furthermore, He is greater than the temple because *He is a surer place of consolation*. Brothers and sisters, when a guilty conscience

wished for relief, in the olden times the man went up to the temple and presented his sin offering. But you and I find a more effectual sin offering in our crucified Lord whenever our soul is burdened, for by it we are in very deed cleansed from sin! The Jew was not really cleansed, but only typically; ours is an *actual* and abiding deliverance from sin, its guilt, and its defilement; we have no more consciousness of it when the blood of Jesus Christ is applied to our souls! Oh, come evermore, you burdened ones, to Christ's body as to a temple, and see your sins put away by His finished atonement, and go your way comforted! The Israelites were known to go to the temple in time of trouble to make supplication. It is very pleasant to think of heart-broken Hannah standing in the tabernacle before the Lord, pouring out her silent petition. Come, beloved, you too may speak in your heart to the Lord whenever you will, and you will be heard! No Eli is near to judge you harshly, and rebuke you sharply, but a better Priest is at hand to sympathize with you, for He Himself is touched with a feeling of your infirmity! Fear not, you shall obtain an answer of peace, and the blessing given shall bear the sweet name of Samuel because you asked it of the Lord! To Jesus you may come as to the temple, when, like Hezekiah, you are made to smart by a blasphemous letter, or any other oppression—here you may spread the matter before the Lord with a certainty that the Lord, who is greater than the temple, will give you an answer of peace in reference to the trial which you leave in His hands. No doubt some went to the temple without faith in the spiritual part of the matter, and so came away with no comfort, but you, coming to Jesus Christ, with your spirit taught of God, shall find sure consolation in Him!

Only once more, our Lord is greater than the temple because *He is a more glorious center of worship*. Towards the temple all the Israelites prayed. Daniel prayed with his window opened towards Jerusalem, and the scattered in every land turned towards that point of the compass where Jerusalem was situated, and so they made supplication. Today not Jews alone, but Gentiles, men of every race, speaking every language under heaven, turn towards Jesus, "You great Redeemer," the true temple of the living God! Myriads redeemed by blood in heaven, and multitudes redeemed by blood on earth—all make the Christ of God the center of their perpetual adoration! The day shall come when all kings shall bow before Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed; to Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that He is God to the glory of God the Father! Brothers and sisters, is not it sweet to think of Jesus as being at this very moment the central point to which all devout believers turn their eyes? Let the Muslim have his Mosque, and the Jew his temple, as for us, we turn our eyes to the risen Savior, and with all the saints we offer prayer to God through Him! Through Him both Jews and Gentiles have access by one Spirit unto the Father!

**II.** Now, secondly and briefly, JESUS OUGHT TO BE REGARDED AS GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE.

We ought to think of Him with greater joy than even the Jew did of the holy and beautiful temple. The 84<sup>th</sup> Psalm shows us how the king of Isra-

el loved the house of the Lord. He cries, "How amiable are Your tabernacles O Lord of hosts." But oh, my soul, how amiable is Christ! How altogether lovely is your Redeemer and your God! If the devout Israelite could say, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord," and if at the sight of the temple, he cried, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion," how ought our heart to exult at the very *thought* of Jesus, our incarnate God! What intense pleasure, what rapture it ought to cause us to think that God, in very deed, does dwell among men in the person of His well-beloved Son! I wonder we are not carried away into extravagances of delight at this thought, and that we do not become like them that dream! I marvel that we are so cold and chill when we have before us a fact which might make angelic hearts thrill with wonder! God incarnate! God my kinsman! Bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh! Surely, if we were to dance, as David did before the ark, we might scarcely need to excuse ourselves to the heartless Michals who would ridicule our enthusiasm! Oh, the bliss of knowing that God is in Christ Jesus!

We ought also to consider our Lord with *greater wonder* than that with which men surveyed the temple. As I have already said, the temple was a great marvel, and would be so even now, if it were still standing. Those huge stones were so well prepared by art, and were so massive, that they did not need to be cemented together, they fit so closely that the thinnest knife could not be inserted between them, so polished and so compact were they. The house itself abounded with gold, silver, and precious stones! It was a treasury as well as a temple! For size it was remarkable if we consider the entire range of the buildings attached to it. The level space within which the actual temple stood is said to have been about one thousand square feet, and it is asserted that it would have contained twice as many people as the huge coliseum at Rome. The actual temple was but a small building comparatively, but its attachments, and Solomon's porch which surrounded the square, on which it stood, made up a great mass of buildings. And the magnificent bridge which joined the lone hill to the rest of Jerusalem was a marvel of architecture. Solomon's ascent, by which he went up to the house of the Lord was one of the sights which quite overcame the queen of Sheba; the brightness of the white marble, and the abundance of gold must have made it a sight to gaze upon with tears in one's eyes to think that man could erect such a house, and that it should be for the one true God! I do not wonder at all that men were bid to go round about her, view the towers, mark well her bulwarks, and consider her palaces. Neither are we astonished that invaders quailed before the strength of her defenses! "They saw it, and so they marveled; they were troubled, and hasted away." The likes of this temple was not to be seen on the face of the earth! Neither the pyramids of Egypt, nor the piles of Nineveh, nor the towers of Babylon could rival the temple of the living God at Jerusalem! But, my brethren, think of Jesus and you will wonder more! What are the huge stones? What are the delicate carvings, and the cedar? What are the sheets of gold, and what the veil of fine twisted linen? And what is all the gorgeous pomp of the

ceremonies compared with God, the everlasting God, veiled in human flesh? Wonder, my brothers and sisters! Wonder; bow low and adore! “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh.”

Being greater than the temple, our Lord is to be visited with greater frequency! The males of Israel were to go up to the temple three times each year. “Blessed are they that dwell in Your house,” says David, for they would be there always! Oh, my brethren, you may enjoy the happiness of these blessed ones, and dwell in Jesus always! You may come up to the Lord Jesus whenever you will! All days are appointed feasts with Him! You need not wait for the new moons or the Sabbaths—you may resort to Him at all times! We that have believed enter into a perpetual Sabbath in which we may continually worship the Most High in the person of Christ!

Let us also *reverence Him with still greater solemnity*. The devout Jews took off their shoes when they entered the temple enclosure. True, in our Lord’s time much of this solemnity had been forgotten, and they bought and sold the beasts and birds that were necessary for sacrifice within the great enclosure around the temple. But as a rule, the Jews always treated the temple with profound respect. With what reverence shall we worship our Lord Jesus? Let us never speak lightly nor think lightly of Him, but may our inmost spirits worship Him as the eternal God.

Let us also honor Him with *higher service*. The service of the temple was full of pomp and gorgeous ceremonies; kings brought their treasures there; with what diligence did David store up his gold and silver to build the temple! And with what skill did Solomon carry out the details of that mighty piece of architecture! Come and worship Christ after that fashion! Bring Him your body, soul, and spirit as a living sacrifice! Yes, bring Him your gold and silver, and your substance, for He is greater than the temple, and deserves larger gifts and higher consecration than the temple had from its most ardent lovers! Surely I need not argue the point, for you who love Him know that you can never do enough for Him.

So, too, He ought to be sought after with *more vehement desire* if He is greater than the temple. David said he, “longed, yes, even panted for the courts of the Lord.” With what longings and panting ought we to long for Christ! In answer to her Lord’s promise to come again, the church cries, “Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.” We ought to long more for the second advent of our Lord—especially ought we, if we mourn His absence from our own souls, never to rest until He reveals Himself to us again! Oh, you redeemed ones, love Him so that you can no more live without His smile than the wife can live without her husband’s love! And long for fellowship with Him as the bride for the wedding day! Set your hearts upon Him, and hunger and thirst after Him! The Jew pined to visit Mount Zion, and with such pining I bid you long for Jesus, and for the time when you shall see Him face to face!

**III.** Now, we have to spend a few minutes in urging home one or two PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS which arise out of this subject.

And the first is this—*how carefully should the laws of Jesus Christ be observed.* I believe that when you entered the temple by passing through the beautiful gate, you saw a notice that worshippers should enter on the right side, and afterwards they were to exit on the left. I am quite sure that if the temple now stood, and any of us could make a journey to Jerusalem, we should be very careful to observe every order of the sanctuary. And if we found the porter at the gate said, “You must take off your shoes,” we would with gladness, remove them! Or if he bade us wash, we would gladly enter the bath. Knowing that God dwelt there, had we been Israelites, we would have been very attentive to every observance required of the law. Now, brothers and sisters let us be equally attentive to all the laws of Christ, for He is greater than the temple! Never ignore His commands, nor tamper with them. Remember, if you break one of the least of His commandments, and teach men so, you will be least in the kingdom of God. He is very gracious and forgives, but disobedience brings injury to our own souls. I beseech all Christians to search the Scriptures and see what Christ’s mind is upon every moot point—whether it is baptism or church government—and when you know His will, carry it out! Do not say of any precept, “That is nonessential,” for everything that Jesus bids you do is essential to the perfection of your *obedience!* If you say it is not essential to salvation, I am compelled to rebuke you! What? Are you so selfish that you only think about your own salvation? And because *you* are saved, will you kick against your Savior, and say, “I do not care to do this because I can be saved even if I neglect it”? This is not the spirit of a child of God! I pray you, dear friends, do what I anxiously wish to do myself—follow the Lord fully, and go step by step where He would have you go—for if you would obey temple rules, much more should you obey the rules of Christ!

The next reflection is *how much more ought we to value Christ than any outward ordinance.* It is not always that all Christians do this. There is a dear brother, who loves Christ, and I can see Christ in him; I am sure I can. If I know anything about Christ at all, in my own soul, I see that he knows Him too. Very well, but then he does not belong to my church! It is a pity—he ought to be as right as I am—and I wish he knew better; but at the same time, his love to Christ is more to be esteemed than his correctness in outward things, for Christ is greater than the temple! I am not going to quarrel with any brother in Christ because he is somewhat in error about external ordinances, for he has the spirit, if not the letter of the matter. I wish he had been baptized with water, but I see he is baptized with the Holy Spirit, and therefore he is my brother in Christ! I wish that he would observe the water baptism because Christ bids him, but still, if he does not, I am glad that his Master has given him the Holy Spirit, and I rejoice to know that he has the vital matter! Perhaps he does not come to the Lord’s supper, and does not believe in it. I am very sorry for him, for he loses a great privilege, but if I see that he has communion with Christ, I know that Christ is greater than the temple, and that inward communion is greater than the external sign! Therefore if it happens that if we see Christ in persons with whose theol-

ogy we do not agree, and whose forms of church government we cannot commend, we must set the Christ *within* above the outward forms, and still receive the brother! The brother is wrong, but if we see the Lord in him, let us love him, for Christ is greater than the temple! We dare not exalt any outward ordinance above Christ as the test of a man's Christianity! We would die for the defense of those outward ordinances which Christ commands, but for all that, the Lord Himself is greater than the ordinance, and we love all the members of His mystical body.

Another reflection is this—*how much more important it is for you that you should go to Christ than that you should go to any place which you suppose to be the "house of God."* How many times from this pulpit have we disclaimed all idea that this particular building has any sanctity about it? We know that God dwells not in temples made with hands, yet there may be some of you who come here very regularly who have great respect for the place. If you did not go to any place of worship, you would think yourselves very bad, and so you would be. If you never went on the Lord's day to the worship of God at all, you would certainly be keeping yourselves out of the place where you may hope that God will bless you. But is it not a strange thing that you would not like to stay away from the temple, but you stay away from Christ? For while you go up to the outward sanctuary, you have never gone to the real Christ! I am sure you would feel ashamed if anybody were able to say of you, "There is a man here who has not been to a place of worship for 12 months." You would even look down upon a man of whom that could be said. Yes, but if there are any reasons for coming to what you think is the temple, how many more reasons are there for coming to Christ? And if you would think it wrong to stay away from the public place of worship for 12 months, how much more wrong must it be to stay away from Jesus all your life? But that is exactly what you have done! Will you please think of that?

Now, had you gone to the temple, you would have felt towards it very great respect and reverence. And when you come to the outward place of worship, you are very attentive and respectful to the *place*—let me ask you, have you been respectful to *Christ*? How is it that you live without faith in Him? No prayer is offered by you to Him. You do not accept the great salvation which He is prepared to give. Practically, you despise Him, and turn your backs upon Him! You would not do so to the temple; why do you do so to Christ? Oh, that you unconverted ones knew the uses of Christ! Do you remember what Joab did when Solomon was provoked to slay him? Joab fled, and though he had no right to go into the temple, he felt it was a case of necessity. Hoping to save his life, he rushed up to the altar and held on the altar's horns. Benaiah came to him with a sword, and said, "Come forth," and what did Joab say? "No," he said, "I will die here." And Benaiah had to go back and ask Solomon, "What is to be done?" and Solomon said, "Do as he has said." And so he slew him right against the altar. Now, if you come to Christ, though the avenger of blood is after you, you will be safe! He may come to you and say, "Come forth," but you will reply, "I will die here." You cannot die there, for He shall hide you in the secret of His pavilion, in the secret of

His tabernacle shall He hide you! And with your hand upon the blood-stained Jesus, no Benaiah, no devil, and no destroying angel can touch you! Sinner, it is your only hope! You will be lost forever—the sword shall pierce through your soul to your everlasting destruction unless you fly now to Christ, the temple, and lay hold upon the altar’s horns and let this be on your mind—

***“I can but perish if I go,  
I am resolved to try!  
For if I stay away I know  
I must forever die!  
But if I die with mercy sought,  
When I’ve this altar tried,  
This were to die, delightful thought,  
As sinner never died!”***

By faith this morning, I put my hand upon the altar’s horns; all my hope, dread Sovereign, lies in the blood of Your dear Son. Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us all lay our hands there once again. Poor sinner, if you have never done this before, do it now, and say in your heart—

***“My faith does lay her hand  
Upon that altar’s horns,  
And see my bleeding  
Lord at hand  
Who all my sin has borne.”***

Christ is greater than the temple! May His great benediction rest upon you! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
PSALM 84 & 87.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—84, 820, 427.**

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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# UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

## NO. 1276

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
JANUARY 30, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Submit yourselves therefore to God.”  
James 4:7.***

THIS advice should not need much pressing. “Submit yourselves to God”—is it not right upon the very face of it? Is it not wise? Does not conscience tell us that we ought to submit? Does not reason bear witness that it must be best to do so? “Submit yourselves to God.” Should not the creature be submissive to the Creator, to whom it owes its existence, without whom it had never been, and without whose continuous good pleasure it would, at once, cease to be? Our Creator is infinitely good, and His will is love—to submit to one who is “too wise to err, too good to be unkind,” should not be difficult! If He were a tyrant, it might be courageous to resist, but since He is a Father, it is ungrateful to rebel; He cannot do anything which is not perfectly just, nor will He do anything which is inconsistent with the best interests of our race. Therefore to resist Him is to contend against one’s own advantage, and like the untamed bullock, to kick against the pricks to our own hurt! “Submit yourselves to God”—it is what angels do; it is what kings and prophets have done; it is what the best of men delight in—there is therefore no dishonor or sorrow in so doing! All nature is submissive to His laws; suns and stars yield to His commands! We shall but be in harmony with the universe in willingly bowing to His sway. “Submit yourselves to God”—you must do it whether you are willing to do so or not. Who can stand out against the Almighty? For puny man to oppose the Lord is for the chaff to set itself in battle array with the wind, or for the twig to make war with the flame! As well might man attempt to turn back the tide of the ocean, or check the march of the hosts of heaven as dream of overcoming the omnipotent! The eternal God is irresistible, and any rebellion against His government must soon end in total defeat. By the mouth of His servant Isaiah the Lord challenges His enemies, saying, “Who would set the briars and thorns against Me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.” God will be sure to overthrow His adversaries; He may in His infinite patience permit the rebel to continue for a while in his revolt, but as surely as the Lord lives, He will compel every knee to bow before Him, and every tongue to confess that He is the living God. “Submit yourselves to God.” Who would do otherwise since *not* to submit is injurious now, and will be fatal in the end? If we oppose the Most High,

our opposition must lead on to defeat and destruction, for the adversaries of the Lord shall be as the fat of rams—into smoke shall they consume away! For the man who strives with his Maker there remains a fearful looking for of judgment, and the dread reward of everlasting punishment! Who will be so foolhardy as to provoke such a result?

“Submit yourselves to God” is an eternal which to thoughtful men is a plain dictate of reason. It needs few arguments to support it; yet because of our foolishness, the text enforces it by a “therefore” with the previous verse—“He resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God”—His wrath and His mercy both argue for submission. We are both driven and drawn to it. The Romans were known to say of their empire that its motto was to spare the vanquished, but to war continually against the proud. This saying aptly sets forth the procedure of the Most High; He aims all His arrows at the lofty, and turns the edge of His sword against the stubborn. But the moment He sees signs of submission, His pity comes to the front, and through the merits of His Son, His abounding mercy forgives the fault. Is not this an excellent reason for submission? Who can refuse to be vanquished by love? Who will not say as our hymn puts it—

***“Lord, You have won, at length I yield!  
My heart, by mighty grace compelled,  
Surrenders all to Thee.  
Against Your terrors long I strove,  
But who can stall against Your love?  
Love conquers even me.”***

If resistance will only call forth the omnipotent wrath of God, but true submission will lead to the obtaining of His plenteous grace, who will continue in arms? I shall not tarry to carry the argument further, but aim at once to press home this eternal upon you as God the Holy Spirit may enable me.

I believe it to be addressed both to saint and sinner, and therefore I shall urge it home first upon the child of God, and say to all of you who love the Lord, “Submit yourselves to God.” And then we shall take a little longer time to say in deep solemnity to those who are not reconciled to God by the death of His Son, “Submit yourselves to God” if you would be saved.

**I. TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD,** “Submit yourselves to God.” He is your God, your Father, your friend—yield yourselves to Him. What does this counsel mean? It means first exercise *humility*. We do well to interpret a text by its context. The context here is, “God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble,” and therefore the submission here meant must include humility, even if it is not the chief thing intended. Brothers and sisters let us take our right place before God! And what is that? Is it the highest seat in the synagogue? Is it the place of those who thank God that they are not as other men are? I scarcely need reply! You who are the children of God will not dream of occupying such a position! If by reason of temporary foolishness you ever boast, I am sure my dear

friends, when you think it over in the watches of the night, you are very much ashamed of yourselves, and would be glad to eat your own words. Will a pardoned sinner boast? Will a debtor to sovereign grace extol himself? It is horrible! Nothing can be more out of place than boasting upon the lips of a child of God. If I heard Balaam's ass speak, I should impute it to a miracle that it should use the language of man, but that a man of God should use the braying of vanity is a miracle another way—not of God, but of Satan! Is it not one of the fundamental Truths of our faith that we are saved by grace? And what says the Apostle? “Where is boasting, then? It is excluded.” The word “excluded” means shut out. Boasting comes to the door; it knocks; it pleads for admission but it is *excluded*. Possibly through our unwatchfulness it gains a momentary entrance, but as soon as ever the grace of God within us ascertains that the intruder is within our gates, it ejects him, shuts the door in his face, and bars him out! And in answer to the question, “Where is boasting, then?” Free grace replies, “It is excluded by the law of grace.” If all the good we have has been given to us freely by divine favor, in what can we glory? If we possess the highest degree of spirituality—if our life is perfectly clear from any open fault, and if our hearts are wholly consecrated to the Lord, yet we are unprofitable servants, we have done no more than it was our duty to have done. But alas, we fall far short of this, for we have not done what it was our duty to have done, and in many things we fail and come short of the Glory of God. The right position of a Christian is to walk with lowly humility before God, and with meekness towards his fellow Christians. The lowest room becomes us most, and the lowest seat in that room.

Look at Paul, who knew far more of Christ than we do, and who served Him far better! It is edifying to notice his expressions; he is an Apostle and he will by no means allow anyone to question his calling, for he has received it from the Lord. But what does he say? “Not meet to be called an Apostle.” What can be lower than this? But we shall see him descending far below it! He takes his place among the ordinary saints, and he will not give up his claim to be numbered with them, for he has made his calling and election sure. But where does he sit among the people of God? He styles himself, “less than the least of all saints.” That is no small a descent from, “not meet to be called an Apostle,” to, “less than the least of all saints”! But he went lower, for at another time he confessed himself to be still a sinner, and coming into the assembly of sinners, where does he take his position? He writes himself down as, “the chief of sinners.” This is submission to God, the true surrender of every proud pretension or conceited claim! If, my brothers, the Lord has called us to be ministers, let us always feel that we are not worthy of so great a grace. Since He has made us saints, let us confess that the very least of our brothers is more esteemed by us than we dare to esteem ourselves! And since we know that we are sinners, let us look at our sins under that aspect which most reveals their heinousness, for in some respects, and

under certain lights there are evils in our character which make us guiltier than the rest of our fellow sinners. The stool of repentance, and the foot of the cross are the favorite positions of instructed Christians. Such humility is not at all inconsistent with believing that we are saved, nor with the fullest assurance of faith, no, not at all inconsistent with the nearest familiarity with God! Listen to Abraham—"I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord; I that am but dust and ashes." He has drawn very near to the Lord, and speaks with Him as a man speaks with his friend, and yet he says, "I am but dust and ashes." His boldness did not destroy his humbleness; nor did his sense of nothingness hinder his near approach to the Lord. My dear brothers and sisters, we know that in Christ we are accepted; we know that we are dear to God, and loved with His everlasting love; we know that He hears our prayers, and answers us continually, and we know that we walk in the light of His countenance. But still our posture should always be that of deep humiliation before the Lord. In the attitude of complete submission we should sit at the Master's feet, and say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." May the Holy Spirit work this gracious submission in every regenerated soul!

Let us next observe that our text bears a second meaning, namely, that of *submission to the divine will*. That, of course, would strike you in the wording of the verse—"Submit yourselves therefore to God." Beloved Christian friends, be willing to accept whatever God appoints! Let us each pray to be—

***"Simple, teachable, and mild,  
Made into a little child;  
Pleased with all the Lord provides,  
Weaned from the entire world besides."***

Is it, indeed, so with us? Are you not, some of you, very far from it? Are you quite sure that you are submissive to the divine Will as to your rank in society? Have you accepted your position in the scale of worldly wealth? Are you satisfied to be sickly, obscure, or of little ability? Are you content with God's appointments? Too many professors are quarrelling with God that they are not other than they are. This is evil, and shows that pride is still in our hearts, for were we conscious of our own wickedness, we would know that anything short of Hell is more than we deserve! As long as we are not in the pit of torment, gratitude becomes us! It is a happy thing when the mind is brought to submit to all the chastisements of God, and to acquiesce in all the trials of His providence. Knowing, as we do, that all these things work together for our good, and that we never endure a smart more than our heavenly Father knows is necessary, we are bound to submit ourselves cheerfully to all that He appoints! Though no trial for the present is joyous, but grievous, yet ought we to resign ourselves to it because of its results. Even the beasts of the field may teach us this! I read the other day of an elephant which had lost its sight—it was brought to the surgeon, and he placed some powerful substance upon the eyes which caused it great pain, and of course

the huge creature was very restless during the operation. After a while it began to see a little, and when it was brought the next day, to the surgeon, it was as docile as a lamb, for it evidently perceived that benefit had resulted from the painful application! If such a creature has enough intelligence to perceive the benefit, and to accept the pain, how much more should we! Since we know that we owe infinite blessings to the rod of the covenant, we ought to be willing to bare our own back to the scourge, and let the Lord do as He wills with us. Yes, I go beyond this; even if we did *not* know that good would come of it, we ought to submit because it is the Lord's will, for He has a right to do whatever He wills with us! Can you agree with this? As a true child, can you make a complete surrender to your Father's good pleasure? If not, you have not fairly learned the mind of Christ.

It is a great thing to have the soul entirely submitted to God about everything so that we never wish to have anything in providence other than God would have it to be, nor desire to have anything in His Word altered. Not one ordinance of the church of God, not one doctrine of revelation, not one eternal or warning other than it is! We shall never be at rest till we come to this; it is essential to our happiness to say at all times, "Nevertheless, not as I will but as You will." Brothers and sisters, ought it not to be so? Who ought to rule in the house but the Father? Who should govern in the body but the Head? Who should lead the flock but the Shepherd? We owe so much to Jesus, and so entirely belong to Him, that even were it put to the vote, all of us would give our suffrages so that the Lord Jesus should be Head and Chief among us! Is He not the First-Born among many brethren? Submit, then, my brothers and sisters! Beseech the Holy Spirit to mold your wills to complete subjection; you will never be happy till self is dethroned! I know some of God's children who are in great trouble only because they will not yield to the divine will. I met with one, I believe a good sister, who said she could not forgive God for taking away her mother; and another friend said he could not see God to be a good God, for He had made him suffer such terrible afflictions. Their furnace was heated seven times hotter by the fuel of rebellion which they threw into it! So long as we blame the Lord, and challenge His rights, our self-tortured minds will be tossed to and fro! No father can let his boy bend his little fist in defiance, and yet treat that child with the same love and fondness as his other children who submit themselves to him! You cannot enjoy your heavenly Father's smile, my dear brother or sister, till you cease from being in opposition to Him, and yield the point in debate, for He has said that if we walk contrary to Him, He will walk contrary to us! It will be wise for you to cry, "My Father, my evil spirit has rebelled against You; my wicked heart has dared to question You; but I cease from it now! Let it be even as You will, for I know that You do right." So the text means first humility, and then submission to the Lord's will. Lord, teach us both!

It means, also, *obedience*. Do not passively lie back and yield to the necessities of the position, but gird up the loins of your mind, and manifest a voluntary and active submission to your great Lord. The position of a Christian should be that of a soldier to whom the centurion said, "Go," and he goes; and he says, "Do this," and he does it! It is not ours to question—that were to become masters. But ours it is to obey without questioning, even as soldiers do. Submission to our Lord and Savior will be manifested by ready obedience. Delays are essentially insubordinations, and neglects are a form of rebellion. I fear that there are some Christians whose disobedience to Christ is a proof of their pride. It may be said that they do not know such-and-such a duty to be incumbent upon them; yes, but there is a proud ignorance which does not *care* to know—a pride which despises the commandments of the Lord, and counts them nonessential and unimportant! Can such scorn be justifiable? Is that a right temper for the Lord's servant to indulge? Can any point in our Lord's Will be unimportant to us? Can the wish of a dear friend be trivial to those who love him? Has Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments," and shall I treat them as matters of no importance? No, my Lord, if it were the lifting of a stone from the road; if it were the moving of a dead leaf, or the brushing away of a cobweb; if You ordain it, then it becomes important straightway—important to my loving allegiance that I may, by my prompt obedience, show how fully I submit myself to You! Love is often more seen in little things than in great things. You may have in your house a servant who is indifferent, and yet she will perform all the necessary operations of the household. But the loving child attends to the little details which make up the comfort of life, and are the tests of affection. Let your love be shown by a childlike obedience which strives to do the entire Master's will in all points.

I am afraid there are some who do not obey the Master because they are proud enough to think that they know better than He does! They *judge* the Lord's will instead of *obeying* it. Are you a judge of the law, my brother? Are you to sit on the judgment seat, and say of this or that statute of the law, "This is not important," or, "That may be set aside without any loss to me"? This is not according to the mind of Christ who did His Father's will, and asked no questions! When next you pray, "Your will be done in earth, even as it is in heaven," remember how they do that will before the throne of God, without hesitation, demur, or debate—being wholly subservient to every wish of the Most High. Thus, dear brethren, "Submit yourselves to God."

The expression, however, is not well worked out unless I add another explanation, and perhaps even then I have not brought out its meaning fully: "Submit yourselves to God" by *yielding your hearts to the motions of the divine Spirit*; by being impressible, sensitive, and easily affected. The Spirit of God has hard work with many Christians to lead them in the right way. They are as the horse and the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle. There is the

stout oak in the forest, and a hurricane howls through it, and it is not moved, but the rush by the river yields to the faintest breath of the gale. Now, though in many things you should be as the oak, and not as the rush, yet in *this* thing be as the bulrush, and be moved by the slightest breathing of the Spirit of God! The photographer's plates are rendered sensitive by a peculiar process; you may take another sheet of glass, and your friend shall stand before it as long as ever he likes, and there will be no impression produced; at least none which will be visible to the eye. But the *sensitive* plate will reveal every little wrinkle of the face, and perpetuate every hair of the head! Oh, to be rendered sensitive by the Spirit of God! We can be made so by submitting ourselves entirely to His will. Is there not a promise to that effect?—"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

Sometimes the Spirit of God whispers to you, "Retire to pray." At such times enter your closet at once! Remember how David said, "When you said unto me, Seek you My face, my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek." The Spirit of God will sometimes impel you to a duty which involves self-denial, which will take up much of your leisure, and will bring you no very great honor as a reward. Be not disobedient to His call, but go about your work speedily! Say with the Psalmist, "I made haste and delayed not to keep Your commandments." The Spirit will, at times, urge us to deep repentance on account of faults in which we have been living. He will rebuke us for some ugly temper which we have indulged, or for some hard word which we have spoken against a brother, or because of the worldliness of mind into which we have fallen. Oh, brothers and sisters, bestir yourself at such times, and examine and purge your soul! Let a hint from the Holy Spirit be enough for you! As the eyes of the handmaiden are towards her mistress, so let your eyes be to your Lord; the handmaid does not require the mistress to speak; it will often happen when she is waiting at table, and there are friends; the mistress nods or puts her finger up, and that is enough. She does not call out, "Mary, do this or that," or speak to her loudly a dozen times, as the Lord has to do to us! But a wink suffices. So it ought to be with us. Half a word from the divine Spirit—the very gentlest motion from Him should be enough guidance, and straightway we should be ready to do His bidding. In this matter it is not so much your *activity* as your *submission* to the Holy Spirit which is needed; it is not so much your running as your *willing* to be drawn by Him! There is to be an *activity* in religion—we are to wrestle and to fight, but side by side with that we are to yield ourselves to the Spirit's impulse—for it is He that works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure! He strives in us mightily, and if we will but resign ourselves, and no longer be obstacles in His divine way, He will carry us to greater heights of grace, and create in us more fully the *likeness of Christ*. "Submit yourselves to God." Learn the sweetness of lying passive in His hands, knowing no will but His! Learn the blessedness of

giving yourselves up entirely to His divine sway, for in so doing you will enter into heaven below!

**II.** Now we come to that part of our discourse in which we must earnestly pray God the Holy Spirit to help us doubly. I desire now to address myself TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT SAVED, but have some desire to be so. I am thankful to God that there should be even the faintest wish of the kind; may it grow at once into an impetuous longing, yes, may that longing be fulfilled this very morning, and may you go out of this house saved! You tell me that you have been anxious about your soul for some time, but have made no headway. You have been putting forth great efforts; you have been very diligent in attending the means of grace, in searching the Scriptures, and in private prayer, but you cannot get on. It is very possible, my dear friend, that the reason is this—that you have not submitted yourself to God! You are trying to *do* when the best thing would be to cease from yourself, and drop into the hands of the Savior who is able to save you though you cannot save yourself! For a proud heart, the very hardest thing is to submit. Do you find it so? “No surrender” is the stubborn sinner’s motto! I have known men who would give their bodies to be burned sooner than yield to God; their high stomach has stood out long against the Most High, and they have been little Pharaohs till the Lord has brought them to their senses. “Must I yield; must I bow at His feet?”—they could not submit to such humiliation! If the gospel had tolerated their pride, and given them a little credit, they would have rejoiced in it, but to be tumbled in the dust, and made to confess their own nothingness, they could not bear. “Submit” is wormwood and gall to haughty sinners! Yet they must drink the cup or die. Hear, then, you stout-hearted! You can never be saved unless you submit! And when you are saved, one of the main points in your salvation will be that you have submitted! I desire to whisper one little truth of God in your ear, and I pray that it may startle you—*You are submitting even now!* You say, “Not I. I am lord of myself!” I know you *think* so, but all the while you are submitting to the *devil!* The verse before us hints at this. “Submit yourselves to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” If you do not submit to God, you will *never* resist the devil—and you will remain constantly under his tyrannical power! Which shall be your master, God or devil, for one of these must? No man is without a master; some power or other is paramount within us, either good or evil is supreme in our hearts. And if we will not be mastered by the good, the evil has already gained the sway!

“How then am I to submit?” one asks, “*To what shall I submit, and in what respects?*” Well, first submit yourself, if you would be saved, to the Word of God. Believe it to be true! Believing it to be true, yield to its force! Does it accuse you? Confess the accusation! Does it condemn you? Plead guilty! Does it hold out hope to you? Grasp it! Does it command you? Obey it! Does it guide you? Follow it! Does it cheer you? Believe it! Submit yourself to Him who in this blessed book proclaims Himself the Sav-

ior of all such as will throw down the weapons of their rebellion, and end their futile war by relying upon His power to save them!

Yield, next, to your conscience. You have quarreled with your conscience and your conscience with you. It persists in speaking and you desire it to be quiet. After dissipation, in the lull which comes after a storm of evil pleasure, a voice is heard asking, "Is this right? Is this safe? Will this last? What will the end of this be? Would it not be better to seek some better and nobler thing than this?" God speaks often to men through the still small voice of conscience. Open your ears then, and listen! Your conscience can do you no harm! It may disturb you, but it is well to be disturbed when peace leads on to death! He was a fool who killed the watch dog because it alarmed him when thieves were breaking into his house! If conscience upbraids you, feel its upbraiding and heed its rebuke; it is your best friend! Faithful are its friendly wounds, but the kisses of a flattering enemy are deceitful.

God also sends many messengers. To some of you He has sent the most tender of monitors. Listen to their admonitions, and regard their kind warnings, for they mean good to your souls. Is it hard, O child, is it difficult to submit when the message comes by a mother's loving lips? Is it difficult to submit when her tears wet each word she speaks? It must have been difficult for some of you, in your young days, to stand out against a mother's entreaties when she not only pointed you to heaven, but led the way—not only spoke of Jesus, but reflected His love in her daily walk and conversation! You have a sister, young man, whom you love and respect; you could hardly tell how much an object of admiration she is to you. Now, that letter of hers which you turned into a joke? You did feel it, after all, didn't you? Yield to its pathetic pleading! Yield to its tender entreaties! Remember, God has other messengers whom He will send if these loving ones do not suffice; He will soon send you a sterner summons; if you listen not to the gentle words of the still, small voice, He can send to you by the rougher messengers of disease and death! Be not so foolish as to provoke Him to do so!

Moreover, submit yourselves to God since He has perhaps already sent His messengers in sterner shapes to you. It was but a few days ago that you lost your old friend; many a merry day you had spent together, and many a jovial night, too. He was apparently in as good health as you, but he was struck down, and you have followed him to the tomb. Is there no voice from that new grave to you? Do you think your friend in his sudden end was a warning to you to be ready for the same departure? You have also suffered from symptoms of sickness; perhaps you have actually been sick, and been made to lie where your only prospect was eternity—a dread eternity—how surely yours! You trembled to gaze into it, but the very tones of the surgeon's voice compelled you to do so; you feared that you would have to leave this body, and you could not help saying to yourself, "To where shall I fly? Where will my naked spirit go when once it leaves the warm precincts of this house of clay?" It is not my business

one-tenth as much as it is yours—but I charge you, hear the voice of these providences! Listen to these solemn calls! The angel of death has stood at your bedside and pointed to you, and said, “Young man, it is the fever this time, and you may recover, but the next time you will never rise from the bed on which you lie.” Or, “You have now been rescued from a dreadful accident, but the next time there will be no escape for you. Because I will do this, prepare to meet your God.”

Above all, I pray you submit yourselves if you are conscious of such things as the whispers of God’s Holy Spirit. God’s Holy Spirit does not strive with every man alike; some have so grieved Him that He has ceased to strive with them, or does so very occasionally, and then they so resist His striving that they are never very long continued! The worst man that lives has his better moments; the most careless has some serious thoughts. There are lucid intervals in the madness of carnal pleasure; at such times men hear what they call, “their better selves.” It is hardly so. I prefer to call it the general reproving of God’s Spirit in their souls! He says to them, “Is this right? Is this wise, this trifling, this time-killing, this depraving of the soul by allowing the bodily appetites to rule; this lowering of the man to the level of the brute, can this be right? Is there no eternity? Is there no immortality, no God, no judgment to come?” The Holy Spirit sometimes opens the man’s eyes, as He did the eyes of Balaam, and makes him see the certainty of the judgment day, and the nearness of its approach. The man is led to anticipate the trumpet’s sound which heralds the assize, the coming of the Judge upon His great white throne, the gathering of the multitudes of the quick and the dead, the opening of the books, the dividing of the throng, the driving away of the goats to their everlasting punishment, and the reception of the righteous to their everlasting joy! Oh, when you are made to feel all this, I pray you submit yourself to it! It costs some men a great deal of trouble to be damned! And a man who blasphemes and talks infidelity merely does so to conceal his inward struggles! Like the boy who whistles as he goes through the churchyard to keep his courage up, they talk blasphemy to divert their mind from its own fears. He who is most fierce in the utterance of his disbelief is not the greatest disbeliever; when the heathen offered children to Moloch, they beat their drums to drown the cries of the victims, and even so these men make a great noise to drown the voice of conscience! The man knows better, and I charge him to let that better knowledge come to the front and lead him to his God and Father; it will be a blessed thing for him if it shall be! And so even this day, “Submit yourselves to God.”

If you ask me again, “*In what respect am I to submit myself?*” I answer as briefly as I can. First, submit yourself by confessing your sin. Do not brazen it out, and say, “I have not sinned.” You will never be pardoned while that is the case! “He that confesses his sin shall find God’s mercy.” Sinners, choose between one of two things—judge yourself or be judged of God! If you will judge yourself, and put in a plea of guilty, then will the

great Judge grant you forgiveness! Condemn yourself, and you shall not be condemned! Confess the indictment to be true, for true it is, and to deny it is to seal your doom!

Next, honor the law which condemns you; do not persevere in picking holes in it, and saying that it is too severe, and requires too much of a poor fallible creature. The law is holy, just, and good. Put your lips down and kiss it, though it condemns you, and say, "Though it charges me with guilt, and convicts me of deadly sin, yet it is a good law, and ought not to be altered, even to save me."

Next, admit the justice of the penalty. Your sins condemn you to hell! Do not say, "God is too severe; this is a punishment disproportionate to the offense." You will never be pardoned if you think so, but God will be justified in your condemnation; the pride of your heart will be a swift witness against you! Confess with your heart, "If my soul were sent to Hell it is no more than I deserve." When you have confessed the guilt, and honored the law, and acknowledged the justice of the penalty, then you are nearing the position in which God can be merciful to you!

Submit yourself, sinner—I pray you do it *now*—submit yourself to God as your king! Throw down your weapons! Lower your crest, and cast away those robes of pride! Surrender unconditionally, and say, "Lord God, I now acknowledge You to be king. No longer like stout-hearted Pharaoh will I ask, 'Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?' But like one brought to his senses, I yield as reason and grace suggest." It will go well with you when you make a full capitulation, and an unconditional surrender. Fling wide the gates of the city of Mansoul, and admit the prince Emanuel to rule as sole sovereign in every street in the city! Dispute no longer His sovereignty, but pray to be made a loyal subject, obedient in all things. You shall find grace in the sight of the Lord if you will do this.

Furthermore, submit yourself to God's way of saving you. Now God's way of saving you is by *His grace, not by your merits*. It is by the blood of Jesus, not by your tears and sufferings. He will justify you by your simply trusting Jesus. But your proud heart does not admire the Lord's way of salvation; you stand up and say, "How is this consistent with morality?" As if you were the guardian of morality; as if the King of heaven and earth could not take care of the moralities without assistance from you! Who are you to be all of a sudden the champion of morality? How dare you dream that the thrice Holy God will not take care of that? He bids you trust His Son, Jesus! Will you do so or not? If you will not, there is no hope for you; if you will, you are saved the moment that you believe—saved from the guilt of sin by trusting Jesus!

You must also surrender yourself at discretion to His method of operating upon you. One says, "I would believe in Jesus, sir, if I felt the horror and terror which some have experienced on account of sin." What? Do you demand of God that He should drag you through horrors and terrors before you will believe? Submit yourself to be saved in a gentler way!

“But I read of one,” says another, “who had a dream! I would believe if I, too, saw a vision.” Must God give you dreams? Must He play lackey to you and save you in *your way*? He tells you plainly, “If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved.” Will you believe or not? For if you do not, neither dreams, nor visions, nor terrors, nor can anything else save you! There is God’s way, sinner! I ask you—and perhaps your answer will settle your fate forever—will you follow that way or not? If you will not, you have chosen your own destruction! But if you will have it, and will submit yourself to be saved by believing in Jesus Christ, it is well with you! I know there are some in this place who feel ready to burst, for their broken hearts are saying, “I yield at once; oh, if He would but save me.” How glad I am to hear you say so, for, “He gives grace to the humble.” I remember the time when I stood and cried to God, “O God, if I must lie on a sick bed till I die, I care not if You will but have mercy on me! If You will but conquer my proud will, and make a new man of me, You may do whatever You please with me! Only save me from the guilt, the power of sin!” It was when the Lord brought me down *there* that He enabled me to see life and salvation in Jesus Christ! And if He has brought you down to that point, sinner, then you have nothing to do but simply trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are assuredly saved! When He brings you to submit, He has given you His grace; submission to His divine will is the essence of salvation. Now, who will yield? Who will yield at once? The Master has come among us! The King Himself is here; your Maker, your Redeemer! See the marks of His wounds! See the scars on His hands, and feet, and side! He asks of you, “Will you yield to Me? Will you throw down your weapons? Will you end the war? Will you surrender at discretion?” If so, He gives you His hand, and says, “Go in peace. There is peace between Me and you.” Kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish from the way, while His wrath is kindled but a little. I prayed the Lord to give me many souls, and I believe I shall have them this morning! I feel sure of it! Grant me this favor—if you submit yourselves to Christ, let me hear of it, and do not delay to unite yourselves with those who rejoice to be led in triumph as the captives of His grace!

#### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JAMES 4.**

#### **HYMNS FROM—“OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—181, 578, 654.**

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# TRIAL BY THE WORD

## NO. 1277

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
FEBRUARY 6, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Until the time that His word came: the word of the Lord tried him.”  
Psalm 105:19.***

JOSEPH was altogether an extraordinary person; he was a young man of great personal beauty, and he exhibited also a lovely character, full of gentleness, kindness, and truth. The grace of God had made him as beautiful in mind as nature had made him handsome in person; he was also exceedingly thoughtful; perhaps at first rather more thoughtful than active, so that his brothers, not only because he had seen two remarkable visions, but probably because of his contemplative habits, said of him, “Behold, this dreamer comes.” He was the swan in the duck’s nest; his superior genius and character separated him from the rest of the family, and none of them could understand him; he was, therefore, the object of their envy and hatred so that they even proposed to murder him, and ultimately sold him for a slave. He was destined, however, for a nobler lot than theirs; they were to feed their flocks, but he was ordained to feed the world! They were to rule their own families, but he to govern the most ancient of empires! From the very beginning his supremacy in Israel had been foretold by a double dream. Their sheaves were seen to pay homage to his sheaf, while the sun and moon and 11 stars also made obeisance to him. This was the light which shone upon Joseph’s early days, the star of prophecy which afterwards gilded his darkest moments, and cheered him on while he endured affliction. You may rest assured, brothers and sisters, that wherever God gives extraordinary gifts or graces, and appoints an extraordinary career, He also appoints unusual trials. There is a verse—I think it is Cowper’s—which says that—

***“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”***

To eminence of any desirable kind there is no royal road, but we must wade through tribulation to it. For Joseph to become Prime Minister of Egypt the path lay through the prison house—to all true honors the road is difficult. Expect, then, dear friend, if God gifts you, or if He graces you, that He intends to *try* you! Such a reflection will tone down your exultation, and prevent its degenerating into pride, and it will aid you to gird up the loins of your mind, and stand in all sobrieties, prepared for that which awaits you. Look upon talents, graces, and high hopes of eminent usefulness as signs of inevitable tribulation; do not congratulate yourself and sing, “Soul, take your ease! You are happy in possessing such special gifts,” but prepare to do the lifework to which you are called. You are favored of the Lord, but do not look for the happiness of ease, carnal enjoyment, and human approval, for “Blessed is the man that endures

temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him.”

Joseph’s worst trial happened to him when he was accused of attempting a foul assault upon his mistress; who would not writhe under so horrible a charge? When he was put in prison, and his feet were made fast with fetters, he became exceedingly troubled, so that the iron surrounded his *soul*. How long he was in “durance vile” as a chained prisoner, we do not know, but it must have been a considerable period. And during those dreary months, thoughts of his father and his fond love, memories of his cruel brothers and reflections upon his sad lot must have keenly wounded him. He was pained to remember how much his character had suffered from a woman’s malicious lies, and most of all, how much blasphemy the heathen had poured upon the name of God, whom he had represented in the house of Potiphar. Do you wonder that the iron entered into his soul?

The word of the Lord tried him very severely. Alone in darkness in an uncomfortable cell, his limbs fretted with chains, no one to speak to him, everyone condemning him as guilty of the basest treachery towards the man who had made him his confidential and favored servant, he found himself regarded as the offscouring of all things, and the object of ridicule to all who were about him. “The archers sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him.” But, blessed be God, his bow abode in strength, and he overcame at the last!

This morning we will commune together upon the trials of Joseph, and our own afflictions. Our first reflections shall be spent upon *the importance of trial*; secondly, we will consider *the peculiarity of the believer’s trial*, for “the word of the Lord tried him”; and thirdly, we will observe *the continuance and the conclusion of the trial*—“until the time that His word came.” May the ever blessed Spirit direct our meditations!

I. First, let us dwell upon THE IMPORTANCE OF TRIAL. The Lord might easily have taken every one of us home to heaven the moment we were converted. Certainly His omnipotence was equal to the task of our immediate perfect sanctification; if the dying thief was rendered fit to be in paradise the same day on which he believed, so might each one of us have been made ready to enter heaven. But it has not so pleased God; we doubt not that there are myriads before the eternal throne who have reached the abode of bliss without treading the winepress of affliction—

**“Babes there caught from womb and breast,  
Claim right to sing above the rest;  
Because they found the happy shore,  
They never saw nor sought before.”**

Theirs is a victory for which they never fought; they wear a crown though they never bore a cross; to sovereign grace these blessed ones will never cease to ascribe their bliss, but as for those of us who live to riper years, it will be written concerning all of us as of others who have gone before, “These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” But why is it so appointed? Is this discipline of any use to us? The word here used is in itself a light upon the question, “The word of the Lord *assayed* him”—that would be the correct translation. The word of the Lord *assayed* Jo-

seph as gold is assayed—it is a term best understood at the mint, and among refiners. Trial in the Christian church is the Lord's refining pot which is never off the fire; it has this excellent effect that it separates the precious from the vile; as long as the church exists I suppose she will have traitors among her number, for if Judas intruded under the watchful eye of the Chief Shepherd, we may be pretty sure that many a Judas will elude the far less watchful eyes of the minor shepherds. Because trial and persecution test men's professions, they are used as the winnowing fan in the Lord's hand, as it is written, "He will thoroughly purge His floor." In persecution, the mere professors, the camp-followers and hangers-on, soon flee away, for they have no heart for true religion when the profession of it involves a cross! They could walk with Jesus in silver slippers, but they cannot travel with Him when His bleeding feet go bare-foot over the world's rough ways! So they depart, every man to his own, and we may say of them, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." So that trial as a permanent institution is of much service to the church in promoting her purity, and we are bound to praise the Lord whose fire is in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem.

A similar process goes on in the individual soul. No Christian is all that he thinks he is—our purest gold is alloyed; we have none of us as much faith as we impute to ourselves, nor as much patience, or humility, or meekness, or love to God, or love to men! Spurious coin swells our apparent wealth; it is amazing how rich and increased in goods we are till the Lord deals with us by a trial—and then full often we discover that we are naked, poor and miserable in the very respects in which we boasted ourselves! Oh, man, if you are a child of God, you are like a house which He is building with gold, silver, and precious stones; but by reason of your old nature you are mixing up with the divine material much of your own wood, hay, and stubble, and therefore the fire is made to rage around you to burn out this injurious stuff which mars the whole fabric! If the Holy Spirit is pleased to bless your afflictions to you, then will you be daily led to put away the materials of the old nature with deep abhorrence and repentance, and thus shall the true world which He has built upon the sure foundation stand in its true beauty, and you shall be built for eternity!

Every good man is not only tested by trial, but is the better for it. To the evil man, affliction brings evil; he rebels against the Lord, and like Pharaoh his heart is hardened. But to the Christian it is good to be afflicted, for when sanctified by the Spirit, trial is a means of instruction to him second to none in value. The rod of God teaches us more than all the voices of His ministers; when the Christian has been passed through the fire, the assaying, by removing the dross, adds a new luster to the gold. Brothers and sisters, you are not what you shall be, nor can you be what you shall be except through a measure of trial. Child, it is necessary for you to feel the weight of your Father's hand, or you will never behave yourself as a man; you must see His face veiled with frowns, and hear His voice in harshness chiding you for your transgressions, otherwise

you will always retain the follies of childhood. Our chastisements are our promotions; they are privileges more precious than the rights of princes! "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Joseph could say this, and all the Lord's Josephs either acknowledge it now, or will have to admit it hereafter.

Let us look a little more closely and we shall see that trial did much for Joseph. First, *it corrected the juvenile errors of the past*. Far be it from me to find any fault with so admirable a youthful character, but it was youthful and needed maturing. As a simple-hearted, trustful child, he certainly told his dreams quite as freely as it was not wise to have done. Perhaps he thought that his brothers and his father would have been as gratified as he was, but even his father rebuked him, and his brothers were indignant to the last degree! It was natural that a boy of 17 should be pleased with the thought of power and eminence, but such a feeling might have gendered evil, and therefore it needed to be toned down, and its eager expression kept within bounds. We find Joseph more self-possessed and more reticent, by-and-by, and we read in later life that he restrained himself—yes, when the strongest passions were at work within him, and his own brother, Benjamin, was before him, he sacrificed his feelings to the dictates of prudence. We see no more boyish exultation, no more telling of his dreams; in quietness and confidence he found his strength. This he no doubt learned amid the sorrows of his prison house.

He was perhaps in his early days, too much in a hurry to realize the promised blessing; he would see the sheaves do obeisance to his sheaf at once, while he and his brothers were as yet but green corn and the harvest had not come. He thought the dream was being realized, no doubt, when that princely garment his father gave him, was put upon him, and he began in some measure to exercise the dignity which the Lord had promised him by reporting his brothers to his father. I do not condemn this action, but it no doubt made his brothers feel that he took too much upon himself since they were, many of them, old enough to have been his father, and they had families of their own! At any rate, he had not then learned as he had to learn afterwards, during 13 weary years, that visions tarry, and that we must wait for them, since the promise is neither for today nor for tomorrow, but abides until it reaches ripeness. God promises us great things which we see not as yet, and therefore we must with patience, wait for them; we must not put on the coat of many colors yet, nor be hasty to rebuke our elder brothers, for we are not yet set on high by the hand of the Lord. Joseph had his royal coat in due time, and he had the fullest conceivable opportunity for reproving his brothers when in later days they went down into Egypt to buy corn, and their hearts smote them for all the wrong that they had done to him. In prison Joseph learned to wait. I do not know a harder or more valuable lesson. It is worthwhile to suffer slander, and to feel the fret of fetters to acquire the patience which sits still, and knows that Jehovah is God! To tarry a while, and not to pluck our fruit while it is yet green and sour—this is rare wisdom! To be instructed to leave the time as well as the form of the blessing in the hands of God is to have been to school with the best result!

Joseph also learned in his trial much that was good for *present* use. For instance he found by sweet experience that the divine presence can cheer us anywhere. If he had always been at home with his father, always his father's darling, he would have known that the love of God is sweet to a favored youth, but no one would have been astonished at that! Even Satan would have said, "Well may he rejoice in You, O Lord. Have You not set a hedge about him and all that he has?" But he learned that God could be with him when he was sold for the price of a slave; that He could be with him when led as a captive across the desert when he walked wearily by the camel's side with the Ishmaelites; he was blessed with His presence as He was with him in the slave mart, to find him a master who might appreciate him; He was with him when he became a servant in the house, by blessing him, prospering him, and causing him to find favor in the eyes of his master till he became overseer of all that Potiphar had! And then, best of all, though some would say worst of all, he learned that God could be with him in a dungeon! He could not have known that if he had stayed at home; he must be brought into the thick darkness, that the brightness of the divine presence might be the more fully seen! There is nothing in this world as delightful as the light of God's countenance when all around is dark. You may tell me that the presence of Jesus is glorious upon Tabor's glorious mount, and I will not contradict you, though I have realized the poet's words—

***"At the too transporting light  
Darkness rushes over my sight."***

But give me the soft subdued light of God's love in adversity; Christ on the stormy waters for me; Christ in the midst of the furnace with His persecuted ones; never does the Lord's love taste as sweet as when the entire world is wormwood and gall! See how the mother presses her dear babe to her bosom when it is sick, or has had a bone broken; the little one may run about the house at other times, and the mother is pleased with it and loves it, but if you want to see *all* her tenderness; if you would read all her heart, you should see her when it scarcely breathes, when she fears that every moment will be its last. Then *the entire* mother is revealed! How she fondles it, and what a store of sweet words she brings forth! So if you would see all of God, you must know what deeps of trouble mean, for then the great heart, the glorious, infinite love comes welling over, and the soul is filled with all the fullness of God! It was worthwhile, I say, for Joseph to be falsely accused, and to be laid in irons to learn *experimentally* the supporting Power of the heavenly Father's smile.

There, too, Joseph learned that temporal things are not to be depended upon; the indulgences of his father's house ended in his being sold as a slave, and the coat of many colors dipped in blood. His prosperity in the house of Potiphar also came to a sudden end, and from being an overseer he became a prisoner in irons! Now he knew that earthly good is not to be depended on, and therefore not worthy to be the object of pursuit to an immortal soul; he sees that all things beneath the moon change, waxing and waning as does the moon herself, and he learns to look to something higher and more stable than circumstances and surroundings.

Here, too, he was instructed in one sad truth of God which we are all so slow to learn, namely, to “cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?” I do not think Joseph had learned that fully when he interpreted the dream of the butler. It was very natural, and therefore not to be censured that he should say, “Think of me when it shall be well with you.” But when two whole years had passed, and all the while he was forgotten, Joseph must have felt that, “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” He ceased from man, and no longer looked for enlargement from that quarter! Cost us what it may, we are great gainers by any process which enables us to say, “My Soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” It is a blessed thing when providence knocks away all the blocks, and lets the vessel launch into her true element. See how freely she floats upon the deep sea of God’s everlasting love and immutable faithfulness! She is no more liable to decay from the dry rot of carnal confidence, but on the broad sea of divine power “she walks the waters as a thing of life” in joyful reliance upon the ever blessed God! Confidence in man seems bred in our bones, but it must be taken out of us, and happy shall the day be which sees us rid of all hope but that which stays itself upon the Lord alone!

But, dear brothers and sisters, the chief use of trial to Joseph and to us is very often *seen in our future lives*. While Joseph was tried in prison, God’s great objective was to prepare him for the government which awaited him. It was designed first to give him power to bear power—a rare acquirement. Solomon says, “As the fining pot is to silver, and the furnace is to gold, so is a man to his praise.” Many a man can bear affliction, but few men can endure prosperity! And I have marked it and you must have marked it too, that the most perilous thing in the world is to step suddenly from obscurity into power. Have we not seen men, illiterate and unknown, suddenly introduced to the Christian pulpit and made much of? And has it not frequently turned out that their names have been, by-and-by, prudently forgotten, for they were overthrown by the dizzy heights to which they were lifted? It is far better that a man should fight his way up to his position, that he should be assailed by enemies, and distrusted by friends, and should pass through a probationary career; even then he can only stand as the Lord holds him, but without it, he is in terrible peril! Therefore the Apostle says, “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.” If I knew that some young man here present would be greatly acknowledged of God in the future, and become a prince in our Israel, and if by lifting up this finger I could screen him from fierce criticism, misrepresentation, and abuse, I would not do it because severe as the ordeal might be to him, I am persuaded it is necessary that he should pass through it in order to make him able to bear the giddy heights of the position for which God intends him! Is Joseph to be on the throne of Egypt? I know not what he might have been if first of all he had not been laid in the stocks; his feet learned to stand fast on a throne through having been set fast in a dungeon! His gold chain was worn without pride because he had worn a chain of iron! And he was fit to be the ruler of princes because he had

been a servant among prisoners! Through his trials God gave him power to bear power—and this is a far rarer gift than the power to endure oppression and contempt!

Joseph was also trained to bear the other dangers of prosperity, and these are neither few nor small. Great riches and high positions are not to be desired; Agur's prayer is a wise one—"Give me neither poverty nor riches." Joseph was in great peril when he came to be lord over the land of Egypt, but during his time in prison he had been learning to spell out a mystery, and answer a riddle. Practically, his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream was what he had been learning in prison, namely that it is idle to boast of the fat cattle since the lean cattle can soon eat them up; and it is unwise to be proud of the full ears, because the withered ears can soon devour them! Pharaoh saw in the dream the lean devouring the full-fleshed, but Joseph alone, understood it. He saw his fat cattle, when he was in his father's house, eaten up when he was sold as a slave; he saw his full ears, when he was in Potiphar's house, devoured by the withered ears when he was thrown into prison, and he now knew that there was nothing here below worth our relying upon, since on the chariot of all earthly good there rides a Nemesis, and every day is followed by a night. He was tutored to be a ruler, for he had learned the prisoner's side of politics, and felt how hard it was for men to be unjustly condemned without trial. He foresaw that this could not be forever endured, and that one day the long-suffering lean cattle would be goaded to fury, and would eat up the fat ones that oppressed them! Hence Joseph's rule would be just and generous, for in this he would see the elements which would preserve law and order, and prevent the poorer sort from overturning everything.

In the prison he had also learned to speak out; his whole course had been a rehearsal fitting him to be bravely truthful before the king! What temptation was there to him when he stood before Pharaoh, to *conceal his faith in God*? To him, I say, who had risked life, and lost liberty for God's sake. It would have been a very great temptation to an ordinary young man not to say anything about the one God in the presence of the head of the Egyptian superstitions—but this did not suggest itself to Joseph! Had he confessed his God in Potiphar's house? Did he not say to Potiphar's wicked wife, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God"? He had stood to his God in prison, and told the butler and baker that "interpretations belong to God." And now he stands before Pharaoh! He does not flinch for a moment, but he says, "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Why, brothers and sisters, have you ever thought of the moral courage of Joseph in interpreting that dream? All the soothsayers there had tried to interpret it, and could not—were it likely the heathen king would believe a youth who had been a slave, and was just brought from a dungeon? When he foretold seven years of plenty and seven years of famine, it was a marvel that Pharaoh believed him! If the narrative had gone on to say, "Then the king said unto his servants, cast this man into prison, and feed him with the bread of affliction, and the water of affliction until we see whether His word shall come to pass," we should not have been at all surprised! The magicians naturally

enough would be ready to say that Joseph was set up to give this preposterous interpretation by persons interested in selling corn, or else they would urge that a man who dared to foretell events so utterly improbable had better be sent back to his prison house! But Joseph believed the word of the Lord, and he spoke with conviction, and Pharaoh believed him. Where did this simple-minded courage come from? Where did this boldness come from? It was the right royal valor which surrounds a virtuous soul—or rather the fearlessness which follows from the fear of God! He stood forth and delivered his message, and the Lord established his word! He had been preparing for this in the day of his sorrow; like a good sword blade, he had been passed through the fire and through the fire again, that now he might not fail in the day of battle! Oh, dear brothers and sisters, may you gain as much from tribulations as Joseph did, and you will if the Holy Spirit sanctifies them to you!

**II.** We must pass on, secondly, to notice THE PECULIARITY OF THE TRIAL. According to the text, “the word of the Lord tried him.” This might have escaped our observation if the Spirit of God had not placed it upon record. “The word of the Lord tried him.” How was that? Potiphar tried him, and the chains tried him, but did the word of the Lord try him? Yes! But there is a previous question—how did he receive *any* word of the Lord? There was no Bible then! Moses had not lived, there was not even the Book of Genesis—what word of God had he? The answer is his dreams were to him the word of God, for they were communications from heaven. The instruction he received from his father was also the word of God to him. His knowledge of the covenant which God had made with Abraham and Isaac, and his father, Jacob, was God’s word to him. Moreover, the secret teachings of the Holy Spirit quickened his conscience and afforded him light on the way. When there was no written word, the divine Spirit spoke without words, impressing truths of God upon the heart itself! All these were to Joseph the word of God! How did it try him? It tried him thus—the word said to him in his conscience, “You shall not commit adultery.” Without that word he would not have been tried, for nature suggested compliance with his mistress’s desires; the pleasure of ease, of wealth, of favor were to be had through that woman’s smile, but the word of God came in and said, “You shall not,” and Joseph was tried. The test however, he could bear—divine grace enabled him to flee youthful lusts and to cry, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

The trial which arose out of his innocence must have again tested him by the word of God. There he is in prison—for what? Why, for an action so pure that had he been set on a throne for it, he would have well deserved it! Do you not think that many questions perplexed him while he lay in prison? Would not the evil spirit say, “Were you not a fool, after all? Do you not think that your chastity was mere superstition?” Thus would the purity of his heart be tried, and the word of God would search him and test his hatred of sin. Would not the word of God try his constancy as it asked, “Do you now believe?” What problems were put before him—is there a moral governor of the universe? If so, why does He allow the innocent to suffer? Why am I in fetters, and the lewd woman in fa-

vor? Could not an Omnipotent God deliver me? Why then does He leave me here? Could Joseph, in the face of such questions, still cling to the faithful word? He could, and he did! But the word tried him and proved his constancy, his faith, and his integrity!

Then, too, the word of the Lord which he had heard many years before would come to him and try him. His trembling heart would ask, "Has God ever spoken to you at all? Those dreams, were they not childish? That voice which you thought you heard in your heart, was it not imagination? This providence of God which has prospered you wherever you have gone, was it not after all only good luck? Has the living God ever revealed Himself to one who at length became a slave? Look at your fetters, and ask if you can be His child?" And then I suspect that during the time in which Joseph was fettered, the word of God had ceased to speak to him as of old. He did not dream nor interpret dreams, and that seems to have been the special way in which the Lord revealed Himself to him. Brother, do you know what it is to be tried by the cessation of comfortable communications? Did you ever live for a time without feeling any text of Scripture applied to your soul, without beholding any vivid flashes of the divine light, or any streaming in of the Spirit's power through the word of God? If you have been so afflicted, you have been tempted to inquire, "Did the Lord ever speak to me at all? Have I been truly converted, or is it after all a myth? And these things which I have looked upon as communications from heaven, have they been after all nothing but the vapors of a heated brain?" The word of God tried him, and he had to weigh himself in the balances of the sanctuary.

The bright promise of future good would also try him. His fears would say, "How is it possible that your brothers should pay homage to you? You are far away from your family, and cannot hope to see them again—as for the sheaves that did obeisance to your sheaf, where are they? You are shut up and cannot go forth! Within these walls the jealous Potiphar has doomed you to die." The word of God would say to him, then, "Can you believe Me? Can you trust the Lord to fulfill His promises?" Oh, my brothers and sisters, it is easy for us to talk about this, but if we had to pass through the same ordeal, lying in a dungeon under an accusation of guilt which we abhorred, far away from all we loved, we might feel the word of God to be a very trying thing! And perhaps the dark thought might even flit across our spirit, "Would God I had never heard that word, but could have lived as the Egyptians do, for then I might have been dwelling in pleasure in Potiphar's house. But this word of God—into what a trial has it dragged me; into what difficulties has it thrown me! Is it after all worthwhile to know it?" I remember once being very, very ill, and a man who had no godliness, but who was full of wicked wit, accosted me thus. "Ah, you see, whom the Lord loves, He chastens." "Yes," I said, "I am suffering greatly." "Well," he said with a sneer, "I can do very well without such love, as long as I get off such chastening." I burst into tears, and my very soul boiled over as I cried, "If the Lord were to grind me to powder, I would accept it at His hands so that I might but have His love. It is *you* who need to be pitied, for sound as your health may be, and merry as you look, you are a poor creature since you have missed

the only thing worth living for.” I let fly a volley at him; I could not help it. I felt forced to stand up for my Master! Joseph took the Lord’s yoke upon him gladly, and found rest unto his soul; he counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the luxuries of Potiphar’s house, and thus the word tried him, and he was found upright!

I have no doubt the word of the Lord tried Joseph in this way. That word seemed to say, “You thought you loved your father’s God, Joseph; do you love Him now? You have lost your father’s house; you have forfeited the ease of Potiphar’s household; you have sacrificed your liberty, and perhaps the next thing will be that you will be taken out to die! Can you still hold fast to the Lord?” Joseph was firm in his allegiance, and prepared to follow the Lord at all hazards to the death; the word had come to him, and it tried his steadfastness! I may be addressing some young men who are getting into all sorts of trouble through being Christians. I congratulate you! Thus does the Lord train His bravest soldiers! I may be addressing some of you older men who are passing through storms of trial mainly because you hold fast your integrity. I congratulate you! Rejoice in this day, and leap for joy, for you are only enduring trials which have fallen to the lot of better men than yourselves! Men do not put base metal into the furnace; they spend their assaying upon precious gold. I see in the fact of your trial some evidence of your value, and I congratulate you, my brothers and sisters, and pray the Lord to bear you up, and bear you through, that like Joseph you may be of great service to Israel, and bring Glory to God!

**III.** The last thought is THE CONTINUANCE AND THE CONCLUSION OF THE TRIAL. Trial does not last forever. Cheer up; the tide ebbs out, but the flood will return again! Note the word “until.” He who counts the stars also numbers your sorrows, and if He ordains the number 10 your trials will never be eleven. The text says “until,” for the Lord appoints the bounds of the proud waters, and they shall no more go over your soul when they reach the boundary of the divine “until.” “Until the time that His word came”—the same word which tried Joseph in due time set him free! If the Lord gives the turnkey permission to keep us in prison, there we must remain until He sends a guarantee for our liberation, and then all the devils in Hell cannot hold us in bondage for an instant longer! My dear brothers and sisters, I want you in your troubles to look entirely to God whose word is a word of Power. He speaks and it is done! He has spoken trouble to you, but He can just as readily speak comfort to you. Never mind what the butler’s word is; do not entreat him saying, “When it is well with you, speak a word for me.” The butler’s word will not be useful, it is Jehovah’s word you need, for “where the word of a king is, there is power.” It is a blessed thing to know that trouble comes directly from God, whatever the secondary agent may be. You must not say, “I could have borne it if it had not been for that wicked woman.” Never mind the wicked woman, look to God as overruling her malice, and everything else! *He* sends the trial, and therefore look to *Him* to deliver you from it—

***“Tis He that lifts our comforts high,  
Or sinks them in the grave.”***

He shuts us up in prison, and He brings us out again.

The time was in God's hands, and it was very wisely ordered. Suppose that the butler had thought of Joseph, and had spoken to Pharaoh about the interpretation of his dream? The probabilities are that when the courtiers of Pharaoh's court heard it, they would have made the halls of the palace ring with laughter! And the magicians would have poured scorn on the idea that a slave boy who had been imprisoned for scandalous behavior knew more about interpreting dreams than the wise men of Egypt who had been brought up to the art, and had gained high degrees in the profession! It would have been a theme of ridicule all over the land! It was the wrong time, and God would not let the butler remember because that recollection would have marred the plot and spoiled the whole business! But God's, "until," came at the nick of time when Joseph was ready for court, and when Pharaoh was ready to appreciate Joseph. The hour needed its man, and here was the hour for the man! The straight way from the dungeon to the throne was not open until Pharaoh dreamed his dream—*then* must Joseph come forth, and not before! Oh, brothers and sisters sit still and wait! The deliverance you are craving for is not yet ripe—wait while the word tries you, for that same word will in due time set you free!

The word set Joseph free in a way which cleared his character, for never a whisper would be raised against him, and Potiphar would know the truth, even if he had not already guessed it! It set Joseph free in a way which secured his eminence, and gave him the means of providing for his father and his household. He might have been liberated from prison earlier, and have remained only a common person, or gone back to be a slave to some new master, but now his liberation secured his emancipation from slavery, and set him in the position which enabled him to provide for his father and his family in the land of Goshen, and so the sheaves did homage to his sheaf, and the sun and moon and 11 stars fulfilled the vision which he had seen so many years before!

You see, brethren, there is a time of deliverance, and the time is fixed by God—and it is a right time! Therefore we have quietly to wait for it. Does not the farmer wait for the precious fruits of the earth? And will you not tarry for the fruits of the promise? Be not impetuous! Hush those murmuring thoughts! Never allow rash expressions to escape your lips! Bear on, young man, bear on; yes, and you gray-headed man, bear on, bear on! The anvil breaks the hammers in the long run; bear on, bear on! The rock breaks the billows, and is not itself, broken; bear the trials which come to you from God and from His word with joy and patience, for the end is not yet—but when it comes, it shall be everlasting joy!

I think I hear some saying all round the place, "Ah, I see these believers are a much tried people! Who would wish to be one of *them*?" Listen, friend, and I will tell you something! Joseph was not the only person in prison, and the righteous are not the only people who are afflicted! The chief butler was in prison, and the chief baker, too. I wonder whether the butler and baker are here, looking sad today; if so, there is this difference between them and Joseph—that the Lord is not with them, but He is with Joseph, and that makes a vast difference, for—

**“Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage.”**

If God is in the prison with Joseph, Joseph is happy, but it is not so with you tried worldlings! I wonder, O butler and baker, whether you have had any dreams? I wonder what has passed through your minds this morning. Why do you look so sad today? I am no interpreter of dreams, but perhaps I can unriddle yours. Was a vine before you in your dream? That true and living vine; did it bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit before your eyes? And did you take of its clusters, and present its pure blood to the King? If so, you will be set free—your dream means salvation—for there is a vine of the Lord’s own planting whose wine makes glad the heart of man! And he who takes of its living fruit is accepted! Do you know how to take those clusters and to squeeze them out? If so, the King will rejoice in you, for nothing is as dear to Him as the fruit of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ! But have you dreamed of cakes which you have made by your own skill? Not fruits from a vine, living and full, but mere cakes, sweetened with your own self-righteousness, baked in the oven of your own zeal and industry? And do you hope to set these before the King? The birds of the air already peck at them! You are now beginning to feel that your works are not altogether what you thought them to be! Oh, if this is your dream, I tremble for you, for you will come to an ill end! I pray the Lord put that dream from you, and teach you something better. Salvation is of the Lord! Whether for butler, or baker, or Joseph—redemption is by Jesus only! Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength, and they that trust in Him will never be ashamed or confounded, world without end. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
GENESIS 39:1-7, 21-23; 40:1-8, 23; 12:1-9.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—214, 750, 764.**

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# REASONS FOR PARTING WITH SIN NO. 1278

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
FEBRUARY 13, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though  
your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;  
though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”  
Isaiah 1:18.***

IT is the great joy of our heart that we do not labor in vain nor spend our strength for nothing; God is calling out from the congregations which gather here a people unto Himself who shall show forth His praise; our heart is filled with adoring joy while we find company after company coming forward and saying, “We have found the Lord, because the Lord, in His mercy, has found us.” Unto the name of the Ever Merciful be praise forever and ever because His hand is still stretched out, and the Spirit of the living God is not restrained among us! Still there is a bass to this music; there are some, and these not a few, who remain unblest where others are saved; this plot of ground is rained upon, and another is not rained upon; the sun shines, and hearts like wax are melted, but other hearts like clay are hardened. This last and saddest of results has happened to some for whom we hoped better things! The almost persuaded have in fact been our peculiar trial. Some of you, my hearers, have remained under the sound of the gospel now for years, not without *impression*, but without *conversion*! The arrows of conviction have wounded your feelings, but they have not slain your sins; ah, how many have disappointed their best friends in this respect; they have manifested the most hopeful appearance at times; their tears have glittered like the dewdrops of the summer’s morning, but alas their goodness has been like the morning cloud, and the early dew in another respect, for they have vanished away, and they are as dry and graceless as ever they were! But they are even worse than they were before, for they have added to their sin—they have increased their responsibility, they have diminished the sensitiveness of their conscience, and the probabilities are daily increasing that they will perish in their sin! How terrible that they should go from the invitation of the gospel to the condemnation of the judgment seat, and that after having looked God’s minister of His mercy in the face! They will soon have to confront the Greater Minister of justice, from whose face they will entreat the rocks and hills to hide them! Oh that these would come to their senses, and reason with themselves; then would they listen to the call of the text which invites them to talk with their Lord, and receive His grace.

Among these persons there are some who in their hearts venture to lay the blame of their present condition upon God. They do not exactly say so, but they mean it; they would tremble to make the accusation in set terms; they would even think it blasphemy to do so! But this is the real intent of their thoughts; they complain that they cannot find peace with God, though they claim that they have used all means within their power, and have been really earnest and prayerful. They say they go to hear the gospel, and *love* to hear it; they say they would be very sorry if they were not able to enter the place where their favorite minister preaches, for he affords them much delight, and even when he rebukes them, they admire his boldness! Though they have heard the gospel, and have heard it continuously and claim to have heard it with good intent, yet no happy result has come to them; they have heard, and their souls do not live! They remain as they were, dead in trespasses and sin. It is not *their* fault, so they say, and we therefore know whose fault it must be! They have even prayed for *salvation* and have not found it; their chambers can bear witness that sometimes they have bowed the knee in earnest supplication, and have cried to God—and this not once or twice, but many times—and yet they still remain in their sins as undecided, unregenerate, and unforgiven as ever! “Surely,” they say, “this is a strange thing, that hearing the gospel has not blessed us, and that crying unto God has not brought us an answer of peace! What can be the cause?”

It is obvious that something hinders; what can it be? The promises of God cannot fail! Why, then, are these seekers left in the dark? Some of these people are not anxious to know too much, and they will not be pleased when I state the true reason for their continuing without hope! They impute it to the Sovereignty of God, or to some withholding of infinite love; they put the reason into some doctrinal shape or other, and quote a text or two so as to look orthodox, but their meaning comes to this—it is *God's* fault that they are unsaved; it is certainly none of *theirs!* I wish that this bold way of stating their secret thought may convince them of the falsehood of it. At any rate, to such I speak! Listen to me, O you who declare that you would gladly be saved but cannot be! O you who say that you have been in earnest about salvation, but God has not been moved by your entreaties; He bids you come near and reason with Him, and end this quibbling! Come now, and settle this matter, and end the dispute! It is not *God* who shuts you out of His mercy! He declares, on the contrary, that as far as He is concerned, He is a God ready to be gracious, and though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool! He will not admit your insinuations against His grace; in the plainest possible terms He denies your imputations; He declares that the hindrance lies on *your* side, and not on His, and He invites you to reason with Him about it, that the truth may be clear to you! Come now, and argue with Him, for I would speak on God's behalf, and press His word upon you. Oh, that this morning, while the argument goes on, your reason might be taught right reason, and your conscience might be quickened to give assent to the

truth of God which, in God's name, I will declare to you! Oh that so by the Spirit's power, being subdued by the persuasion and reasoning which we would gladly use this morning, you may yield yourselves unto God, for thus He says to you, "If you are willing and obedient you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel you shall be devoured by the sword, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

It is most certain that the real reason why men who have an earnest desire to be saved, and have sincere religiousness of a certain sort do not find peace is this—they are in love with sin! Whether some *one* sin is secretly indulged, or many sins are unrepented of and unforsaken, they provoke the Lord with their trespasses, and then hope to pacify Him with their prayers. Therefore it is altogether vain for them to tread God's courts! In vain they pray, and in vain they attend religious ceremonies with the view of finding peace, for they have hidden the accursed thing in the midst of the camp; they are harboring a traitor, and until this accursed thing is destroyed, and this traitor is driven out they cannot be acceptable to God! To all such, the word of God says, "What have you to do with peace while your offenses are so many?" O, ungodly man, woman, your heart can never rest in God while it goes forth after its idols! As long as you and your sins are at peace, God and your soul must be at war! Until you are ready to be divorced from sin you can never be married to Christ! God will give salvation and the pardon of sin, and give them freely to the very chief of sinners, but the sinner must confess and forsake his sin! The Lord graciously says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"; but "There is no peace, says my God, unto the wicked," and His word solemnly declares that "God shall wound the head of His enemies and the hairy scalp of such a one as goes on in his trespasses." About this matter we will talk this morning as the Lord shall help us, and may His Holy Spirit bless us.

**I.** "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord." Let us have this matter out, and hear what is to be urged in favor of God's demands. **IT IS A REASONABLE THING THAT SIN SHOULD BE RENOUNCED.** As soon as I make that statement, every conscience here agrees with it; it is most reasonable that if the rebel is pardoned, he should ground his arms, and cease to be a rebel. Look at the demand for a minute, and it will strike you as being founded in right. It is most reasonable that we should renounce sin—that our heart should loathe it first, *because it is most inconsistent to suppose that pardon can be given while we continue in sin!* Dear brothers and sisters, suppose God were to say to the ungodly man, "You may continue in your sin, and I will forgive you; you may go on in your rebellion, and I will never punish you for it"? What would this be but granting license to sin, and offering a premium to iniquity? How could the Judge of all the earth thus wink at iniquity? I think the angels would cease to sing, "Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," if the Lord could act in this manner! Where would His justice be? Where His righteous-

ness? This would be to make him—I speak with reverence—an accomplice in man’s sin, a justifier of transgression in the present, and a promoter of iniquity in the future! Where would moral government be if the Lord bestowed His pardons upon those who persevere in transgression? Shall men fondle their sins, and yet be in a state of grace? Then might every adulterer and every thief say, “What does it matter? I am forgiven! I will defile myself, and rob my neighbor yet more and more.” Only fancy what the effect would be upon our country if a proclamation were issued that from now on all manner of offenses against the law would be immediately forgiven, and men might continue still to perpetrate them! We should hasten to emigrate from such a pandemonium! The wicked might approve of such a relaxation of the bonds of law, but it would be an awful curse to the righteous! If the Judge of all the earth could possibly forgive sin while men continue to indulge in it, I do not see how the world could be inhabited; it would become a den of beasts, wild and without restraint, raging against all goodness, and even against themselves. The very pillars of society would be moved if sin could be at the same time indulged by the sinner, and pardoned by the Lord! And what would be the effect upon the sinner himself, if such could be the case?

Say to a man, “You are not to be punished for your sin, and you may live in it,” and what worse turn could you do him? Why, sir, this would in some respects be a new curse to him! Here is a bleeding wound in my arm; the surgeon says he will allow it to bleed, but he will remove my sense of faintness and pain; he will leave the mortal injury, but take away its attendant inconveniences so that I may bleed to death and not know it? I would decline to have it so! No, let me bear the pain if that will the more persuade me to seek the binding up of my wound! We do not want to be delivered from the punishment of sin so much as from the sin itself, for sin bears its punishment in our *hearts*. Suppose there were no hell, no lake of fire into which the ungodly shall be cast? Yet let the wicked live together and indulge envy, revenge, and malice, and you will soon see that these passions would create hell! Turn men down together, and let them be selfish, ambitious, angry, lustful, jealous, and envious; take away all the restraints of moral government, and let their passions be indulged without a single hindrance, oh, what a scene it would be! Imagine a den of wild beasts let loose upon one another—that would be a scene of peace and beauty compared with what this world would be if sin were patronized by a promise of pardon to the impenitent! Each man would also be hateful to himself; as long as he had sin within him it would be impossible for him to rest, his seething passions would boil against each other. Man is so constituted that sin means an unhealthy and unhappy condition; the machinery will not work easily unless it acts accurately; it is at once its glory and its burden that it is so. O mighty God, Your wisdom makes You append suffering to sin; it is well that we should feel it if we put our finger into the fire; it would be a pity to take away the pain from the burning lest a man should sit by the fire and lose limb after limb, and not be aware of it. In the same manner it is also most meet

that the unhappiness caused by sin should give us warning of the mischief it is doing to us!

We do not ask God to separate the suffering from the sin, (let them stand as they are), but we need to be severed from the sin, and then the suffering will go as a matter of course. It is unreasonable, man; it is unreasonable that you should expect that God will allow you to remain impenitent, and yet give you the kiss of His forgiving love! It would be neither honorable to God, nor good to your fellow men, nor really beneficial to you! Is it not also reasonable that we should part with sin because *sin is so grievous to God?* I never know how to express my feelings when I read this 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the Prophet Isaiah. I have felt a heartbreaking sympathy with God when I have read those words, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." It is so very sweet to us to have our children love us in return for our kindness to them; they are to us a very great joy and comfort, and we are very glad and thankful to God for their dutiful affection, but many a man has been ready to tear his hair when the boy that he rocked on his knee has treated him with wanton insult. With what sorrow and anguish has many a mother had to remember an ungrateful daughter? Such iron enters into the soul; such draughts of gall embitter the inmost heart of life, and here is the good Lord, like David of old, crying, "O Israel, My son, My son!" To let us see how He regards sin, God describes Himself as calling the universe to witness to the ingratitude which has assailed Him. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know; My people do not consider!" There is another plaintive expression in one of the Prophets, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate," as though the Creator turned pleader to His own creatures, and said, "Do not follow after that which so provokes Me, and is so detestable to Me." It is for our sakes that He is so grieved! We vex the Holy Spirit every time we go into sin, for He loves us much, and cannot bear to see us so dreadfully hurting ourselves! Now, sinner, is it not most reasonable that if you would find peace with God you should cease from that which provokes Him? Are you to go on vexing Him, and yet expect Him to bless you? How would it be in your own case if you were a father? Would it not seem right and reasonable that the evil habit which vexed and broke your heart from day to day should be given up by your child? Would you not expect *him* to say, "My Father, I did not know I was grieving you as much as this; but now I know it, I turn from my folly: teach me how I may please you and do that which is right in your sight."

A third reason why sin should be given up may also be found in the chapter before us, for I am strictly following the context of the text. Should it not be given up because of *the mischief it has already done to man?* Look at yourself, unconverted man or woman; what happiness have your transgressions brought you? What peace has the love of sin produced in your spirit? What are you now? Why, according to your own

confession you are dissatisfied and ill at ease! Sometimes thoughts of death haunt you, and make you so wretched that you hardly know how to live. The dread of hell comes over you, and you have often wished you had never been born. You know it is so. You are well described in the chapter before us—"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." What has made you so sick and sorry? What but your wrong-doing? If you could prove that some good had come to yourself through sin, even then you ought to give it up for God's sake, since it grieves Him. But no good has ever come of it; ills of every sort are its only offspring. Look prodigal, look at your rags, and see what your harlots and your companions have done for you! Look at what the citizens of the far-off country have done for you—sent you into the fields to feed swine! In your degradation and your filthiness, ask yourself if there is not a cause? What has deprived you of the comforts of a father's house? What has made you ready to eat the husks to stop your craving hunger? If you were wise you would hate the sin which has served you so badly; you would long to shake it off as Paul shook the viper into the fire, and cry to God, "Deliver me from it, O Lord, by Your Son, Jesus Christ, for it is evil, only evil, and that continually; therefore cleanse me O Lord!"

Remember also, my Friend, *that unless sin is repented of and forsaken, neither acts of yours, nor ceremony of religion, nor hearing, nor praying can possibly save you!* Do you see what these Jews did? They brought expensive offerings; they said, "We will be very generous to the cause of God" and therefore they brought bullocks, and rams, and goats by the hundreds! And what does God say of it? "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?" says the Lord. "I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot stand; away with it! It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." If their hearts had been right He would have accepted the smallest offering; a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons would have been acceptable to Him; but as long as they lived in uncleanness, their sacrifices were vain oblations, and their sweet smelling incense was an abomination to Him! "Ah," you have said, "I have given to the cause of God, and yet I have had no peace." Does God accept what is given by one who practices dishonesty, or lives in pride, or revels in vice? "Ah," you say, "but I have always attended the means of grace." Yes, but suppose you go from the tabernacle to the gin palace; will your coming here be acceptable with God? Suppose you go home to practice unholy living or continue in malice against your brother; can the Lord regard you? Suppose you go away from the assembly of the saints to find equally congenial company in the society of sinners? Then I say to you, in God's name, who has required this at your hands, that you should tread His courts? Does He need courtiers to surround His Throne whose garments stink of the dens of Belial? Does He need your hymns, O

you who have been singing lascivious songs? Do you think He will endure it that men should rise from the bed of uncleanness, and draw near to His altars? It is scandalous to decency! It is insulting to the infinite majesty of heaven! And yet how many there are who are secretly doing this! Let the consciences of those who hear the gospel and yet live in known sin attest the truth of my words! Does not reason itself teach them that God must be angered rather than pleased by the worship of those who live in sin? I heard to my deep sorrow, the other day, of one who will walk several miles to hear me preach, and yet in the place where he lives he is known to be a drunk! He glories in his admiration of the preacher, and yet lives scandalously! O sir, do you think the preacher gains by the admiration of such as you are? How much less can God be pleased with the adoration of men who live in open sin? Their worship is a dishonor to His blessed name! He calls your attendance at public worship the treading of His courts! It is nothing more than a mere trampling upon holy things, and if you *dream* that there is anything acceptable in such conduct you are grievously mistaken! If you come here that you may repent of your sins, and forsake them, come and welcome! But if you imagine that coming up to the worship of God will procure the condoning of your offenses, you dote on a lie! Be not so deluded by Satan, but cast away this lie from your right hand.

“Well,” says one, “but there must be *something* in prayer.” Hear, then, from the Lord’s own mouth what there is in prayer while you continue in sin: “When you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.” Though I cannot say of you that your hands are full of blood, yet if they are full of *any* sin which you love in your heart, your sacrifice will be an *abomination* to God! Do you dare to bow the knee and say, “O God, forgive me my sin, though I mean to continue in it”? How dare you offer such an impudent petition to the Majesty of heaven! Is God to give you a dispensation—a permit to sin with impunity? Is He such a One as you are that He should answer such a wicked prayer? “O God,” you practically say, “please grant me a sense of peace with You, and let me still be unholy.” God will not hear such a request! I speak with reverence to His blessed name: God’s holy nature forbids that He should ever listen to such a blasphemous prayer! Change it and say, “Lord, help me to give up my sin; Lord, Help me to deal righteously with my neighbors; help me to love my fellow men and at the same time, grant me forgiveness for the past for Jesus’ sake.” If this is your heart-felt language, the heavenly Father meets you freely, and says, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” But if you reply to that gracious word, “I am willing to accept the pardon, but am resolved to keep the sin,” His reply to you will be, “Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries, and avenge Me of My enemies.” If you refuse and rebel, there is none of His mercy for you, but the sword shall devour you, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it!

**II.** Thus have I reasoned upon one point; let me now go further and declare that IT IS MOST REASONABLE THAT MAN SHOULD SEEK PU-

RITY OF HEART. You ask for pardon and forgiveness—and in return God says to you, “Wash, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes, cease to do evil; learn to do good; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow.” Is there not reason in this command? You practically say, “Lord, enter into amity and peace with me.” The Lord replies, “There is no peace to the wicked: only as you become renewed in nature can there be any peace between us.” Do you dare to ask God to commune with you while you are a lover of sin? Can two walk together except they are agreed? What communion has Christ with Belial, what fellowship has light with darkness? You cannot have amity with God till the evil of your doings is put away from before His eyes, and this He will enable you to do. Do you refuse the work of His grace? Do you decline to be purged from every false way? Then you also decline friendship with God! You ask the Lord to make you His child. When you pray, you call Him, “Our Father, which are in heaven,” but do you not see that it is unreasonable to expect to be enrolled in His family, and yet remain the servant of Satan? What would the world say? “If this is one of God’s children, what a Father He must be who has such a family!” As it is, the faults and imperfections of the Lord’s children often cause men to blaspheme His name, but at any rate, His *children* desire to be clean from sin, and He has not a child in the world that is in love with evil! This is one of the marks of His children—that they hate iniquity, and that sin is a plague and burden to them. John says, “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother.” Shall the drunk, the liar, the oppressor, the revengeful, the pitiless, the greedy, the dishonest be called the sons of God? Shall fornicators and persons of unclean lives be called His children? True, He takes such into His household, by His amazing grace, but He washes, cleanses, and sanctifies them, making them new creatures in Christ Jesus! He receives them while they are sick with sin, but it is in order to their *healing*, and if that healing is refused, they cannot become His children at all!

You have asked to be a disciple of Christ in your prayers. I ask you again, how is it reasonable that you should be recognized as a disciple of Christ if you will not imitate His character, and if you do not desire to obey His commands? Is this man a disciple of Christ, and yet he remains an habitual drunk, or carries on a dishonest trade, or lives in unchastity? Can he really be a Christian? Every hallowed name forbids it! Such a man is a servant of the devil, not of Jesus! You are the servant of whom you *obey*—there is no mistake about that matter! He that does sin is the servant of sin; if you yield yourselves to evil, then you are the servants of evil, and the wrath of God abides on you!

Often too, you pray the Lord to take you to heaven when you die, and yet you intend to remain in your sins. Why this folly? Are you devoid of thought? What? Carry your sins into heaven? Carry hell into heaven? Man, woman, have you any reason left in you to expect God to have it

so? Shall even His own courts, where His glory blazes forth with ineffable splendor, be defiled with that which His soul abhors? Shall His enemies be admitted to insult Him to His face in His own palace? It cannot be! Holiness will never allow such an intrusion! Heaven's portals are guarded by omnipotence and cannot be invaded by His enemies—

***“Those holy gates forever bar  
Pollution, sin, and shame;  
None can obtain admission there  
But followers of the Lamb!”***

Now, my hearer, let us reason together, in God's name, while the word of the Lord shows you what it is you must be willing to become as the result of salvation. Look at the portrait drawn by Isaiah—it pictures the truly pardoned man's life towards his fellow man. It sets him forth in those lovely colors in which the Spirit of God has adorned him. Read the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> verses. The pardoned man has by grace been washed and made clean; his life is pure, upright, and commendable; he has put away the evil of his doings from before God's eyes; that is to say he not only shuns open sin before the eyes of man, but he also hates that which is only seen by the eyes of God! He desires to be cleansed from secret faults, and to be pure within. He has also by grace been led to cease to do evil. He breaks off his sins by righteousness, and flees from unholy habits. At the same time he learns to do well—he is not yet *perfect*; he is a scholar, and he is learning, but with all his heart he studies to be practically holy, and by divine teaching he is instructed in God's righteousness. He seeks judgment and desires to deal faithfully with all, to be honest and upright, and to walk in all integrity, true to the word he speaks, even when it is to his own loss. He counts his simple word to be as binding as another man's oath, and scorns to profit by a falsehood. Nor is this all, the grace of God teaches him to love his neighbor as himself, and therefore he relieves the poor and oppressed, and is the generous friend of the fatherless and the widow. In almsgiving and deeds of Christian love he abounds! Here is the portrait. Do you admire it? Do you wish to be made like it? God's grace is willing to make you this! Are you willing that it should operate upon you? If on the other hand, your hard heart cries out, “No, I want pardon and peace, but I do not wish to be renewed in heart,” then the reply is there is no peace for you! You are not to be saved by, or for your good works, but God's salvation brings these to those in whom it works. God will not separate sanctification from justification, nor free remission from regeneration. Pardon must be followed by purity, and grace by the graces. If any man will be forgiven his sin, he must also be renewed in nature and submit to be molded into the blessed likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you been made willing that such should be your case?

**III. IF THE SINNER REMAINS IMPENITENT IT IS MOST UNREASONABLE FOR HIM TO LAY THE BLAME OF HIS NOT BEING FORGIVEN UPON THE CHARACTER OF GOD, FOR GOD IS READY TO FORGIVE. Those who impute an unforgiving spirit to the Lord, lie, and know not the**

truth! God gives the master argument to confute that slander by saying—“Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” He is both willing and able to forgive! He is prepared to remove the ingrained sins of our nature. Scarlet dye was fixed in the very wool of the fabric before it was made up, and so is sin inwrought into our being. We were sinners by nature before we were sinners by practice, but this deep-seated stain of our nature He is able to remove, so as to make us white as snow! Though your sins should be double-dyed as crimson was; though you should have sinned again, and again, and again, multiplying your transgressions, yet He is able to cleanse you! And though you should have continued long in sin, as the scarlet cloth lies long in the dye, and though your sins should be glaring and startling as scarlet and crimson colors are, yes, though they should be imperial sins, as though you had put on a royal robe to defy the sovereignty of God, yet even *these* shall be forgiven perfectly by His grace! Not only shall some of the more glaring color be taken out of our character, but the scarlet shall be white as snow, and the crimson, red as it was, shall be as wool! And all this by the free, unmerited grace of God! There is perfect pardon to be had by the most vile transgressor—immediate and irreversible pardon is freely given according to God’s infinite mercy and abounding grace to the very chief of sinners! He waits to bestow His mercy on the sons of men, and therefore if you do not have it, it is not because God is hard to appease. He delights in mercy! To the ends of the earth He proclaims, “Let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”

**IV.** Here is the last point upon which we will argue. IT IS A REASONABLE THING THAT GOD SHOULD DEMAND WITH THIS PARDON, OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMAND. And what is that command? It is, “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, the sword shall devour you.” Great Lord, it seems most strange that men should be unwilling to be saved from their sins, and unwilling to follow the direction of perfect love! Yet, so perverse is human nature, that till Your grace *makes men willing*, they will never lay hold upon Your abounding mercy and transcendent Forgiveness, but prefer to abide in their sins. Sinner, here is the great question—are you willing?” Willing for what? I am willing to be saved from hell.” Ah, who is not? What criminal is not willing to be saved from prison or the gallows? Are you willing to be saved from yourself, to be saved from *loving the sin* which now enthralls you; to be saved from finding pleasure in the unholiness which now enchants you; to be saved from the indulgence of evil passions which tyrannize over you; to be saved, in a word, from SIN? Are you willing? Some say that they are, but when it comes to the test, and a sweet sin comes before them, like a painted Jezebel, they are bewitched by it! They fall into its arms, and let Jesus go! Are you willing to give up *any* sin for Christ, and *every* sin for Christ? The Lord demands this of you! Oh, may He also grant it to you, turning your heart of stone into a heart of flesh! May you be made truly willing to be saved from sin in

God's way, that is, by simply believing in Jesus; believing in Jesus not that you may merely get rid of the past, but be delivered from the present dominion of evil. *If you are willing*—that is the point! His people shall be willing in the day of His power, and if you are *not* willing, and live and die unwilling, you are none of His!

Then it is added, "If you are obedient." Whenever the Lord saves a soul, He will make that soul obedient, for Jesus Christ will not take into His army soldiers who mutiny against His commands. "If you are willing and obedient"; obedient to what? Obedient to all gospel precepts! "Repent"—let sin be hateful to you! "Repent and be converted"—that is, turn round to seek after other things and better things than you sought before. Are you willing to obey His command to love one another as Christ also has loved you? Are you willing to be obedient to the command, "Cease to do evil, learn to do good"? "Oh," one says, "I am willing enough to be obedient, but where is the strength to come from?" Ah, my blessed Lord does not ask you to find the strength—for that you may look to Him! If you are willing, He will grant you the power; no, in *making you willing*, He has already begun the work! If this morning He has made you truly willing to give up sin, His blessed Spirit will never leave you till sin is overcome! Jesus is able to cleanse you from the power of sin as well as from the guilt of it! The point is this—has He *made you willing* to be made holy? Are you at this present moment willing to be washed and cleansed? Do not answer this question till you have looked at it and marked the self-denial it will cost you. After doing so, I fear that honesty will compel some of you to say, "I am not prepared to undergo the change which is here proposed." You know, my hearer that sin in some attractive form is very sweet to you, and while it is so, there can be no hope of pardon for you.

You think, perhaps, that I spoke sharply just now? The Lord knows I desire to speak in all gentleness of spirit, but I must be faithful to your souls, and by God's help I will be! As I look around I am not so utterly ignorant of you all as not to know that there are some here who love to hear me preach, and yet they love their sins; they know their characters are disgraceful, and yet they pretend to believe that they are going to heaven because they have a notional faith in Jesus. Now, sirs, when you wake up in the day of judgment and find yourselves deceived, you will be forced to admit that I have not deceived you! I have never preached to you that you may live in sin if you only believe in Jesus! I have never preached that you shall be saved without being purified in heart! No, the salvation which this pulpit has proclaimed is not salvation *in* sin, but salvation *from* sin; not a license to evil, but a deliverance from evil! The two-edged sword of our gospel divides between men and sin—and slays all the hopes of the impenitent and disobedient! "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatever man sows that shall he also reap." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" and this holiness is His *gift* to you! Deliverance from sin is not a work of the flesh, but a work of grace! It does not spring from legal bondage, but from the gracious work of the blessed

Spirit. But you must have it; you must have it! And if you will not have holiness, neither shall you have heaven! There shall be no blotting out of sin unless there is a ransom from the dominion of sin. May God grant you grace to be honest with yourself, and honest with your God who invites you again to reason with Him, and entreats you not to be so unreasonable as to continue in sin, and yet expect forgiveness! He invites you to cast out that evil which is as much your enemy as it is His! He points to this stumbling block which lies at your door, and bids you will to have it removed. He begs you to come to your senses, and awake from your dreams. Your past sin He is fully prepared to obliterate forever, but it is your love of sin which lies in the way. O that you would, from your heart give it up, and follow after better things! May He help you now to say, “O Lord, I desire to be made pure and holy; give me strength, I pray you, to overcome temptation, and walk in the way of Your commandments. I want to be holy, even as You are holy; to will is present with me. Give me also power to do that which I would. O Lord, I would renounce my old sins, my constitutional sins, my once-beloved sins. I do not ask to be tolerated in any one of them, but would be delivered from every false way for Jesus’ sake. Help me, O Lord.”

Your heavenly Father stands ready to help you, *prepared* to help you! Though you are as yet a great way off, He comes to meet you, and opens His arms to embrace you! For the sake of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, He has passed an act of amnesty and oblivion for all the past, and He will rule over you for the future with the gentle scepter of His holy love. “If you are willing and obedient”—are you indeed so? May God grant you a subdued will and a submissive mind, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 1.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—176, 459, 489.**

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# AMAZING GRACE

## NO. 1279

**A SERMON DELIVERED  
BY C. H. SPURGEON  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also,  
and restore comfort unto him and to his mourners.”  
Isaiah 57:18.***

THERE are a few objects in nature which never cease to astonish the beholder; I think Humboldt said he could never look upon the rolling prairies without astonishment, and I suppose some of us will never be able to look upon the ocean, or to see the sun rise or set without feeling that we have before us something always fresh and always new! Now, I have been not only for the love of it, but because of my calling of preaching it, a constant reader of Holy Scripture, and yet after these 25 years and more I frequently alight upon well known passages which astonish me as much as ever; as if I had never heard them before, they come upon me, not merely with freshness, but even so as to cause amazement in my soul! This is one of those portions of Scripture. When I read the chapter describing the wickedness, the horrible wickedness of Israel—when I notice the strong terms which Inspiration uses, and none of them too strong to set forth the horrible wickedness of the nation—it staggers me! And then to see God’s mercy following instead of His judgment overwhelms me! “I have seen his ways, and”—it is not added “I will *destroy* him,” or “I will sweep him away”—but “I will *heal* him.” Verily, God’s grace, like the great mountains, cannot be scaled; like the deeps of the sea, it can never be fathomed, and, like space, it can never be measured! It is, like God Himself, wondrous, matchless, and boundless. I can only cry, “Oh, the depths!” And again I cry “Oh, the depths!”

I shall try to set forth the astounding grace of God, as His Spirit shall enable me, by showing, first, that *the sinner is beheld by God*—“I have seen his ways.” And yet *the sinner is nevertheless the object of divine mercy*—“I will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.”

**I.** Our text declares that THE SINNER HAS BEEN OBSERVED OF THE LORD. Many a man will relieve an unknown person in distress whom he would not think of helping if he knew his character. Some generous hearts are perpetually victimized this way; they deal out their money to those who are altogether unworthy, but if they knew of this unworthiness, they would not be so free with their gifts. Now, the Lord is *aware* of the unworthiness of those to whom He deals out His grace, and it is the glory of that grace that He pours it upon the utterly undeserving! He knows exactly what men are, and yet He is kind to the evil and to the unthankful; He gives His grace to those who, like Manasseh, and Saul of

Tarsus, and the dying thief, have nothing but sin about them, and deserve His hot displeasure rather than His gracious love.

Notice, first, that *God's omniscience has observed the sinner*. Man, while living in rebellion against God, is as much under his Maker's eyes as the bees in a glass hive are under your eyes when you stand and watch all their movements. The eyes of Jehovah never sleep; they are never taken off from a single creature He has made. He sees man—sees him everywhere—sees him through and through so that He not only hears his words, but knows his *thoughts!* God does not merely behold his actions, but weighs his motives, and knows what is in the man as well as that which comes out of the man! One is often led to cry, "Such knowledge is too amazing for me! It is high; I cannot attain unto it." That God should know all, even all the little things about man's sin is a dreadful thing for unpardoned souls to think of! I was reading the other day, a very pretty observation upon one of our Savior's sayings, and I cannot help telling it to you. You remember He says two sparrows are sold for a farthing, and yet one of them does not light on the ground without your Father? But in another passage He says, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? And not one of them is forgotten of God." Do you notice that? Two for a farthing—five for two farthings; so there is an odd one thrown in for taking a double quantity; only a sparrow! Nobody cares about that odd sparrow, but not one of them is forgotten by your heavenly Father—not even the odd sparrow! And so no stray thought of yours, no imagination, no trifle which you have quite forgotten, which indeed, you never took any heed of, has escaped your heavenly Father's notice! The text is true to the fullest possible extent: "I have seen his ways." God has seen your ways at home, your ways abroad, your ways in the shop, your ways in the bedchamber, your ways within as well as your ways without—the ways of your judgment, the ways of your hope, the ways of your desire, the ways of your evil lusting, the ways of your murmurings, the ways of your pride; He has seen them all, and seen them perfectly and completely! And the wonder is that after seeing all, He has not cut us down, but instead of it, has proclaimed these amazing words of mercy, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him. I have seen all that he has done, and yet for all that I will not cast him from My presence, but I will put My mercy and My wisdom to work with divine skill to heal this sinner of the wickedness of his soul."

While we were reading the chapter, I could not help feeling that it was a chapter almost too strong to read in public! I looked it through and through, and I said, "Shall I read it?" Some of its allusions are so painful that one can *think* of them, but one would not like to *explain* them. Divine wisdom could not find anything but vices which are scarcely to be mentioned, to describe the wickedness of the human heart. It is so foul a thing that He must compare it to the lewdness and filthiness of those who are given over to the utter rottenness of licentiousness! And yet, after so describing the character, the Lord says, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him. I have seen everything bad in his ways, and I have per-

ceived nothing good in them, but nevertheless, though I know all his conduct, and see the filthiness of it all, yet will I come to him, and I will heal him.”

You noticed, while I was reading, that the persons described were a people who *had scoffed at religion*. “Against whom do you sport yourselves? Against whom make you a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue?” They had made the name and honor of God the subjects of profane sport! They had ridiculed God’s people—calling them hypocrites, fanatics, enthusiasts, or whatever else happened to be the cant names with which they bespattered saints in those days. They had jested at virtue, and jeered at piety, and yet the Lord says, “I have seen his ways. I have heard his ungodly jests and taunting ridicule. I know his sarcasms. I know what falsehoods, what slanders he pours forth upon My own beloved people, and My wrath rises against those that touch My Anointed; but for all that I will heal him! I have seen him put out his tongue at the name of Jesus; I have seen him behave exceeding proud when My gospel has been the subject of conversation, but for all that, though I have seen his haughty ways, I will heal him.” Oh, the splendor of this grace! Is this the manner of men, O Lord God? Surely, high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are Your ways above our ways!

These people seem to have been quite *infatuated by sin*. According to the Scriptures, you will see that they could not have enough of it. What mountain was there upon which Israel had not set up her altars? What stone was there, polished by the flow of the stream, which they had not consecrated to an idol? What giant oak was there throughout all Bashan under which they had not performed mystic and diabolical rites to the false god? The land was stained with the blood of their children offered to Loch! Yes, it reeked with their infamous sins, for in the worship of their false gods, their orgies were full of lewdness, and all manner of indescribable iniquities. Yet the Ever-Merciful says, “I have seen it; I have seen behind the door what they have done; I have seen in the high mountains what they have done; I have seen their abominations in the groves and thickets; I have seen how eager they are after sin—how they drink it down like Behemoth—who thinks to drink down Jordan at a draught! They add lust to lust in their pursuit of sin till they are maddened with it! I have seen that they are desperate sinners, but I will heal them, I will heal them.” Oh beloved, this text sounds so strangely good, so singularly gracious, so exquisitely merciful that it holds me spell-bound! It is such a surprise; just when the harsh drum begins to sound, and war is about to let slip her dogs, there comes an unexpected pause, and meek-eyed Pity, with a thousand tears, steps forward and cries, “I still love them! Only let them renounce their ways, and to My bosom they shall be pressed, and their horrible sins shall be forgiven!”

There is one expression I must dwell upon, because it is so remarkable. I should never have dared to use it if Inspiration had not employed it. It is that expression in verse nine, where the Lord says, “You did debase yourself even unto hell”—*even unto hell!* When a man debases him-

self as low as the swine trough, that is low enough, and there are many who do that. The drunk goes lower than the sow, for no sow would habitually intoxicate itself; few animals would even touch the defiling concoction! We talk of a man's being like a beast, but the beasts are hardly done by when we compare drunks with them! Men sink below the mere animal because being capable of so much higher things; they make a more terrible descent when they yield themselves up to their baser appetites. Alas, there are vices of human nature from which the cattle of the field are exempt—man has debased himself below the creature over which he has received dominion! The prophet says, "They debase themselves even unto hell." I say a man does that when he defies his Maker, and blasphemes his Savior; when after every other word he uses an oath, and lards his conversation with profane expressions as some do. What good can there be in such wanton wickedness? What is to be gained by it? I suppose the devil himself is not such a blasphemer as some people are whom we have the misery to hear, even in our streets, as we walk along. I suppose Satan has some method in his profanity, but they use it in mere lack of other words! Men sink to the level of the devil when they are unkind to their aged parents, or on the other hand, unnatural to their own offspring. What shall I say of the abominable cruelty of some men to their wives? I believe that if the devil had a wife, he would not treat her as many working men treat their wives. Creatures called *men* are frequently brought up before our police courts, and the charges proved against them make us altogether disgusted with human nature! Would the fierce lion, the savage tiger, or the wild boar treat his mate so evilly? O how many are thus debased unto hell! Yet, yet, should this reach the ear of anyone who has thus debased himself, let him listen to this—"I have seen his ways, I have seen him debase himself even unto hell; yet will I heal him, and lead him, and restore comforts unto him."

"Why," says one, "that seems too good to be true!" It does, and if you were dealing with men, it *would* be too good to be true; but you are dealing with One of whom it is written, "Who is a God like unto You, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin?" And, "for all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." And, "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." I say once more, I do not know how to put this declaration of grace into words forcible enough! I stand astonished! I am not here to explain it, for I *cannot* explain it! I am here to set it forth, but I cannot even do that! It does so amaze me that God's electing love should cast its eye upon the very vilest of the vile, and then that He should say, "I have seen him; I know what he has done; I understand it all, and yet I mean to save him, and save him, I will." Heaven itself shall be amazed that ever such a wretch was saved! And hell itself shall tremble in its lowest deeps while it sees against what a gracious God it has dared to offend!

But I must proceed to notice, next, that God had not only seen their ways in the sense of omniscience, but He had *inspected their ways in the sense of judgment*. He says, "I was angry, and I hid Myself." O sinners, do

not think because tonight we come to preach free grace and dying love to you, and proclaim full pardon through the blood of Jesus, that therefore God winks at sin! No, He is a wrathful God, and will by no means spare the guilty! As surely as fire consumes the stubble, so does His wrath burn against wickedness! And He will utterly destroy it from off the face of the earth, for “God is angry with the wicked every day.” Do not think that when these sinners of old worshipped idols, the Lord was careless as to what they did; do not imagine that when they thrust out the tongue and mocked Him, He was indifferent and sat still as if He had been made of stone; far from it! It provoked His holy mind, for He cannot look upon iniquity, neither shall evil dwell with Him; He is as a consuming fire against evil, and will by no means tolerate it! And yet—and yet—He whom the angels call, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth”—the jealous God, the God who revenges, and is furious against sin—even He has said, “I have seen his ways, and will heal him.” Ah, if it were a matter of indifference to Him—if God were hardened so that He did not care about sin as some men are, or if He were only half-sensitive to sin as *we* are, I could understand His forgiving sin; but when I remember that sin, as it were, touches the apple of His eye, and moves His heart, and vexes His Spirit, then I am amazed that in the same moment in which He denounces sin, He looks on the sinner, and says with tears of pity, “I have seen his ways, and will heal him. He is My child though he has played the prodigal; I hate his harlotry, and the riotous living with which he has wasted his estate and Mine; I hate the swine trough, and the citizens of the far-off country, but My child, My child, I love him still! And when he comes back to Me, I will receive him with a kiss, and I will say, ‘Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and let us eat and be merry, for this, My son which was dead, is alive again! He that was lost is found.’” I cannot trust myself to speak on this Godlike miracle of His love—it is very wonderful to me, and deeply touches my heart.

Yet once more on this point: it was not only that God had seen and observed the rebel, and had judged the evil of his sin, but *the Lord had tested him!* If you read the chapter through you will see that God says that He had attempted to reclaim him by chastisements. He says, “For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry and smote him; I hid Myself and was angry, and he went on stubbornly in the way of his heart.” You see, then, that the Lord *tested* the man; He said to Himself, “Perhaps he does not feel the evil of sin; I will make him smart. These people have worshipped false gods; I will send a famine; I will send a pestilence. I will give them over into the hand of their enemies, and then perhaps they will repent.” And so God did this to Israel, and the nation was brought very low. But what was the result? Did they turn under the chastening rod, and confess their sin? Did they humble themselves before God? No! He says of the *nation*, “He went on stubbornly in the way of his heart.”

How often it happens that when the Lord commences a work of grace on men, He begins with some terrible judgment, laying them low that He

may lift them up in due time; but how often these visitations end in disappointment! The man is sick—he lays suffering on the brink of eternity; he makes promises of reformation, but what happens when he recovers? Why, he forgets it all, and is if anything worse than before! Or the man is brought low by his sin, even to beggary. How often have I seen this! There is a man of respectable parents shivering in his rags; but when he is in his poverty does he turn from his vices? No, he whines about his follies when he asks for a little help, and when he gets it, he spends the charity on drink, and continues as degraded as ever he was! Worse and worse is the way of the wicked—even though their sorrows are multiplied. Ah, my friends, all the afflictions in the world, apart from the grace of God, will only harden men! When the Lord in His mercy sends sharp providences to stir men up in their nests, and make them feel that sin is an evil thing, the general result of it—no, the *constant* result of it apart from divine grace—is that the man continues in his sin just the same as before, or only flies from one form of it to another! He is wounded by the goad, but he does not yield; he kicks against the pricks; he thinks that God has treated him very harshly; he drives himself farther off from God, and runs into despair! He says there is no hope, and therefore he may as well live as he likes—he may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb! And so he plunges deeper and deeper into rebellion. Yet notice the grace of our text, and be again astonished! This person had been chastened in vain, and even hardened by affliction, and yet God says, “I have seen his ways; I have seen how he grows worse and worse; I have seen how he hardens his neck; I have seen what a brazen forehead he has, and what a neck of iron he dares to lift up against Me. I have seen it all, but thus *my eternal purpose runs*—I will heal him, I will do it. I will let the entire world see that grace is stronger than sin, and My everlasting mercy is not to be cut short, even by infamous transgressions.” Oh, the depths of divine love; truly it is past finding out!

Now, before I go to the second part of the subject, I must say this. I am not now speaking of cases which happen now and then; neither am I talking about men that lived years ago, like John Newton, the African blasphemer, or John Bunyan, the village rebel. No, I am talking about a great many *here* before me, and to a great extent I am talking about *myself*. I know that in me there was nothing that could have caught the eyes of God to merit His regard. I know that if I were not permitted to indulge in grosser vices, yet I went as far as I could—but would have gone infinitely farther if it had not been for His restraining grace. And in my case I feel that it is as much the free sovereign undeserved mercy of God that I am, this night, saved, as that the poor thief, when dying on the cross, received the promise, “Today shall you be with Me in paradise.” In every case, whether we have been moral or immoral, salvation is altogether a matter of pure favor! And in every case God has virtually said of us, “I have seen his ways; I cannot see anything good in him; I see only what I abhor, but I will heal him.” The tears may well stand in our eyes as we think of this; I am sure they do in mine. A poor half-witted man

was asked by his minister how he came to be saved, and he said, "It was between me and God; God did His part, and I did the other." "Well," said the minister, "what part did you do?" The answer was, "God saved me, *and I stood in His way.*" That is the part, I must confess, in which I was most conspicuous; I was very stubborn and willful, and put from me the invitations of the Lord's love. I willed to remain a rebel, but He would not have it so; did I not resist His Spirit? Did I not put from me His gospel? Did I not resolve to abide in my self-righteousness, and continue as I was? Yes, but He would not allow it to be so, and at last I was compelled to cry, "I yield to the all-conquering grace of God, and bless the hand that sweetly bows me to its mighty sway!"

**II.** Now we will turn to the second part of our discourse, and pause for a while to let you relieve yourselves with a cough.

Notwithstanding all that we have said, THE CHOSEN SINNER IS THE OBJECTIVE OF DIVINE MERCY TO AN EXTRAORDINARY DEGREE. Thus says the Lord, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will also lead him, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners." Notice how God speaks; observe the tone and spirit of His declaration. "I will," says He! "I will, I will, I will." Now, "I will" and "I shall" are for a king. No, in the highest sense they are only becoming when used by God Himself! It is not for you and me to say, "I will"; we shall speak more wisely if we declare that we will if we can; we will if—but God needs no "ifs." "I have seen his ways," He says. "I know what a rebel he is, but I will heal him; I know how sick he is, for from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet nothing but bruises and putrefying sores are to be seen, but I will heal him." He speaks like a God—"I will." There is no condition expressed, and there is no "perhaps," or "but," because there is no condition! He does not say, "*If he will.*" No, when God says, "I will," man will *be made willing*; be sure of that! He does not say "I will, if man will do a part of it." No, but "I will." But suppose that *man would not*? That is not to be supposed! The Lord knows how, without violating the human will, (which He never does), to so influence the heart that the man, with full consent against his *former* will, yields to the Will of God, and is made willing in the day of God's power! I always like to think, as I am preaching here, "Now, whether or not there will be anybody saved by the gospel I preach does not depend upon whether they have come up here willing or unwilling, for the Lord has said, "My people shall be willing in the day of My power." There is a higher power than the human will, whatever power there may be in that, and neither do I wish to deny the fact. But there is a *higher* power than the will of man, else man would be God, and the *will of man* would be omnipotence. The Lord knows how, by sacred arts of wondrous grace, to make the stout free will of man yield itself to the perfect free will of God! And thus He takes the sinner captive, and leads him in triumph to the feet of Christ! Glory be to God for this; if the salvation of men depended upon their being willing, and no prevenient grace ever came to unwilling sinners, there is not one soul in all our race that ever would be saved, for we err and stray from God's ways like lost sheep! And

if God waited till *we* came to Him of ourselves, He would wait in vain forever! No, the Good Shepherd goes after the sheep—follows it, tracks it, seizes it, throws it on His shoulders, and carries it home rejoicing! We, tonight, bless that mighty grace which did not stop for *us* to seek it, but sought us! It was like the dew which waits not for men, neither tarries for the sons of men, but comes in all its blessed cheering influences, and makes the earth glad! Oh, mighty grace of God, come in that way tonight to this crowd of poor sinners without “ifs,” “buts,” or conditions!

Now, notice that this was the only good thing that could be done with Israel. There were two courses possible. Here is Israel bent on sin—here is God angry with that sin, and hating it with all His heart. Israel can be destroyed—that is one thing, and it is an easy matter; the Lord has only to call flood, fire, famine, fever or war to sweep the nation away. But then He is full of love, and judgment is His strange work. What is to be done? He must either mend them or end them—one of the two! He cannot let them go on as they are! Which shall it be, destruction or salvation? He looks at them and says, “I will heal them. That is what I will do with them; I cannot endure that they should act as they do; I will therefore set to work upon them as a physician does upon a sick patient. Though the case would be quite hopeless unless I were omnipotent, I will bring my omnipotent love to bear on this foul, leprous, rotting, loathsome sinner, and I will make him clean, pure, and lovely. I will heal him; I cannot leave him in My universe as he is, for he spreads infection all around. He defiles My sanctuary, he profanes My Sabbaths, he pollutes the very air he breathes! He must not be allowed to go on in this way. What must I do with him? I will not destroy him, but I will *heal him*.” Oh, the wonder of divine mercy that ever the Lord should say that!

But do you not know that this is just the spirit which the Lord Jesus creates in the heart of His really consecrated servants towards the wicked and the fallen? Here they are in this world—we cannot put them out of it, and we wouldn't if we could; we are very sorry whenever the majesty of Law requires the destruction of a single guilty life. What are we to do with the criminal classes—with depraved men and fallen women? What are we to do with cannibals and heathens? In God's name we must cure them with the blessed medicine which has cured us! Think of John Williams. He hears of Erromanga; what is there in Erromanga to induce John Williams to go there? Are they a hopeful sort of people? No, they are hideous *cannibals*—they devour men! Will they receive Mr. Williams if he lands? Will they listen to him with respect? Not they; the probabilities are that they will lift the war club, and he will not escape with his life. What did that devoted missionary feel? “Those are the people that need me, and to those I will go beyond all others.” And so he went, and Williams, in landing at Erromanga, and in dying there, is a feeble type of Jesus coming to an ungodly and graceless world! Not because there was anything *good* in it, but because there was *no good whatever*—not because they would welcome Him, but because they were so fallen that they would crucify Him! The sinfulness of man was his need of a Savior's com-

ing, and for that very reason Jesus came! Did He not say, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; I am come as a physician, and the physician has nothing to do with the healthy; his business lies with the sick, and I am come, therefore, to deal with sin-sick souls"? What a wondrous thing this is that God should look upon sin and say, "I see it all, and I hate it all, but nevertheless I mean to heal the sinner, and to lift him up from his degradation." May the Lord say that to you, dear hearer, if you are still dead in sin!

Now, notice how the Lord puts His hand to the work. He heals sin as a *disease*. He cannot look at it in any other light without destroying men. He says, "These creatures of Mine do not love Me; they must be diseased in their minds, so I will heal them. They see no loveliness in My Son; they must be blind, so I will open their eyes." Thus mercifully tracing our sin to its cause, the Lord manifests His grace and heals the maladies of our nature.

And, blessed be God, the disease that we suffer from is a disease which He knows all about, because the text says, "I have seen his ways." Oh sinner, you will not have to tell God the symptoms of your complaint—He has seen your ways! He has seen right through your heart, and there is no physician so able to deal with a patient as the man who knows the constitution of the patient, and knows his habits, and knows all his secret history! God knows all that, and because He knows it, it is a blessed thing that He—He, Himself—with that infinite knowledge says, "I will heal him." Who else but He would know enough to be able to heal a sinner of all the sin that lies concealed within him?

And God does in very deed heal sinners! I daresay you have heard the common talk in the world. They say, "These evangelical ministers preach salvation for sinners—what is this but *encouraging sin*?" The gentlemen who make the observation are generally not particularly sweet themselves, but we will say nothing about that, although it is an odd thing to hear accusations against the morality of the gospel from gentlemen whose own morality is not of the most delicate kind! Still, we have a better answer. Suppose we open a hospital; thank God there are many in London! Here is a fever hospital; do you hear people objecting, "Oh, you are *encouraging fever*!" The only qualification for admission to a fever hospital is for a person to have a fever! If they have the fever, they can come in. If it is a smallpox hospital, the only thing that is needed is that they shall have the smallpox, and they may freely enter. Why don't you cry that this free statement of gratuitous admission will encourage *contagious diseases*? Fools! You know better! You know that the hospital is the enemy of the disease, and men are received in sickness that they may be delivered from its power! And you know that it is the same with the gospel! We almost scorn to answer you, for you must be aware that to say that Jesus Christ is able to take the very vilest sinner and to save him is to promote *morality* in the best manner, not *immorality*! What is salvation? Do you think we mean by that, the saving people from going down to hell, and letting them live as they lived before? We never meant

anything of the sort! We mean that Jesus Christ heals people of the disease of sin, that is to say He takes the sin away, changes their mind, renews their heart, makes them hate the sin which once they loved, and leads them to seek after the holiness which once they despised! It is true He has opened a house for thieves, drunks, and harlots—and set the door wide open, and said, “Come and welcome!” But why has He done this? Why, the sinner who enters comes to be no more a drunk, to be no more a thief, to be no more unchaste—for this objective is the guilty one invited to come to Christ that he may have his heart renewed! He is not invited that he may have his putrid sores bound up and skinned over with some Madame Rachel stuff that may conceal the evil—but that the gangrene may be cut out, and the ulcer may be removed, and the dire cancer may be torn up by the roots! This is what the gospel is for, and Jesus Christ proclaims, tonight, by these lips of mine, that however guilty you may have been, if you desire to be healed from the plague of sin, He can and will heal you upon your believing on Him! He says, “I have seen his ways, and I will heal him.” Come and welcome! Come and welcome, you guiltiest of the guilty! Oh, may His infinite mercy do more than invite you! May it *compel* you to come in according to that message of His at the royal supper, “Go you out into the highways and hedges, and *compel* them to come in that My house may be filled.” May His infinite mercy *compel* you to come!

Then the text goes on to say, “*I will also lead him.*” The poor soul of man, even when healed, does not know which way to go! There is not a more bewildered thing in this world than a poor sinner when he is first awakened! Have you ever gone with a candle into a barn where a number of birds have roosted? Have you disturbed them? Have you not seen how they dart here and there, and do not know which way to fly? The light confuses them! So it is when Christ comes to poor sinners; they do not know which way to go! They see a little, but the very light confuses them! Now, the loving Lord comes in and says, “I will also lead him.” Oh, how sweetly does the Lord lead sinners, first to His dear Son, and bids them find in Him their all-in-all. Then He leads the sinner to the mercy seat, and He says, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find.” Then He leads the sinner to that grand old book, the Bible, and He says, “Read there, and as you read it I will open it up to you; I will open your eyes to see its hidden treasures and wonders, and lead you into all My truth.” “Come,” He says, “I will lead you farther; I will lead you in your daily life; I will lead you as to how to act among the ungodly; yes, I will lead you in the paths of righteousness for My name’s sake.” Now, is not it very wonderful, that God should lead men who formerly would not be led, men who for years went their own way, and resisted all that His judgments and providences could do to turn them? “Yes,” He says, “I will lead them.” And it is amazing how readily men will be led when God’s grace renews them! I have seen the stout-hearted man who used to revile Christ and His people become a babe in grace; the idea of ever going inside a place of worship, especially of a dissenting sort, would have put

him in a temper! He would spit on the ground, and curse at the very mention of such a thing! And yet that man has become the most earnest of Christians—the very man to go out and bring in others, and he has loved Christ more than many who were born and bred in the midst of religion! The Lord can make a little child lead a lion, and can make the most obstinate rebel tender and sensitive beyond others.

I heard a man pray once at a prayer meeting, and he did shout and holler at such an awful rate that I did not enjoy his prayer a bit. A friend asked him, some time afterwards, whatever made him make such an awful noise in prayer. “Why” he said, “I have only been converted a very little time; I am the master of a vessel, and I used to storm and rage, and go on at the sailors, and now, when I get warm, I cannot help making a noise! I begin to shout and holler as I did before when I served the devil.” When I heard this, I said, “Well, I hope he will go on with it.” I love to see the same zeal manifested in the cause of God that a man is accustomed to use in other things when he is really warmed up! We often see people who have been most earnest *against* Christ become most earnest *for* Him. Look at Saul of Tarsus—you do not need a better instance; he is exceedingly mad against Christ, and nobody can stop him, till the Lord says, “I have seen his ways, and I will heal him.” And what short work God made of Saul of Tarsus! Three days made a perfect cure of his eyes—but I do not suppose it took three minutes to do the essential part of the healing in his soul! He is as full of enmity to Christ as ever his heart can be, but in a *moment* the light shines, and he falls from his horse to the ground! And he hears the voice, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” He answers, “Who are You, Lord?” And the answer is, “I am Jesus whom you persecute.” The man is changed in a shorter time than it takes to tell! It is all done! O grace of God do the same to many here tonight, and let it be seen that Your “wills” and “shalls” will stand against all human sin, and all the obstinacy of the most corrupt heart! “I have seen his ways, and I will heal him; I will also lead him.”

Then there comes the last part of the text, “*I will restore comforts to him,*” for God begins by knocking our comforts away. He takes away the comfort we once had in our false peace, and He makes us mourn for our sin; but after a while He restores comfort to us. What sort of comfort does He restore—the comfort of perfect forgiveness, the comfort of complete acceptance! The Father sets a warm kiss upon the child’s cheek, and that is the comfort of *adoption*. Whereas we were heirs of wrath, we become heirs of heaven, and have the comforts of hope; we receive the comfort of daily fellowship, for we are admitted to speak with God, and to draw near to Him; we receive the comfort of perfect security, for we are led to feel that whether we live or die it does not matter, we are safe in the arms of Jesus! We also receive the comfort of a blessed prospect beyond the grave in the land of the hereafter where the arbors shall never wilt, and the comfort of knowing that all things work together for good! Our God also gives us the comfort of having the angels for our servants, and heaven for our home! “I will restore comforts to him” and all this—*all*

*this* to the man of whom it is said “You did debase yourself even unto hell.” All these comforts *for him!* A crown in heaven for one who but for God’s mercy had been damned in hell; a harp of everlasting music for hands that once delighted in lascivious music; new songs in glory for lips that once used the blasphemous oath; the presence of Jesus, and the likeness of Jesus for one that often rolled in the mire with the drunk, or went into worse mire with the unchaste and the unclean! Proclaim it! Proclaim it! Proclaim it to the most despairing sinners, that if they will but come back, their heavenly Father will receive them in the name of Jesus! Go forth and proclaim it at the corners of your streets! Go and proclaim it in the dens and thieves’ kitchens! Proclaim it in the prisons, yes, even in the condemned cell! Go to the very gates of hell and tell it to every soul that is this side of the pit of Tophet, and as yet out of its eternal fire—that if the wicked will but forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, He will have mercy upon him, and our God will abundantly pardon!

Proclaim it to yourself, poor sinner, you that trembles while I speak—you who would gladly sink through the floor because of your sense of sin! Your Father comes to meet you tonight! If you do not embrace Him, it is your fault, not His. His voice speaks and says, “Come, and welcome! Come, and welcome! Dear child of Mine, come to Me!”—

***“From the cross of Calvary,  
Where the Savior deigned to die,  
What transporting sounds I hear  
Bursting on my ravished ears!  
Love’s redeeming work is done,  
Come and welcome, sinner, come.”***

O grace of God, bring in the great sinners, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 51.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—248, 49 SANKEY, 219.**

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# AN OBJECTION AND AN ANSWER NO. 1280

A SERMON  
**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything,  
nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love.”  
Galatians 5:6.***

THE most prominent doctrine in Paul’s teaching was that of justification by faith. He taught it so very plainly, so very boldly—I almost said so very baldly—that it seemed necessary to the Holy Spirit that James should bear testimony to the necessity of holiness as the result of faith. Hence the Epistle of James is put into the sacred canon lest any should wrest and twist the language of Paul from its proper meaning. His great teaching—anybody can see this with half an eye—the great teaching of Paul is that we are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. This doctrine has always been taught in the church of God, and it is, as Luther well put it, the standing or falling article—the test of a standing or a falling church. A church which holds this doctrine in its integrity, notwithstanding many errors, is still a church of Christ, but the church which denies this, whatever else it may hold, is against Christ, and is not a church of Christ at all! The great Reformation, for which we so often bless God, was brought about by this light of God, for the truth of God which had been hidden in darkness, was held forth in the preaching and teaching of Protestant reformers. But for a long time after those eminent men had departed, the testimony of all the Protestant churches to justification by faith was clear and unwavering. You can scarcely read a sermon of any of the immediate successors of the reformers, but you will find it filled with the doctrine that man is justified through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, by faith in Him, and *not* by the works of the law. It was the same testimony which produced the revival in the last century, when Whitefield and Wesley awoke the slumbering masses of our population as they went forth through every town and hamlet preaching the gospel. Whatever difference there might have been between those eminent evangelists and their followers, they did not differ at all upon this point—that men are saved by believing in Jesus Christ—by resting upon the atonement once offered for human sin upon the bloody tree of Calvary.

And I rejoice, dear friends that this doctrine was never more clearly preached than now! As the time of the singing of birds has come, and the churches are waking up and expecting a blessed springtide, I thank God that there is this sign of its being a truthful work! Among other gracious signs it is conspicuous that Jesus Christ is preached, and that faith in Him is declared to be of paramount importance. That it is so is evident from the opposition which has been awakened! I can hear the voice of the

old growler—he is a gentleman that never has been absent when the banner of Christ has been unfurled; he is again beginning to whine and snarl as he always did, and to bark at this doctrine, in particular, as not according to holiness, subversive of morality, and mischievous in all its tendencies! I shall not attempt to stop his growling; his temper tells its own tale! He and his cronies do but display their natural disposition; if dogs delight to bark and bite, Dr. Watts has taught us to let them do so, “for ‘tis their nature, too.” I am not thinking of the cynical skeptic just now—my aim is to meet the *sincere seeker*. This objection takes the form of a difficulty in the minds of some who are anxious to find salvation; they say to themselves, “Can it be so? Is it possible that by simply *believing* on Christ my soul can be saved? I can comprehend that this might be made a condition upon which God should pardon me, but that is not all I need; I need a new heart; I need a right spirit! It would be of little use for me merely to have my past sins forgiven; I need to become a better man! The salvation that I need is salvation from my sins, from temptations in the world, and from the uprisings of my own naturally depraved heart; if I cannot get that, the mere pardon of sin is a very small business. However, I can understand that God would pardon me upon my believing in Jesus, but what I need to know is what effect my believing in Jesus will have upon *me* personally—what change would accrue to my nature as the result of my believing.”

It is about that I want to talk—faith which works—faith which works! And I want to show something about *how* it works. It works “by love.” To begin, then, I shall first attempt to answer the inquiry, “What is the faith which saves the soul?” And I venture to answer the question, first, by saying that it does not differ as a mental act from any other kind of believing. I fully admit that there is much about faith that is mysterious, and of that I may speak presently, but if any man asked me what the act of believing is, I should not hesitate to reply, “I believe God just the same as I believe anybody else—believe Him as I believe my father, as I believe my mother, as I believe my wife. It is the same mind which believes, and it is the same act of the mind that comes into operation. It is a rational assent. Faith is to believe what God says, to take it to be true, real, a matter of fact.” Now, when I believe what a man tells me, I do not say to myself, “Well, that is now a piece of my creed,” and so put it on the shelf, and have done with it! A man tells me, for instance, in the middle of the night, that my house is on fire. You know what I should do! You know what *you* would do! You know what any sane man would do! But when you are told in God’s Word that you are in danger of His wrath to come, do you believe what you read? No, you do not, or you would not be as cool as you now are! Your imminent peril should prompt instant action.

I would to God that what men call faith in a religious point of view were as prompt in its proceedings as the common acts of faith which they exercise towards their fellow men! The fact is, the creed we profess comes often far—very far *short* of the credit we give to our fellow creatures about the common affairs of life. Do you want to be saved? Believe God as you would believe the one that told you that your house was on

fire! Believe God as you would believe your friend—believe Him actively, really, truly, *for that is faith*. God tells you that you have transgressed against Him, but that He wills not your death, and that He has sent His Son into the world to suffer in the place of sinners, and that if you rely upon His Son you shall have immediate forgiveness, and shall be saved. Believe that message! Believe it to be true! You ought to believe it, for God cannot lie! It is an indisputable fact that whatever God says stands good; it is not contingent upon anything but His will, and He is without variableness or shadow of turning; what He says He means! Believe Him, whom you have not seen, as you would believe anyone whom you see daily; give credit to the Word He has written as you would credit any word that is spoken to you, and if you do so believe, your faith will then resolve itself into an act of reliance. If I believe a man when I am in trouble, and he says, “Now, sir, leave that with me; I will get you through”—I rely upon him to do it! I leave the matter in his hands and go my way.

This is the very core of saving faith. It is to say, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; I am a sinner; I will trust Him to save me. He, on the cross, made expiation for me, and I am at peace. My heart rests on the atonement which He has offered.” It is dependence, reliance, or as the old Puritans used to say, “recumbency”—leaning upon a friend because I have ceased to rely on myself. If He takes the burden, I stand aloof; His the weight, mine the relief, free from pressure, free from anxiety! That is faith; easy, artless faith; self-renouncing, God-honoring faith! It is unequivocal faith; faith taken in the simple common acceptance of the word, of the act, of the feeling; the very core, marrow, essence, soul of faith is reliance upon Jesus Christ, once offered for human sin, and now gone, covered with glory, up to the right hand of God to represent sinners within the veil! And this reliance, wherever it is true, may also be described as an acceptance of what God has set forth as a propitiation for sin; God has given His Son. Let me put it in other words; God Himself, because He could not tarnish His Justice, has descended to earth and taken up our nature—He has worn the clay garb of our humanity. God Himself has suffered, has died upon the cross as if He had been guilty; the judge has taken the culprit’s place and borne the vengeance due to the offender. He says, “Will you accept My substitution? Shall it be so? Are you willing that I should be in your place, that you may be in Mine?”

Sinner, I ask you now, and let your *heart* reply—are you willing that the scourging of Christ should be in the place of your being scourged? Are you agreeable that by His stripes you may be healed? Are you willing that His blood should be shed instead of your blood—His death instead of your eternal death? You say—

***“My faith does lay her hand  
On that dear head of Yours,  
While like a penitent I stand  
And here confess my sin.***

You Say, “I am all too glad to take this Substitute, this blessed substitute, and to accept God’s way of salvation.” Very well! You are saved then and there! Believing God’s testimony, relying on God’s Son, accepting God’s way of salvation—that is the faith that saves the soul! That is not

faith which says, "I am saved because I believe I am." That may be a lie. It is not a faith that says, "I feel so happy, and therefore I am saved." There are a great many who feel very happy, indeed, who will be lost! No, it is a faith that goes upon *principles*, upon the *truths of God* written in Scripture—neither upon excitement nor upon *feelings*! God gives Christ to save men, and Christ saves all who trust Him. I trust Him, therefore He saves me. I believe *God gave me* that trust; therefore I give all the glory to God! Having no works to boast of, I confess that I am saved through what Jesus did on my behalf! That is my first direction for your first dilemma.

I want to answer a few objections against this being the way of salvation. Let me ask you, however, what on earth is the good of your objecting? If God has made this to be *the way* of salvation, your best plan is to accept it; what good will your objections do? "Can I not do as I will with My own?" would be God's response to your impertinence! As surely as this book is God's Word, so surely are we taught there that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: he that believes not shall be damned." Now it is no use your kicking against it! There it stands and it will not be altered for anyone. Were this city starving, and a man of wealth were to bring in bread and distribute it, any regulations he chose to make for the distribution, he surely would have a right to enforce! Nobody ought to quibble at it. God has made and fixed this fast and firm—there is no other salvation. "There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." Man, woman, do not object! We sometimes say to boys who go out to business, and do not like the work, "It is no use quarrelling with your bread and butter." Surely the available supply of actual necessities ought to silence every murmur. What profit, I pray, sir, can you expect to come of quibbling at God's covenant, or challenging the propriety of His salvation which He has prepared before the face of all people? God has fixed it! He will not alter the thing that has gone out of His mouth; leave your objections for something else! Write to the newspapers, if you please, about some public grievance, but to impugn with indignation, or bemoan with bitter complaints God's way of salvation must be the most unprofitable, not to say the most impertinent and wicked way of wasting time! It is alleged that when we tell men to believe in Jesus and they will be saved, they will go on in sin—they will despise good works—they will, perhaps, grow immoral! The answer is this: *do they? Do they?* I quoted a very homely proverb just now. I will quote another quite as homely. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." And truly the proof of the doctrine is in the practical results!

Do the people that believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, renouncing all trust in their good works, plunge deeper into sin and make this a reason for licentiousness? Answer honestly. Turn to the pages of history, and see on a large scale the aspect of society. What do you think of the cavaliers of King Charles's day? They certainly were not believers in justification by faith! I do not know, exactly, what they *did* believe in, but I suppose had there been a preacher of good works, and the whole duty of

man who adorned moral essays with graceful language, sparkling wit, and aphorisms from heathen authors, these gallant gentlemen would have listened to the court preacher with a listless satisfaction, and gone home to their ladies to tell what a profitable sermon they had heard! But where do you look for social virtue among men, holy living before God, and noble sacrifices for the public good? Why, among your Puritans! Among the rough men that would do anything *but* sin, who feared no man's face in the day of battle, and who feared God in the sanctities of their private chambers and the secret recesses of their own hearts! Around Cromwell's campfires at night there may be many disputes about doctrines, but never a dispute about this question—that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ! All the world knows that the men who cry up good works have not got any stock in hand, or even a *sample* to show—while those who preach up faith in Jesus Christ are the very people whose biographies will bear to be written, and who exhibit the very works which this doctrine is supposed to destroy! Judge, therefore, by facts!

But if the doctrine of faith is such a wonderfully easy way of salvation, and when it is accepted men just go on as they did before, why do not all the licentious people receive it? Why do you not hear in the theater and the saloon the song sung—

**“I do believe—I will believe—  
That Jesus died for me”?**

If free grace is such a potent factor in the merchandise of free living, why not introduce it more freely among your harlots? Why does it not find favor among the gay and giddy, the fast and frivolous? Do men do that? No! Because the world knows that our *faith* will not blend with their *filth*! If any man among you would like to come up here and say, “I for one believe in Jesus Christ, and yet I lead a licentious life,” he would become known as a hypocrite among the sensuous and the Sybarites! It is all very well to bribe false witnesses who say that it leads to that, but you know it does not! The licentious are the last persons to talk about the atonement of Jesus Christ! Yet if it were so, if the expiation of Christ pleased in ever so small a degree, the Epicurean of the world, it would surely be one of the doctrines which the self-indulgent would seize upon with the greatest eagerness! No, sir, the man that lives in vice, and violates every precept of the Decalogue is just the man to make conscience of going on Good Friday to his church—there he takes the sacrament, and believes that he, somehow or other, gets absolution! At our Agricultural Hall services, and noonday prayer meetings, they will sneer because, they say, it is encouraging hypocrisy instead of putting down immorality, and so on. Yes, we know where the talk comes from—from men who lack a morality of their own! If they were to look at their true lives it would suffice.

Again, suppose we were to change the system of preaching, and preach that men were to be saved by good works—entirely by what they *did*? You say, “That would set them working!” Perhaps it would, or perhaps it would not—most likely the *latter*, for as a general rule it never has produced much result. Dr. Chalmers' experience was that he

preached morality till he had not any moral people left—and he did not see anybody converted to Jesus Christ. I believe you may preach against sin, but if you do not at the same time proclaim the way of salvation, you prevent shame, and leave men accusing one another and excusing themselves! Your model sermons would become monstrous travesties of honesty; in plain English, you would be preaching up *selfishness*! You say to these people, “Do this, that you may be saved.” What is, then, to be the objective of their life? *Self*-salvation! That is the one thing they are to live for—that they may somehow *merit* heaven. But it would be a doctrine that would pay extremely well! If you happen to be a priest, and need something that will really pay you for your services, I do not know anything better than to tell them that they will get to heaven by their benevolent actions, their deeds of charity, and *especially* their alms to the Catholic Church! And of course, you need to remind them that in their departing moments it will be *extremely useful* to leave a large sum of money for the benefit of the church, and much to the advantage of their souls! Oh, it is an excellent plan of picking their pockets! If men give in that way, they are giving to God, they say. It is a bald-faced lie! They are giving to *themselves*—seeking their own salvation! It is a pure system of selfishness from beginning to end, and he that lives to save himself is living with a mean purpose! I wonder how he can look himself in the face, and say, “God made me, and yet I am not living to His glory, but I am living to save myself.” I say, sir, that if your system could be worked out, and produce the best possible effect that could come of it, it would only be to reduce mankind into a race of *self-seeking men*, seeking self in a very fine garb, but still seeking self!

“How about faith?” you ask. Why, faith in Jesus Christ saves us from self! We believe in Him, and we are saved from that day, for we live not for *self*-salvation! We are saved, and now, out of love to Him who saved us, we live unto His praise and glory, this being our grand motive—that we might glorify Him, not seeking a reward, but, “As you have loved me, O ever loving Lord, so would I love You!” This is something better than selfishness; this is, in fact, salvation from self, which is no mean part of salvation from our sins. Pushing the matter still closer home, I would like to ask another question. You say that to tell a big evil sinner that God forgives him on the spot when he believes in Jesus is to encourage him in sin? Come then, and defend your hypothesis! Suppose that the man is led to believe that God has forgiven him; what will be the effect upon him? Think a little. Have you never heard of the effect of kindness upon men? Do you not believe in it? Some men are all for whips and chains; flog them; give them a term of penal servitude; exile them! That is the law, and it is supposed to be capable of working a wonderful reformation in their characters, but have you never heard of the effect of *kindness*? I will tell you a story of a Quaker. Isaac Hopper was in the streets of Philadelphia, and he heard a waiter swearing awfully. This waiter waited upon him in a hotel and he swore there. “Well,” said Hopper, “I must stop this man’s swearing.” So he brought him up, (it was many years ago), before the Philadelphian court, which then had a law that anybody who cursed

God should be fined. So Cain got fined. Some years afterwards Hopper was in Philadelphia, and he saw Cain, not in the white cravat of the waiter, but in rags. He had evidently been living a life of drunkenness; Hopper had desired this man's good, so he said to the man, "Cain, you have not much improved since I saw you last." No, he had not, and he had some bad ways. Hopper asked him if he did not remember when he had him brought before the Philadelphian court and fined for using bad language. Remember it?! He certainly did remember it! He would never forget the nasty trick that the Quaker had played on him! "Now," Hopper said, "Friend Cain, I meant your good; I really did desire your good." Cain said, "And afterwards I cursed at you dreadfully." So Hopper put his hand into his pocket with all the calculation of business, and he said, "Friend Cain, you were fined so much, and the interest upon it since then is so much; I can assure you I only meant your good, and now I give you this back." Then he proceeded to speak to him very kindly till big tears stood in Cain's eyes. And Cain said, "After all, Mr. Hopper, there is something better in the world than I thought there was." And it was the means of reclaiming the man; the fining did not do him good, as we generally believe it does on those of whom we speak as "worthless characters." Kindness—that's what set him right!

A more remarkable case was that of Penel, the master of the lunatic asylum in Paris, in the days of the convention. There were hundreds of people chained to the floor, and Penel sued the convention that they would allow him to set them loose. He proposed to let loose fifty furious savages first. Caithon, the president, said, "I will come down tomorrow, and see these creatures, and if you are concealing any of the enemies of the republic, death to you at the guillotine." And when Caithon went down they howled at him, like so many wild beasts, and he said, "I think you are maddest of all of them, but you may do as you like, though I am sure you will be the victim of it." There was one English captain in the house who had been chained there 40 years—chained down to the ground because he had got one of his hands loose and had killed a keeper—a savage, morose beast of the worst kind that could be. Penel went to him, and he said, "Captain, if I set you free, will you act like a rational being?" "Ah, that I would," said the man, "but you are all afraid of me—all of you." "No, I am not," said Penel, "I have got these men here who could manage you very well, but I will trust you, if you behave yourself rationally." Oh, he would behave very well, that he would—the very man who killed his keeper! And when his chains were taken from him he strove to stand, poor man, but for many minutes he could not because he had been chained down so long. At last he got up, and looked up at the sky, and could only say, "Beautiful! Beautiful! Beautiful!" And he became not only calm, quiet, and tractable, but made himself a sort of superintendent over the rest! I believe Penel was the means of bringing all the poor creatures that had been let loose, back to sober reason, and something like reasoning obedience of the laws under which they lived—simply by *kindness*. And has that been done by madmen? Why, it has been done by some of us who were worse than mad—mad with sin! We

have trusted them, forgiven them, been kind to them, and conquered them! And do you believe if the everlasting God says to a sinner, "Now, you will destroy yourself if you go on; I am angry with your sin, and though I hate your sin, I do not hate you. I have laid your sin on Christ; believe it." And will you think, if the man believes it, that he will rise up to be worse than he was before?

Human nature is bad enough, but after all, this is not the way of man! The cords of love hold us, and the bands of a man restrain us. I will ask you, sir, that makes the objection, if you could be met on the Tabernacle steps tonight, or at your own door by an angel who should say to you, "I have brought you this scroll fresh from the hands of the eternal God: on it is written, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn you; I have bought you with My precious blood: your sins, which are many, are all forgiven.'" sir, would the effect of that upon you be to make you live a worse life than you did before? You would be a devil—worse than a devil—if such were to be the consequence! But it could not be so. "I feel I must begin a new life"—that is what I want you to feel, and therefore I preach to you tonight, not as an angel with a scroll, but as a man, like yourself, with the Christ-inspired volume before me! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall have pardon for the past, and you shall, with the reception of that pardon, find a change come over your nature which shall inspire you with nobler purposes, and make you another man than you are at present! I might thus continue to speak, but I refrain; if the objection is not driven away by my feeble sentences, may God drive it away by His mighty Spirit!

Now my closing effort shall be to show the comparative power of faith. Paul says that faith works. It works by God's love—not by dread or fear, but by *His love*. Oh, blessed machinery is this! love shall be the great communicator—the great band which connects the mighty engine of faith with our lives—faith which works by love! Do you ask how faith works by love? Why, when a man believes God's Testimony, and sees that notwithstanding all his offenses, God loves him, and has provided His own dear Son to be a ransom for him, the man says, "My views of God are changed. I never understood that God was like this; I thought that He was very angry with me, that He would utterly destroy me and that without remedy. "Has God given *me* His only-begotten Son, and did that only-begotten Son bear for me what I ought to have borne? Then I cannot be His enemy! It was ignorance of what He is that made me indifferent to Him; my indifference begat insolence, and that made me oppose Him. His love has come into my soul, now, and I see who God is; God is love! God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." The man's mind is, by that very fact changed in regard to God, and having affected this revolution of feeling, you have gone a long way towards changing the man's actual life. The next step after that is repentance. The man says, "Well, I struggled against a mighty God who had made laws which I have broken, and only knew that He would punish me. I feared the worst; I felt case-hardened. I said, 'I will go on, for there is no hope.' But now I perceive that God has never done anything towards me for which I should hate

Him; He has never viewed me in a malicious spirit, but He has always regarded me with an eye to my good. I hate myself to think that I should have offended Him! Wretch that I am, that I should have lived 40 years denying the existence of One who has never forgotten me a single day! Wretch that I am, that I should have taken that name in vain which is a name above every name—the name that is to be my everlasting joy! O, my Father, my God, how could it be that I, Your child, should be Your foe? My Savior, my bleeding Savior, how was it that I could revile Your people, despise Your cross, and trample on Your blood? I grieve, for I have grieved You! I hate the sins that made You mourn! And now that I see that You forgive—I thank You.”

There is a change, you see, of the view the man takes of God, and then a change in the views which he takes of his own actions, and he repents in dust and ashes when he discovers the love of God. Yes, and faith works by His love yet farther, for faith leads to the foot of the cross, and says, “Look there.” And the soul stands and looks up! And as it looks, it lives! And as it lives, it loves! And as it loves, it weeps! And as it weeps, it again gazes upon Christ, and says, “Yes, He is the Son of God, and yet the greatest sufferer that ever lived! He was offended, yet He died! He it is whose laws were broken, yet the punishment of our sin was put on Him! And as we look into those wounds, and read those griefs, and as our eyes begin to penetrate within His flesh to see the heartbreak which He endured, and as the ear catches the sound of, “Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani,” and as our heart gazes into His side, and sees His heart that was broken, we begin to love and weep—and love and weep again! And then we say to ourselves, “What should I do for Him who died to save my wretched soul?” Sin becomes hateful, and we ask, “How can I please Him? How can I serve Him?” Then we wish we could die for Him, and as He does not ask us to do that, we pray that we may *live* for Him! Love to Him becomes the strongest incentive, the mightiest impulse, and the motive power that sways our entire being! Oh, I wish you felt it to be so in your own souls! It has been so in some of us, and now, forever more to us, to live is Christ! Now for the love we bear to His name, Christ has become the great objective of our being! And so faith, leading us by the way of gratitude up to the standpoint of love, begets in us a desire to please Him, and also a desire to imitate Him—for love, somehow, always grows like its objective. You cannot love a thing without becoming something like it, in proportion to the force of love. And just in proportion as you love Jesus, you must become like He. Oh, objector, would it hurt the world if men were to grow like Christ? Whatever you may think about the religion we have taken from His lips, I know you cannot speak against the *life* which He lived! And if faith in Him will make men like He—and it *has* made them like He, and *is making* them like He every day—it cannot be an evil and a licentious thing! It must, in fact, be the greatest power for morality, the greatest strengthener of social law and order, and the very best principle a patriot might desire to spread throughout the nation in which he lives! Talk no more about morality, I pray you! O bleeding

Lamb, the best morality is love to You! And where is it but in those who trust You with their soul, their all-in-all?

You will always find that those who thus, out of gratitude, desire to imitate Christ, inevitably become lovers of their fellow men. When we imitate Christ, we cannot be men-haters. To hate is not Christ, but the very opposite of Christ; our blessed Lord and Master is no man-hater. When I listen to a cynic, I know that Christ is not of his school; when I read sharp and cutting satire; when I have heard men spoken of in terms which make them to be brutes—at least a few dozen generations back, I know that that doctrine was not learned of Christ! My Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, was the poor man's friend! Never a syllable fell from His lips which would make a tyrant feel at ease in His despotism; never did He utter a syllable that would make the oppressive master feel that he had any right to tread down his workmen; never did He utter a line that would make the workman feel that he had the right to be envious of those who possessed more talents or enjoyed higher privileges than he had. His teaching was Justice, and His life was love! If you ask me for a man that all might respect—such a man as one would wish all men to be with whom we dwell—I can only commend you to the person and character of my Lord! And if you are to become imitators of Him, the husband will be the kindest husband, and the most loving of fathers! The mother will be the most tender and amiable of mothers, and of wives! If you have been forgiven by Christ, and so love Him mightily and imitate Him diligently—well, you will be such men and women that no pastor need be ashamed to say, “They belong to my flock!” And no fellow Christians need be ashamed to acknowledge you as one of their fraternity! Oh, beloved, there is growing in this country, I fear, more and more a feeling of alienation, the one from the other! I cannot speak as some do, of “the good old times,” for I believe the times were never as old as they are now, and never so good! But I do grieve to see that different classes are positioned against each other; it will be ill for our country if this jealousy goes on, for rivalries provoke resentments. God has given us preeminence among the sons of men in many respects, and if the house would not be divided against itself, it would prosper. If every one of us will resolve to love his neighbor as himself, and to seek his brother's good, each one seeking and satisfied with that which is just and equal, whether occupying the higher or the lower, or the middle place, from how many districts, manifold distractions would be averted! Yes, but if we will do more, and be generous, and kind, and loving, we shall be benefactors indeed, and bless our country! I do not know by what process we can be brought to do this so surely, and so reasonably as by our believing in Jesus Christ! Feeling gratitude and love to Him, then imitating Him, and then becoming like He, we shall verify in our triumph over the world, the virtue of that faith whereby, alone, the victory can be won!

One more remark: if you would have faith in Christ as the ground of justification, do not mix up this gift in your thoughts with anything else that has nothing at all to do with it. “Neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision.” These outward distinctions are of no conse-

quence; they might have made a great difference at another time, and under other circumstances, but “from now on know we no man after the flesh.” “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” Now, there may be, and most likely there are not a few of my hearers who are inquiring the way of salvation, but cannot understand it because they distract themselves with thoughts about themselves that are totally irrelevant. I think I can read the thought which is just now passing through the minds of many of you. “Oh,” you say, “I would like a few minutes conversation with the pastor!” But why? Have you any questions to ask? Is there any matter I have failed to make plain? Do you not understand, one and all of you, that entirely irrespective of anything about your birth, your bringing up, or your business, the simple direction of the gospel is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Suppose I listened to you? It would not be very difficult for me to conjecture what everyone would have to say. “Well,” says one, “I wanted to tell you, sir, that I was trained in the Established Church, and christened before I was three months old.” That means nothing! “Alas, sir!” says another, “You could not imagine the disadvantages of my childhood; my parents never went to church; they never had me sprinkled, or dedicated, or anything else. I was reared like a heathen!” Well, that is no detriment—it means nothing! “Why, sir,” says another, “I could repeat the Catechism, and I knew by heart all the collects before I was four years old.” “Alas!” says another, “I *never* was taught *anything!*” Know assuredly, my friends, that there is but one salvation for white men, or black men, for Pharisees, or publicans! When you believe in Jesus, you are born-again! Every trace of your former self is wiped out! I would that you counted yourselves dead and buried, that you might live the new life, and say with the Apostle, “The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.”

Some of you have been converted during the last few weeks; I hope a good many of you have. Some of you have been converted to God in this place. There are here present, I doubt not, those who have been brought to believe in Christ under various agencies piously and prayerfully conducted at this time in our metropolis. We greet you cordially. Our adversaries watch you narrowly. They say, “Well, but will they stand? Will they last?” “Is their conversion worth anything?” Now, I do pray that you who profess to have found Christ, do not make a sham of it; do let it be salvation from sin that you have. Salvation from hell—is that what you want? That is *not* the salvation you ought to try after. It is salvation from *sin*. That will bring salvation from hell! You know, every thief would like to get salvation from going to prison, but that would not be of any particular use to him. The salvation that is worth having is the salvation from *thieving* any more. Mr. Thief, if you get *that*, you will get salvation from prison, too! Salvation from hell is not the issue, but salvation from *sinning!* Now let us see how you live, you converts; you go home, sir, and growl at your wife. You go home, madam, to be snappish with your servant. You go home, housemaid, to be slovenly in your duties. You go home, working man, resolved to give half a day’s work for a whole day’s wage. You go

home, master, to act the tyrant over your men. Well, you have been converted, have you? I pray God to *undo* such a conversion, and begin again with you! There are lots of people who need to be *unconverted* before they are converted—to have the rubbish they have built up themselves pulled down before Christ can begin!

Suppose you have some freehold ground, and it has an old remarkable building on it; with a new edifice in view, you must clear away every vestige of the former house. There are plenty of people who have a good-for-nothing conversion that needs sweeping away before God does anything with them. Pray to the Lord in this way—“Lord, I beseech You save me from my sin; let me have a perfect faith which works; not a faith that sends me to sleep, not a faith that gives me a dose of opium, and says, “There, your conscience was like an aching tooth, and would not stop aching, but I have stopped it.” Now, ask the Lord to extract that which causes pain; to take away that which causes the mischief—not to give you quietness only for a time. Ask for a right spirit, and a new heart, and remember, you must be born-again. Though it is quite true as we say and sing, “Only believe and you shall be saved,” yet if that, “only believing” is of a sort which merely asserts without intelligence of the mind, without emotion of the heart, there is nothing in it! It leaves you what you were before—it is not the faith, pure and simple, that will save your soul! Evidently it will not save you, for it has left you still slaves to your sin. Real childlike faith in Jesus Christ saves us because it works by His love. The Lord grant you to possess this precious prize which we persistently preach—the faith which works by love.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 3:20.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—351, 544, 406.**

**[The original title of this sermon was *A Remonstrance and a Rejoinder*.]**

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# “DO YOU LOVE ME?”

## NO. 1281

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 27 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

**“Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?”  
John 21:16.**

THIS is a very short and simple text, and some would think it very easy to say all that can be said upon it, but indeed, it is a very large text, and too full of meaning for me to attempt to expound it all. The words are few, but the thoughts suggested are very many; there are subtle meanings, too, in the original Greek well worth considering, and allusions which deserve to be followed. I intend at this time to confine myself to one point, and to ask your consideration of one thought only. May the Spirit of God prepare our hearts for our meditation, and impress the truth of God upon them. My one point is this—*our Lord asked Peter whether he had a love to His person*. The inquiry is not concerning his love to the kingdom of God, or the people of God—it begins and ends with his love to the *Son of God*. “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” He does not say, “Do you now perceive the prudence of My warnings when I bade you watch and pray? Simon, son of Jonas, will you, from now on, cease from your self-confidence, and take heed to My admonitions?” It is not even, “Do you now believe My doctrines? Do you now trust in One whom, the other day you denied?” Neither is it asked, “Are you pleased with My precepts? Are you a believer in My promises? Will you still confess Me to be the Son of the Highest?” No, these matters are not brought under question, but the one inquiry is, “Do you love Me? Have you a personal attachment for Me, to My very self?” He calls him by his old, unconverted name, *Simon, son of Jonas*, to remind him of what grace had done for him, and then He asks only about his love; the question deals with personal attachment to a *personal* Christ—and that is my sole subject.

Observe that our ever wise and tender Savior questioned Peter about his love in plain terms. There was no beating about the bush; He went at once to the point, for it is not a matter about which ambiguity and doubt can be endured. As the physician feels his patient’s pulse to judge his heart, so the Lord Jesus tested at once the pulse of Peter’s soul! He did not say, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you repent of your folly?” Repentance is a very blessed grace, and very necessary, but it was wiser to look at once to Peter’s *love*, because it is quite certain that if a disciple loves his master, he will deeply grieve for ever having denied him. The Lord does not even ask His follower about his faith which might well have been put under question, for he had with oaths said, “I know not the Man.” It would have been a highly important question, but it was answered when Peter avowed his love, for he who loves, believes, and no man can love a

Savior in whom he does not believe! The Lord left every other point out of His question, or perhaps I ought rather to say *concentrated* every other point into this *one* inquiry—“Do you love Me?” Learn from this fact that one thing is necessary—love to Jesus is the chief, the vital point to look to!

This question the Lord asked three times, as if to show that it is of the first, of the second, and of the third importance—as if it comprised *all* else, and therefore He would again, and again, and again insist upon it—as orators dwell with repetitions and emphatic sentences upon topics which they would urge home upon their hearers. This nail was meant to be well fastened, for it is struck on the head with blow after blow! With unvarying tone and look, the Lord inquired, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” It shows what weight our Savior attached to the matter of his love, that He asked him about *that*, about *that only*, and about *that three times over!* When you are examining yourselves, look mainly to your hearts, and make thorough inquisition into your love. Is Jesus really loved by you? Have you a deep attachment to His person? Whatever else you trifle with, be earnest here!

Remember that the Lord Jesus asked the question, and He asked it until He grieved Peter. So long as he was but recognized as a *disciple*, Peter must have felt ready to receive the severest possible rebuke and think himself gently treated; therefore it was not easy to grieve him. Our Lord was slow at all times to cause pain to any true heart, yet on this occasion, for wise reasons, He reiterated His inquiry till He touched Peter’s unhealed wounds and made them smart! Had he not made his Master’s heart bleed? And was it not fit that he should feel heart-wounds himself? A threefold denial demanded a threefold confession—and the grief he had caused was fitly brought to his memory by the grief he felt. Now, this morning, if I press this question until I grieve some of you, till I also grieve myself, I shall not be censurable for having done so. To comfort you would be a good work, but sometimes it may be better to grieve you. Not always is sweet food the best thing we can bring you; bitter medicine is sometimes more important. I shall not have pushed the question beyond its legitimate sphere if I should so present it as to stir your hearts even to anguish! True love has more or less of pain about it; only the mere *pretender* passes through the world without anxious inquiry and heart-searching. Better far that you should be grieved today, and be found right at last, than that you should presumptuously feel yourselves secure, and be deceived in the end!

We remarked that the question was put by our Lord Himself. What if the Lord Jesus should meet you today and should say to each one of you, “Do you love Me?” If the question came at the end of one of our sermons, or just as we finished teaching, I should not wonder if it startled us. Found as we are, in His House, having just sung sweet hymns in His honor; having united in prayer, and heartily joined in His worship, it would seem strange to be questioned as to our love to Him, and yet it would not be unnecessary! Imagine, then, that your Lord has found you quite alone, and is standing before you; think of Him touching you with

His hand and gently asking, “After all, do you love Me?” How would you feel under such a question? Would you not be struck with it, and perhaps with shame begin to tremble and think over a dozen reasons why such a searching question was suggested to you just now? And if the Lord were to repeat it three times, and each time put it distinctly to *you*, and to you only, would you not feel great searchings of heart? Yet would I have you so receive the question! Let it come to you now as from Jesus! Forget that it is spoken by the minister, or written in the text; hear it only as spoken by Jesus, by that same Jesus who has redeemed you from death and hell by His most precious blood! He addresses it to you rather than to others—is there not a cause? Singling you out of the company, He gazes on you fixedly, and says, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?”—*you know* why there is such cause to question you! Answer for yourself, for He puts the inquiry only to you. Never mind Nathanael, or Thomas, or the two sons of Zebedee—“Do *you* love Me?” Does your heart beat true towards Jesus of Nazareth? Come, Peter, yes or no? You say, “Yes,” but is it so? Is it so? Is it so? I want the inquiry to come to my own soul and to yours this morning, as if Jesus really stood before each one of us and said, “Do you love Me?” May the Lord grant us grace to make solemn inquiry as to this matter, to bear honest witness, and to give a true answer which shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!

**I.** Our first observation shall be this—LOVE TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST MAY BE ABSENT FROM OUR HEARTS. Unhappy thought, and yet most certainly true! Even in *our* hearts there may be no love for Christ! I know of nothing which can screen any one of us from the necessity of the question. Our gifts and apparent graces may prevent our *fellow creatures* questioning us, but nothing should prevent our questioning *ourselves*, for certainly there is nothing which will prevent the Lord from putting the inquiry to us.

*No outward religiousness renders this inquiry needless.* Are we professors of religion? Are we very constant in attending to outward forms of worship? Do we enter very heartily into all the public exercises of God’s house? Yes, but there are thousands who do that, hundreds of thousands who do that every Lord’s-Day, and yet they do not love Christ! My brothers and sisters, are not multitudes wrapped up in forms and ceremonies? If the service pleases the eyes and the ears, are they not quite content? Love to the person of Christ has not occurred to the mass of avowed worshippers of Jesus! We know others to whom the end-all and be-all of religion is an orthodox statement of doctrine. So long as the preaching is according to the confession of faith, and every word and act is piously correct, they are well pleased; but no love to Jesus ever stirs their hearts! Religion to them is not an exercise of the heart at all—it is mere brain work, and hardly that; they know nothing of the living soul going out towards a living person, a bleeding heart knit to another bleeding heart, a life subsisting on another life, and in love with it. We know brothers and sisters who carry this very far, and if the preacher differs from them in the merest shade, they are overwhelmed with pious horror

at his unsoundness—and they will not hear him again, even if he preaches Christ most preciously in all the rest of his discourse. It is nothing, because he cannot say correctly their “Shibboleth.” What is orthodoxy without love, but a catacomb to bury dead religion in? It is a cage without a bird! The gaunt skeleton of a man, out of which the life has fled! I am afraid that the general current of church life runs too much towards externals, and too little towards deep burning love to the person of Christ. If you preach much about emotional religion, and the heart-work of godliness, cold-blooded professors label you as rather mystical, and begin to talk of Madame Guyon, and the danger of the Quietist school of religion. We would not mind having a little spice of that, even if we were blamed for it, for after all, the realizing of Christ is the grand thing! The faith which is most blessed is faith which deals most fully with the person of Jesus Christ! The truest repentance is that which weeps at the sight of His wounds, and the love which is most sweet is love to the adorable person of the well-Beloved. I look upon the doctrines of grace as my Lord’s garments, and they smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia. I look upon His precepts as His scepter, and it is a rod tipped with silver, and I delight to touch it, and find comfort in its power. I look upon the gospel ordinances as the throne upon which He sits, and I delight in that throne of ivory overlaid with pure gold, but oh, *His person* is sweeter than His garments, dearer than His scepter, more glorious than His throne! He, Himself, is altogether lovely, and to love HIM is the very heart’s core of true religion! But perhaps you may not love Him after all; you may have all the externals of outward religiousness, and yet the secret of the Lord may not be with you. It will be vain to reverence the Sabbath if you forget the Lord of the Sabbath! It is vain to love the sanctuary but not the Great High Priest; vain to love the wedding feasts but not the Bridegroom! Do you love ME? That is the question. “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love ME?”

*Nor, Brothers and Sisters would the highest office in the church render it unnecessary to ask the question.* Peter was an Apostle, and not a whit behind the very chief of them. In some respects he was a foundation stone of the church, and yet it was necessary to say to him, “Do you love Me?” There was once an Apostle who did not love the Lord; there was an Apostle who coveted 30 pieces of silver—a goodly price was that at which he sold his Master! The name of Judas should sound the death-knell of all presumptuous confidence in our official standing! We may stand very high in the church, and yet fall to our destruction! Our names may be in the list of religious leaders, and yet they may not be written in the Lamb’s book of life. So, my brother minister, deacon, or elder—it is necessary to put to ourselves the question, “Do you love the Lord?”

*The enjoyment of the greatest Christian privileges does not render this question unnecessary.* Peter, and James, and John were the three most favored of all the Apostles; they witnessed certain of our Lord’s miracles which were done in secret and beheld by no other human eyes; they beheld Him on the mount of transfiguration in all His glory, and they saw Him in the garden of Gethsemane in all His agony, and yet, though thus

avored, their Lord felt it necessary to ask of their leader, “Do you love Me?” O my brother, you have had high enjoyments, you have been on Tabor, illuminated with its transporting light, and you have also had fellowship with Christ in His sufferings or, at any rate, you think you have. You are familiar, alike, with inward agonies and spiritual joys! You have been the friend of the Lord, and eaten bread with Him, and yet remember, there was one who did this, and yet lifted up his heel against Him! Therefore it is necessary to say to you, my brother, “Do you love the Lord?” Do you *really* love Him, after all? For it is not certain that you do just because of what you have seen and enjoyed; it is easy to invent a remarkable experience, but the one thing necessary is a loving heart. Take heed that you have this!

Nor, my dear brothers and sisters, *does the greatest warmth of zeal prevent your necessity of this question.* Peter was a red-hot disciple; how ready he was both to do and to dare for his Master! How impetuously he cried when he was on the lake of Galilee, “Lord, if it is You, bid me come to You on the water.” What daring! What faith! What vehement zeal! And here too in the narrative before us, when the Lord was by that same Sea of Tiberias, Peter in his headlong zeal cannot wait until the boat touches the shore; he girds on his fisher’s coat, and plunges in to meet the Master whom he loves, and yet with that headlong zeal before Him, the Lord says, “Do you love Me?” Yes, young man, you are earnest in the Sunday school; you have sought the conversion of the little ones, and succeeded above many! You encourage others, and give impetus to every movement in which you engage, and yet you need to inquire whether you do, in very deed, love the Lord or not! Perhaps my dear brother, you stand up in the corners of the streets, and face the ungodly throng, and delight to talk of Jesus, whether men oppose or not. Yet are you *sure* you *love* Jesus? My sister, you visit the poor, and care for the needy; you lay yourself out to do good to young people, and are full of warmth in all things which concern the Redeemer’s cause. We admire you, and hope your zeal will never grow less—but for all that, even to *you* must the question be put—“Do you love the Lord Jesus?” There is a zeal which is fed by regard to the opinions of others, and sustained by a wish to be thought earnest and useful; there is a zeal which is rather the warmth of *nature* than the holy fire of grace! This zeal has enabled many to do great things, and yet when they have done all, they have been as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, because they did not love Jesus Christ! The most zealous actions, though they naturally lead us to hope that those who perform them are lovers of Jesus, are not conclusive evidence, and therefore we must still inquire, “Do you love the Lord?”

Yes, dear Friends, and I will go a little further—*the greatest self-denial does not prove it!* Peter could say, “Lord, we have left all and followed You.” Though it was not very much, yet it was all Peter had, and he *had* left it all for the good cause, without having gained any earthly good in return. He had been frequently abused and reproached for Jesus’ sake, and he expected to be reproached still more, yet he was loyal and willing to suffer to the end. Yet the Lord, knowing all that Peter had sacrificed

for His sake, nevertheless said to him, “Do you love Me?” Sadly, strangely true it is that men have made considerable sacrifices to become professed Christians, and yet have not had the root of the matter in them. Some have even been put into prison for the truth of God, and yet have not been sincere Christians. It is not for us to say, but it is to be feared that in the martyr days some have given their bodies to be burned, yet because they had not love, it profited them nothing. Love is essential; nothing can compensate for its absence, and yet this precious thing may not be in your hearts! O God, I tremble as I remember that perhaps it is not in mine! Let each one hear the question, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?”

I must press the point a little further still. It is often necessary for us to ask this question because there are other points of religion besides the emotional. Man is not all heart—he has a brain, and the brain is to be consecrated and sanctified. It is therefore right that we should study the Word of God, and become well instructed scribes in the kingdom of heaven. Peter went to college three years, with Jesus Christ for a tutor, and he learned a great deal—who would *not* from so great a teacher? But after he had been through his course, his Master, before He sent him to his lifework, felt it necessary to inquire, “Do you love Me?” Brother, you may turn over the pages of your Bible; you may digest doctrine after doctrine; you may take up theological propositions and problems, and you may labor to solve this difficulty, and expound that text. You may answer the questions till somehow or other, the heart grows as dry as the leaves of the volume, and the book-worm feeds on the *soul* as well as the paper, eating its way into the spirit. It is, therefore, a healthy thing for the Lord to come into the study, and close the book, and say to the student, “Sit still a while, and let Me ask you, ‘Do you love Me?’ I am better than all books and studies; have you a warm, human, living love for Me?” I hope many of you are very diligent students—if you teach in the Sunday school you ought to be; if you preach in the streets or in cottage meetings you ought to be. How shall you fill others if you are not full yourselves? But, at the same time, look most of all to the condition of your *heart* towards Christ; to know is good, but to *love* is better. If you will study, you can solve all problems. Yet, if you love not, you have failed to comprehend the mystery of mysteries, and to know the most excellent of sciences. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up; look well, then, to the question, “Do you love Me?” Much of Christian life ought to be spent in active labor; we are to be up and doing! If there was anything to do, Peter was the man to do it; he had gone forth to preach the gospel, and even the devils had been subject to him! Peter had worked marvels in Jesus’ name, and he was ordained to work yet greater wonders; yet despite all that Peter had done, his love needed to be examined. Even though those feet of Peter’s had walked the sea, which no other man’s feet had done, yet Peter must be asked, “Do you love Me?” He had just dragged that huge net to the shore with all that host of fishes, all 153, and it took great skill and mighty effort to draw the whole catch to shore, yet this did not prove his love.

There are preachers of the gospel among us who have dragged a full net to shore—the great fishes have been many! They have been great and successful workers, but this does not prevent its being necessary for the Lord to examine them as to their *hearts*. He bids them put aside their nets for a while, and commune with Him. Shut up the church book. Fold up the membership roll and have done counting your fishes! Come into your chamber; Jesus means to ask you something! “In My name you have cast out devils, but did you love Me? You cast the net on the right side of the ship, as I told you, but did you love Me? You drew to shore that catch of fishes, but did you love Me?” Brothers and sisters, this is the solemn fear, “Lest after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” Lest after bringing others to Jesus, and serving God well in the school, or in some other sphere, you should nevertheless make a dead failure of it, because you have not loved Jesus Himself! I must press the question again and again, and I pray the Holy Spirit to let its power be felt by every one of us! Possibly we may have been called to contend earnestly for the faith, and we may have been battling with the King’s enemies on this side, and on that, and standing up for the truth of God even as for dear life! It is well to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, for this age needs men who are not afraid to bear reproach for speaking out the truth of God with strong, stern words. But to this spirit it is most important that the question should come, “Do you love Me?” A man may be a very firm Protestant, but may not love Christ; he may be a very earnest advocate of divine truth, but he may not love Him who *is* the truth itself! He may maintain Scriptural views as to baptism, and yet he may never have been baptized into Christ. A man may be a staunch Nonconformist, and may see all the evils against which Nonconformity protests, but still he may be conformed to the world—and be lost, notwithstanding all his dissent!

It is a grand thing for every Christian warrior to look well to this breastplate, and to see that he can promptly reply to the question, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” Putting all together, let me say to you, beloved—however eminent you may be in the church of God, and however distinguished for services or for suffering—do not evade this question! Bare your heart to the inspection of your Lord! Answer Him with humble boldness while He says to you, again and again, even till He grieves you, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?”

**II.** We will now turn to a second head. WE MUST LOVE THE PERSON OF CHRIST, OR ALL OUR PAST PROFESSIONS HAVE BEEN A LIE. It is not possible for that man to be a Christian who does not love Christ. Take the heart away, and life is impossible; your very first true hope of heaven came to you, if it ever did come at all, by Jesus Christ! Beloved, you heard the gospel, but the gospel, apart from Christ, was never good news to you. You read the Bible, but the Bible apart from a personal Christ, was never anything more than a dead letter to you. You listened to many earnest entreaties, but they all fell on deaf ears until Jesus came and *compelled* you to come in! The first gleam of comfort that ever entered my heart flashed from the wounds of the Redeemer; I never had

a hope of being saved until I saw Him hanging on the tree in agonies and blood! And because our earliest hope is bound up, not with any doctrine or preacher, but with Jesus, our all-in-all, therefore I am sure, even if we have only lately received our first hope, we must love Jesus, from whom it has come! Nor do we merely begin with Him, for every covenant blessing we have received has been connected with His person, and could not be received apart from Him. You have obtained pardon, but that pardon was through His blood! You have been clothed in His righteousness, but *He* is the Lord, your Righteousness! He is Himself, your glory and your beauty; you have been cleansed from many sins by conversion, but it was the water from His opened side which washed you! You have been made the child of God, but your adoption has only made you feel more akin to the Elder Brother, through whom you are made heirs of God! The blessings of the covenant are none of them separate from Christ, and cannot be enjoyed apart from Him any more than light and heat can be divided from the sun! All blessings come to us from His pierced hands, and therefore if we have received them, we must love Him! It is not possible to have enjoyed the golden gifts of His unbounded love without being moved to love Him in return; you cannot walk in the sun without being warmed, nor receive of Christ's fullness without being filled with gratitude!

Every ordinance of the Christian Church, since we have been converted, has either been a mockery, or else we have loved Christ in it. For instance baptism—what is it but the mere washing away of the filth of the flesh, and nothing more unless we were buried with Christ in baptism unto death? Like as He rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also might rise to newness of life! The Lord's Supper, what is it? What but a common meal for the eating of bread, and the drinking of wine, unless Christ is there? But if we have come to the Lord's Supper as true men, and not as false-hearted hypocrites, we have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood—and is it possible to have done that and *not* to love Him? It cannot be! That communion with Christ which is absolutely essential to ordinances, is also sure to produce in the heart love towards Him with whom we commune. And so, beloved, it has been with every approach we have made towards God in all the long years of our Christian life! Did you pray, my brother? Did you really speak with God in prayer? You could not have done it except through Jesus the Mediator. And if you have spoken to God through the Mediator, you cannot remain without love to one who has been your door of access to the Father! If you have made a profession of religion, how can it be a true and honest one unless your heart burns with attachment to the Great Author of salvation? You have great hopes, but what are you hoping for? Is not all your hope wrapped up in Him? Do you not expect that when He shall appear you shall be like He is? You are hoping to die triumphantly, but not apart from His making your dying bed soft as a pillow of down; you are hoping to rise again, but not apart from His resurrection, for He is the first fruits of the resurrection harvest; you expect to reign upon earth, but it is with Him. You do not expect a millennium apart from the

King! You expect a never-ending heaven, but that heaven is to be with Jesus where He is, and to behold His glory! Since, then, everything that you have obtained—if indeed you have received it from the Lord—has Christ’s name stamped on it, and comes to you direct from His pierced hands, it cannot be that you have received it unless you love Him! Now, when I ask the question, remember that upon your answer to it hangs this alternative—a hypocrite or a true man; a false professor or a genuine convert; a child of God or an heir of His wrath. Therefore answer the inquiry, but answer it with deliberation; answer it conscientiously, as though you stood before the bar of Him who now so tenderly inquires of you, but who will then speak in other tones, and look with other glances, even with those eyes which are like a flame of fire, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?”

**III.** Our third consideration is this—WE MUST HAVE LOVE TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST OR NOTHING IS RIGHT FOR THE FUTURE. We have not finished life yet—a long pilgrimage may possibly lie before us; now all will go right if we love Christ, but nothing can proceed as it should if love to Jesus is absent. For instance, Peter is called to feed the lambs, and feed the sheep, but for a true pastor, the first qualification is love to Christ. I gather from this incident, and I am sure I do not press it unduly, that Jesus Christ, meaning to make Peter a feeder of His lambs and sheep, acts as a tester to see whether he has the proper qualifications. And He does not so much inquire about Peter’s knowledge or gifts of utterance, as about his *love*, for the first, second, and third qualification for a true pastor is a loving heart. Now, mark, what is true of a pastor is true of every useful worker for Christ. Love is essential, my dear friend. You cannot work for Christ if you do not love Him! “But I can teach in the school,” says one. “No, not as school *should* be taught, without love to Jesus.” “But I am connected with an interesting society, which is doing much good.” But you are not glorifying God unless you are connected with that society because you love Jesus Christ. Put down your tools, for you cannot work profitably in my Lord’s vineyard unless your heart loves Him; His vines had better be untrimmed than be pruned by angry hands. Let the lambs alone, sir; you will never rear them if your heart is hard and ungentle. If you do not love the Master, you will not love His work, or His servants, or the rules of His house—and we can do better without you than with you! To have an unloving worker grumbling about the Lord’s house and vineyard would be distressing to the whole family! Love must be in the heart, or true service cannot come from the hands.

Then again, perhaps *suffering* lies before you—and if your heart is not true to Christ, you will not be able to patiently endure for His name’s sake! Before long the time came for Peter to glorify God by death; Peter has to be girded and to be taken where he would not. Now, can he be fit for martyrdom if he does not love Jesus? Tradition says that he was crucified with his head downwards because he felt it too much honor to be put to death in the same position as his Lord. It may be so. No doubt he was put to death by crucifixion, and it was his strong, deep love which

made him more than a conqueror. Love makes the hero. When the Spirit of God inflames love, He inspires courage! See then, O believers, how much you need love for the future! Young Christian, you will have to run the gauntlet before you enter heaven; I do not care what sphere of life you occupy, you are very particularly favored if somebody does not mock you and persecute you! Between here and heaven you will be tried, and perhaps your foes will be the men of your own household! Many will watch for your stumbling, and even place stumbling blocks in your way; to walk steadily you will need to carry the fires of love in your heart. If you do not love Jesus intensely, sin will get the mastery over you. Self-denials and humiliations, which would be easy with love, will be impossible without it! Rightly to work, or to suffer, or to die, we must love Jesus with all our hearts.

Look, my brothers and sisters, if we have no love for Jesus Christ's person, our piety lacks the *adhesive element*; it fails in that which will help us to stick to the good old way to the end, and hold out to the end. Men often leave what they like, but never what they love; men can deny what they merely believe as a matter of mental conviction, but they will never deny that which they feel to be true and accept with heartfelt affection. If you are to persevere to the end, it must be in the power of His love.

Love is the great *inspiring force*! Many a deed in the Christian life is impossible to anything but love. In serving Christ you come across a difficulty far too great for judgment, far too hard for prudence, and unbelief sits down and weighs and calculates. But love, mighty love, laughs at the impossibility, and accomplishes it for Jesus Christ. Love breaks through troops. Love leaps over walls, and hand-in-hand with faith, she is all but omnipotent! No, through the power of God which is upon her, she can do all things for Jesus Christ her Lord! If you lack love, your energy is gone; the force which nerves the man, and subdues his foes is lacking.

Without love, too, you are without the *transforming force*. Love to Christ is that which makes us like He is. The eyes of love, like windows, let in the Savior's image, and the heart of love receives it as upon a sensitive plate until the whole nature bears its impression! You are like that which you love, or you are growing like it. If Christ is loved, you are growingly becoming like He; but without love you will never bear the image of the heavenly. O Spirit of God, with wings of Your love brood over us till Christ is formed in us!

My brothers and sisters, there is one other reflection—without love for Christ we lack the *perfecting element*. We are to be with Him soon. In a few more weeks or months, none of us can tell how few, we shall be in glory. Yes, you and I! Many of us shall be wearing the white robes, and bearing the palm branches. We shall only buy two or three more almanacs, at the outside, and then we shall keep no more reckoning of days, for we shall be where time, with its little eddies and currents, shall be forgotten in the eternal rainbow of the ages! But if we do not love Jesus, we shall not be where He is; there are none in heaven that have not first learned to love Him here below, so we *must* have love for Jesus—the fu-

ture imperiously demands it, and therefore I put the question with all the greater seriousness and vehemence, “Simon, Son of Jonas, do you love Me?”

**IV.** But now I will suppose I have received an answer from you, and you are able to say you *do* love Jesus. Then my fourth and closing head must be, IF WE DO LOVE HIM, WHAT THEN? Why then, if we do love Him, let us *do something* for Him, for Jesus Christ replied to Peter the moment he said, “You know all things, You know that I love You”—“Feed My sheep.” Very kind, it was, of the Savior, because He knew from His own heart that wherever there is love, there is a desire for *activity*. Because Jesus loved so much, therefore it became His meat and his drink to do the will of His heavenly Father. And so thinks Jesus—“Peter loves Me, and his heart will ache if I do not give him something to do. Go and feed My lambs, go and feed My sheep.” Brother, sister, if you love Christ, do not idle away this Sunday afternoon! If you love Christ, get to work! What are you doing? Are you attending to the means of grace and getting a good feed? Is that all? Well, that is doing something for *yourself*. Many people in the world are very busy at feeding—among the most active with knife and fork—but I do not know that eating a man’s bread is any proof of love to him! A great many professing Christians give no proof of love to Christ except that they enjoy sermons. But now, if you love Jesus Christ as you say you do, prove it by doing good to others—“Feed My sheep.” I see a company of brethren met together to hold a conference, and to grow in grace. Very excellent, indeed—grow away, brothers and sisters, as fast as ever you can—I like to see you as a flower garden, all a-growing, all a-blowing. But when you have done all that, I pray you do not congratulate yourselves as though you had done a mighty fine thing, because there is nothing in it unless it leads you to *work for others!* To publish accounts of such happy gatherings is like telling the poor people of Whitechapel that the Lord Mayor and Aldermen had a fine banquet of turtle soup. Suppose I read that you have had a splendid series of meetings? Well, I am glad you enjoyed yourselves, but the point is this—if there is anything in it, get to work! If you love Christ, feed His sheep and lambs. If it is not all talk; if it is not all much ado about nothing; if it is not all fuss—get to soul-winning! Get down among the poor and needy! Get down among the lost and wandering! Get down among the dark and ignorant, and hold forth Jesus Christ as the balm of Gilead, and the Savior of sinners! After all, this is the test of how much you have grown in grace; this is the test of your higher life; this is the proof of how much you have become like Jesus! What will you do for Him? For if you do not go now, and feed His sheep, and feed His lambs, it does not matter what you say or what you think you enjoy—you do not give that proof of love which Jesus asks for!

I put it in this final word—when next you teach your classes or your own families—do it for love of Jesus! Say to your heart, “I love Christ, and now I am going to teach for love of Him.” Oh, there will be a grand class this afternoon, my sister! You will get on mightily if you teach for love of Him—every word you say will be powerful since it is suggested by

love of Him! That girl who makes so much noise, and troubles you so much, you will bear with her for love for Him! That restless young urchin, you cannot get the truth into him—you tell him many tales, and when you have done, he wants another; you will patiently give him another for the love of Christ! When you pray with the little ones, pray because you love them for Christ’s sake! You are going to preach, do the preaching for love of Christ! We sometimes do it because it is our turn to do it, but it should never be so; you know how delightfully servants will wait upon you if they do it for love. You have been out for a few weeks, and at last you come home. Look at the room! What a welcome it is before you! They have half destroyed the garden to bring in the flowers to make the table look nice for you! That supper—well, it is just the same supper that any Mary or Jane would have cooked, but see how it is put upon the table! Everything seems to say it is done for love of master and mistress, to show our affection and respect for them—and you enjoy it indescribably, because it tells of love! Now, tomorrow and as long as you live, do everything out of love to Christ! It will spread flowers over your work, and make it look beautiful in His eyes. Put love’s fingers to work, love’s brains, love’s eyes, love’s hands—*think* with love, *pray* with love, *speak* with love, *live* with love, and in this way you will live with power, and God will bless you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 21.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—786, 787, 640.**

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# CONVERSIONS DESIRED

## NO. 1282

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 5, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great  
number believed, and turned unto the Lord.”  
Acts 11:21.***

THE brethren who had dwelt together in church fellowship at Jerusalem were scattered abroad by persecution which arose about Stephen; their Master had told them that when they were persecuted in one city, they were to flee to another; they obeyed His command, and in the course of escape from persecution they took very long journeys—very long journeys indeed for that age of the world, when travel was exceedingly difficult! And wherever they found themselves, they began at once to preach Jesus Christ, so that the scattering of the disciples was also a scattering of good seed in broader fields; the malice of Satan was made the instrument of the mercy of God! Learn from this, dear brothers and sisters, every one of you, that wherever you are called to go, you should persevere in making known the name and gospel of Jesus; look upon this as your calling and occupation! You will not now be scattered by persecution, but should the demands of business carry you into different countries, employ your distant travel for missionary purposes. Providence, every now and then, bids you move your tent—take care that wherever it is pitched, you carry with you a testimony for Jesus! At times the necessities of health require relaxation and change of air, and this may take you to different places of public resort—seize the opportunity to encourage the churches in such localities, by your presence and countenance, and also endeavor to spread the knowledge of Jesus among those to whom you may be directed. The position which you occupy in society is not an accidental one; it has not been decreed to you by a blind, purposeless fate; there is *predestination* in it, and that predestination is wise, and looks towards a merciful end. You are placed where you are that you may be a preserving salt to those around, a sweet savor of Christ to all who know you! The methods of divine grace have ordained a happy connection between you and the people with whom you associate; you are a messenger of mercy to them, a herald of good tidings, an epistle of Christ. The surrounding darkness needs you, and therefore it is written, “Among whom you shine as lights in the world.” You are intended to warn and rebuke some, to entreat and encourage others; to you the mourner looks for comfort, and the ignorant for instruction; let them never look in vain. Be the true friend of men; observe their condition before God, and endeavor to reclaim them from their wanderings. If Joseph was sent to Egypt that he might save his father’s house, you also are sent where you are for the sake of some hidden ones of the Lord’s chosen family. If Esther was placed in the court of a heathen king for the deliv-

erance of her nation, so are you, my sister, called to occupy your present position for the good of the church of Christ. Look to it, brothers and sisters, lest you miss your life's calling, and live in vain! It would be a sad thing indeed if you who profess to belong to Christ should be "creation's blot, creation's blank," by having failed to work while it is called today!

These good people of the early church, with all their zeal were somewhat narrow-minded and hampered by their national prejudices, for they preached at first to only Jews, and it was very hard to make them see that the gospel was meant for the whole race of man, Gentiles as well as Jews. Their Master had said, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," and yet they began with preaching only to Jews; words could not have been plainer, and yet they missed their meaning. It is not to be wondered at that some in our day are still unable to preach to men as men, when we see how slow the early saints were to learn the lesson. Brethren, if there is any narrowness about our spirit, let us pray the Lord to take it away! We shall not, of course, be shackled as these Jews were by boasting of our nationality, but perhaps there may be classes of society of whom we despair, and therefore for whom we make no effort. We say, "It would be useless to attempt the conversion of such characters; I feel myself quite able to talk to other persons, and although I am placed in the midst of *these* people, I cannot bring my mind to speak with them about spiritual things, for I feel hopeless of success." Beloved, may you be delivered from this snare, and learn to sow beside all waters! The Gentiles, though they were for a while passed over by the brethren, turned out to be the most hopeful of all classes. From the Gentile fields they reaped harvests such as were never gathered in Judea! Antioch, with its Grecians, became famous among Christian churches—there the church of Christ first took its name amid a revival of religion when great multitudes believed and turned unto the Lord! God had from of old intended that the great majority of the election of grace should be gathered out of those very Gentiles whom even the Apostles themselves, scarcely ventured to address! Now then, my brother, in the light of this incident, begin to work where as yet you have done nothing—begin to hope where up to now you have despaired! Throw out your best energies in that very direction in which you have felt most hampered, for there awaits you to your own intense surprise, a success which will amply reward you. You need not restrict yourselves to lands familiar with the plow—invade the primeval forest; fell the ancient trees, and clear the broad acres—that virgin soil will yield you harvests a hundredfold such as you will never find in fields where others have labored before you! If your spiritual mining has become a failure, open fresh lodes of the precious metal, for veins of treasure lie concealed in the unbroken ground. Launch out into the deep! Let down your nets for a catch, and multitudes of fish shall crowd the net! It seems to me to be the obvious teaching of the text that wherever we are cast, we should try to do good, and that we may hope for the largest success among the most neglected portions of society.

Coming closely to the text, I desire to press upon you this morning, with great earnestness, the need of the conversion of men, and the desir-

ableness that we should have many converted *here*. And I shall suggest what we can do to produce that result. In all these I beg to be assisted by the Holy Spirit, without whose aid I shall only exhibit my own weakness, and deaden those energies which I long to awake! These will be our heads—first, *the end we aim at*—that many may believe and turn unto the Lord; secondly, *the power by which this can be attained*—“The hand of the Lord was with them”; thirdly, *the desirableness of our objective*, and fourthly, *how we may promote its attainment*.

**I.** Let us speak upon THE END WHICH WE DESIRE. It may seem very commonplace, but it is in fact one of the grandest designs under heaven; he who contemplates it has a higher aim than philosopher, reformer, or patriot; he aims at that for which the Son of God both lived and died! We desire that men may believe; that is to say, first, that they may believe the testimony of Jesus Christ to be true, for there are some who have not attained as far as that; they reject altogether the inspired word, and to them the incarnation, the redemption, the resurrection, the glory, and the second advent are so many old wives' fables. You to whom these truths are the light of your lives can scarcely realize the power of the unbelief of this kind, and yet some men live and die in its gloom! We pray that they may be taught better, and that the evidence of these great facts may be forced home upon them; alas, there are many who *profess* to believe these things, but their only reason for doing so is that they have been taught so from their childhood, and it is the current religion of the nation! They regard the inspiration of Scripture, and so on as matters about which it is not expedient to trouble themselves—they do not care one way or the other about them. They find it the easier and more respectable plan to admit the truth of the gospel, and think no more about it; such a vain complimentary belief is rather an insult to our holy faith than a thing to be rejoiced in! But, dear friends, we need more than this faith of indifference which is little more than dishonest unbelief! We need men to believe for themselves because they are *personally convinced*, and have felt in themselves the saving power of Christ Jesus! We pray that nominal believers may treat the doctrines of revelation, not as dogmas, but as *facts*; not as opinions, but as *truths of God*—as surely facts as the events of history, as much truths as the actual incidents of everyday life, for alas, the grand doctrines of the eternal truths are frequently treated as venerable nonentities, and have no effect whatever upon the conduct of those who profess to receive them because they do not realize them as matters of fact, or see their solemn bearings! It is shocking to reflect that a change in the weather has more effect on some men's lives than the dread alternative of heaven or hell; a woman's glance affects them more than the eye of God! We therefore desire to see men really and truly believing the facts of the gospel in an honest, practical manner,

We cannot, however, be content with this! We labor *that those around us may savingly believe by putting their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ*; this is the grand saving act—the man brings his soul, and commits it to Christ for safe keeping; and that entrusting of the soul to Jesus saves him! He makes the Savior trustee of his spiritual estate, and leaves himself and all his eternal interests in those dear hands which once were

nailed to the cross! Oh, how we long to see the Holy Spirit bringing men to this, that they may believe in Jesus Christ by resting in Him, and trusting upon Him! For this we live; for this we would be content to die that many might believe!

The end we aim at is that men may so believe in Jesus that they may be altogether changed in their relation towards God, for “many believed *and turned unto the Lord.*” What does that mean? It means that these heathen gave up their idols, and began to worship the only Living and True God! We desire, dear Hearers, that faith in the Lord Jesus may lead you to give up the objects of your idolatrous love—yourselves, your money, your pleasures, the world, the flesh, the devil, and there are even some whose God is their belly, and who glory in their shame! When a man believes in Jesus Christ, he puts away his false gods, and worships the great Father of Spirits; he makes no inferior objective the aim of his being, but from then on lives for the glory of God! This is a glorious turning, a complete conversion of the man’s heart and soul!

To turn to God means not merely to forsake the false god for the true, but to turn from the love of sin! Sin lies that way, but God’s glory lies in the opposite quarter; he who looks sin-ward has *his back to God*; he who looks God-ward has *his back to sin*! It is blessed conversion when men turn from the folly of sin to the glory of God! With weeping and supplication do men so turn, confessing their wrongdoing, lamenting their transgressions, abhorring their evil lusts, desiring pardon, and hoping for renewal of their nature. Precious in the sight of the Lord are the tears of penitence, and the sighs of contrite hearts! We can never be satisfied with the results of our ministry unless faith leads man to hearty repentance towards God, an intense loathing of their sins, and *an actual forsaking of them.*

To turn to God means that from now on God shall be sought in prayer; “Behold he prays” is one of the indications of a true convert; the man who lives without prayer lives without God, but the man who has turned to God is familiar with the mercy seat. What a turning it is when the eyes are turned upward to seek the Lord—with the solemn glances of the eyes when none but God is near! To turn to God means to yield obediently to His sway, to be willing to do what He bids, to think what He teaches, and to be what He commands! Faith is nothing unless it brings with it a willing and obedient mind. Willful rebellion is the child of unbelief—sincere obedience is the offspring of humble believing. “They believed, and turned unto the Lord.” We want men to turn so that their whole life shall be a going towards God, growing more like He, a closer communing with Him, leading on to the soul’s becoming perfectly like He, and dwelling forever where He is.

Now, dear friends, when I speak thus of believing and turning unto God, some will say, “Well, but that must be a very easy matter, only to believe and turn.” Yes, my brothers and sisters, it appears simple, but it is none the less, vitally *essential.* “He that believes on the Lord Jesus has everlasting life; but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed.” You say, “Why make all this stir about it?” Because upon this apparently little matter depends the present and eternal condi-

tion of the sinner! To believe and to turn to God is to be delivered from the present dominion of sin, and from the future punishment of it; to be without faith and without God is to be without joy here, and without hope hereafter! Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is what you and I must aim at in all our attempts to influence our fellow men! It may be useful to reform them, but it is far better that grace should regenerate them! God speed every effort to promote sobriety, chastity, thrift, honesty, and morality—but you and I are sent for something *more* than this—our work goes deeper, and is more difficult! It is not ours to wash the African, but to seek to change his skin; we do not so much pray that the lion may be tamed as that he may be turned into a lamb; it may be well to lop the branches of the tree of sin, but our business is to lay the axe at the root of the trees by leading men to turn to God; this is a change, not merely of the outward conduct, but of the *heart!* And if we do not see this result—if men do not believe and turn to God—we have labored in vain, and spent our strength for nothing and in vain. If there is no believing and turning to the Lord, we may go to our secret chambers, and bewail ourselves before God because none have believed our report, and the arm of the Lord has not been revealed! Praying in the Holy Spirit, and depending upon His power, push on with this one sole objective. Drive at it, you teachers in the Sunday school; do not be satisfied with *instructing* the children—labor to have them converted! Drive at it, you preachers—do not believe that you have done your work when you have taught the people—you must never rest till they believe in Jesus Christ! Pursue this end in every sermon or Sunday school address—throw your whole soul into this one objective—aim at it saying, “This one thing I do.” Yours must not be a cold inculcation of an external morality, but a warm enthusiasm for an inward *regeneration!* You are not to bring men to believe in themselves, and so become self-made men, but to lead them to believe in Jesus, and to become new creatures in Him! There is our end and aim—are we all alive to it?

**II.** Secondly, let us consider THE POWER BY WHICH THIS CAN BE ATTAINED—“The hand of the Lord was with them.” None ever believe in Jesus except those in whom God’s arm has been revealed, for Jesus says, “No man can come to Me except the Father, which has sent Me, draws him.” But, brother ministers, in answer to prayer, that power *has been revealed* among His people, and is with them still! His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, neither has He withdrawn it from His church. Be encouraged while I suggest to you a few thoughts. The hand of God is upon many of our friends before we speak to them. It is most pleasant to me, when I am seeing inquirers, to observe how God makes ready the hearts of my hearers; I am studying a certain subject, and praying to God for a blessing on it—and upstairs in a chamber, which I have never seen, one of my hearers is being made ready for my message! He is struck with a sense of sin, or troubled with uneasy thoughts, or rendered hopeful of better things—and thus he is being made ready to accept the Christ whom I shall preach to him! Yes, and ready to accept that particular form of the gospel message which the Spirit of God gave me when I preached! There on a sick bed will lay a woman painfully ex-

exercised with the sad memory of her sinful life, in order that when she comes up to the house of God, every word may have power over her! Sickness and pain, shame and poverty often produce a condition of mind most hopeful for the reception of the gospel. A man well-to-do in circumstances has been ruined in business; he despairs of happiness below, and therefore comes to hear the gospel, made willing to seek his happiness above! Another has lately felt failures of bodily strength, and so has been warned that life is frail—and thus he is prepared to listen to the admonitions which speak of eternity! Courage, minister of God! You are nothing, but the Almighty God is with you! When you lift your hand to build the house of the Lord, omnipotence works with you, and names your labor a success; every revolution of those awful wheels, so ponderous that even the prophet said, “O wheel!” is working to accomplish the objective which is near your heart; the stars in their courses fight for you! The stones of the field are in league with you! Eternal wisdom plans for you, infinite power works with you, divine patience perseveres with you, and almighty love will conquer by you! “The hand of the Lord was with them.” What more do we need? Sow, brother, for God has plowed! Go up and build, for God has prepared the stones, and made ready the foundation!

Moreover, the hand of the Lord is with His people in helping the teachers and preachers themselves. There are strange impulses which come over us at times, which make us think and say what otherwise had never crossed our minds—and these work with His power upon men’s minds! If you will live to win souls it shall be given you in the same hour what you shall speak; you will often say to an inquirer what you would not have beforehand arranged to say, but God who knows that inquirer’s heart better than you do, has prevented your saying what you would have liked to have said, and has led you to say what you afterwards judged to be a mistake! My experience teaches me that we are often wise in our ignorance, and as often foolish in our wisdom; we have frequently done best when we felt that we did but badly, and if we will but trust God, and be whole-hearted in the winning of souls we shall have a power assisting us in our speech of which the greatest orator in the world is not aware! Speak in the House of Commons for a party, and you will have to look *within* for aid, but speak in the House of the Lord, and you may look *upward for spiritual aid*. The poet invokes the fabled muses, but for you, O servant of the Lord, there is real help from a higher source! Think of this, you workers, and be encouraged! Besides providence and the gracious help by which good men speak, there is a distinct work of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of men where the gospel is preached. Not only is the Spirit in the Word, but over and above that, in His own elect, God works most effectually so His truth is rendered irresistible. Let us never forget where our great strength lies, for in this matter we must rely alone upon the Spirit of God! How often has God worked in the power of His grace by making men feel the majesty of the word? They come perhaps to hear the preacher out of idle curiosity; they look for something which shall amuse them—but the truth of God comes home to them and searches their heart! Simple as the language is, “As if an angel spoke they hear the sol-

emn sound.” And it goes through them like a dart, and they cannot help feeling, “Surely God was there, and He spoke with me!”

The Spirit of God makes men remember their sins; they try to forget them, but sometimes they cannot. Sad memories steal over them, and wholesome regrets fatigue their very souls; men who have been giddy, careless, and forgetful, have all of a sudden found themselves turning over the pages of their old diaries, and with thoughtfulness reviewing the past. All this leads to repentance and faith! That same Spirit makes men see the beauty of holiness; they cannot help admiring it, though they are far from it; they are charmed with the loveliness of the character of Jesus, and begin to feel that there is something about it which they would wish to imitate. When the preacher proclaims the way of salvation, the same Spirit leads men to admire it, and to say within themselves, “There is something here which human wisdom could never have devised”—and they begin to long for a share in it! A wish takes possession of their heart, as though some strange bird from an unknown land had flown into their souls, and had amazed them with a new song! They do not know where the desire came from, but they feel strangely bound to entertain the stranger. Sometimes the Spirit blows like a hurricane through men’s hearts, and they have been borne along by His power without the will to resist; as when a tempest rushes across the sea, and drives the frail boat before it helplessly, so have I known the divine Spirit sweep away the peace and quiet of the soul’s self-righteousness, stir up the deeps of inward trouble, make the soul reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man—and impel the heart forward to the iron-bound coast of self-despair where every false hope and vain-glorious trust has been wrecked forever! Glory be to God when this is the case, for then the soul is driven to cling to Jesus!

Yes, brothers, it is not the preacher and it is not altogether what the preacher says, but there is a power abroad, as potent as that by which the worlds were made! Unbelievers sometimes ask, “Where is your God?” O sirs, if you once felt the power of the great Spirit, you would never ask that question! “Since the fathers fell asleep,” they say, “all things continue as they were.” But this they willingly are ignorant of, that new creations are being worked every day; that there are men and women alive in this world who are neither liars nor enthusiasts, who can declare that upon their spirit the eternal power and Godhead has operated and changed them; it has conquered them, and holds them as willing captives to its supreme Majesty! Yes, brothers, there is a hand of the Lord, and that hand of the Lord is still with His people! If it is not, then we shall see no believing and no turning to God; but since it is still at work among us, let us work on, for as surely as we live we shall see great numbers converted to God, and God will be glorified!

**III.** Let us now dwell upon THE DESIRABLENESS OF CONVERSIONS. It is no new thing to you and to me to see many believing and turning to God. These 22 years God’s hand has been stretched out—we have had no spasm of revival; we have not alternated between furious spurts, and sudden lulls. But month by month, I think I might say Sunday by Sunday, souls have been saved, and the church has grown exceedingly, and

God has been glorified. What we have enjoyed we desire to retain—yes, we would have more! The Lord says to us what he said to the church at Philadelphia, “Hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown,” and our crown is the crown of soul-winning, which we must hold fast, for we cannot endure to lose it! This must be our crown, that we have preached the gospel, both minister and church members, and have been all of us soul-winners! We desire this because first of all, we desire to see the truth of God, godliness, virtue, and holiness extended. Who among you does not? Does not every good man wish others to be good; every honest man wish others to be honest? Does not every man who loves his family desire that other families should be well-ordered? Oh, then, if there were no nobler reason, you may desire that men may be converted, since conversion is the root of everything that is pure and lovely, and of good report!

You desire too that your fellow creatures should be happy, but there is no such happiness as that which springs out of reconciliation to God! The peace which you enjoy through pardoned sin must surely make you desire that others may possess the same! If religion is indeed a source of perennial joy to yourself, you are inhuman if you do not wish others to drink of it! brothers and sisters, as you would make eyes sparkle; as you would make countenances radiant with delight; as I know you would spread gladness on all sides—desire above all things that your children, your relations, your neighbors, and your friends should be converted to God! Thus shall thorns and briars give place to myrtles and roses, and deserts shall be turned into gardens of the Lord!

I am sure you also desire conversions because you feel the dreadful hazard of unconverted men. You have not yet subscribed to the modern doctrine that these men and women around you are only two-legged cats and dogs, and horses, and will ultimately die out and *cease to be*. You believe in the God-given *immortality* of human souls—a heritage from which no man can escape, the noblest of all man’s endowments—in itself the highest of all gifts, though sin may pervert it into the direst of all evils! You would have scant motives for desiring men’s conversion if you did not believe that there is another and everlasting state! But believing that men live hereafter, and exist forever, I am sure you must be eager that men may escape from the wrath to come. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, you would persuade men! Judging that there is one of two things for them all, either “These shall go away into everlasting punishment,” or else “The righteous into life eternal,” you can never rest until you feel convinced that those about you are partakers of eternal life! Look at any unconverted person, and your sympathies should be awakened; if I saw tokens of fever, or marks of consumption in the face of anyone I loved, I would be struck with alarm! What then must I feel when I see damnation—as I do see it—in the face of every unbeliever? How is it that we are not more distressed than we are when men are perishing in their sins? Why, my brethren are we not more intent upon the conversion of men? Let these questions humble us, and cause great searchings of heart. It is a shame to us that we have so little of the mind of Christ; so little compassion for men’s souls.

Moreover, brothers and sisters, self-preservation is a law of nature, and the church can never preserve herself except by increasing from the world by *conversion*. Where are the preachers for the next generation? Today they are among the ungodly, and we must labor to bring them to God! Where are the stones that are to make the next course in the walls of our Zion? They are not quarried yet, and we must, by God's grace, excavate them! We who now labor for the Lord will soon go our ways; our thrones and crowns are waiting for us, and the angels are beckoning us away. Who will fill our places? Who will bear the banner? Who will blow the trumpet? Who will wield the sword? We must find new champions in the ranks of the foe—they must be born unto God, and we must pray that this may be accomplished by our instrumentality!

Seek conversions *for Christ's sake!* You know the agony and bloody sweat—shall these be spent in vain? You know the nailing to the cross, and the shriek of “Why have You forsaken Me?” Shall these be unrewarded? You have thought over and trusted in the bitter pangs of your Redeemer's death—shall He not see of the travail of His soul? Shall He not be satisfied? These lost sheep are His sheep, for which He shed His precious blood! These lost pieces of money are His money, and they bear His Image and superscription—shall they not be found? These lost sons spending their living in riotousness are His brothers, children of His Father—do you not desire, for Jesus' sake, that they should be brought home?

Dear friends, what joy it will be to yourselves if men believe and turn to the Lord by your means! I put that motive last, and hope it will not be the strongest, but it may yet be one of the liveliest. What joy it will be to yourselves if you see many converted! Somebody has asked, “If the heathen are not evangelized, what will become of them?” I will put another question of a far more practical character. If *you* do not *try* to evangelize the heathen, *what will become of you?* Do not so much inquire about *their* destiny as your own if you have no care for their salvation! He who never seeks the conversion of another is in imminent danger of being damned himself. I do not believe in any man's salvation who is wrapped up in self! Assuredly he is not saved from *selfishness!* I cannot believe in any man possessing the Spirit of God who is indifferent to the condition of others—one of the *first* fruits of the Spirit is love! Even as flowers at their very first blooming, shed their perfume, so do the saved ones, in their earliest days of grace, desire the good of their fellows. I know that one of my earliest impulses, when I first looked to Christ, and lost the burden of my sin, was to tell everybody around me of the blessings I had received, for I longed to make others as happy as I was. I fear that you who never try to win souls lack an essential part of the Christian character. I leave the question with your own consciences.

**IV.** Fourthly, let us inquire, WHAT WE CAN DO TO PROMOTE CONVERSIONS. Conversion is God's work. It cannot be worked without His hand; without Him we can do nothing; our hands are far too puny for such a work. The power of the first disciples, and our own lies in the fact mentioned in the text—“The hand of the Lord was with them.” Still, there are certain circumstances under which that hand will work, and there

are hindrances which will restrain it. Let us think for a while. First, then, if sinners are to be converted, *we must distinctly aim at it*. As a rule, a man does what he tries to do, and not that which is mere by-play. The conversion of sinners is not one of those things which a man is likely to accomplish without intending it. Sometimes in the sovereignty of God, a preacher who does not aim at conversion may nevertheless be made useful, for God works as He wills. But as a rule, men do not win souls if they do not eagerly desire to do so; fishing for men cannot be carried out by throwing in the net without caring whether fish are caught or not! Few traders become rich by accident—they generally have to plod and work hard for money; and to be rich in treasures of saved souls you must aim at it, and labor for it. I am struck with astonishment as I think how many sermons are preached, how many Sunday school addresses are given, how many religious books are written of which you are quite sure that the intention was *not* immediate conversion! It is thought that in some unknown way these good things may accidentally contribute to men's salvation, but they are not aimed at as their present objective! Ah, brother, if you want men to come to Christ, you must preach Christ to them with all your heart—with this design—that they may *immediately* close in with Christ and at once give their hearts to Jesus! Yes, and you are to pray that they may do so through the present effort which you are making for their good. There is the target, and if you continue to shoot into the air long enough, an arrow may strike it; but, man alive, if you want to win the prize of archery you had better fix your eye upon the white, and take your aim distinctly and with skill! If an individual would win souls, he must bend his whole soul to it, and make it the objective of his whole energy!

Next to that we must take care, if we would have souls won, that we press upon them the truths which God usually blesses. Shall I read to you the verse before my text? Here it is—"They spoke unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus, and the hand of the Lord was with them." Now, if we do not preach Jesus Christ, we shall not see souls saved! There are certain forms of doctrines which condemn themselves by working out their own extinction. Did you ever hear of a minister whose preaching leaned towards Unitarianism, but what the congregation sooner or later began to diminish? Though many such preachers have been men of great ability, they have not as a rule been able to keep the dead thing on its feet! You shall go into our small towns, and you may find an ancient chapel which was once an Independent, or a Presbyterian, or it may be a Baptist chapel; but if you see over the door, "Unitarians," you have, as a rule, seen all that there is, for there is neither church nor congregation worthy of the name—frequently the place is never opened at all, and the grass grows knee deep on the path to the door! Even when these little places are used, you will generally find that they contain half a dozen nobodies who think themselves everybody as to intellect and culture! It is a religion of the utmost value to spiders, for those insects are able to spin their webs in the meeting houses without fear! Who ever heard; who will ever hear of a Unitarian Whitefield, or a Socinian Moody gathering 20,000 people to listen to a Christless gospel? It is a phenome-

non which never has been seen, and never will be! Men's instincts lead them to turn away from a creed which contains so little which can solace the troubled soul.

If we want souls saved, we must equally avoid the modern intellectual system in all its classes. "Oh," cries somebody, "you should hear the great Mr. Bombast. It is—Oh, I cannot tell you what it is, but something very wonderful! It is an intellectual treat." Just so, but how many conversions are worked by this wonderful display of genius? How many hearts are broken by fine rhetoric? How many broken hearts are healed by philosophy? So far as I have observed, I find that God does not save souls by intellectual treats!

Certain views as to man's future are equally to be kept clear of if you would be the means of conversion. Diminish your ideas of the wrath of God and the terrors of hell—and in that proportion you will diminish the results of your work! I could not conceive a Bunyan or a Baxter, or any other great soul-winner, falling into these new notions, or if he did, that would be an end to his success! Other crotchets and novelties of doctrine are also to be left alone, for they are not likely to promote your objective, but will most probably divert men's attention from the vital point. Dear brothers, if you want a harvest, look well to your seed! Time was when gardeners threw all the little potatoes on one side for seed, and then they had bad crops. Now I have seen them pick out the very best, and put them by! "We must have good seed," they say. If I had to sow my fields with wheat, I would not take the tail seed; I should grudge no expense about seed, for it would be false economy to buy any but the very best! Go preach, teach, and instruct with the best doctrine, even that of God's Word, for, depend upon it, though the result is not in *your* hands, yet it very much depends upon *what* you teach! O, eternal and ever blessed Spirit, guide Your servants into all truth!

Next to this, if you want to win souls for Christ, feel a solemn alarm about them; you cannot make them feel if you do not feel yourself. Believe their danger; believe their helplessness; believe that only Christ can save them, and talk to them as if you meant it. The Holy Spirit will move them by first moving you; if you can rest without their being saved, they will rest too! But if you are filled with an agony for them; if you cannot bear that they should be lost, you will soon find that they are uneasy too. I hope you will get into such a state that you will dream about your child, or about your hearer perishing for lack of Christ—and start up at once, and begin to cry, "O God, give me converts or I die!" Then you will have converts—there is no fear about that; God does not send travail pangs to His servants without causing them to abound in spiritual children! There will be new births to God when you are agonizing for them!

But let me add, *there must be much prayer!* Delight to be at prayer meetings where the brethren will not let the Lord go except He blesses them! When a brother prays, choking as he speaks, tears rolling down his cheeks as he pleads with God to have mercy on the sons of men, I am always certain that sinners are ordained to be blessed when I see saints thus compelled to plead with God for them! In your closets alone, at your family altars, and in your gatherings for prayer, be *importunate*, and the

hand of the Lord must and will be with you! Cry aloud and spare not; plead as for your lives, and bring forth your strong arguments, for only by prevailing with God will you be enabled to prevail with men.

Then there must be added to prayer *direct personal effort on the part of all of you*. Great numbers may be saved by my preaching if the Holy Spirit blesses it, but I shall expect *larger* numbers if you *all* turn preachers; if every brother and sister here becomes a witness for Christ. Are you lazy? Are any of you beginning to sleep? I charge you, wake up! By the love you bear to Jesus, and by the love you bear to your fellow men, begin at once to seek the conversion of those who dwell around you. O my beloved, do not become lukewarm! My heart fails me at the very thought! If you are earnest, I live—if you grow slothful, my spirit dies within me!

Last of all, if you want to see many converts, *expect them!* “According to your faith so be it unto you.” Look out for them; believe that God will bless every sermon, and go hunting after the sermon, to see where the converts are. As a company of butlers and camp-followers generally follow every army—and after a battle go up to strip the slain—so if you cannot preach, I would have you follow after the warriors to gather in the spoil. No one needed to urge the voracious spoilers to prowl over the field of Sedan or Gravelotte, but now it even seems necessary to persuade you to collect a far nobler prey! Come up! Come up, you servants of the Lord, and divide the spoil with the strong! Christ has fought your battle; His arrows have been sharp in the hearts of the King’s enemies; His two-edged sword has struck right and left—come up, you sons of Jacob, to the prey and gather in the converts as your spoil! Speak with the young converts; cheer the broken hearts; comfort the seekers, and bring into His palace trophies for your Lord! Verily, I say unto you, if you look not for conversions, neither shall you obtain them! And you cannot blame the Lord—you are not straitened in Him—but in your own hearts! God bless you, beloved, and may we have a larger increase to this church during the next month than we have had for years past, that our God may have greater praise!

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 11.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—887, 450, 881.**

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# CONVERSIONS ENCOURAGED

## NO. 1283

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 12, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But if from there you shall seek the Lord your God, you shall find Him, if you seek Him with all your heart, and with all your soul. When you are in tribulation, and all these things are come upon you, even in the latter days, if you turn to the Lord your God, and shall be obedient unto His voice; (for the Lord your God is a merciful God); He will not forsake you, neither destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore unto them.”  
Deuteronomy 4:29-31.***

LAST Lord's-day the title of my discourse was “Conversions Desired”—(See #1282, Volume 22—by the *grace* of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in Modern English, and more than 574 Spanish translations, visit: [www.spurgeongems.org](http://www.spurgeongems.org)) and my earnest prayer to God has been that the effect of this morning's sermon may be conversions accomplished! I cannot be happy unless I indulge the hope that some will this morning turn to God with full purpose of heart, led to do so by the power of *divine grace*. For this I sought the Lord, and at this I resolved to aim. I asked myself, “What is the most likely subject in the hand of the Holy Spirit to lead men to the Lord? Shall I preach the terrors of the Lord, or shall I proclaim the sweetness of divine mercy? Each of these has its proper use, but which will be most likely to answer our design today?” I remembered the fable of the sun and the wind; these rival powers competed as to which could compel the traveler to cast away his cloak. The wind blew boisterously, and tugged at the garment as if it would tear it from the traveler's shoulders, but he buttoned it closer about him, and held it firmly with his hands. The battle was not to the strong and threatening. Then the sun burst forth from behind a cloud, when the wind had ceased its blustering, and smiled upon the traveler with warmth of kindness until he loosened his cloak, and by-and-by was glad to take it off altogether; the soft, sweet influence of the sun had vanquished where the storm had raged in vain! So I thought, perhaps if I preach the tender *mercy* of God and His readiness to forgive, it may be to my hearers as the warm beams of the sun to the traveler, and they will cast away the garments of their sin and self-righteousness. I know that the arrows of God's love are keen, and wound many hearts which are invulnerable to the sword of His *wrath*. O that these sacred darts may win the victory this day! When ships at sea apprehend a storm they will gladly make for an open harbor, but if it is doubtful whether they can enter the port they will rather weather the tempest than run the risk of being unable to enter the harbor's mouth. Some havens can only be entered when the tide happens to be at the flood, and therefore the captain will not venture; but when the welcome signals are flying and it is clear that there is plenty of water,

and that they may safely run behind the breakwater; they hesitate no longer, but make sail for the shelter. Let seeking souls know this day that the Lord's harbor of refuge is open, the port of free grace can be reached, that there is sea room for the largest transgressor, and *love* enough to float the greatest sinner into port! Ho, weather-beaten vessels, you may come and welcome! There is no need that even for a solitary hour you should run the risk of the tempest of almighty wrath; you are invited to find shelter and to enjoy it NOW!

It is rather singular that having these ideas floating in my mind, and desiring to preach free grace and abounding mercy, that I should have found my text in Deuteronomy. Why, that is a book of the law, and is plentifully besprinkled with terrible threats! And yet I find a gospel theme in it, yes, and one of the very richest! As I read it I admired it for its context as well as for its own fullness; it seems to me so pleasant to find this lily among thorns. As in the wintry months of the opening year one finds a crocus smiling up from the cold soil, and in its golden cup offers a taste of the sunlight which summer will more fully bring, so amid the uncongenial pages of the law I see this precious gospel declaration, which like the spring flower assures us that God's *love* is yet alive, and will bring us happier times. My thoughts also likened this passage to the water which leaped from the smitten rock, for the law is like a rock, and the Pentateuch is hard and stern as granite; but here in its very heart we find a crystal spring of which the thirsty may drink! I likened the text also to the manna lying on the desert sand, the bread of heaven glittering like a shining pearl upon the barren soil of the wilderness. Here amid the fiery statutes of the law, and the terrible judgments threatened by the God of Sinai, you see this manna of His mercy dropped about your tents this morning, as fresh, I hope, to you as if but newly fallen. May you eat of it and live forever!

Let us come to our text at once. The Lord here encourages sinners to turn to Himself, and find abundant *grace*; He encourages sinners who had violated His plainest commandments, who had made idols, and so had corrupted themselves, and had consequently been visited with captivity, and other chastisements—He invites them to turn from their evil ways, and seek His face! I feel moved to say at the commencement of this discourse that if the text has any limited aspect, if it is to be regarded as uttered to any special character among transgressors, it peculiarly belongs to *backsliders*; for the people to whom it was first addressed were the people of God, but they had set up idols, and so had wandered; and it is to them chiefly, though not to them exclusively, that these encouragements to repentance are presented. And probably there are some backsliders here who once stood in the church of God, but have been cut off from there, who once were very zealous and earnest in the cause of God, but have now become utterly indifferent to all religion. I charge such to take this text home to themselves; take every syllable of it into your own heart, Backslider; read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the same—and may the text bring you to your knees and to your God! It gives you a pointed invitation to return from your wanderings, and end

your weary backslidings by coming once more to your Father's house, for He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of mercy which He has made on your behalf! Happy are you that you may return! Happy shall I be if you return! I thought I would lay special stress upon this, because the Lord Himself, and His ministers with Him, rejoice more over one lost sheep that returns to the Shepherd of souls than over 99 that went not astray! There is rejoicing when a man finds a treasure which he never had before, but it is scarcely equal to the joy of the woman who found the piece of money which was hers already, but which she had lost. Glad is the house when the baby is born, but deeper is the joy when the lost son is found! My soul longs to see the Lord bring home His banished ones, and to be the means of gathering His scattered ones!

Still, the text is fully applicable to all sinners—to all who have corrupted themselves, and done evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger. The Ever-merciful encourages them to turn to Him with full purpose of heart by assuring them that He will not forsake them! There seems to me to be in the text three points which should induce an earnest seeking of His face at once, for here is, first, *a time mentioned*; secondly, *a way appointed*, and thirdly, *encouragement given*.

**I.** First, then, in the text there is A TIME MENTIONED. Look at it—"from there you shall seek the Lord...When you are in tribulation, and all these things are come upon you, even in the latter days."

The time in which the Lord bids you seek Him, O you unforgiven ones, is first of all, "*from there*," that is, from the condition into which you have fallen, or the position which you now occupy. According to the context of the text, the offending Israelites were supposed to be in captivity, scattered among various nations, dwelling where they were compelled to worship gods of wood and stone, which could not see, nor hear, nor feel, nor eat, nor smell; yet "from there"—from the unhallowed heathen villages, from their lone sorrows by the waters of Babylon, from their captivity in far-off Chaldea, they were bid to turn unto the Lord and obey His voice! Their surroundings were not to be allowed to hinder their prayers. Perhaps, dear friend, at this time you are dwelling among ungodly relatives; if you begin to speak about religion, you are put down at once; you hear nothing that can help you in the way to better things, but very much that would hinder you; nevertheless do not delay, but, "*from there*," even from *there*, seek the Lord, for it is written—"If you seek Him, He will be found of you." It may be you are living in a neighborhood where everything is hostile to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and injurious even to your morals. Time was, and you may remember it with regret, when you were a child upon the knee of a pious mother, when you spent your Sundays in the Sunday school, when the Bible was read in your house every day; but now all these helps are taken from you, and everything around is dragging you down to greater and yet greater sin. Do not, however, make this a reason for delay; as well might a man refuse to go to a physician because he lives in an unhealthy locality, or a drowning man refuse a life-boat because a raging sea surrounds him! Hasten rather than slacken your speed! Do not tarry till your position improves; do not wait till you

move into a godly family, or live nearer to the means of grace, for if you seek Him “from there” He will be found of you!

But you will tell me that it is not so much your regret that others are ungodly among whom you dwell, but that you yourself are in a wretched condition of heart; you have followed after one sin and another until evil has become a habit with you, and you cannot shake it off; like a rolling thing before the whirlwind, you are driven on—an awful force impels you from bad to worse! Awake yourself for immediate action! If you wait till you have conquered this evil force by your *own* strength; if you delay to turn unto God until you are free from the dominion of sin; then assuredly you will wait forever, and perish in your folly! If you could vanquish evil by your own power you would not need to seek the Lord, for you would have found salvation in *yourself*; but be not so infatuated as to dream of such a thing! Today, “from there,” from the place where you now are, turn your face to your Father who is in heaven, and seek Him through Jesus Christ! Remember that hymn which ought to be sung every Sunday in our assemblies—

***“Just as I am—and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To You, whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come.”***

Every verse begins with, “Just as I am,” and so must your prayers, your faith, your hope begin. The whole hymn commences, “Just as I am,” and so must your Christian life be started.

The Lord invites you *as you are*, and *where* you are. Are you one of a godless family, the only one in the house who has felt any serious thought at all? Come, then, and tarry not, for the Lord invites you! Are you the one man in a large workshop where all the rest are irreligious? Admire His sovereign grace, accept the call, and from now on be the Lord’s! The Lord invites those of you who have gone to the ends of the earth in sin, and brought yourselves into captivity by your rebellion. Today, even *today*, He bids you seek Him “with all your heart and with all your soul.”

With regard to the time of turning, it is well worthy of our notice that we are especially encouraged to turn unto the Lord if we are in a painful plight. Our text says, “When you are in tribulation.” Are you sick? Have you felt ill for some time? Does your weakness increase upon you? Are you apprehensive that this sickness may even be unto death? When you are in such tribulation, then you may return to Him. A sick body should lead us the more earnestly to seek healing for our sick soul. Are you poor, have you come down from a comfortable position to one of hard labor, and of scant provision? When you are in this tribulation then turn to the Lord, for He has sent you this need to make you see your yet greater necessity, even your need of Him! The empty purse should make you remember your soul poverty; the bare cupboard should lead you to see the emptiness of all your carnal confidences, and accumulating debts should compel you to calculate how much you owe to your Lord. It is possible that your trials are very bitter at this moment because you are expecting to lose someone whom you dearly love, and this is like tearing half of

yourself away. One dear child is hardly cold in the tomb, and your heart is bleeding when you think of that loss—and now another is sickening and will follow the first. When you are in this tribulation, be sure to seek the Lord, for His pitying heart is open to you, and He will sanctify this grief to noblest purposes. Is it possible that I speak to one whose sins have become so open as to have been punished by the law of the land? Have you lost your character? Will none employ you any longer? When you are in this tribulation, then turn to your Lord, for He will receive earth's castaways, and make criminals His sons! Have you suffered from the just verdict of society because you are vicious, dishonest, and disreputable? Are you, at this time, despised and looked down upon? Yet even to you would I say when you are in tribulation, when every door is shut, when all hands are held up against you; even then seek the Lord, and He will be found of you! If your father scarcely dares to think upon your name; if you have been a grief to your sister's heart, and have brought your mother's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, yet now, even in this shameful estate, when you are in tribulation, turn to the Lord your God!

Doubtless there are some people who will never be saved unless they come into tribulation; their substance must all be spent, and a mighty famine must come upon them! The citizens of the far country must refuse them aid, and with hungry bellies they must stand at the trough and be willing to feed with the swine, or else it will never occur to them to say, "I will arise and go to my Father." No matter how deep your trouble, your safest and wisest course is to flee to God in Christ Jesus, and put your trust in Him!

Notice further, when you feel that the judgments of God have begun to overtake you, then you may come to Him; "When you are in *tribulation* and *all these things*—these threatened things—*are come upon you.*" There are many in this world who feel as if their sin had at last found them out, and had commenced to be a hell to them. The manslayer has overtaken them, and is striking at them with terrible blows. "Ah," says one, "my great sins have provoked God at last, and all men may see what He has done to me, for He has removed my choicest mercies from me. I despised a father's instruction—that father is dead; I did not value my mother's tears—my mother sleeps under the sod; the dear wife who used to beg me to walk to the house of God with her—I slighted and treated her with unkindness, and death has removed her from my bosom! The little child, who used to climb my knee, and sing its little hymns and persuade me to pray, has gone too! God has found me out at last, and begun to strip me; these are only the first drops of an awful shower of His wrath from which I cannot escape. Alas, while one mercy after another is removed, my former joys have been embittered, and are joys no more. I go to the theater as I used to do, but I do not enjoy it; I see beneath the paint and the guilt, and it seems a mockery of my woe! My old companions come to see me, and they would sing me the old songs, but I cannot stand them; their mirth grates on my ears—at times it seems to be mere idiotic yelling! I used to get alone and philosophize, and dote upon many things which af-

forded me comfort, but now I find no consolation in them—I no longer have joy of my thoughts; the world is dreary, and my soul is weary; I am in the dry and yellow leaf, and all the world is fading with me! What little joy I had before has utterly departed, and no new joy comes; I am neither fit for God nor fit for the devil. I can find no peace in sin, and no rest in religion. Into the narrow way I fear I cannot enter, and in the broad way I am so jostled that I do not know how to pursue my course! Worst of all, there is before me a dreadful outlook; I am filled with horrible apprehensions of the dread hereafter; I am afraid of the harvest which must follow the sad seed sowing of my misspent life; I have a dread of death upon me; I know not how near it may be, but it is too near, I know, and I am not prepared for it! I am overwhelmed with thoughts of the judgment to come; I hear the trumpet ringing in my ears when I am at work; I hear the messengers of God's justice summoning me, and saying, 'Come to judgment, come to judgment, come away.' A fearful sound is in my ears, and I, where shall I go?" Hear, O sinner, and be comforted, for *now* is the appointed time for you to seek the Lord, for our text says, "When all these things are come upon you, if you turn unto the Lord your God, He will not forsake you neither destroy you."

There is yet one more word which appears to me to contain great comfort in it, and it is this, "*even in the latter days.*" This expression may refer to the latter days of Jewish history, though I can scarcely think it does, because the Jews are not now guilty of idolatry. I rather think it must refer to the latter days of any one of their captivities, and in *our* case to the latter days of life. Looking around me I see that many of you are advanced in years, and if you are unconverted I thank God I am as free to preach Christ to you as if you had been children or young men and women! If you have spent 60 or 70 years in rebellion against your God, you may return, "even in the latter days." If your day is almost over, and you have arrived at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, when the sun touches the horizon, and evening shadows thicken, still He may call you into His vineyard, and at the close of the day give you your penny! He is long-suffering, and full of mercy, not willing that any should perish! And therefore He sends me out as His messenger to assure you that if you seek Him, He will be found of you, "even in the latter days." It is a beautiful sight, though it is mingled with much sadness, to see very old men and women become babes in Christ. It is sweet to see them, after they have been so many years the proud, wayward, self-confident masters of themselves, at last learning God's wisdom, and sitting at Jesus' feet. They hang up in the cathedrals and public halls old banners which have long been carried by the enemy into the thick of the fight. If they have been torn by shot and shell, so much the more do the captors value them; the older the standard the more honor is it, it seems, to seize it as a trophy! Men boast when they have carried off—

***"The flag that braved a thousand years  
The battle and the breeze."***

Oh, how I wish that my Lord and Master would lay hold on some of you worn-out sinners, you who have been set up by the devil as standards of

sin! O that the Prince of the kings of the earth would compel you to say, "His *love* conquers even me!"

I will not leave this head till I have said that it gives me great joy to be allowed to preach an *immediate* gospel to you—a gospel which bids you turn to God, and find *present* salvation! Suppose for a moment that the gospel ran thus—"You, sinner, shall be saved in 12 months time if you turn to God." Oh, sirs, I would count the days for you till the 12 months were gone! If it were written, "I will be found of you in March, 1877," I would weary over you till the auspicious season arrived, and say, "Maybe they will die before His mercy's hour has struck! Spare them, good Lord!" Yes, and if it were true that God would not hear you until next Lord's-Day I would like to lock you up and keep you out of harm's way, if I could, till that time arrived, lest you should die before the promised hour! If there were any way of insuring your lives, though you had to give all that you have for your soul, you might be glad to insure your life till next Lord's-day! But, blessed be God, the promise does not tarry! It is NOW; "*Today* if you will hear His voice." The gospel does not even bid you wait till you reach your home, or get to your bedside, but here and now—in that pew, and at this moment, if you seek Him with all your heart, and with all your soul, the Lord Jesus will be found of you, and present salvation shall be immediately enjoyed! Is it not encouraging thinking that *just now* the Lord is waiting to be gracious?

**II.** But now, secondly, let us look at THE WAY APPOINTED. To find His mercy, what are we bid to do? "If from there you shall seek the Lord your God." We have not, then, to *bring* anything to God, but to *seek* Him. We have not to seek a righteousness to bring to Him, nor seek a state of heart which will fit us for Him, but to seek *Him* at once! Sinner, you have offended God, none but God can forgive you, for the offenses are against Him! Seek Him, then, that He may forgive you. It is essential that you seek Him as a real existence, and a true person, believing that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. It is all in vain to seek sacraments, you must seek Him; it is idle to go through forms of prayer or to utter customary phrases of devotion, you must seek Him! Your salvation lies in God, sinner, and your seeking must be after God! Do you understand this? It is not going to your priest or to your clergyman, or to your Bible or to your Prayer-book, or even to your knees in formal prayer—you must draw near to God in Christ Jesus, and *He* must be found of you as a man finds a treasure, and takes it to be his own. "But where shall I find Him?" one asks. When they sought God of old they went to the mercy seat, for there the Lord had promised to speak with them. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ is that mercy seat, sprinkled with precious blood, and if you want to find God, you must seek Him in the person of Jesus Christ! Is it not written, "No man comes unto the Father but by Me"? Jesus is the *one* Mediator between God and man, and if you would find God, you must find Him in the person of Jesus the Nazarene, who is also the Son of the Highest. You will find Jesus by believing Him, trusting Him, and resting upon Him. When you have trusted Jesus, you have found God in Jesus, for He has said, "He that has seen Me, has

seen the Father.” Then have you come to God when you have believed in Jesus Christ. How simple this is! How unencumbered with subtleties and difficulties! When God gives grace, how easy and how plain believing is! Salvation is not by *doing*, nor by *being*, nor by *feeling*, but simply by *believing*! We are not to be content with self, but to seek the Lord! Being nothing in ourselves, we are to go out of ourselves to Him. Being, ourselves unworthy, we are to find worthiness in Jesus!

*We are also to grasp the Lord as ours*, for the text says, “You shall seek the Lord *your God*.” sinners that is a part of *saving* faith, to take God to be *your* God! If He is only another man’s God, He cannot save *you*. He must be yours, yours, assuredly yours; yours to trust and love, and serve all your days, or you will be lost.

Now, mark God’s directions—“If you seek Him *with all your heart and with all your soul*.” There must be no pretence about this seeking; if you desire to be saved, there must be no playing and toying, trifling and feigning; the search must be real, sincere, earnest, fervent, intense, and thorough-going or it will be a failure. Is this too much to ask? Surely if anything in the world deserves earnestness it is this! If anything ought to awake all a man’s powers to energy, it is the salvation of his soul! You cannot win gold, and attain riches without being in earnest in the pursuit—and what earnestness does *this* deserve; this obtaining eternal life, deliverance from eternal death, acceptance in the beloved, endless bliss? Oh, men, women, if you sleep over anything, at any rate be awake here! If you trifle upon any matters of importance, yet here at any rate be serious, solemn, and earnest. Here there must be no idling and no delay. Note that there is a repetition in the text. “If you seek Him *with all your heart and with all your soul*”—we must be *doubly* in earnest—heart and soul must be in the pursuit! Half-hearted seeking is no seeking at all! To ask for mercy from God and at the same time to be willing to be without it is a mere pretence of asking! If you are content to be put off with an inferior blessing, you are not seeking the Lord at all! I remember one who is now a member of this church who in a desperate fit of soul anxiety said solemnly to one of us, “I will never go to work again; I will neither eat nor drink till I have found the Savior”; and with that solemn resolve it was not long before he had found Him! Oh, sirs, suppose you should be lost? Suppose you should perish while I am speaking? I know of no reason why your pulse should continue to beat, or your breath should remain in your nostrils—and if at this moment you were to die, at that same instant you would plunge amidst the flames of hell! Escape then at once! Even now make soul matters your sole concern; whatever else you have to attend to, leave it alone, and attend first to this chief thing, the salvation of your soul! If a man were in a sinking vessel, he may have been a student of the classics, but he will not think of his stopping to translate an ode of Horace! He may have been a mathematician, but he will not sit down to work out an equation—he will leap at once from the sinking vessel into the lifeboat, for his objective will be to save his life! And should it not be so as to our *eternal life*? My soul, my soul, this

must be saved, and with all my heart will I seek God in Jesus Christ that I may find salvation!

The text further adds that we are to *turn* to Him. Did you notice the 30<sup>th</sup> verse—“*If you turn to the Lord your God.*” It must be a thorough *turn*. You are looking now towards the world—you must *turn* in the opposite direction, and look God-ward. It must not be an apparent turn, but a *real* change of the nature, a turning of the entire soul, a turning with repentance for the past, with confidence in Christ for the present, and with holy desires for the future. Heart, soul, life, speech, action—all must be changed. Unless you are converted you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. May God grant you such a turn as this, and to this end pray, “Turn me and I shall be turned.”

Then it is added, “*And be obedient to His voice,*” for we cannot be saved in disobedience. Christ has not come to save His people *in* their sins, but *from* their sins. “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword.” Do you see, my dear unconverted Hearers, what God’s advice is to you? It is that you obey now His gospel, and bow before the scepter of His Son Jesus. He would have you admit that you have erred, and entreat to be kept from erring again; your proud self-will must yield, and your self-confidence must be renounced; you must incline your ear, and come unto Him, “Hear and your soul shall live.” This His Holy Spirit will grant you grace to do! This is the least that could be asked of you; you could not expect the great King to pardon rebels, and allow them to continue in rebellion! He could not allow you to continue in sin, and yet partake of His grace; you know that such a course would not be worthy of a holy God.

Do you feel inclined at this moment to turn to the Lord? Does some gentle *power* you have never felt before, draw you beyond yourself? Do you perceive that it would be well for you to be reconciled to your God and Father? Do you feel some inkling of regret, some spark of good desire? Then yield to the impulse! I trust it is the Holy Spirit within, working in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Yield at once; completely yield and He will lead you by a way you know not, and bring you to Jesus, and in Him you shall find peace, rest, holiness, happiness, and heaven! Let this be the happy day; bend before the Spirit’s breath as the reed bows in the wind; quench not the Spirit, grieve Him no more—

**“Lest slighted once, the season fair  
Should never again return.”**

Beware lest bleeding *love* should never woo again, lest pitying grace should never more entreat, and tender mercy should never more cast its cords around you! The spouse said, “Draw me, we will run after You”—say the same! Behold, before you is an open door, and within that door a waiting Savior! Will you perish on the threshold?

**III.** Thirdly, the text contains VERY RICH ENCOURAGEMENTS. How does it run? “For the Lord your God is a merciful God; *He will not forsake you.*” Look at that, sinner! “He will not forsake you.” If He were to say, “Let him alone, Ephraim is given unto idols,” it would be all over with

you; but if you seek Him, He will not say, "Let him alone," nor take His Holy Spirit from you! You are not yet given up, I hope, or you would not have been here this morning to hear this sermon.

I thought, when I woke this morning, and saw the snow and pitiless sleet driven by a vehement wind, that it was a pity I had studied such a subject, for I would like to have the house crowded with sinners, and they are not so likely to come out in bad weather. Just then I remembered that it was upon just such a morning as this that I found the Savior, and that thought gave me much courage in coming here! I thought the congregation cannot be smaller than that of which I was one on that happy day when I looked to Christ! I believe that many will this morning be brought out and saved, for the Lord has not forsaken this congregation! I used to think He had given me up, and would not show me His mercy after so long seeking in vain, but He had not forsaken me, nor has He cast *you* off, O sinner! If you seek Him with all your heart and soul, you may rest assured He will not forsake you!

And then it is added, "*Neither destroy you.*" You have been afraid He would; you have often thought the earth would open and swallow you; you have been afraid to fall asleep lest you should never wake again, but the Lord will not destroy you; no rather He will reveal His saving *power* in you!

There is a sweeter word still in the 29<sup>th</sup> verse—"You shall find Him if you seek Him." I wish I could sing and could extemporize a bit of music, for then I would stand here and sing those words—"You shall find Him if you seek Him." At any rate, the words have sweet melody in them to my ears and heart—"You shall find Him if you seek Him." I should like to whisper that sentence softly to the sick, and to shout it to the busy. It ought to linger long in your memories, and abide in your hearts—"You shall find Him if you seek Him." What more, poor sinner, what more do you need?

Then there are two reasons given—"For the Lord your God is a merciful God." Oh, guilty soul, the Lord does not want to damn you! He does not desire to destroy you! Judgment is His strange work! Have you ever had to chasten your child? When you have felt bound to punish him severely by reason of a great fault, has it not been very difficult work? You have said to yourself a hundred times over, "What shall I do? What shall I do to escape from the misery of causing pain to my dear child?" You have been driven to chasten him or you would not have done it! God never sends a sinner to hell till justice demands it; He finds no joy in punishing. He swears, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies." Look at the judge when he puts on the black cap, does he do so with pleasure? No, some of our judges speak with choked utterance and with many tears when they say to the prisoner, "You must be taken to the place from where you came, there to be hanged by the neck till you are dead." God never puts on the black cap without His heart yearning for men! His mercy endures forever, and He delights in it.

Notice how the Lord teaches us His care even over the guiltiest by the comparisons He makes. "What man of you," says He, "having a sheep

gone astray, will not go after it until he finds it? What man of you, having a sheep that is fallen into a ditch, will not pull it out?" Any animal which belongs to us causes us concern if we lose it, or if it is in trouble. I noticed the other night how even the little kitten could not be missing without causing anxiety to the household. What calling and searching! Rougher natures might say, "If the kitten will stay out of doors all night, let it do so." But the owner thought not so, for the night was cold and wet. I have seen great trouble when a bird has been lost through the opening of a cage door, and many a vain struggle to catch it again; what a stir there is in the house about a little short-lived bird! We do not like to lose a bird, or a kitten—and do you think the good God will willingly lose those whom He has made in His own image, and who are to exist forever? I have used a very simple and homely illustration, but it commends itself to the heart. You know what you would do to regain a lost bird, but what will *not* God do to save a soul? An immortal spirit is better than 10,000 birds! Does God care for souls? Yes, that He does, and in proof thereof Jesus has come to seek and to save the lost! The Shepherd cannot rest while one of His flock is in danger. "It is only one sheep! You have 99 more, good man; why do you go and bother yourself about one?" He cannot be pacified; he is considering where that sheep may be; he imagines all sorts of perils and distresses! Perhaps it is lying on its back, and cannot turn over, or it has fallen into a pit, or is entangled among briars, or the wolf is ready to seize it! It is not merely its intrinsic value to him, but he is concerned for it because it is *his* sheep, and the object of his care. Oh, soul, God has such a care for man! He waits to be gracious, and His Spirit goes forth towards sinners—therefore return to Him!

Now dwell upon that last argument—"*He will not forget the covenant of your fathers.*" The covenant always keeps open the path between God and man. The Lord has made a covenant concerning poor sinners with His Son Jesus Christ; He has laid help upon One that is mighty, and given *Him* for a covenant to the people. He always remembers Jesus, and how He kept that covenant. He calls to mind His sighs, tears, groans, and death-throes—and He fulfills His promise for the great Sufferer's sake. God's grace has kept His covenant on behalf of men! God is even eager to forgive that He may reward Christ, and give Him to see of the travail of His soul! Now, listen to me, you who are still unconverted. What solid ground there is here for your hope! If the Lord were to deal with you according to the covenant of *works*, what could He do but destroy you? But here is a covenant of *grace* made in Jesus Christ on the behalf of sinners, and all who believe in Jesus are partakers in that covenant, and are made partakers of the countless blessings which that covenant secures! Believe in Jesus! Cast yourself upon Him, and by the covenant mercies of God you shall assuredly be saved!

You have heard me preach like this before, have you not, a good many times? Yes, and I am sometimes fearful lest God's people should grow tired of this kind of sermon; but then *you* need it over and over again. How many more times will some of you need to be told this? How many more times must the great *mercy* of God be set before you? Are we to

keep on inviting you, again, and again, and again, and go back with no favorable answer from you? I have been questioning myself in the night watches about this, and I have said, “These people are unconverted. Is it my fault? Do I fail in telling them my Lord’s message? Do I mar the gospel? Well,” I thought, “if it is so, yet I will charge them not to be partakers of my *fault*.” Brothers and sisters, God’s mercy is so rich that even when the story of it is badly told, it ought to influence your hearts! It is so grand a thing that God should be in Christ reconciling the world to Himself by a wondrous sacrifice that if I stuttered and stammered, you ought to be glad to hear it! Or even if I told you in terms that were obscure you ought to be so eager to know it that you would search out my meaning! In secret correspondence a cipher is often used, but inquisitive people soon discover it, ought there not to be more interest taken in the gospel? But, my friends, I do not speak obscurely. I am as plain a speaker as one might meet in a day’s march, and with all my heart I set Christ before you and bid you trust Him! Will you do so this morning? Or will you not? See how dark it is outside, even at noon? God has hung the very heavens in mourning. Never fear, the sun will soon break forth, and light up the day; and even so—

*“Our hearts, if God we seek to know  
Shall know Him and rejoice!  
His coming like the morn shall be,  
As morning songs His voice.  
So shall His presence bless our souls,  
And shed a joyful light;  
That hallowed morn shall chase away  
The sorrows of the night.”*

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
DEUTERONOMY 4.**

**HYMN FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—199, 555, 40.**

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# THE SEALING OF THE SPIRIT

## NO. 1284

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 19, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.”  
Ephesians 1:13, 14.*

I HAVE taken the whole passage for the sake of completing the sense, but I have no intention whatever of preaching upon all of it. Practically I only need for the topic of this morning the following words—“In whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” The sealing of the Holy Spirit will be the subject of our meditation; there are many who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ who are extremely anxious to obtain some token for good, some witness from God which shall render them quite sure that they are saved; they have not yet reached the full assurance of faith, and they feel uneasy till they attain it; they feel that these matters are too important to be left at all uncertain, and they therefore pine for some sure witness or seal. Men will not risk their estates, and no spiritually sensible man will endure to have his soul and its eternal affairs in jeopardy for an hour; hence this anxiety. It is true that by the way of faith only the fullest and best assurance may be reached, but many who truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are not yet aware of this, and their trembling hearts crave for a testimonial from the infallible God to certify that they are indeed saved. Yes, and I conceive that even more advanced saints, who know more fully where their standing is, and confess that they can only walk by faith, yet often sing with very great emphasis of desire—

*“Might I but hear Your heavenly tongue  
But whisper, ‘You are Mine,’  
That cheerful word should raise my song  
To notes almost divine!”*

Though we can and do believe, and can claim the privilege which belongs to those who have not seen, and yet have believed, yet we would be glad to sometimes have a sight. We sometimes wish we could know by sure mark and evidence and token that our experience is after all a reality, and that we are indeed born of God—

*“O tell me that my worthless name  
Is engraved on Your hands!  
Show me some promise in Your book  
Where my salvation stands!”*

Now, in the best sense, this seal which we seek after is to be had! No, it is manifestly seen by many of God’s children. It does not supersede faith,

but it *rewards* and strengthens it. There is a way by which God speaks to His own, and assures them that they are His; there is a pledge, and an earnest, and this is freely given to the people of God. May God's own Spirit enable me to speak aright upon this weighty subject.

The text says, "After that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise"; and, therefore, first, I shall call your attention to *the position of this sealing*; secondly, to *the benefits which arise out of it*; and thirdly, to *the sealing itself*, which, indeed, I shall endeavor to explain thoroughly.

**I.** First, let us speak of THE POSITION OF THIS SEALING. We are desirous to get some confirming seal from God set upon our souls, some sure token that we are indeed His own people. That sealing we can have, God bestows it; but let us notice very carefully, lest we make a mistake, when that sealing comes, *it does not come before believing*. According to the text it is, "after that you believed, you were sealed." Now, there are hundreds of persons who are craving for something to see or to feel *before* they will believe in Jesus Christ; this is wickedness, and the result of an unbelief which is most offensive in the sight of God. If you demand a token *before* you believe, you practically say that you cannot take God's bare word for your comfort, that the sure word of testimony recorded in the Bible is not enough for you, that the solemn declaration of God may after all be false; at any rate, that you find it impossible to rest your confidence upon that alone, and must see something else. If not a miracle, perhaps you demand a dream, or a strange feeling, or a mysterious operation; at any rate, if you do not see some sign and wonder, you declare that you will not believe; you do, in fact, say to God, "If You will not go out of Your way to give me what I ask, and to do for me what I *demand*, then I will call You a liar to Your face by refusing to believe You." Ah, my hearer, this will not do! This is to provoke the Lord to jealousy, and he that does this shall receive no token whatever, except it be the sign of the unbelievers of Chorazin, for whom the day of judgment shall be more intolerable than for Sodom and Gomorrah!

Note also that this sealing *does not necessarily come at once with faith*. It grows *out of faith*, and comes, "after that you believed." We are not in every case sealed at the moment when we first trust in Jesus; I am persuaded that many who believe in Jesus enter into peace directly, and perceive at once the blessed assurance which is involved in their possessing the Holy Spirit; but with many others it is not so. I have frequently been asked this question, "What is a person to do who believes in Jesus, but yet is not conscious of peace and joy, but is filled with such a conflict within that the utmost he can do is to cling to Jesus with trembling hope?" I have replied, "If you believe in Jesus Christ you are saved; the best evidence that you are saved lies in the assurance of the word of God that every believer has eternal hope." Whether you *feel* that you are justified or not is not the point, you are to accept God's word which assures you that everyone that believes is justified. You are bound to be-

lieve the testimony of God apart from the supporting evidence of inward experience, and if it were possible for you to be a believer by the year together, and yet find no peace, still you would have no right to doubt what God says because you do not *feel* peace—you are bound to hold on to God's promise whether you enjoy peace or not! My firm belief is that where there is a real faith in the promise of God, peace and the other fruits of the Spirit come as a necessary ultimate consequence, but even then they are not *grounds* of faith—the word of the Lord is the sole foundation upon which faith builds! Some people have a sort of confidence in God, but they are also looking out for confirming signs, and they spoil the simplicity of their faith by having one eye on Christ, and another eye on their peace of mind. Now, my friend, this will never do! You are bound to believe in God as He is revealed in Christ Jesus unto salvation, altogether apart from peace, joy, or anything else. The witness of the Spirit within is neither the ground nor the *cause* of our faith—faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. I, being a sinner, believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and I rest my soul upon Him, believing that He will save me. This is to be my standing, seal or no seal, token or no token; my dependence is *not* to be upon the seal of the Spirit, but upon the blood of the Son! The Spirit of God never takes the place of the Redeemer; He exercises His own peculiar office, which is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, and not to put His own things in the place of Jesus. The foundation of our hope is laid in Christ from first to last, and if we rest *there* we are saved. The seal does not always come with faith, but it follows after. I have said this because I am afraid lest in any way whatever you should leave the simple, plain, and solid ground of confidence in the finished work of Jesus Christ, and in that only. Remember that a man who believes in Jesus Christ is as truly saved when he does not know it as he is when he does know it; he is as truly the Lord's when he mourns in the valley of humiliation as when he sings on the mountaintop of joy and fellowship! Our ground of trust is *not* to be found in our *experience*, but in the person and work of our Lord Jesus—

***“I dare not trust the sweetest frame  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.  
On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
All other ground is sinking sand.”***

Note, also, as to the position of this sealing, that, while it is not the first, *it is not the last thing in the divine life*. It comes after believing, but when you obtain it, there is something yet to follow. Perhaps you have had the notion that if you could once be told from the mouth of God Himself that you were saved, you would then lie down and cease from life's struggle. It is clear, therefore, that such an assurance would be an evil thing for you, for a Christian is never more out of place than when he dreams that he has ceased from conflict. The natural, fit, and proper position for a soldier of Jesus Christ is to be at war with sin; we are wrestlers, and our normal condition is that of “striving according to His work-

ing who works in us mightily.” This side of heaven, if there is a place for nest-building and ease-taking it is not the place for you; you are a pilgrim, and a pilgrim’s business is to be on the road, pressing forward to the home beyond. Remember, if there are seats of ease, and no doubt there are, they are not for you since you are a runner in a great race, with heaven and earth for witnesses. Cessation from watchfulness means ruin to your soul; the closing of conflict would show that you could never gain the victory! Perfect rest on earth would show that none remained for you in heaven; even if the Spirit of God seals you, what will it amount to? To the inheritance itself, so that you can say, “I have attained perfection”? Certainly not! No brethren, the Scripture says, “Which is *the earnest* of our inheritance till the redemption of the purchased possession.” This side of heaven all you can obtain is an earnest of the perfection of which heaven is made up—

**“There rest shall follow toil,  
And ease succeed to care:  
The victors there divide the spoil;  
They sing and triumph there.”**

Here we must labor, watch, run, fight, wrestle, agonize; all our forces, strengthened by the Eternal Spirit, must be expended in this high enterprise, striving to enter in at the strait gate; when we have obtained the sealing our warfare is not ended, we have only then received a foretaste of the victory for which we must still fight on.

This is the true position of the sealing. It stands between the grace which enables us to believe, and the Glory which is our promised inheritance.

**II.** We will notice, secondly, what are THE BENEFITS OF THIS SEALING, and while we are doing so, we shall be compelled to state what we think that sealing is, though that is to be the subject of the third head. The sealing spoken of in the text does not make the promises of God to be true. Please notice that. This text has been preached upon as though it stated that the Spirit of God set His seal upon the *gospel* and the *promises* of God. Well, dear friends, it is true that the Spirit of God witnesses to the truth of God, and to the sureness of the promises, but that is evidently not intended here, for the text says not that the *promises* were sealed, but that, “*you were sealed.*” You are the writing which has the stamp put upon it; you yourselves are sealed! It is not even stated that the Spirit of God seals up covenant blessings as gold is sealed up in a bag, and reserves them for the chosen seed. The text tells us that believers themselves are thus reserved, and marked as the Lord’s peculiar treasure, and it is upon believers themselves that this seal of the Holy Spirit is set. Nor my brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit does not make the promises sure—they are sure of themselves! God, who cannot lie, has uttered them, and therefore they cannot fail. Nor, my brethren, does the Holy Spirit make sure *our interest* in those promises; that interest in the promises was sure in the divine decree, before the earth was, and is a matter of fact which cannot be changed. The promises are already sure

to all the Seed. *The Holy Spirit makes us sure that the word is true* and that we are concerned in it; but the promise was sure beforehand, and our interest in that promise was sure, too, from the moment in which it was bestowed upon us by the sovereign Act of God.

To understand our text, you must notice that it is bounded by two words, "*In whom*," which two words are twice given in this verse. "In whom also after that you believed, you were sealed." What is meant by, "In whom"? The words signify "In Christ." It is *in Christ* that the people of God are sealed! We must therefore understand this sealing as it would relate to Christ, since so far, and so far only, can it relate to us. Was our Lord sealed? Turn to John 6:27, and there you have this exhortation—"Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: *for Him has God the Father sealed.*" There is the clue to our text. "Him has God the Father sealed." For since our sealing is in Him, it must be the same sealing.

Notice, then, first, that the ever-blessed Son was sealed on the Father's part *by God's giving a testimony* to Him that He was indeed His own Son, and the sent one of the Lord. As when a king issues a proclamation, He sets His seal to it to say, "This is mine," so when the Father sent His Son into the world, He gave Him this testimony, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He said this in words, but how did He give a perpetual testimony by a seal, which should be with Him throughout life? It was by anointing Him with the Holy Spirit. The seal that Jesus was the Messiah was that the Spirit of God rested upon Him without measure! Hence we read expressions like these—"He was justified in the Spirit." "He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." "It is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth." Now, the Spirit of God, whenever it abides upon a man, is the mark that that man is accepted of God. We say not that where the Spirit merely *strives* at intervals, there is any seal of divine favor, but where He *abides* it is assuredly so. The very fact that we possess the Spirit of God is God's testimony and seal in us that we are His, and that as He has sent His Son into the world, even so does He send us into the world.

Secondly, to our Lord Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit was a seal *for His own encouragement*. Our Lord condescended to restrain the power of His Godhead, and as a servant, He depended upon the Father for support. When He began His ministry, He encouraged Himself thus—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted." He found His stimulus of service, He found the authorization of His service, He found His comfort and strength for service, in the fact that God had given Him the Holy Spirit. This was His joy! Now, brothers and sisters, if we need to be encouraged for holy service by feeling quite sure that we are saved, where must we get that encouragement? Read in the First Epistle of John, the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter, and 24<sup>th</sup> verse where the seal of

God is described—“Hereby we know that He abides in us by the Spirit which He has given us.” Read also in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter, verse 13, “Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, because He has given us of His Spirit.” So that as the seal which comforted our Lord, and made Him to know, in times of depression, that He was indeed beloved of the Father, was that He had the Spirit of God! So to you and to me, brothers and sisters, the possession of the Spirit of God is our continuous encouragement, for by this we may know beyond all question that we dwell in God, and God dwells in us. The seal answers a two-fold purpose; it is on God’s part a testimony, and to us an encouragement.

But the seal is meant to be *evidence to others*. The Father set His seal upon His Son in order that others might discern that He was indeed sent of God. John says, “I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (John 1:33). The Spirit, then, was upon our Lord, the seal for recognition, and, beloved, so must it be with us. We cannot be known by our fellow Christians except by the possession of the Spirit of God. Have you ever noticed how Peter claimed for the uncircumcised the rights of Church membership in the 15<sup>th</sup> of Acts in the eighth and ninth verses? He says, “God, which knows the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He did unto us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.” So that to Peter, the possession of the Holy Spirit was the broad seal of heaven which the Lord never sets upon a heart wherein there is no faith. The same argument had been felt in all its power by Peter when he said, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?” Paul used this as his test concerning the sons of men, for in Romans 8:9, he says, “You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now, if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His,” plainly indicating that the absence of the Spirit is fatal, for the divine Signature is not at the bottom of the document; but if the Spirit of God is there, then all is right, for the Lord never puts His seal to anything which is not sound and true! Rest quite sure that where the Spirit of God abides, there the gospel of Jesus Christ has been written on the heart, and the man is saved.

Further, the fourth effect of the seal upon Christ was that *it was to the world a witness*. The Spirit of God upon Jesus Christ was not recognized by the ungodly world to be indeed divine, but they perceived and were astonished at a *something* about Him which they did not understand. He spoke with authority, and not as the scribes, and they confessed, “Never man spoke like this Man.” They did not know what spirit He was of, but they knew they hated it, and straightway they began to oppose Him. Now, brothers and sisters, if you have the same seal as your Lord which is described in the text as “the Spirit of promise,” the same result will fol-

low! Men will wonder at you, misunderstand you, and oppose you! And what is the reason? Never in this world did the Spirit of promise appear without opposition from the spirit of bondage. Isaac was the child of promise, and did not Ishmael, who was born after the flesh, persecute him? The two seeds of the flesh and of the promise are at daggers drawn with each other! When the Lord sets His seal upon you by giving you the Spirit of promise, so that you are not under the law but under Christ, the world will know it; they will not admire you, but they will strive against you to destroy you!

Once more, the seal upon our Lord Jesus Christ was intended for a fifth reason, namely—for *His perseverance even to the end*. A seal is set upon a treasure which we mean to preserve, and so was the precious Redeemer sealed. Now, you will say to me, “But dare we speak of Jesus Christ as being preserved by the Spirit of God?” My dear brethren, we must never forget the wonderful self-denial of Christ in that He laid aside His own divine power, and while He was in this world He said the Father was greater than He, and He became a man so as to *pray* and to believe, and to depend upon the Father. Jesus Christ put Himself into such a condition while He was here that He relied upon the Spirit of God to uphold Him. Do you doubt it? Turn to the 42<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Isaiah, verse one, and there you get it in express words: “Behold My servant whom I uphold!” See how He puts Himself, as a servant, to be upheld by the Lord; “My elect, in whom My soul delights. I have put my Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles: He shall not cry nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street: a bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.” There can be no doubt that this is Christ, for these very words are quoted concerning Him. Now, what comes of the upholding of the blessed Spirit? “He shall not fail nor be discouraged until He has set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for His law.” So that the Spirit of God upheld Christ, sustained Him, and kept Him till His life’s work was finished, without His failing or being discouraged. My brothers and sisters, this is how you and I must be kept; this is the seal which we need, which shall preserve us as the consecrated ones of God, so that when He comes, He shall find us under His seal and not discouraged.

Let me now recapitulate. Upon our Lord Jesus the Spirit of God acted as a seal, namely, as God’s testimony that He was His Son, as an encouragement to His own heart, as an evidence to others, as a witness to the world, and as a help to perseverance, even to the end. The same benefits will the sealing of the Spirit confer upon us—“in Christ Jesus after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.”

**III.** Thirdly, let us consider THE SEALING ITSELF. A great deal has been said on this point which has tended to foster superstition. Some have supposed that there is a separate act of the Spirit of God in which He seals believers. It may be so; I will not raise the question. But I should

be very sorry if any man here, living in sin, should nevertheless look back upon some time of religious excitement or enjoyment, and say, "I am safe, for on that occasion I was sealed." And I should be very sorry to have any brother or sister take as the *sure* reason why they are saved, some remarkable experience which they underwent on a certain day, long past. A seal is for the present, and is not a mere memory, but an object palpable *now*, and before the eyes. I am afraid many have been deceived into carelessness by the notion of a sealing received long ago. Let us seek out the truth of God. According to the text, as far as I can read it, here is a man who has believed in Jesus, and he desires a seal that God loves him. God gives him the Spirit, and that is all the seal he can wish for or expect. Nothing more is needed, nothing else would be as good; the very fact that the Spirit of God works in you to will and to do according to God's good pleasure, is your seal! You do not require anything beyond. I do not say that any one operation of the Holy Spirit is to be regarded as the seal, but the whole of them together, as they prove His being within us, make up that seal. It is better, however, to keep to the doctrine that the Spirit of God in the believer is, Himself, the seal—

***"You are the earnest of His love,  
The pledge of joys to come,  
And Your soft wings, celestial Dove,  
Will safely convey me home."***

Now, let us look at what the context tells us about this. If you read on, the Apostle tells us that *wisdom and revelation* in the knowledge of God are part of the seal. Kindly turn to the chapter and follow the Apostle's line of argument. He says in verse 15, "Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith, etc., cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." See, then, if you have believed in Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God comes upon you, and He gives you His wisdom and revelation. Doctrines in the Word which you never understood before become clear to you—"the eyes of your understanding being enlightened"; the blessings promised are more distinctly discerned, and you see, "the hope of your calling, and the riches of the glory of the Lord's inheritance in the saints." The deeper truths of God, which at first quite staggered and puzzled you, gradually open up to you, and you see and appreciate them. More especially you discover the glory of Christ, and see the exceeding greatness of the power with which the Lord works in the saints, "according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come." You drink deep into the blessed thought that Jesus is the head over all things to His church, and you obtain some glimpses into the mysterious doctrine that the church is His fullness, the fullness of Him that fills all-in-all. Now, brothers and sisters, if we know these

things aright, the Spirit has taught us, and the consequence of it is that we say to ourselves, "Certainly I must be a child of God, for I never understood the things of God before." How could I have learned them if I had not been taught of God? The Master seems to stand by our side and say, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven." If you have been made to see the abounding grace of God, the grandeur of the plan of salvation, and the choice beauties of the blessed person of Jesus Christ, you have a sure seal upon your soul, for like the blind man in the gospels you can say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind now I see."

Following on to the next chapter you will see that the Spirit of God works in every man who possesses in him *life*, and that life becomes another form of the seal. "You has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin." That life is of a new kind, and has a renewing power so that men reject the course of this world, and no longer fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind. This new life they trace to God who is rich in mercy, who in His great love with which He loved them, even when they were dead in sins, has quickened them together with Christ. They trace this life entirely to the grace of God—"By grace are you saved"—and they see that this life produces in them good works, "for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." I need not explain how this life lifts us up to sit in the heavenlies with Christ, for most of you know all about it; you have received a life from above, a living and incorruptible seed is in you; you have passed into a new world; you have feelings, desires, fears, hopes such as you never knew before, and thus your *outward* life is also changed, so that you follow after that which is according to the will of God. Now, brethren, what can be a better seal to you that you are indeed saved, than this life which you feel within? This is the way in which the Spirit of God seals you—by making you partakers of the divine life which never has resided in the unbeliever yet, and never can dwell in anyone apart from faith! To "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." And therefore wisdom and life, which are both sure results of the indwelling of the Spirit of God, are a seal to us that we are really saved.

Go on a little further, and you will notice upon the one seal a further mark, namely—*fellowship*. "You were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ, for He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Those who have believed in Jesus Christ are led by the Spirit of God to love their fellow Christians, and thus "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love

the brethren.” Once we thought the godly a dull and melancholy set—at any rate we let them go their own way, and we were glad to keep aloof from them! But now we delight in their society, sympathize with their pursuits, and are willing to share their persecutions. We count the saints of God the best company in the world; we would sooner sit down and talk half an hour with a poor, bed-ridden Christian woman, than be found in the courts of princes. This brotherly love becomes a seal of grace within our hearts, for John tells us in his first epistle, “Everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God.” “If we love one another, God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:7, 12).

Even more striking is that which follows, namely, that we have *fellowship with God!* The Apostle speaks of us as reconciled unto God by the cross, by which the enmity is slain, and he says of our Lord, “Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” I am following the course of the chapter. When you and I feel that we commune with God, that there is no quarrel between Him and us, that He is loved of us as we are loved of Him, that we can draw near to Him in prayer and speak to Him, that He hears us and deigns to grant us gracious answers of peace, these are blessed seals of salvation! Some of us can look back on times of fellowship with God, on seasons of prevailing prayer with Him, and upon countless answers to our petitions: all these become to us infallible tokens of divine love!

I shall not tire you if I bid you notice for one moment that the Apostle puts in next building up—“And are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord.” Are you not conscious, believers that you are being built up unto a divinely glorious form, after a high and noble model? It does not yet appear what we shall be, but you must be conscious that course upon course of precious stones have been built upon the foundation of your faith in Christ. Since you have known the Lord you have made a distinct advance. At times you are afraid you have only grown downwards, but you have grown! There is a something about you now which was not there 10 years ago. I am distinctly conscious, somehow, that 20 years ago I was not what I now am. I sometimes feel like a bird in the eggshell! I am chipping it away bit by bit; I believe it will break one of these days, and the bird will come out, But I often feel my wings fretted and cramped by the shell. I want the life in me to be developed and set free! Do you ever feel the same? Have you not felt as if you were big with a far more glorious nature, and longed for deliverance from flesh and frailty? These groans, aspirations, hopes, and desires are all seals of salvation; you will never find the *ungodly* thus moved. These pangs are peculiar to life. You are not a finished structure, but a house in process of building, and you may be sure that one of these days the top stone shall be brought forth with shouts of, “grace, grace unto it.” This building up through the Spirit

of God is the seal of the Spirit. It is to you the evidence that God has begun a good work in you, and is carrying it on.

Last of all, the second chapter finishes up by saying, "In whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit;" and this seems to me to gather up all that I have said before. The *indwelling* of the Spirit in the saints, in the whole of them united, and in each one in particular, is a choice seal—

***"Do You not dwell in all the saints,  
And seal them heirs of heaven?"***

Yes, that is the manner of the sealing, according to the prayer of our hymn—

***"Jesus, my Lord, reveal  
In charms of grace divine,  
And be Yourself the sacred seal,  
That pearl of price is mine."***

If you have the Spirit of God dwelling in you, you must be the Lord's! Will the Spirit of God dwell in any temple but that which God has consecrated? He may come upon men to strive with them for a while, but He will never dwell in any heart that has not been cleansed with the blood of Jesus, nor can He possibly reside permanently in any soul which is defiled with self-righteousness and love of sin. No, beloved, if the Spirit of God dwells in you, you need no dreams, nor angels' whispers, nor noises in the air; the indwelling Spirit is the only seal you need! I put it to you, brothers and sisters, what more do you need? What more could God give you? Suppose you were to meet on the road home, standing in the snow, an angel clothed in glittering white, and that he should say to you, "I have a message from God to you"? What if he should then mention your name, and add, "You are one of God's chosen." That vision would comfort you for half-an-hour, I have no doubt, but many desponding spirits would not be comforted much longer, for Satan would say, "It was snowing, right? No doubt the flakes blew into your eyes, or else you simply have a fine imagination!" "Oh, but," you would say, "I heard him speak!" "Ah, you had noises in your head; you are becoming a fair subject for Bedlam Asylum!" I confess if you were to tell me the story, I would not make any bones about it, but would say, "You are not such a fool as to believe that, are you?" And you would find many other people of the same mind! Now there can be no doubt about the seal of the text; you have been taught of God what no one but the Spirit of God could have taught you; you have a life in you which no one but the Spirit could have given you; of that knowledge and that life you are perfectly conscious; you do not need to ask anybody else about them. A man may ask me whether I know So-and-So—I am the best witness whether I do or not. If I am asked, "How do you know you are alive?" Well, I walk about, that is all, and I am quite sure about it—I do not need any further evidence.

The best seal to a man's heart must be that of which he is conscious, and about which he needs not appeal to others. Give me a seal that is as sure as my own existence! I fail to see how God Himself can give me any-

thing more sure than the gift of His Spirit working knowledge and life in me! “Oh,” says one, “but if I could hear a *voice*.” Suppose you did? Then the argument of fear would be that there are *countless* voices, and one may be mistaken for another. You were in the street when you heard it; perhaps it was a parrot or a starling in the upper window; who knows? It is so easy for the ears to be deceived; many a time you have said, “I know I heard So-and-So,” when you did not hear him, but someone like him. I would not believe my own ears, if their evidence had to do with my *soul*, one half as readily as I would believe my own *consciousness*. Since knowledge and life and other things I have mentioned just now, are all matters of consciousness, they are much better seals than anything could be which appealed like an angelic vision to the eyes, or like a mysterious voice to the ears! Here you have something sure and steadfast. If the Spirit of God dwells in you, you are His, but if He dwells not in you, you are none of His.

Take this for the closing word—“Grieve not the Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption,” but love Him, honor Him, and obey Him; so will the seal always be bright before your eyes.

As to you who have not believed, I conclude with this—do not ask for seals! You have nothing to do with seals, but with Jesus! “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign.” Believe in Christ Jesus, and when you have trusted Him, *then* shall there come signs, seals, marks! God bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

## **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EPHESIANS 1.**

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# SIHON AND OG, OR MERCIES IN DETAIL NO. 1285

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever: and gave their land for a heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even a heritage unto Israel His servant: for His mercy endures forever.”  
Psalm 136:17-22.***

THESE six verses iterate and reiterate the same fact; they rehearse and repeat the same reflection. Is the tautology tedious; do the chimes weary you with their monotony? No; but this is a veritable charm in poetry. When the poet touches upon some important theme which illuminates his soul, and kindles his nobler passions to a flame, he is very apt to dwell upon it with enthusiasm, inclined to pursue it with eagerness, to follow it up with feeling, and echo it over and over again with strong and yet stronger emotion. Nobody feels that repetition is out of place in poetry, because in weal or woe, with pleasure or with pathos, we dwell on the theme which awakens our sympathy. This psalm, of which the refrain is always the same—“His mercy endures forever,” has in it several instances of this repetition. “To Him that made great lights,” is followed by, “The sun to rule by day,” and by the next, “The moon and stars to rule by night: for His mercy endures forever.” The repetition is natural and secures attention, the words are musical as they strike on our ears, and the style is not only allowable, but acceptable as a beautiful license of the poetic school. For my part, I like a repetition in the tune of a psalm as well as in its language. There has sprung up a fashion in music now to quibble at repeats. I must confess I do not feel of the same mind as some who, when the psalm or hymn is given out, seem to say, “Now, let us go through it as quickly as we can, from beginning to end.” I prefer to chew some of the words—to have them come over again—to get the flavor of them in my mouth, or rather in my soul. For instance, an old tune like the one we have sung is none the worse because it gives us the repeat of “His loving-kindness.” Such a word as that you would like to keep on repeating, if it were necessary, a dozen times—

***“His loving-kindness, His loving-kindness, oh, how good!”***

A repeat ought to be considered a beauty rather than a blemish in music. There is, moreover, a reason for every repetition in Scripture, for we may say of the ornaments of poetry, when we find them in the sacred volume, that they are never mere ornaments. The repetitions, though elegant, are not merely flowers of rhetoric: they have a design. The Holy Spirit dwells upon a theme because He has an intention in doing so. My present purpose is to endeavor to show you why there should be six verses here when one verse might have sufficed. It is clear one might

have been quite sufficient. Suppose it had run thus—“Who slew famous kings, Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and gave their land for a heritage to His people: for His mercy endures forever.” That would have comprehended all the sense, but the Holy Spirit did not judge that to be the best way of speaking, and so He divided it into six parts. He repeated it that there might be heard six times the refrain—“His mercy endures forever.” Not, I think, merely for the sake of repeating that beautiful truth of God so often, but for other reasons connected with the truth of which He was writing. *It is well to dwell long, and to dwell deliberately, upon some of God’s dealings with us.* This is the theme on which I want to thread a few ideas.

**I. And, first, IT IS WELL TO DELIBERATE LONG OVER THE MERCIFUL SIDE OF GOD’S JUDGMENTS.**

One does not always see God’s *mercy* in, He “slew mighty kings: for His mercy endures forever: and smote famous kings: for His mercy endures forever.” It would have read more naturally if He had said, “Who smote mighty kings: for His *justice* endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His *vengeance* endures forever.” The point to be brought out, however, was that there was *mercy* in these judgments. The Holy Spirit would have us know that there is His mercy abroad in the world even—

***“When God’s right arm is bared for war,  
And thunder clothes His mighty bar.”***

The removal from the earth of these great oppressive kings, though it was terrible for *them*, was a great blessing! When tyrants die, nations have time to breathe. When great oppressors are cut off, it is as when a lion falls, or as when wolves are slain, and the deer and sheep have time to rest. Who knows how often, in answer to the tear of the slave, God has been pleased to smite his tyrant master? Mercy, herself, had brushed the tear from her eye, and said, “Smite, O God!” Sometimes when we have read stories of oppression and tyranny, wrong and violence, the gentlest among us, who would not have hurt a hair of a man’s head, have been the very first to express indignation, and to marvel that God kept back the thunderbolt—that He did not pour vengeance on the adversary, and deliver the injured and down-trodden. If you read all through history and see how dynasties have crumbled, and empires have melted away—could you but discern the secret history of the nations, and how much there was of robbery and oppression, injustice and cruelty, you would understand that when emperor after emperor was slain in battle, or overtaken by sudden death, and king after king was swept from the throne, it was because God’s mercy endures forever! It was not mercy (speaking as a man) to the one man, perhaps—to Nero, Caligula, Tiberius, or the like; but was it not His mercy to the millions who had grown weary of their abominable rule? The sufferings of the helpless cried to God for redress; the moans and tears of serfs, vassals, prisoners, and captives presented their wretchedness before Him—till His mercy linked hands with His wrath, and He slew great and famous kings because His mercy endures forever! Read the pages of history, I say, with this sentiment in mind, and you will often judge that what seemed to be a very severe retribution up-

on some man of eminence, may turn out, after all, only to have been an act of God's mercy towards those who were under His power.

Apply the thought another way. There are huge systems of power in the world, and such there always have been—systems like Sihon, king of the Amorites, whose force and fame have held vast hordes and populations in terror, and the defenses of these systems have been strong as the walled cities of Og, king of Bashan; but since the day when Christ came into the world, and gathered His 12 Apostles around Him, how many of these systems have been utterly destroyed? Ask, at this moment, where are the gods that were worshipped when Paul entered Athens and preached Jesus and the resurrection? Where are all the gods that held sway over Greece and Rome when Peter, and the rest of the fishermen, were telling of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the propitiation that He made for sin? They have passed, away and they are not! And, since then, there have risen up great systems and schools of thought—in which human wisdom has opposed the divine wisdom. Strong and mighty systems they have been, but the student of history knows how they have all passed away, one after the other. And in our own land there has passed away—I pray God never to return—the system of Popery more terrible than Sihon, king of the Amorites, or Og, king of Bashan! And now their ruined abbeys are scattered all over the land—ruins which make our souls rejoice as we look upon them, for we say, “Come, behold the works of the Lord! What desolation He has made in the earth.” And here is another instance of how He can put His foes to flight. At this day there are other systems still standing, crushing down the people, darkening the night of nature with a denser darkness of superstition—turning a midnight of human depravity into a darkness that might be felt as in the plague of Egypt of old. But, as the Lord lives, as He has scattered falsehoods one after the other, so will He scatter all these systems, and the day shall come when we shall say, “Mohammed's crescent is forgotten now, for His mercy endures forever; and the pomp of anti-Christ has passed away and all his ‘infallibility’; for the mercy of the Lord endures forever.” One great error after another is brought down by the strong hand of the God of Jacob, for His mercy endures forever; and though in each case these things seem like judgments upon the people, yet are they judgments full of God's mercy, for it is a blessing when God smites any system which is contrary to Himself and to His truth, contrary to His Son, contrary to the liberties and the rights of man, and, above all, contrary to the gospel life and the holy purity of the church.

Now, brothers and sisters, there are other judgments yet to come—judgments which we, surely, are to look forward to with great hope as instances of the mercy of God. The day is coming when he who is more terrible than Sihon, king of the Amorites, shall be cast out. Christ, by His death, has broken the power of Satan, but Satan still holds sway to a great extent over the sons of men. As the gospel spreads, his power shall lessen, and by-and-by there shall come the time when he shall be cast into the lake of fire, and his power shall cease. It will be a judgment upon him, but what an illustration it will be of how God's mercy endures forever! Then shall Satan lift “his brazen front with thunder scarred,” receive

his sentence, and begin anew his hell—and in that day the saints shall sing, “His mercy endures forever!” And death, too, that terrible thing, that also is to be destroyed. It is the last enemy, and it is the last enemy *that shall be destroyed*. And when death itself shall cease to be, and the sepulcher shall be rifled of all its treasures, then shall we magnify and bless the Lord as Israel did when they thought of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, for His mercy endures forever! And when that last tremendous act of vengeance shall come, and death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire, and all the hosts of evil—even all that have done iniquity, and have rejected Christ, shall be cast out forever from all hope and joy—in that dread day, while it shall be to them weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, it shall be to the righteous, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! For God and goodness, the right and the Christ have triumphed forever.” Yes, even in the condemnation of the lost, it shall be a token of His mercy to the universe that sin was not permitted to triumph, that evil was not allowed to have its sway, but that God overcame it at a mighty cost, and, at last, shut it up within its proper bound, never to break forth again, for, “His mercy endures forever.”

We know not, brethren, what may happen to ourselves, but we know what *has* happened, and, in the light of the truth of God I am now dwelling upon, we may now sing unto the Lord a new song! We have had our smiting, and we have had our slayings; we have had sins within us slain that were mighty kings, and we have had corruptions that were famous kings, but they have been brought down! We have had our idols broken, and judgments have come upon our inventions. Oh, what a smashing of idols there has been with many a heart here present! How have you stood with tears in your eyes as your Dagon was made to fall before the ark of the Lord! You tried to set it in its place again, but you could not, for the Lord broke it to pieces, and He has taken away the gods in which you trusted, and the things that your heart doted upon. The delight of your eyes, and the joy of your spirit—He has taken these away, one by one—mighty kings that swayed you, and famous kings that ruled your heart and mind, and engaged the best of your affections. These have been slain because His mercy endures forever, and, for my part, I would say, “O sword of the Lord, rest not! Return not to your scabbard if you are slaying my sin, if you are overcoming my corruptions! Go through me, Lord, and smite again, and if You break up the idols, break on!”—

***“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from its throne  
And worship only Thee.”***

Still would I say of every act of idol-breaking, and of king-slaying within my soul, “His mercy endures forever; His mercy endures forever!” Therefore these blows, therefore these trials, therefore these afflictions—they are sent not in anger, but in His dear covenant love—not to harm us, but to bless us! They are sent not to impoverish us, but to make our inheritance wider and larger both here, and in the world to come. This is our first thought. In the midst of judgments we should wait and watch till we see the divine mercy side of them, for then we shall sing, “Who smote

great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever.”

**II.** Secondly, EACH MERCY DESERVES TO BE REMEMBERED. With what special point and emphasis each instance is put, “Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever.” Why not give them in the gross—Sihon and Og? Why not, as we commonly and vulgarly say, lump them together and thank God for them in the mass? No, no! They must come in detail—“Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever.” Why should they thus come in detail?

Because *every mercy we have received is undeserved*. The Israelites did not deserve that God should smite Sihon, king of the Amorites, or Og, king of Bashan. It was a mercy so rich and gracious that it deserved to be recorded! In that very chapter from which I read to you just now, where God smote Sihon, you will find that the children of Israel *mur-mured* so that God sent fiery serpents among them. In that same chapter we have the record of His chastening them with fiery serpents, and yet He is giving them victory over their foes! Oh, it brings tears into our eyes, and fills us with humiliation when we remember that many of our choicest mercies have come to us just after our very blackest sins! It is not that the Lord gives us His mercy when we are walking consistently—when we are obedient, when we are what we ought to be. There would be great grace in that, but the crowning mercy is that when we have gone out of the way—when we have gone down By-path Meadow, when like Peter we have denied our Master—yet still some great mercy has been given to set us right again! Sihon, king of the Amorites, just when we had provoked the Lord, has come down upon us to destroy us, but the Lord has said, “No, I will smite My children, but I will not let *you* smite them; I will chasten them, and send fiery serpents, but Sihon, you must not touch them. Get back! If you dare lay a finger upon them, My jealousy shall burn and smoke against you, for they are My children, and I will deliver them in the day of their afflictions.” Oh, bless the Lord for each mercy because it has been so undeserved!

Nor have we received a mercy *that we could have dispensed with*. Had God smitten Sihon, king of the Amorites, and then when Og came against them had said, “I have done enough for you, and I will do no more,” the nation would have been destroyed! No, Sihon, king of the Amorites, is no more. Bless the Lord for that. Yet if the Lord does not smite Og, king of Bashan, what will become of Israel? Thus each mercy is *needed*—why then should not each mercy have a separate song? When you are in present trouble, you think much of the present mercy. My dear brothers and sisters, when you have got through the trouble, why not think a great deal of the mercy afterwards? Then as it comes, a brand new mercy in a fresh dilemma, the more you need it, the more store you set by it. Why not set the same store by these mercies after you have received them, and commemorate in particular the benefits which flow out of *each*? Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan shall be sung of, each one separately, because neither victory could be dispensed

with. They were both necessary that Israel might enter into the Promised Land.

Moreover, there was *a peculiarity about each mercy*. This was sure to be the case. You never had two mercies from God that were quite alike. There were some special circumstances which made a marked difference. Pluck the leaves from a tree—commonly speaking, they are alike, yet there are no two leaves veined exactly in the same manner. So too with mercies; there is some distinction if you look narrowly into them. Generally, when we are in deep waters, there is some peculiar feature to distinguish the trial, and to identify it afterwards. I know that Monday's mercy will not do for Tuesday, and I should be sorry if I had nothing but Tuesday's mercy to help me through Wednesday. His mercies "are new every morning: great is His faithfulness." Now, since they are all new, and each one separate, why could not each one be spoken of by itself? As God paints so many fresh pictures, why should we not set them in appropriate frames, saying of each one, "His mercy endures forever"? There is a specialty about each. Sihon is not Og, and Og is not Sihon. Well may my text assign to each one its place in the song of praise!

*But if any mercy deserves to be rehearsed more distinctly than another, it is early mercy.* The children of Israel had not got their hands into fighting yet. They had not crossed the Jordan; they had not entered Canaan where they were to be soldiers every day. They were on this side of the Jordan, and they had not learned war. They offered to Sihon and to Og to go quietly through their land, and not so much as pluck a fruit from their trees, or drink a drop of water from their wells. But Sihon and Og were in an ill state of mind, and they would not allow them to go peaceably through. There was a battle—the first of their battles—the commencement of their warfare, and so they always looked back with happy and grateful memories to their first fights, and their first victories. No doubt they remembered all about Adonibezek, and about the king of Ai, and all those other kings; but these were later—their first fights were with Sihon and Og. Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, I should like you to recall your first troubles—your first labors for Christ, your first trials, and your first successes! You remember the first soul that you brought to Jesus—you cannot forget the little room where you began to work; you remember the half-dozen girls that you collected for the first time to form a class—those two or three boys that you got into that little room down in the back slum. Now, remember your Sihon, king of the Amorites, and your Og, king of Bashan, and how God helped you over those beginnings! It was a great thing, you know, for you were not as big then as you are now. You begin to think (I am only saying out loud what your heart whispers to you)—you begin to think that you can do it. Why, you are a man of experience, are you not? And you, young man, why you are a well developed minister now! You can do a great deal. We too often feel as if our experience had matured us into something far more important than we dreamed of in the first stage of our little career! It is a wicked feeling, but the vanity of our hearts will sometimes assert itself. Now, let us revert to the time when we were little in Israel, and all unknown! Some of us were perhaps quite boys and girls, though we truly loved our Lord; we

were weak and feeble; nobody thought there was anything in us, or if they did, we ourselves did not think so. We were all trembling, and afraid; but, glory be to God, we overcame Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan, and our early victories are fresh in our memories! Let us recall them, partly to humble us, and partly to strengthen us. Let us, like David, say, "Your servant slew both the lion, and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." The Lord who helped those young days will not forsake you now. Only trust Him with the same simplicity; only distrust yourself as much as you did then, and a little more; only sink into the very dust of self-abasement, and rise in all the grandeur of childlike confidence in God, and as He smote Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, so will He make all your foes as driven stubble before your face. He will make you as a new, sharp threshing instrument, having teeth, and you shall thresh the mountains, and make them as chaff.

Thus each mercy deserves to be specially remembered, for not one is deserved, not one is needless, and everyone has its peculiarity, but especially the early ones—they have a never-to-be-forgotten speciality.

**III.** Thirdly, EACH MERCY DOES REALLY IN ITSELF DESERVE SEPARATE CONTEMPLATION.

I will show you exactly why I think so. I go to visit a sick person. He has been in trouble. Let me suppose it is you who makes the visit, for I dare say you have done the same thing. Very soon after you enter you get an account of the trouble in pretty full details; and then you have all the special circumstances related to you. "You see, my dear sir, I should not have felt the loss of this dear child so much, only it is the second or the third I have lost; and then, you see, sir, she was such a sweet girl." Or, "It was that dear boy upon whom I had set all my hopes." These little points are always mentioned as occasions of special grief or aggravations of a heavy sorrow. "My dear husband is taken away," says the disconsolate widow; and unwilling to mingle her tears indiscriminately with other weepers in like afflictions, she adds, "Ah, sir, but in my widowhood there are pangs peculiarly bitter. Just after he had been toiling and struggling, with the tide against him, and we were beginning to get on more smoothly, he was taken away with a sudden stroke or a slow consumption before there was a proper provision made for these dear children. When they seemed to need a father's care and tenderness, it was then, just then, he was smitten, and I am left with a heart withered like grass." Then you meet another who has lost money, and you hear of the failure that is likely to come on, and then there are certain details about the loss—about the person that was trusted; certain circumstances about the cruel manner in which he acted, and the shameful way in which he betrayed confidences. You hear all that. Oh, I know all about it! I have heard it, and when I have got some trouble of my own, I think I generally find myself turning it inside out, like a child does a new dress, saying, "Look here," and showing every bit of it—every point of it—upside down, the right way up, the wrong side up, and the wrong side out, and all ways! You always do that, do you not, with all your troubles?

Now then, dear friends, ought you not to do the same with all your *mercies*? Do you not think so? If the Lord gave you nothing but troubles, then I think there might be some justification in dwelling so much upon them; but since there are so many of His mercies, would not it be wisdom to sometimes tell your friends all about those mercies with a sparkling eye, and say, “They were manifold mercies; there was fold upon fold! See the goodness of the Lord in this thing; He sent that mercy just when I needed it—just when I most required it, and it came to me in such a beautiful way, too, and it was delivered to me by the very person that made it most acceptable; the way in which the gift was bestowed so sweetened it, that I do not know how to praise the Lord enough for it.” Oh, if only I heard Christians often saying one to another, “Have you heard what the Lord has done for me? Sit down a little while, and let me fill your ears with the sweet tale of His loving-kindnesses, and His tender mercies.” Is not this justice? Bare justice? If you will harp on your sorrows, you should, in a better sense, harp on your joys, and bring out the best harp with all its ten strings—and touch all those strings with praise to Him who has done so much for you! Tell the world not only that He overcame your foes, but say, “To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites, for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever.” “We might tire people,” says one. I am glad you are a little sensitive on that point, because you have been rather *inconsiderate* sometimes when you have been talking about your *troubles*. And I think you might be excused if you were to weary us occasionally by declaring your mercies! Oh, but the ears of saints are not tired with such themes as this; on the contrary, they are gladdened and made to rejoice! “Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will tell you what He has done for my soul!” I am sure the response of all God’s people will be—“Let us hear it! Tell it to us, for we will rejoice with you and magnify the name of the Most High.”

**IV.** Fourthly, CONTINUED BENEFITS ARE A SPECIAL PROOF OF ENDURING MERCY.

For God to slay Sihon, king of the Amorites, may hardly prove by itself that His mercy endures *forever*, though it does prove that He had mercy *then*. Therefore the inspired poet wisely strikes that string, and before the note has died away upon the listening ear, He touches another. “Og king of Bashan,” says He, “for His mercy endures forever.” One, two, three, four, five, six succeeding stanzas—these mercies come quickly, one after the other, and so they show the continuance of the mercy, while the unbroken succession of wave upon wave in ceaseless regularity gives sanction to the chorus, “His mercy endures forever!” Thus, dear brethren, were we in the habit of dwelling distinctly upon God’s distinct mercies, do you not think we should have in our souls a firmer faith as to the endurance, the continuity, the everlastingness of the mercy of God? Oh, what the Lord did for us when we were babes in grace! When we think of what He did then, we say, “His mercy endures forever.” Then consider what He did for us when we were young men in Christ Jesus! “His mercy endures forever.” Think of what He has done for us after we have grown

to be fathers! "His mercy endures forever." And O you gray heads, tell of what the Lord has done for you, for when you put all four ages together you can say with peculiar emphasis, "His mercy endures forever." I wish I had a memory strong enough to remember all the mercies of God to me in the past year. They have been very many, very great, and taken one by one, they have been very sweet. As I look at them, one after the other, the evidence seems to accumulate till the argument becomes conclusive that "His mercy endures forever." It has endured all through the year! It was connected with all the years that went before! It is gathering fresh force in the year that is current! Therefore I may trust for the years that are yet to come that He who was yesterday so full of mercy, and is today so full of grace, will be forever the same! Do you not see that the striking of these bells, one by one—the bringing out of each mercy in its distinctness, one after the other—goes to illustrate the precious and ever-blessed truth of God that His mercy endures forever? Let our hearts look forward with the calm confidence which must come to a soul that lives by faith and sings without fear—

***"For His mercies shall endure  
Ever faithful—ever sure."***

**V. Fifthly, THE OVERRULING OF TRIALS IS A SUBJECT TO DWELL UPON WITH DELIGHT.**

Read the verses—"And gave their land for a heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even a heritage unto Israel His servant, for His mercy endures forever." The Israelites did not expect to have the territory of Sihon and Og; their land was on the *other* side of the Jordan, but since Sihon and Og assailed them as unexpected foes, they got out of them unexpected territory. You and I have had, and we do have, unexpected trials. In looking back we have suffered many trials which we did not anticipate, from unlikely quarters—from persons who ought to have been our friends, our helpers, our comforters. The result has shown that we have had unexpected *advantages*—our perils have proved pioneers of our progress. I want you to remember this, so that you may sing the more sincerely, "His mercy endures forever."

How many sins and how much unsuspected treachery of heart have we been led to discover through our troubles? Those vipers would have slept in our soul quietly—they would have bred disease there of the deadliest kind, but trouble came, and we were put in such a state of trembling that we began to search, and as we searched we found the deadliest evil, and we put it away. How many a vice has been discovered to us in the hour of trial? Whenever I hear of a brother who thinks his corruptions are dead, I feel inclined to say, "Put him half-an-hour in the furnace, and if he does not hear the dogs bark inside his soul, I am mistaken." There they are, sure enough. Depend upon that. As a general rule, he is possessed of most devils who thinks he has the fewest imperfections! Only let us get into trouble—be thrown into the sieve—and let the devil give us an extra shake or two, and there is enough of chaff or dust in us all to blind our eyes, or to fill them with tears when our Lord sends us His repentance. This trouble must come, and we must be thankful for

the trouble since it winnows the wheat, and makes us clean before the living God.

Besides helping to cleanse us, how many times has trouble helped to instruct us? You may read the Bible all through, young man, and you may think that you know all about it, but your grandfather knows the meaning of texts that you cannot read yet. "Oh," you say, "I have been studying the commentators; I have been looking into them for the meaning of the passages." Yes, but there is another way of reading the commentators, and it comes from *experience*. Experience is the grand way of getting texts written upon your heart! There are many texts that cannot be brought home to your own heart yet. A text of that sort must be brought home to you when you are in such a position as to need its application—it cannot be understood until then. You may have learned all about anchors, sir, but you never know the value of a sheet anchor till you have gotten into a storm. You may read and hear on shore all about a tempest, and you may have met with beautiful descriptions of it, and think you know how it tosses the ship about. But I will guarantee you that a good heave or two will let you know more about sea-sickness and the effects of those mighty tempests that rouse the billows, and rock the vessels than all the books you have ever read for sound instruction or seasonable entertainment!

And how much has the character of God been revealed to us in trouble? We do not know our friends till we fall into adversity! Neither is that, "friend who sticks closer than a brother," truly prized by us till we are brought into trouble. Then we know His power to sympathize and to succor.

Trials help to strengthen us. It is impossible for a Christian to be very strong—in certain ways, at any rate—unless he grapples with difficulties, and endure hardships. There is no proving your courage and prowess in war unless you smell gunpowder, and are exposed to the dread artillery. There is no learning to be strong in the battle unless you pass through trouble—depend upon it. My arm would soon weary if I had to lift the blacksmith's hammer for an hour or two, and make horseshoes. I am afraid I would soon give up the business. But the blacksmith's arm does not ache, for he has been at it so many years, and he rings out a tune on the anvil, so joyfully does his strong arm do the work. Practice has strengthened him. And so, when we have become used to trial and trouble, faith is to us a far more simple matter than it was before! Then we become "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." What shall we say, then? Thanks to Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, for teaching us war? No, but we will thank the Lord who has given "their land to be a heritage, even a heritage for Israel His servant: for His mercy endures forever."

**VI.** Lastly, THE HAPPENING OF ALL THIS TO THE SAME PERSONS IS A FURTHER ILLUSTRATION THAT HIS MERCY ENDURES FOREVER. These six verses tell of great things done for *Israel*, all for Israel. That last verse is very sweet to me—"Even a heritage unto Israel His servant." What are the kings slain for? For Israel! What does Sihon die for? For Israel! Why does Og fall? For Israel! For whom is the heritage? For Israel!

And who is Israel, and what has Israel done to have all this? What have they done? Brothers and sisters, it is a sad but gracious story. Israel! Israel! Why, that is the nation that made the golden calf, and said, "These are your gods, O Israel." Israel! Why, these are the people who said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt have You brought us into this wilderness to destroy us?" Israel! Why, these are the people that took the daughters of Moab and committed lewdness with them. Israel! Why, these are the people who provoked the Lord, so that He said to His servant, Moses, "Let Me alone! Let Me alone, that I may destroy them," for they provoked the Lord to jealousy. Israel! Why, these are the people of whom God swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His Rest. Yet it is the same nation! Their children have followed them! It is Israel still, and God has done all this for Israel. Now, while you are thinking about Israel, just begin to think about yourselves. For whom has God done all this—turned Judgment into mercy, fought great battles on their behalf, and given them a great inheritance of mercy and loving-kindness and grace? Who is it for? Well, I will not mention anybody's name, but I will mention my own to myself, and as I mention it, I think—

***"O grace, it is Your known love  
Into unlikeliest hearts to come."***

How amazing that You should do all this for such a one as I am! Brother, sister, I can better understand God's mercy to you than I can His mercy to me! I know one who has, in distress, sometimes doubted the loving-kindness of the Lord. I know one who has been proud, envious, and worldly. I know one whose heart has been cold, dead, callous, and careless—when it ought to have been tender, and full of pity, and full of love. I know one that is all imperfections, all faults. He seems, to himself, to grow worse, instead of better, everyday—at least he loathes himself more a hundred times than he used to do. And yet I know that the Lord loves that man. But why, I do not know, except, "even so, Father, for so it seems good in Your sight." And if you tell your own story, and know your own hearts, and your own lives, you will wonder and be astonished to the extreme of wonderment that the Lord should give a heritage to Israel—to you, His servant, truly His servant—but a poor, faulty servant to have such a heritage given him out of the abundance of the grace of God. And why does He do it but that His mercy endures forever? Is there one of us who might not justly be in hell before the clock ticks again if it were not that His mercy endures forever? The brightest saint here has no brightness but what God lends him, and He only lends it to him because His mercy endures forever! Oh, bless His name, you children of His that live near to Him—you that have climbed to the highest stage of communion! Remember, you do not stand there because of anything in *yourselves*, but because His mercy endures forever! If you have conquered your sins—Sihon king of the Amorites—it is because His mercy endures forever. And if today you put your foot upon the neck of Og, king of Bashan, it is not because you are strong, but because His mercy endures forever. If you have grown in sanctification, and begun to possess the land which God has given to be a heritage to His people, it is still because His mercy endures forever! And when death itself is dead, and you have passed be-

yond the gate of pearl, and taken possession of the throne reserved for you with Christ at God's right hand, the only reason why you shall get there will be because His mercy endures forever! This is the song of every saved soul in this Tabernacle, as it shall be in the temple above, from now on and forevermore.

I think it ought to be a great encouragement to those of you who are not God's people, if there are any such present, and there may be. Oh, how it ought to ring in your ears, "His mercy endures forever!" You are very old, but His mercy endures forever! You are very sick, and near death, but His mercy endures forever! You have gone to the utmost extreme of sin, but His mercy endures forever! You have resisted His Spirit; you have stifled your conscience; you have been disobedient to Christ, but His mercy endures forever! You have indulged every evil passion; you have broken loose from every bond that ought to have held you to the way of right, but His mercy endures forever! The last day of your life is almost come, but His mercy still endures, and will endure till you die! If death comes, we have no gospel for the dead, but as long as you live, that mercy still endures—

***"While the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return."***

The returning prodigal, trusting in Jesus Christ, shall find His mercy. If you say, "Oh, but sir, my sins are strong, how can I master them?" The answer I shall give you is in the words of my text, "He slew great kings: for His mercy endures forever: yes, slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever." Cannot God slay your sins? As for Satan and the world, He slew Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, for His mercy endures forever! If you say that you never can be holy, and never can grow like His children, I know, "He gave their land to be a heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even a heritage unto Israel His servant: for His mercy endures forever."

And why should He not, even thus, enrich you with sanctifying grace? May God in His rich mercy abundantly bless you, that you may sing His praise forever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
NUMBERS 21:21-35;  
DEUTERONOMY 2:16-37, 3:11.**

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136, 196.**

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# A WEIGHTY CHARGE

## NO. 1286

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 26 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Keep yourselves in the love of God.”*  
*Jude 1:21.*

JUDE gives a very terrible picture of what will happen in the last days; he describes apostates, and paints them in the blackest colors, and he then informs us that there will come in the last time mockers, and with them separatists and sensualists, all of whom will assail the church of the living God. It feels very natural that after foretelling our adversaries, and describing them, and so bidding us view the hosts assembled for the war, he should next instruct us how to prepare our defenses, and set our forces in battle array. In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> verses of his epistle, Jude mentions the great Christian *Quadrilateral*, the four forts which must be well manned and carefully maintained if we would battle the advancing foe. I shall call your attention to the four important points, though I must do so with the utmost brevity.

The Apostle says, “You beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith.” *Edification* is a grand defense against the assaults of skeptics and heretics. These prey upon the ignorant and unestablished, but fail to overthrow those who are rooted and grounded in the truth of God. We need to be continually built up—learning more, loving more, and *living* more the grand truths of the gospel. We must see to it that the foundation is right, for it will be useless, or worse than useless, to be built up upon false principles—it is “on our most holy faith” that the building must be based. We should be so established in the doctrines of grace as to recognize their holiness, and to imitate them in our own lives; only a “most holy” faith is safe for the soul, and woe unto the man who rests content with any other. See, then, brothers and sisters, that to ward off the ills of these last times we must labor to know the truth ourselves, and must endeavor to instruct our brethren in them. Personal and mutual edification in the church should be zealously maintained as one of the most valuable defenses against the invasion of error.

The second most necessary defensive principle in the church is *devotion*. “Praying in the Holy Spirit” is the weapon with which the hosts of the Lord will put to rout the armies of the alien. The prayers of saints are the mighty artillery with which the walls of our Jerusalem are protected; supplication is a cannon which throws tremendous bolts against the advancing foe, as Sennacherib knew when Hezekiah pleaded with God! The prayers, however, must be deeply spiritual, written on the heart by the Holy Spirit, and presented with energy of His creating. Formal, lifeless petitions are but a Chinese painted fortress—while praying in the Holy Spirit is an impregnable castle! Those “groans which cannot be uttered” are pieces of ordinance which make the gates of hell tremble, but we

must put our hearts under the influence of the blessed Spirit of God to have this, and then lift them up in continued intercession before God, and then there can be no fear about the preservation of our minds from the error of the wicked. A praying church soon tries the spirits of false prophets, and casts them forth as evil. I have far more faith in prayer than in controversy; keep the prayer meetings going! Maintain private prayer with earnestness, and we may laugh to scorn all the sophisms of unbelievers and deceivers!

Jude next mentions as a third important matter the *affections* of the church. If the hearts of the members of the church are right, mockers and scoffers can do very little against them. "Keep yourselves in the love of God," for a warm-hearted company of Christians, who love the Lord with all their hearts, and with all their souls, are not likely to be overcome by mockers and sensualists. Love to God will be as a wall of fire round about them. In dull, decaying churches, errors spread like ivy on the crumbling walls of an old abbey, but life, zeal, earnestness, warm-heartedness throw off these evils even as a red-hot iron plate evaporates the drops which fall upon it. Love God, and you will not love false doctrine; keep the heart of the church right, and her head will not go far wrong. Let her abide in the love of Jesus, and she will abide in the truth.

The fourth point to which he calls attention is the brightness of our *expectancy*. "Looking," says he, "for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Expect that Christ will come, and come with undeserved blessings which shall display the mercy of God to us! Expect that when He comes it will be to end our conflicts, to tread Satan under our feet, and to reveal and perfect that eternal life which He has already implanted in us! Looking forward to the sure coming of Christ, the church will not be afraid of the great swelling words of men, nor dread their murmurings; she will have an answer to the tyrant's question, "Where is the promise of His coming?" She will reply, "Behold the Lord comes with 10,000 of His saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." First, "building," and then, "looking" from her watchtower, the church will defy the powers of evil, confident of victory at the appearing of her Lord.

Brethren, if the darkest times should come, if these four points are diligently maintained, we shall be perfectly safe against the cunning assaults of the arch enemy! O servants of the living God, seek with all your hearts the edification of the saints! Keep your devotions warm, keep your affections pure, and keep bright your expectancy, for so shall you stand fast in the tempest! In prospect thereof we may sing with Jude, "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

At this time we take the third of the four exhortations as our text—"Keep yourselves in the love of God." This may refer, and I have no doubt it does, to mutual oversight. Christians are to labor to keep *each other* in

communion with God; if they see a brother grow cold in his attachment to the Lord, it is their duty to endeavor by gentle rebukes, consolations, and admonitions, to restore the heart of the backsliding one to proper warmth. “Keep yourselves in the love of God,” that is to say—exercise a mutual oversight, and practice watchfulness over each other, lest any of you should by little and little lose your sense of the love of God. Let not the wolf steal here a lamb, and there a sheep, and so diminish your numbers as a church, but ask for the Spirit’s aid that you may keep yourselves and your brethren near to the great Shepherd, for so shall you be safe. Mutual oversight will not, however, be the theme of this morning’s discourse. I must narrow the text down to a *personal* duty—let each man keep *himself* in the love of God.

To many minds this exhortation will appear to be somewhat unguarded. I am quite certain that if I were the author of the sentence, my very sound brothers and sisters would seriously object to it, and would say, “We are kept by the power of *God* through faith unto salvation, and to exhort us to keep *ourselves* is useless, carnal, and legal.” To whom I reply—dear brethren, I am *not* the author of the phrase, and therefore if you have any quarrel with it, will you be so kind as to remember that your dispute is with the Holy Spirit and not with me? I find it in the Inspired Volume, and I have no power or wish to blot it out! Moreover, I find in the word of God many other exhortations against which the same objection may be brought, and I do not intend either to twist them to mean something else, or to avoid expounding them from fear of being thought unsound. With half an eye one can see that while in Holy Scripture we are taught that we can do nothing without Christ, we are at the same time exhorted to do all sorts of things, and are even bid to be *perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect!* If this is inconsistent it is the inconsistency of Scripture, and I bow before it and leave others to quibble if they choose. All power to do good comes from the Holy Spirit, and all will towards good is from the same source, yet we are bid to perform right things as freely as if we could and would do them of ourselves. Nor are the exhortations of the word of God couched in guarded language and hedged round with limiting phrases. Holy Scripture seldom guards its own utterances but speaks freely, and whereas men are so fearful lest they should be mistaken that they frequently interject parentheses and explanations, and so spoil the effect of what they are saying, we find the Holy Spirit speaking out what He has to say and leaving it to the instructed minds of believers themselves to remember those other truths of God which balance the doctrine in hand. We are too fearful about truth, she needs no armor, her naked beauty is better protection than a coat of mail. As no one thinks of wrapping the sun in a blanket on a winter’s day, so we need not anxiously guard and protect the truth of God—let it shine forth, and it will be its own interpreter!

Yet look at the context, and you will see that it lends no sanction to the proud idea that a man can keep himself apart from the grace of God, for the sentence which precedes the text is “praying in the Holy Spirit.” Remember to keep yourselves, but do so by praying in the Holy Spirit, and so confessing that you are dependent upon His divine power. The

following sentence also lifts my text out of a legal atmosphere by saying, “Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life”—showing that your eyes are to be on Jesus and to the mercy of God, and not to yourself—and by no means to any merit or power of your own. My brothers, we must never be afraid to exhort one another because of the Scriptural doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit! This should urge us forward, and by no means hold us back. We are not to feel ourselves muzzled and gagged when we preach practical Precepts because we believe comforting doctrines; let us speak the whole truth with a gracious liberty, resting quite assured that the Lord can reconcile His own truth in the hearts and experiences of His people, and does not need us to be perpetually agitated with the fear of damaging His truth, as if it were some delicate eggshell china which we might break with a touch, or a cobweb which would be swept away by the movement of our hand! Let us speak the truth with all boldness as we ought to speak, and say as the text does, “keep yourselves in the love of God.”

This implies, however, beloved friends, that you *are* in the love of God. It is not an exhortation directed to every man, for some men are not in the love of God. It is directed to those of you who are in that love to keep yourselves in it.

Let me, then, begin by inquiring, are you in the love of God? Not, are you an *object* of divine benevolence, for that He exercises towards *all* His creatures—but do you *know* His love in Christ Jesus? Have you believed in Jesus Christ unto eternal life, and seen the Father’s love beaming in the face of Jesus? If you have believed it, you have also enjoyed it, for the love of God has been shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit which is given unto you, and you have been conscious of a joy superior to anything which this world can create! Well, then, continue to believe in that love so deep, so strong, so true! Abide also in the enjoyment of that love, and pray for more. Do not lose the sense of it by careless living; if you have ever known that love, it is quite certain that you love God in return; therefore continue to love the Lord. This is, probably, the particular meaning of the exhortation before us. The love of God in you is made manifest by the love which you have towards God, and the consequent affection which you feel to all His people; endeavor, then, to always love God, and to love Him more and more. Feed the sacred flame of divine affection till it becomes an all-consuming fire. “Oh, love the Lord all you His saints.” With all your heart, with all your soul, and all your strength, love the Lord, and love your neighbor as yourselves! Especially cultivate love unto all the saints, for this also is the love of God. “Let brotherly love continue.” “Walk in love as Christ also has loved you.” Keep yourselves in the love of God; you are in that love, you believe it, you enjoy it, you reflect it, you manifest it to others, then continue both to believe and enjoy it, and persevere in displaying and manifesting it in your love to God and your love to men.

Two things this morning, and only two; the first will be *motives for keeping ourselves in the love of God*; and the second will be *means to assist us in so doing*.

**I.** First, MOTIVES for “keeping yourselves in the love of God.” It is as though a courtier having gained the favor of his sovereign should receive upon his entrance into court this good advice from a friend—“You now sun yourself in your sovereign’s favor, so act as to retain your position, that you may never be sent away from his presence, and made to occupy a lower place. He is not capricious, but he is jealous, therefore be careful so you may dwell in the light of his countenance.” Believers are always God’s servants, but they are not always smiled upon; let them so live as never to lose that smile. When we go to the sunny south in the winter for our health, we are advised by the physician to keep ourselves as much as possible in the sun; we are told to let our rooms look towards the rising sun, and to keep clear of sunless streets and courts. This is the advice of wisdom, for if you lodge in rooms upon which the sun never shines, you might as well be at home in our own chilly land! The sun is the great physician, and by basking in his beams we find healing beneath his wings. It is even thus with the love of God, “Keep yourselves in it,” sun yourselves in it all day long. The flowers teach us this, for when the sun shines upon them they open themselves and turn their faces towards its light. They love him and they delight to be kissed by his beams, and therefore they keep themselves as much as they can in his brightness. When trees are planted in a spot where the sun only reaches them in one direction, they put forth their boughs towards the sun’s quarter, and seek his beams. Do you the same! You are in God’s love, continue in it, grow towards it, keep yourselves in it! Your Father loves you; do not, like the prodigal, go away from that love, or forget it, or slight it, or grieve it; enjoy it, be warmed by it, and be sanctified by it evermore.

What is to be the motive for this? It is clear that *all the motives which led you to desire God’s love at first should lead you to stay in it.* If it is to me, a poor broken-hearted sinner, of the utmost importance to find the love which heals my wounds, then, being healed, it is equally important that I should keep in that love lest I should be wounded again! If being my father’s prodigal child it was a great thing to get back and once more receive the kiss of love, and hear him acknowledge me as his son, it must be equally good for me to stay at home and never play the prodigal again! The true son abides in the house forever, and dreads the very idea of going forth from it. You know, beloved, with what earnestness you were formerly pleaded with that you should not rest without the love of God in Christ; now, I have but a few minutes this morning to spend on any one argument, and therefore I shall leave it to you to remember what those arguments were, and to enforce them upon yourselves. That which is worth getting is worth keeping! If divine love was worth seeking, even if you had been called to lay down your lives in the search, it must be equally worth retaining, cost what it may. I have heard that many who have been shrewd at making money, have not been able to keep a fortune after they have gained it; and I fear there are many Christians who, with much zeal obtain a high degree of enjoyment of the love of God, and become very warm and earnest in the ways of God, but they cannot retain their fervor, and after a while relapse into lukewarmness. Many get into the sunlight of full assurance, but they soon leave it and are dark-

ened with doubts and fears, and are chilled with insensibility and indifference, and so they do not keep themselves in the love of God as they should. Let it not be so with you, but hear your Master's words wherein He says, "Abide in Me." If love within the soul is worth the getting, it is worth the keeping—continue in it!

Next, *we should continue in God's love because it is His due*. Brethren, that I should know that God loves me, and should rejoice in it, and then should love Him in return, is His due under the law, for this is the substance of His law to Israel, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." And that because He had revealed His love to Israel, for the preamble of the commandments runs thus—"I am the Lord your God that brought you out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage." He claims their love because of His love to them. Much more is it so under the gospel. That matchless display of divine mercy should exercise upon us a divine influence, it should be permitted to melt, renew, restrain, constrain, and govern us. Receiving its blessings, and meditating upon its glories, we ought to be as much affected by it as wax by the flame. Touched with its flames of love, our hearts ought to burn with loving gratitude, as with coals of juniper. See God in the gospel and not love Him? It is monstrous! Brothers and sisters, if you have part and lot in the covenant of grace, the love of God with all subduing power must and will hold you beneath its sway! That God's love should be felt and returned is a *duty*, but at the same time a *privilege* unbounded.

Remember that God's nature makes love to be His due. Such a character as His engrosses the love of every intelligent and right-minded creature. Not to love such a one as God is would be impossible to renewed hearts! He reveals himself as Father, Son, and Spirit, and in each divine person displays a sacred form of matchless goodness, so that *not* to love Him is baseness and profanity. God's nature claims it, and our nature also cannot rest without it; I mean, of course, our *regenerate* nature. Grace has made us the children of God, and true children must love their Father; it cannot be that the life of God is in your soul if there is no sense of the divine love and no return of that love to Him from where it came. As the sparks seek the sun, who is the father of flame, so in warm affections and communing the love of God in the soul seeks the God who gave it. You cannot be God's children and yet not love Him! Well, then, since law and gospel, since *His* nature and *your* renewed nature, since Father, Son, and Spirit all have claims upon your hearts, oh, if you love the Lord Jesus, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

Remember, too, dear brethren (and this is a strong argument) that *love is the evidence of faith, and the grace by which faith operates*. The faith which saves the soul is always attended by love. It is written, "Faith works by love." "Faith without works is dead," but faith without love is faith without works, therefore faith without love is a dead thing, and cannot possibly save a soul. If you say, "I believe in Jesus Christ," my dear brother, if that is true, you have proved it already by loving God; therefore prove it still by loving on, even to the end! May the ever blessed Spirit help you to do so!

Another argument lies here—*the love of God is the spring of all our graces*. I include in the term “the love of God,” both God’s love to us and our love to Him, for they are very much the same. Let me use one illustration: you have a magnifying glass, and hold it up before the sun till you focus the rays upon a piece of dry wood and set it on fire. Now, while you see the wood burning to ashes, will you tell me what it is that burns? Does the heat of the sun burn the wood or does the wood burn? The heat which you feel while the wood is burning, is it due to the sun or to the wood? Of course at first the fire is purely and simply the flame of the sun, but afterwards the wood itself begins to burn; the sun burns the wood, and then the wood itself burns; even so the love of God comes into our heart, and then our heart loves too, and in both cases, “love is of God.” No man is a Christian unless he himself loves God with his own heart, but yet our love to God is nothing more nor less than the reflection of God’s love to us; so that it comes to the same thing. The love of God, whether from Him to us or from us to Him, is practically one and the same thing. This, I say, we must retain in our souls, because it is the source of every virtue; no man can do anything aright if he does not love God. Without love to God, where is zeal for His glory? Where is patient endurance for His sake? Where is cheerful obedience to His will? Without love to God where is true knowledge of God? Can any man know a God whom he does not love? Without love to God can any action be acceptable in His sight? Brothers and sisters, if you have more love you will have more of every grace, your love will be the test of the healthiness of your condition. When love burns, the whole of our nature blazes with holy fire, but when love smolders, every grace is like smoking flax. Love must be maintained as a primary necessity of the divine life if we are indeed to glorify God.

Keep yourself in the love of God, because *though your love is all you can give, it is very little*. Suppose you loved Christ more than any saint that ever lived, more than any apostle or martyr? Yet I put it to you, what is the highest supposable love compared with the love of *Christ to you*? If you regard the excellence of the character of God, does He not deserve a vastly more intense admiration and affection than we have as yet been capable of? Our whole heart is all too little, let it not be divided! Daily increasing in love, give Him all your affections. Consider that if you do not give Him all your love you have given Him nothing. If you give your body to be burned, and have not love to God, it profits you nothing. Though I should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though I should traverse the whole world to preach the gospel of Christ, though with dauntless courage I should brave the gates of hell, yet if I loved not God what would it all be but a dead sacrifice which could not be accepted upon His altar? Keep yourselves, then, dear friends, in the love of God, for it is the least you can do.

Remember, too, that *we must give the Lord our love, or else that love will go somewhere else*. We are so created that we must love something or other. If the Ever-Blessed One does not win our love, the world, the flesh, or the devil will gain it. The worst witch in the entire world is the world herself, and she soon casts her spell over the man who grows chill

in his love to Jesus. You are hankering after some idol or other, my brethren, if God is not all in all to you! If His love is not very sweet within you, and if it does not cause you to love Him intensely, you will fall under the dominion either of some lust or passion or corruption, or else your heart will be cankered and consumed with the rust of care and covetousness and worldliness. Your heart cannot be kept from loving; its only safety lies in keeping it in the love of God.

As a motive for loving God, I should remind you *that here lies happiness*. Without an exception, this is the rule, that he who loves God most is happiest. "But there must be exceptions," says one. "If a man is in prison, if he is on the eve of a cruel death, will love to God fill him with delight?" It has done so many times! "But if a man rolls in riches, if he is blessed with good health and every comfort of life, surely *he* can be happy without the love of God in his soul." There is abundant evidence to show that it is *not* so, for the most favored children of this world become before long heart-sick of its joys, and the more honest among them have declared that they could find no satisfaction in all their possessions. It scarcely needs a Solomon to tell us that the entire world apart from the love of God is "vanity of vanities." A Christian at his worst is really more to be envied than a worldling at his best! I would sooner have an ounce of the love of God than be loaded down with the wealth of nations. When the soul is filled with the love of Christ, it seems lifted beyond ordinary manhood. It burns with holy fire, and as it glows, it mounts on wings of flames, and soars towards heaven! Love's feet are like hinds' feet, so that they tread upon the high places of the earth, and leave care and doubt below it, even as the hinds of the mountains leave the marshes of the plains for those who cannot climb. The love of God breeds an enthusiasm and a sacred fervor within the soul which lifts men out of themselves, and bestows on them a sort of celestial other-life, a divine favor, by which the soul is borne up as on eagle's wings, and triumphs in unspeakable joy! This makes them 10 times stronger, braver, grander, and happier than they were before. I suppose to make us equal to the angels, we have but to love God more, and to make us *superior* to the angels, as we shall be in heaven, there will be nothing more needed than to fill us with a superior love to that which angels feel!

Brothers and sisters, this shall be my last argument. Get love to God and keep it, because *it will make you like Jesus*. Jesus Christ, your Lord and Master, dwelt in the love of God and was full of love to God, and consequently of love to men. This made it His meat and His drink to do His Father's will. The secret of the life of Christ lies in the supremacy of love within Him. He was indeed embodied love—into His heart no selfishness, ambition, anger, wrath, or any gross or sinister motive had ever entered. The prince of this world found nothing in Him, because God had everything in Him. Love shone in His eyes and spoke from His mouth; the Father's love upheld Him, and His own love to the Father covered Him with zeal as with a cloak. Get love, much love, healthy love, sacrificing love, and you will be like Jesus—and so you will be fit to dwell with Him in heaven! Love is the very atmosphere of Paradise; it is the odor of the flowers of the new Eden. Put on your beautiful garments, O bride of

Jesus, and the garments of glory and beauty which become your rank, the garments which the Bridegroom's love has worked out for you! Gird on the sandals of love which are fairer than the lily, and more precious than the gold of Ophir; robed in the love of Jesus, you shall shine as if you were clothed with the sun, while your love to Him shall make you fair as the moon in His sight! Wear love to Jesus as your jewels and your adornments, and when you put them on, take care you never lay them aside, but wear them evermore, for so shall the King greatly desire your beauty.

These are some of the motives out of very many, but having no time to mention them all, we must leave to your own instructed minds the easy task of arguing for His love.

**II.** Secondly, THE MEANS for calming out the exhortation of the text shall now be considered. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." I am not going to dwell upon prayer because that is in the sentence before my text. Nor will I at this moment insist upon the necessity for the Holy Spirit's aid in this work, for that truth you all know and believe, and we have frequently dwelt upon it of late. The text does not make that doctrine prominent, and therefore, I will not enlarge upon it; not because I undervalue it, but because just now it is not our theme.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God"—how are you to do that? Well, first I should say, brethren, *endeavor to be full of that love at this present moment*. If I were told that a city was about to be besieged, and if I were commanded to keep the people supplied with provisions during the siege, I would lay in a plentiful store at once to provide for the famine. So, if you desire to continue in the love of God, have much of the love of God *now*, and pray for more of it. Oh, to know the love of God as much as ever it can be known! Be greedy, be hungry, be covetous after it! Store it up, fill your soul full of it as a man would fill his storehouses and granary if he knew that a dearth would be in the land. Notice that just before my text these words occur—"You, beloved, building," which means increasing, and growing up. The way to keep yourselves in the love of God is to obtain more and more of it. Love is like a fire, which, if it does not consume more fuel, burns low. You cannot stop where you are; to retain you must annex. Napoleon used to say, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." O Christians, remember that you must advance or backslide; you must build higher and higher! Love must become more and more supreme in your souls, or you will decline; if you would remain warm, be warm now! Alas, what a little stock of love some Christians have! You may look into their hearts long before you can spy it out. They are true believers, and therefore there must be *some* love in their bosoms, but their cruse of oil is almost run out, there is just a little at the bottom, hardly enough to cover the wood of the barrel. We ought not to be in so evil a case, for if we have so little grace in prosperous seasons, what shall we do in times of temptation and trial? If the heart is full to overflowing, there is a likelihood that its stores will hold out, but scant affection makes us fear that it is a transient emotion, and not the love which is born from above.

If you desire to keep yourself in the love of God, *avoid everything that would dampen your love*. Avoid sin, especially, for sin is the poison of the love of God. Love of sin is the death of love of God! I mean by *sin*, not merely the grosser forms of vice, but everything which has a tendency to tarnish the virgin purity of your soul. I know some Christians who complain a good deal about their need of love to Jesus, and the smallness of their faith, and so on. When I track them to their haunts, I find that they keep ill company, and frequent amusements and assemblies where love to Christ is sorely wounded and almost slain! I put it to their own consciences whether they are ever likely to increase their love to Christ by going where His name is not adored and His cause is not befriended. I heard of one who professed to be a Christian, that he claimed to be able to attend the theater and yet to live very near to God. And I remembered the remark of a minister who said, "When I see great grace in those who frequent the theater, I shall at once grow prize roses in my coal cellar." Just so; I shall cultivate not only roses, but palms and oranges in the vault under my house when that is the case! He who says that gay amusements help him to grow in the love of God utters a lie! Conscience condemns the worldly professor; he cannot come home from a place of amusement where the ungodly congregate, without feeling, "I have been where I had no right to be." I am not now judging the outside world, but I am dealing with the members of our churches who profess to be separated from the world. If a worldling loves worldly amusement, I do not wonder at it, nor wish to deny him his enjoyments. Just as one feels about the swine, that they ought to have their pig wash, for it suits them, but none of us want to share it, so say we of the unconverted and their frivolities! But the case is otherwise with the children of God! O man of God, run not with the multitude! Wantonness, chambering, lewdness, and unclean mirth are not for you. No, "let them not be mentioned among you as becomes saints."

I would also have you *avoid as much as possible the company of those who deaden your spirituality*. I like to drop into the house of the poorest Christian whose conversation will edify me, but though a man may be richer than I am, and his company may be desirable to me in many ways, if I find on coming out of his house that he has insinuated doubts into my mind, or that his language has tainted the purity of my conscience, I am bound to avoid him. If business calls me into connection with him I must go, or else I must go out of the world, but I will not seek as my companion any man who in any measure takes me off from keeping myself in the love of God. Neither should we read books which have an injurious effect upon the mind. I wish some of our younger friends would take good heed to this remark; you have little enough of the love of God in your souls—you do not need to pour cold water on it by emptying trashy novels upon it. Go not into the chill, cold air of irreligion and vanity! Brothers and Sisters, put everything aside that would hinder your loving God and knowing that He loves you; and if you have erred, and you find out this morning that you have done so, do not be angry at my rebuke, nor yet be led to despair of yourself, for the times of your ignorance God winks at and forgives! Go to your heavenly Father and say, "O Lord,

help me to make this the rule of my conduct—that whatever prevents my feeling that You love me, and prevents my loving You, I may withdraw from at once, and have nothing more to do with it, for You have bid me keep myself in Your love.”

If you would love the Lord, *meditate much upon what He is, and what He has done for you*. Your debts to Him are overwhelming—try to feel them, and you will love Him because He first loved you. See your daily dependence, your hourly indebtedness, and the patience, constancy, faithfulness, and tenderness with which He cares for you! Here I need not enlarge, for you will not fail to do this if you are indeed the subjects of divine grace.

Next, dear friends, if you want to be kept in the love of God, follow earnestly the means of grace. Do not neglect the hearing of the word, nor the reading of it in private, nor secret prayer, nor the assembling of yourselves together. Come often to the Lord’s table—you will find it a very blessed means of quickening the pulse of your soul. There are God’s appointed ordinances for stirring up your love; do not be so proud as to think you can do without them. I fear there are some Christians who are so busy in *doing* good, that they do not allow themselves opportunities of *getting* good. Incessantly do I urge Christian people here to be engaged in some work for Christ; and I would urge it again and again, but some of you young people ought not to absent yourselves from public worship in order to go and teach in ragged schools or elsewhere, for you have not yet enough knowledge, nor enough strength to be able to bear the frequent loss of the instructive ordinances. And even those of you who can bear to go upon half rations will be wise not to do so, for a man who works so long every day that he does not sleep enough, or eat enough, will in the long run be less capable of labor than if he had attempted less, and had taken more time for the feeding and resting of his body. Do remember that Martha, though she was very busy, was not so much commended as Mary who sat at Jesus’ feet. Be busy as Martha, but be devout as Mary, and so will you keep your heart in the love of God!

You will do this very much, too, by *communing with the Lord*. Never spend a day without hearing your Master’s voice! Do not come down from your chamber to see the face of man till you have seen the face of God! Do not let week after week roll by without communion with heaven. There is no trading like it; send the ships of prayer to the gold coast of communion with the Lord, and they will come back to you with priceless treasures! Hold high communion with the supreme Invisible, and your soul will be sure to love Him, for never man drew near to God without the love of God flowing into his soul.

Then I would say next, if you would love God, *be sure to work for Him*. If I wanted a man to love me, and I had my choice of two things, either to do something for the man or to let that man do something for me, if my sole object were to secure his love, I know which I would do; I would let him serve *me*. If you do a kindness for a man, he may be ungrateful and forget you, but if you let him do something for you, the more he does for you the more he will stick to you through life. For this reason, therefore, you will not only love God because of what He has done for you, but you

will love Him because you have been allowed to do something for Him. Read the song of Deborah when she and Barak had chased away the adversaries. You do not read much in Judges about love to God, but at the end of her song you find it appearing—“So let all Your enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love You be as the sun when he goes forth in his might.” She felt that she loved God because she had bravely led with Barak the host of God, and love to God had been kindled while she was battling for Him. Go and teach the ignorant, visit the sick, help the poor, and guide those that are out of the way, and though you thought you did not love Christ, you will soon discover that you do! Laziness is a bolster with which to suffocate love, but honest service of Jesus Christ is a platform upon which love shows herself in all her beauty, and there also she gathers her strength.

O love the Lord, all you His saints, and if you need yet another means of keeping in His love, then *live in expectation of seeing Him*. Nothing inflames a Christian’s love more than feeling how much he owes in the past, and how much he expects in the future. Jesus is coming! You are soon to be with Him! Perhaps before another week is over you will behold His face! Surely you feel even now the kindling of warm desire—a passion for Him springs up within your spirit, and you long for the lagging days to fly, that you may be in His arms! Keep yourselves thus in His love. May God help you to do so, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 15.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—766, 804, 811.**

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# STRENGTHENING WORDS FROM THE SAVIOR'S LIPS

## NO. 1287

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL, 2, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”  
2 Corinthians 12:9.***

PAUL, when buffeted by the messenger of Satan, addressed his prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ, and not, as he usually did, to the heavenly Father. This is a somewhat remarkable fact, but it is clear from the passage before us. He says, “For this thing I besought *the Lord* thrice,” and that the Lord here is the Lord Jesus is pretty clear from the fact that he says in the next verse, “that the power of *Christ* may rest upon me.” His prayer was not directed to God absolutely considered, nor does he speak of the power of *God*, but his prayer was directed to the Lord Jesus Christ, and it was the power of the Lord Jesus Christ which he desired to rest upon him. It is an infallible proof of our Lord's divinity, that He may be addressed in prayer; and this is one instance with several others, which show us that we may legitimately present our petitions, not only to the ever-blessed Father, but also to His Son Jesus Christ. There seems to me to be a peculiar fitness in a prayer to Jesus when the temptation came from a messenger of Satan, because the Lord Jesus has endured the same temptation Himself, and knows how to succor them that are tempted. Moreover, He has come to earth to destroy the works of the devil. In His lifetime He manifested peculiar power over unclean spirits, and was constantly casting them out from those whom they tormented. It was one of His few rejoicing notes, “I saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven.” It was by the name of Jesus that devils were expelled after Christ had risen into glory. “Jesus I know,” said the spirits whom the sons of Sceva endeavored in vain to exorcise. Devils felt the power of Jesus, and therefore it was wise and natural that the Apostle Paul should, when buffeted of Satan, turn to Jesus and ask Him to bid the evil spirit depart from him.

Is it not a little remarkable also that this prayer was not only addressed to Jesus, but was offered in much the same manner as the prayer of our Lord in the garden? The Apostle prayed three times, even as our Lord did when He too was sorely buffeted by the powers of darkness. Paul's thrice-repeated cry was intensely earnest, for he, “*besought*” the Lord thrice. And Paul, singularly enough, met with very much the same answer as his Master, for our Lord was not permitted to put aside the cup, (it could not pass away from Him unless He drank it), but an angel

appeared unto Him strengthening Him, and so in Paul's case the trial was not taken away from him, but he was strengthened by kind, assuring promises, and by being led to see that God would be glorified by his enduring the trial. I see, then, the Lord Jesus reflected in His servant Paul as in a mirror! I hear the three-times repeated prayer, I mark the cup standing unremoved, and I see the strength imparted in the midst of weakness!

Our text fell from the lips of Jesus Christ, Himself, and if anything could make its language sweeter than it is in itself it would be this fact, that He Himself delivered the promises to His chosen Apostle. It is Jesus who says in the promises of the text, "*My* grace is sufficient for you; *My* strength is made perfect in weakness." This truth of God casts a soft, mellow light upon the promises, helps us to interpret them, and enables us to derive all the greater comfort from them. When Jesus speaks, a special charm surrounds each syllable.

The exact tense of the Greek promises are not easy to translate into English. The Apostle does not merely tell us that his Lord said these promises to him 14 years ago, but the tense connects the past with the present, as if he felt that the answer was not simply something past, but something which continued with him in its consoling power. The echoes of what his Lord had said were still sounding through his soul! I should not miss the Apostle's meaning if I read it, "He has been saying to me, 'My strength is sufficient for you.'" The promises had an abiding effect upon the Apostle's mind not merely for the time reconciling him to the particular trouble which had afflicted him, but cheering him for all the rest of his life—strengthening him in all future trials to glory in his infirmities and render praise to God. It is a sweet thing to have a text of Scripture laid home to the heart for present uses, but when God the Holy Spirit so applies a promise that it abides in the heart for the term of one's natural life, then are we favored indeed! Elijah's meat gave him strength for 40 days, but what is that meat which endures unto eternal life? What bread must that be which feeds me through the whole period of my pilgrimage? Here, then, we have before us food which Jesus Himself provides, so nutritive that His Spirit can cause us to remember the feast to our dying day! O Lord, feed us now and give us grace to inwardly digest your gracious word.

With this preface, which I beg you to remember during the discourse, since it indicates my line of thought, we now come to the text itself—a mass of diamonds, bright and precious! In the text we notice three things—first, *grace all-sufficient*; secondly, *strength perfected*; and, thirdly, *power indwelling*.

**I.** In the text even the most superficial observer notices a promise of GRACE ALL-SUFFICIENT. In the case of our Lord Jesus, the Spirit so rested upon Him as to be sufficient for Him at all times. Never did the Spirit of God fail to uphold the man Christ Jesus under the most arduous labors, the most terrible temptations, and the bitterest suffering; and therefore He completed the work which His Father gave Him to do, and in

death He was able to exclaim, "It is finished!" The Lord here assures His chosen servant that it should be the same with him—"My grace," said He, "is sufficient for you."

To bring out the full meaning of these few promises, I will give you four readings of them. The first is a strictly grammatical one, and is the first sense which they bear. Taking the promise translated *grace* to mean favor or love—for that also is included in the promise *charis*—how does the passage run? "My favor is sufficient for you." Do not ask to be rid of your trouble, do not ask to have ease, comfort, or any other form of happiness—My favor is enough for you, or as good Dr. Dodge reads it, "*My love is enough for you.*" If you have little else that you desire, yet surely it is enough that you are My favored one, a chosen subject of My grace. "My love is enough for you." What a delicious expression! You do not need an explanation. Repeat the promises to yourselves, and even now conceive that the well-beloved looks down on you, and whispers, "My love is enough for you." If you have been asking Him three times to deliver you from your present affliction, hear Him reply, "Why do you need to ask Me anymore? My love is enough for you." What do you say to that? Do you not answer, "Yes, Lord, indeed it is. If I am poor, if You will me to be poor, I am content to be severely tried, for Your love is enough for me. If I am sick, so long as You will come and visit me and reveal Your heart to me, I am satisfied, for Your love is enough for me. If I am persecuted, cast out and forsaken, cheerfully will I bear it if a sense of Your love sustains me, for Your love is enough for me. Yes, and if I should be left so alone as to have no one to care for me in the whole world, if my father and my mother should forsake me, and every friend should prove a Judas—"Your love is enough for me." Do you catch the meaning, and do you see how Paul must have been comforted by it if he understood it in this primary and most natural sense? "O Paul, it is sufficient for you that I have made you to be a chosen vessel to bear My name among the Gentiles; it is enough for you that I have loved you from before the foundation of the world, that I redeemed you with My precious blood, that I called you when you were a blasphemer and injurious, that I changed your heart, and made you love Me, and that I have kept you to this day, and will keep you even to the end by My love. My love is enough for you; ask not to be set free from this buffeting; ask not to be delivered from weakness and trial, for these will enable you the better to enjoy My favor, and that is enough for you."

We will now read our text another way, keeping to our authorized version, but throwing the stress on the first promise—"My grace is sufficient for you." What grace is this? Note who it is that promises. It is Jesus who speaks; therefore it is *mediatorial* grace, the grace given to Jesus Christ as the covenant head of His people which is here intended. Think of it a minute. It is the head speaking to the member, and declaring that His grace is enough for the whole body! The anointing oil has been poured upon the head that it may go down the beard and descend to the garments, and, lo, one poor member of the body is mourning and complain-

ing, for it is fearful of being omitted in the plenteous anointing, but the head comforts it by saying, “*My* anointing is enough for you, since it is enough for all *My* members.” It is the head; Christ, in whom all fullness dwells, speaking to one of the members of His mystical body and saying, “The grace which God has given to Me without measure on behalf of all the members of *My* body is sufficient for you as well as for the rest of them.” Beloved, seize the thought! The Lord has given to Christ all that the whole company of His people can possibly need—no, more than that—for, “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell,” and of His fullness have we all received, and grace for grace, and from that fullness we hope continually to draw forevermore. This is the grace which is sufficient for us! It greatly tends to help faith when you can see the relation that exists between the Redeemer and yourself, for Jesus is *your* covenant head, and God has been pleased to give Himself and all His infinite riches to the Lord Jesus Christ as your federal representative; and as your covenant head, the Lord Jesus assures you that the stores laid up in Him on your behalf are sufficient for you. Can you limit the mediatorial power of Christ? Don’t you know that God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him? Be you, then, assured that Christ’s grace is sufficient for you!

I will read the text again, and this time put the stress in the center. “*My* grace *is sufficient* for you.” It is *now* sufficient. You are buffeted by this evil spirit, but *My* grace is sufficient for your present need. Paul, you have been beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, and in perils often—and in all these *My* grace has been sufficient; and now I tell you this present trouble, though it is somewhat different in shape from the rest, is nevertheless such as I am well able to meet. *My* grace is sufficient for you in this also. The nearness of an object increases its apparent bulk, and so the affliction under which we are at *present* laboring seems greater than any we have known before. Past trials appear when we have passed them to have been small things compared with present troubles, and therefore the difficulty is to see the sufficiency of grace for present and pressing afflictions. It is easy to believe in grace for the past and the future, but to rest in it for the *immediate* necessity is true faith. Believer, it is *now* that grace is sufficient; even at this moment it *is* enough for you. Do not say this is a new trouble, or if you do say it, remember the grace of God is always new! Do not complain that some strange thing has happened to you, or if you do, remember blessings are provided in the grace of God to meet your strange difficulties. Tremble not because the thorn in the flesh is so mysterious, for grace is mysterious too, and so mystery shall be met by mystery. At this moment, and at all moments which shall ever occur between now and glory, the grace of God will be sufficient for you! This sufficiency is declared without any limiting promises, and therefore I understand the passage to mean that the grace of our Lord Jesus is sufficient to uphold you, sufficient to strengthen you, sufficient to comfort you, sufficient to make your trouble useful to you, sufficient to enable you to triumph over it, sufficient to bring you out of it, sufficient

to bring you out of 10,000 like it, sufficient to bring you home to heaven! Whatever would be good for you, Christ's grace is sufficient to bestow; whatever would harm you, His grace is sufficient to avert; whatever you desire, His grace is sufficient to give you if it is good for you; whatever you would avoid, His grace can shield you from it if so His wisdom shall dictate. O child of God, I wish it were possible to put into promises this all-sufficiency, but it is not. Let me retract my speech—I am glad that it *cannot* be put into promises, for if so, it would be *finite*, but since we never can express it, glory be to God, it is inexhaustible, and our demands upon it can never be too great! Here let me press upon you the pleasing duty of taking home the promise personally at this moment, for no believer here need be under any fear, since for him also, at this very instant, the grace of the Lord Jesus is sufficient!

In the last reading which I will give, I shall lay the emphasis upon the first and the last promises—“*My* grace is sufficient for *you*.” I have often read in Scripture of the holy laughter of Abraham, when he fell upon his face and laughed; but I do not know that I ever experienced that laughter till a few evenings ago, when this text came home to me with such sacred power as literally to cause me to laugh! I had been looking it through, looking at its original meaning, and trying to fathom it, till at last I got hold of it this way—“*My* grace,” says Jesus, “is sufficient for *you*,” and it looked almost as if it were meant to *ridicule my unbelief*; for surely the grace of such a One as my Lord Jesus is indeed sufficient for so insignificant a being as I am! It seemed to me as if some tiny fish, being very thirsty, was troubled with fear of drinking the river dry, and Father Thames said to him, “Poor little fish, my stream is sufficient for you.” I should think it is, and inconceivably more. My Lord seemed to say to me, “Poor little creature that you are, remember what grace there is in Me, and believe that it is all yours. Surely it is sufficient for you.” I replied, “Ah, my Lord, it is indeed.” Put one mouse down in all the granaries of Egypt when they were the fullest after seven years of plenty, and imagine that one mouse complaining that it might die of famine. “Cheer up,” says Pharaoh, “Poor mouse, my granaries are sufficient for you.” Imagine a man standing on a mountain, and saying, “I breathe so many cubic feet of air in a year; I am afraid that I shall ultimately inhale all the oxygen which surrounds the globe.” Surely the earth on which the man would stand might reply, “My atmosphere is sufficient for you.” I should think it is; let him fill his lungs as full as ever he can, he will never breathe all the oxygen, nor will the fish drink up neither the entire river, nor the mouse eat up all the stores in the granaries of Egypt! Does it not make unbelief seem altogether ridiculous, so that you laugh it out of the house, and say, “Never come this way again, for with a mediatorial fullness to go to, with such a Redeemer to rest in, how dare I for a moment, think that my needs cannot be supplied?” Our great Lord feeds all the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, and the cattle on the hills, and guides the stars, and upholds all things by the power of His hand, how then can we be straitened for supplies, or be destitute of help? If our needs were a

thousand times larger than they are they would not approach the vastness of His power to provide. The Father has committed all things into His hands. Doubt Him no more. Listen, and let Him speak to you—“*My* grace is sufficient for *you*. What if you have little grace, yet *I* have much; it is *My* grace you have to look to, not your own, and *My* grace will surely be sufficient for you.”

John Bunyan has the following passage which exactly expresses what I myself have experienced. He says that he was full of sadness and terror, but suddenly these promises broke in upon him with great power, and three times together the promises sounded in his ears, “My grace is sufficient for you; My grace is sufficient for you; My grace is sufficient for you.” And “Oh! I thought,” he said, “that every promise was a mighty promise unto me; as, ‘*My*,’ and ‘*grace*,’ and ‘*sufficient*,’ and ‘*for you*’; they were then, and sometimes are still far bigger than others are.” He who knows, like the bee, how to suck honey from flowers, may well linger over each one of these promises and drink in unutterable content—

***“Have we forgot the Almighty name  
That formed the earth and sea?  
And can an all-creating arm  
Grow weary or decay?  
Treasures of everlasting might  
In our Jehovah dwell!  
He gives the conquest to the weak,  
And treads their foes to hell.  
Mere mortal power shall fade and die,  
And youthful vigor cease—  
But we that wait upon the Lord  
Shall feel our strength increase.”***

**II.** Secondly, in the text we have STRENGTH PERFECTED—“For My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Now, running the parallel still between Jesus and Paul, remember, beloved, that it was so with our Lord Jesus Christ. He was strong as to His Deity, in Him dwells all strength, for He is the mighty God—but how was His strength as Mediator made perfect? The Scripture says, “Perfect through suffering”; that is to say, the strength of Christ to save His people would never have been perfected if He had not taken upon Himself the weakness of human nature, and if He had not in that feeble nature descended lower and lower in weakness. Had he saved Himself He could not have saved us, but His giving up of all that He had, made Him rich towards us, and His putting on of weakness made Him strong to redeem us. O incarnate God, You could not redeem till You were swaddled as a babe in Bethlehem; no, You could not redeem till You were made to bear a cross like a felon; no, You could not perfect redemption till You did hang a ghastly corpse upon a gallows; no, it was even essential that You should be laid in the grave; Your work was not fulfilled till three days and nights You did abide in the heart of the earth among the dead! The Lord Jesus could say—“My strength is made perfect in weakness.” This was to be realized in Paul, and is to be fulfilled in all the saints. Of course the strength of God is always perfect; we do not understand that anything is necessary to make perfect the divine

power, but the promises fell from the lips of Jesus as our Mediator and representative, and it is *His* strength which is made perfect in weakness.

In us this is true, first because *the power of Jesus can only be perfectly revealed in His people by bearing them up, keeping them, and sustaining them when they are in trouble*. Who knows the perfection of the strength of God till he sees how God can make poor puny creatures strong? Yonder is a timid, sickly woman who lives a life of agony; almost every breath is a spasm, and every pulse a pang; each member of her body is subject to tortures of which others scarcely dream; but look at her cheerful patience! As much as possible she conceals her pain that she may not distress others; you hear no mutter of complaint, but oftentimes she utters promises as cheery as those which fall from persons in robust health; and when she *must* tell of her afflictions, she always speaks of them in such a tone that you feel she has accepted them at the Lord's hands with complete resignation, and is willing to bear them as many years as the Lord may appoint. I do not wonder when strong men say strong things, but I have often marveled when I have heard such heroic sentences from the weak and trembling. To hear the sorrowing comfort others, when you would think *they* needed comfort themselves; to mark their cheerfulness when, if you and I suffered half as much, we would have sunk to the earth—this is worthy of note. God's strength is perfectly revealed in the trials of the weak. When you see a man of God brought into poverty, and yet in that poverty never repining; when you hear his character assailed by slander, and yet he stands unmoved like a rock amidst the waves; when you see the gracious man persecuted and driven from home and country for Christ's sake, and yet he takes joyfully the spoiling of his goods and banishment and disgrace—then the strength of God is made perfect in the midst of weakness! While the man of God suffers, and is under necessities, distresses and infirmities, then it is that the power of God is seen! It was when tiny creatures made Pharaoh tremble that his magicians said, "This is the finger of God," and evermore God's greatest glory comes from things weak and despised.

This is equally true to the man himself. *God's strength is made perfect to the saint's own apprehension when he is weak*. My brothers, if you have prospered in business all your lives, and have had an easy path of it, I will tell you something—you do not know much about the strength of God. If you have been healthy all your lives, and never suffered; if your families have never been visited by bereavements, and if your spirits have never been cast down, you do not know much about the strength of God! You may have read about it in books, and it is well you should; you may have seen it in others, and observation is useful; but a grain of experience is worth a pound of observation, and you can only get knowledge of the power of God by an *experimental* acquaintance with your own weakness—and you will not be likely to get that except as you are led along the thorny, flinty way which most of God's saints have to travel, which is described by the promise, "tribulation." Great tribulation brings out the great strength of God! If you never feel inward conflicts and sinking of

soul, you do not know much of the upholding power of God; but if you go down, down, into the depths of soul-anguish till the deep threatens to shut her mouth upon you, and then the Lord rides upon a cherub and does fly, yes, rides upon the wings of the wind and delivers your soul, and catches you away to the third heaven of delight—*then* you perceive the majesty of divine grace! Oh, there must be the weakness of man felt, recognized, and mourned over, or else the strength of the Son of God will never be perfected in us! Thus have I given you two meanings of the text; others see the strength of God in our weakness, and we ourselves discover it when our weakness is most manifest.

I think the term, “made perfect,” also means *achieves its purpose*. Read it thus—“For My strength fully achieves its design in weakness.” Brothers and sisters, God has not done for us what He means to do unless we have felt our own weaknesses; as long as a portion of strength remains we are but partially sanctified. When our Lord has accomplished in us what He is aiming, the result will be to empty us out and to make us discover the utter vanity of *self*. If the Lord ever takes you like a dish and turns you upside down, and wipes you right out, and sets you away on a shelf, *then* you will feel what He *means* you to feel—that is to say you will feel as if you were waiting there for the Lord to take you down and use you, and then, be sure, He will come in due time, and use you for His honorable purposes, laying meat upon you for His hungry people and making you an ornament at His banquets of love. If you feel yourself to be a full dish, I will tell you what there is in you—you hold nothing but the slop and filthiness of depraved nature. The Lord will never use you till all that is poured out, and you are wiped quite clean and put away with nothing of yourself remaining in you, wherein you may rejoice! All the saints who are ready to go to heaven feel themselves to be less than the least; but those professors who are by no means ready for glory are highly self-conscious, and feel that there is a great deal in them which is very commendable. Those who enter heaven carry nothing of self with them; neither will any of us enter there so long as we talk proudly of our attainments. Those who claim to possess “the higher life” have been heard to boast of their purity, but those who enjoy the highest life in glory cry, “Not unto us! Not unto us be glory!” It is a mark of fitness for heaven when self is dead and grace alone reigns. The strength of God is never perfected till our *weakness* is perfected. When our weakness is consciously and thoroughly felt, then the strength of God has done its work in us.

There is yet another meaning. *The strength of God is most perfected or most glorified by its using our weaknesses*. Suppose the world had been converted to Christ by 12 emperors? The establishment of Christianity might have been readily accounted for without glorifying God. Imagine that Christianity had been forced upon men with the stern arguments which Mohammed placed in the hands of his first disciples—the glory would have redounded to human courage and not to the love of God. We wonder not that the gods of the heathen were dashed to the ground when

the scimitars were so sharp; and were wielded by such ferocious warriors; but when we know that 12 humble fishermen, without arms or armor, without patronage or prestige, without science or sophistry overthrew colossal systems of error, and set up the cross of Christ in their place, we adoringly exclaim, "This is the finger of God!" And so the other day when the Lord took a consecrated cobbler and sent him out to India, whatever work was done by William Carey was evidently seen to be of the Lord! If societies would send out distinguished scholars, it is thought by some that in all probability heathen intelligence would recognize abilities and genius, and respect them, and, convinced by reasoning, and influenced by talent, they would bow before superior Western culture! Yes, and so they would be converted by a conversion in which the Lord would not be glorified, but proud man would have the praise! In what way would that increase the glory of God? God uses weakness rather than strength, and so His power is revealed. All that you have that is strong, my brothers and sisters, will be of small service in this matter, for the Lord will not exalt your strength and make you proud of your attainments; your weakness and infirmities, in all probability, the Lord will see fit to use, for He delights to take the base things and the things that are despised, and use them to achieve His purposes, that the excellency of the power may be all His own.

Let me notice last of all on this point, that all history shows that the *great strength of God has always been displayed and perpetuated in human weakness*. Brothers, what made Christ so strong? Was it not that He condescended to be so weak? And how did He win His victory? By His patience, by His suffering—that is to say, by those things wherein His human *weakness* appeared! Now, look at Christ mystical, namely, the church. How has His church ever been strong? Of course you reply, "By the strength of God!" I know—but what has brought forth the strength of God so that it has been undeniably *manifest*, and consequently operative upon mankind? Has it been the strength of the church? No, but the *weakness* of the church, for when men have seen believers suffer and die, it is *then* that they have beheld the strength of God in His people! The sufferings of the saints have been the victories of the truth of God! The martyrs led the van! They suffered most, and consequently are the champions of the elect army. The weakness which allowed of their being destitute, afflicted, tormented, has been the battle-axe and the weapons of war with which the Lord has procured conquest for the gospel. When one of the pastors of a church in London was put to death in Smithfield one early morning, before the frost was melted by the sun, there stood around the stake a number of young people who had been accustomed to listen to his teachings. Strange thing for young believers to be up so very early to see their pastor burned to death! What do you think they were there for? No idle curiosity could have brought them to such a spectacle! It is written that they went there *to learn the way*. Do you see? They saw him burn, and came there with that intention—to learn the way to die for Christ themselves! The Church of Rome could do nothing with a people

who from the weakness which compelled them to suffer, gathered strength to die triumphantly! The weakness of the martyr as he suffered revealed the strength of God in him—which held him fast to his principles while he was gradually consumed by the cruel flames. Had not men been poor worms, capable of being crushed, and capable of agonizing suffering, the upholding grace of God could never have been so conspicuously revealed! Blessed be the name of the Almighty! He displays His might in our weakness even as He shone forth in the midst of the burning bush! He spoke, and lo, the heavens and the earth stood forth. A marvelous creation! But then there was nothing to oppose the fiat of His power—His all-powerful word was not hampered by using weak instrumentalities. How, then, is God to show yet greater power? How shall omnipotence or all kinds of power be seen? Why, brothers and sisters, He will not use His unfettered word alone, but He will clog and encumber it by using infirm and weak instruments! He will in the kingdom of grace work by men compassed with infirmities—and achieve His purposes by agencies in themselves unfit for His ends—and then His power will be doubly seen! The celebrated Quentin Matsys had to make a well-cover in iron one morning. He was a master in the art of fashioning the metal, and could shape it as though it were so much wax. His fellow workmen were jealous, and therefore they took from him the proper tools, and yet with his hammer he produced a matchless work of art! So the Lord with instruments which lend Him no aid, but rather *hinder* Him, does greater works of grace to His own glory and honor. He takes us poor *nothings* who are weak as water, and uses us to accomplish His designs, and this is His almightiness gloriously displayed! Omnipotence when it does what it wills by its bare word is one thing, but when it takes weakness into league with it, and performs its powerful deeds by means of *weakness*, it is quite another thing, and by the weakness it doubly manifests itself.

**III.** The most blessed part of the text remains—INDWELLING POWER. Dr. Adam Clarke here furnishes us on the last part of our text a most useful observation, “Most gladly therefore will I glory in infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Now mark, the Greek promise here used, interpreted “rest,” is the same promise employed by John when he says, “The word was made flesh, and,” as the Greek runs, “*tabernacled* among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” The passage before us means just this, “I glory in infirmities that the power of Christ may tabernacle in me.” Just as the Shekinah light dwelt in the tent in the wilderness beneath the rough badger skins, so I glory to be a poor frail tent and tabernacle that the Shekinah of Jesus Christ may dwell in my soul. Do you catch the thought? Is it not full of beauty? See, then, what he means—first, he puts the power of Christ in opposition to his own power because if he is not weak, then he has strength of his own; if then what he does is done by his own strength, there is no room for Christ's strength; that is clear, but if his own power is gone there is space for the power of Christ. If my life is sustained by my own strength, and my good works are done

in my own strength, then there is no room for Christ's strength; but the Apostle found that it was not so and therefore he said, "I glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may tabernacle in me."

But what is the power of Christ? Let the text I quoted tell you—"The glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." What power, then, was this which Paul expected to tabernacle in him but the power of grace and the power of truth? It must be so, because God had said, "My *grace* is sufficient for you." Paul catches at that promise, and he cries "this is the truth of God, and I rely upon it"; and he therefore expects that the grace of God and the faithfulness of God would tabernacle in him, and shine forth within his soul. This is the power of Christ which he expected to rest upon him. What more could we desire?

What is the power of Christ? I answer next, it is Christly power—the kind of power which is conspicuous in the life of Jesus. There was a power in Christ peculiar to Himself, as all can see who read the New Testament—a power unique and altogether His own. You know what the power of Alexander was—it was a power to command men, inspire them with courage for great enterprises, and keep them in good heart when called to endure hardships. You know what the power of Demosthenes was—it was the power of eloquence, the power to stir the patriotic Greeks, to break the fetters of the Macedonian. But what was the power of Jesus? It was power to *suffer*, power to be made *nothing* of, power to *descend* to the very depths for love of God and love of men. There lay His power—in those five conquering wounds, in that majestic mournful face, more marred than that of any man, in that great agonizing heart which sent forth sweat of blood when men were to be pleaded for before the Lord. Love and patience were Christ's power, and even now these subdue the hearts of men, and make Jesus the sufferer to be Jesus the King. Therefore Paul says, "I glory in my infirmities that this same power may tabernacle in me. I triumph in weakness, in reproaches, in poverty, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, that I may suffer, humble myself, be obedient and prove my love to God even as Jesus did. When I am weak then am I strong"—he meant strong to prove his love by enduring the weaknesses and afflictions which he accepted for his Master's sake.

What was this power of Christ? I answer again, it was a part of the "All power" which our Lord declared was given unto Him in heaven and in earth—"Go you, therefore, and teach all nations." Paul desired to have that power living in himself, for he knew right well that if he had to "go and teach all nations" he would have to suffer in so doing, and so he takes the suffering cheerfully, that he might have the power! The glory of the Lord shone forth beneath the badger skins of the tabernacle even as the mighty converting power of Christ which dwelt in Paul was gloriously revealed while he endured reproaches and persecutions, sufferings and death for Jesus' sake.

What was Christ's power again? I answer, to complete my sermon; His power lay in His weakness, His humiliation, His dependence upon God,

His faith in God, His perfect consecration to the Father; and Paul says that he was made to suffer, and to be weak, that this same power to become nothing that God might be glorified, might rest in him!

I have done when I say just this. Dear brothers and sisters go home and never ask the Lord to make you strong in yourselves! Never ask Him to make you anybody or anything, but be content to be nothing and nobody! Next, ask that His power may have room in you, and that all those who come near you may see what God can do by nothings and nobodies! Live with this desire, to glorify God! Sometimes when God honors us in His service, a great, "I" stands in the Lord's way. Tremble when you see a poor, weak preacher made useful in converting souls—then all the papers and magazines begin to blaze his name abroad, and silly Christians—for there are plenty of them—begin to talk him up as if he were a demigod, and say such great things about him, and describe him as wise, eloquent and great. Thus they do all they can to *ruin* the good brother! If the man is sensible he will say, "Get you behind me, Satan, for you smell not of the things that are of God"; and, if God gives him great grace, he will retire more and more into the background, and lie lower and lower before his God—but, if you once get a man to feel himself to be great and good, either a fall will happen, or else the power of God will withdraw from him, or in some other way the Lord will make His people know that His glory He will not give to another. The best of men are flesh and blood, and they have no power except as God lends them power, and He will make them know and feel this. Therefore, neither exalt others nor exalt yourselves, but beseech the Lord to make and keep you weakness itself, that in you *His power* may be displayed. God grant it may be so, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
2 CORINTHIANS 11:5-24; 12:1-9.**

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# TRULY EATING THE FLESH OF JESUS

## NO. 1288

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 9, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me, and I in him.”***  
**John 6:53-56.**

OUR Lord Jesus did *not* in this passage allude to the Lord's supper, as some desiring to maintain their sacramental superstitions have dared to affirm! I will not dwell upon the argument that there was no Lord's supper at the time to allude to, though there is certainly some force in it; but I will rather remind you that with such an interpretation this passage would not be true. It must be confessed even by the most ardent advocate of the sacramental meaning that the expressions used by our Lord are *not* universally and without exception true if used in that sense—for it is not true that those who have never eaten the Lord's supper have no life in them, since it is confessed on all hands that hundreds and thousands of children dying in childhood, are undoubtedly saved, and yet they have never eaten the flesh of Christ, nor drank His blood, if the Lord's supper is here meant. There have also been many others in bygone times that by their conduct proved that the life of God was in their souls, and yet they were not able to eat bread at the sacramental table because of sickness, banishment, imprisonment, and other causes. Surely there are some others, though I would not excuse them, who have neglected to come to that blessed commemorative ordinance, and yet nevertheless for all that they are truly children of God. Would the highest of high churchmen send every Quaker, however holy and devout, down to the bottomless pit? If this should refer to the Lord's supper, then it is certain that the dying thief could not have entered heaven, for he never sat down at the communion table, but was converted on the cross, and without either baptism or the Lord's supper, went straight away with his Master into Paradise! It can never be proved; indeed, is utterly false that *no one* has eternal life if he has not received the bread and wine of the communion table; but on the other hand, it is certainly *equally* untrue that whoever eats Christ's flesh has eternal life, if by that is meant everyone who partakes of the Eucharist, for there are unworthy receivers, not here and there, but to be found by the hundreds! Alas, there are apostates who leave the Lord's table for the table of devils, and who profane the holy name they once professed to love! There are also many who have received the sacramental bread and wine, and yet live in sin—who in-

crease their sin by daring to come to the table, and who, alas, we fear, will die in their sins as many others have done. Unregenerate persons are very apt to make much of the sacrament and nothing of Christ. They think a great deal of the bread and wine of the (so-called) “altar,” but they have never known what it is to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ; these eat and drink unworthily—carnally eating bread, but not *spiritually* eating the Redeemer’s flesh—to them the ordinance is a curse rather than a blessing. Our Lord did not refer to the feast of His supper, for the language will not bear such an interpretation.

It is evident that the Jews misunderstood the Savior, and thought that He referred to the *literal* eating of His flesh. It is no wonder that they strove among themselves over such a saying, for, understood literally, it is horrible and revolting to the last degree! But far greater is the wonder that there are millions of people who accept so monstrous an error as an actual truth of God, and believe in *literally* feeding upon the body of the Lord Jesus! This is probably the highest point of profane absurdity to which superstition has yet reached—to believe that such an act of cannibalism as could be implied in the literal eating of the flesh of Christ could convey divine grace to the person guilty of such a horror! While we wonder that the Jews so misunderstood the Savior, we wonder a thousand times more that there should remain upon the face of the earth men in their senses not yet committed to a lunatic asylum who endeavor to defend such a dreadful error from Holy Scripture, and instead of being staggered, as the Jews were, by so fearful a statement, actually consider it to be a vital doctrine of their faith—that they are *literally* to eat the flesh of Christ, and to drink His blood! Brothers and sisters, if it were possible that our Lord required us to believe such a dogma, it would certainly need the most stupendous effort of credulity on the part of a reasonable man, and the laying aside of all the decencies of nature; in fact, it would appear to be necessary before you could be a Christian, that you should altogether divest yourself of your reason and your humanity! It is a gospel certainly more fitted for savages and madmen than for persons in the possession of their senses, and in the least degree removed from absolute barbarism! I greatly question whether the creed of the king of Dahomey contains a more unnatural doctrine. We are not required, however, to believe anything so impossible, so degrading, so blasphemous, so horrifying to all the decencies of life! No man ever did eat the flesh of Christ or drink His blood in a *literal* and corporeal sense; a deed so beastlike, no, so *devilish*, was never yet perpetrated, or could be. No, brethren, the Jews were under an error; they made the mistake of taking *literally* what Christ meant *spiritually*. Judicially blinded as the result of unbelief, they stumbled at noonday as in the night, and refused to see what was plainly set forth. The veil was on their *hearts*. Ah, how prone is man to pervert the words of the Lord! I believe that if Christ had meant this word *literally*, they would have spirited it away; but such is the perversity of the human mind, that when He intended it *spiritually* then straightway they interpreted it in a grossly carnal manner. Let us not fall into their error, but may divine grace lead us to see that our Lord’s words

are spirit and life. Let us not be held in bondage by the letter which kills, but follow the Spirit which quickens. The spiritual meaning is clear enough to spiritual men, for to them belong spiritual discernment; but as for the unregenerate, these things are spoken unto them in parables, that seeing they might not see, and perceiving they might not understand.

Our first head will be *what is meant then by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ?* And our second point of inquiry shall be *what the virtues of this act are.*

**I.** First, then, WHAT IS MEANT BY EATING THE FLESH AND DRINKING THE BLOOD OF CHRIST? It is a very beautiful and simple metaphor, when understood to refer *spiritually* to the person of our Lord. The act of eating and drinking is transferred from the body to the soul, and the soul is represented as feeding—feeding upon Jesus as the bread of life. Eating is the taking into yourself of something which exists externally, which you receive into yourself, and which becomes a part of yourself and helps to build you up, and sustain you. That something supplies a great need of your nature, and when you receive it, it nourishes your life. That is the essence of the metaphor, and it well describes the act and the result of faith.

To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, first, *we must believe in the reality of Christ*—we must not regard Him as a myth, an imaginary personage, an invention of genius, or a conception of the Oriental mind, but we must believe that such a person actually and in very deed lived, and still lives. We must believe that He was God, and yet condescended to be incarnate on earth, and here lived, died, was buried, and rose again. “Except a man eat My *flesh* and drink My *blood*.” It is a mode of expressing the actual existence and true materialism of our Lord’s body, and the sureness and truthfulness of His existence in human nature. You cannot be saved unless you believe in an historical Christ, a real person—

**“A man there was, a real man,  
Who once on Calvary died,  
And streams of blood and water ran  
Down from His wounded side.”**

That same actual person has in His own proper personality ascended to the skies. He is now sitting at the right hand of the Father, and is ordained to descend, before long, to be the judge of the quick and the dead. We could not use the terms *flesh and blood* unless we meant to indicate an actual person—such language could not describe the creation of a dream, a phantom, or a symbol. Before all things, if you would be saved, you must believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as having been really manifested in human nature among the sons of men. “The word was made flesh and tabernacled among us,” and the Apostles declare that they beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

We must believe not only in the reality of the Savior, but in *the reality of His incarnation*, acknowledging that while He was divine, He was also human, that He did not assume human nature in *outward* appearance,

as certain heretics have said, but that Jesus came in the flesh, and as such was heard, seen, touched, and handled. He was in an actual body really nailed to a tree, was really laid in the grave. Thomas did in real deed put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into His side. We must also believe that He did assuredly, and in very deed rise again from the dead, and that in His own real body He ascended into heaven. There must be no doubts about these foundational facts; if we would feed upon Christ He must be real to us, for a man does not eat and drink shadows and fancies.

We must also truly believe in *the death* of the incarnate Son of God. The mention of His flesh as *eaten*, apart from His blood which is drunk, indicates death; for the blood is in the flesh while there is life. His death is more than hinted at in the 51<sup>st</sup> verse of John 6, where our Lord says, "And the bread that I will give him is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Brothers and sisters, we must believe in our Lord's death as it accomplishes the expiation of sin, for so faith feeds on His body as given for the life of the world. There are some who profess to believe in Christ's life, and they hold Him forth as a great *example* that will save us from selfishness and other evils if we follow Him. Such is not the teaching of the text—the blessing of eternal life is not promised for following Christ's *example*, but for eating and drinking His flesh and blood, or in other words taking Christ *into* oneself! And the promise is not made for receiving His example or His doctrine, but His *person*, His flesh, His blood—His flesh and blood as *separated*, and therefore Himself as *dead* for us, and made a sacrifice for us. Just as in the peace-offerings the offerer sat down and feasted with the priest upon the victim which he had presented, so Jesus Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us, and we are to feed upon Him as the Lamb of God, receiving Him in His sacrificial and propitiatory character into our souls. It is vain for us to hope for salvation apart from this! The Father sets Him forth as the propitiation through faith in His blood, and if we refuse Him in this character, Christ has become of no use to us. Christ the exemplar cannot save you if you reject Him as the Christ who bowed His head to death, even the death of the cross, and suffering in His people's place. Christ as a king cannot save you unless you believe in Christ as a victim. This is absolutely necessary to saving faith—unless you eat His flesh and drink His blood, that is, accept Him in His real personality, offered as a sacrifice for sin, you have no life in you! This is what is to be *believed*.

But in order to eat, a man not only believes that there is bread before him and accepts that bread as being proper food for his body, but the next thing he does is to *appropriate* it. This is a great part of the act of feeding upon Christ. As a man in eating takes the morsels to himself and says, "This is bread which I believe nourishes the body, and it shall now nourish *me*, I take it to be *my* bread," so must we do with Christ. Dear brothers and sisters, we must say, "Jesus Christ is set forth as a propitiation for sin, I accept Him as the propitiation for *my* sin. God gives Him to be the foundation upon which sinners' hopes are to be built; I take Him to be the foundation of *my* hopes. He has opened a fountain for sin

and for uncleanness; I come to Him and desire to wash away *my* sin and my uncleanness in the fountain of His blood.” You cannot eat, you know, unless you make the food your own; in fact, nothing is more especially a man’s own than what he has eaten—his possession of it cannot be denied, nor can it be taken away from him. So you must take Christ to be as much your own as the bread you eat or the water you drink—He must beyond question be yours personally and inwardly. Looking up to Him upon the cross, you have to say, “Savior of sinners, those who trust in You are redeemed. I also trust You as my Savior, and I am therefore assuredly redeemed by Your most precious blood.” Eating lies in part in appropriating food, and so unless you appropriate the flesh and blood of Christ to be your own personal hope and confidence, you cannot be saved. I have laid stress upon a *personal* appropriation, for each man eats for himself, not for anyone else. You cannot eat for anybody but yourself; and so in taking Christ you take Him for yourself; faith is your own act and deed; nobody can believe for you, nor can you savingly believe for another. I say it with reverence, the Holy Spirit Himself cannot believe *for* us, although He can and does lead us *to* believe; and indeed, if the divine Spirit *did* believe for us, we would not obtain the promise, since it is not made to *proxy faith*, but solely and alone to *personal* believing. We are not passive in believing; we must be active and perform the personal act of appropriating the Lord Jesus to be our soul’s meat and drink. This believing in Jesus and appropriating Him go far to explain what is meant by eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

Eating and drinking also consist principally in *receiving*. What a man eats and drinks he appropriates to himself, and that not by laying it on one side in a treasury or casket, but by receiving it into himself. You appropriate money and you put it in your pocket—you may lose it; you secure a piece of land and you put your hedge about it, but that hedge may be broken down; but when you receive by eating and drinking you have placed the good things where you will never be robbed of them, you have received them in the truest and surest sense, for you have real possession and enjoyment *in* your own person. Now, to say “Christ is mine” is a blessed thing, but to *really* take Christ *into* you by the act of faith, is at once the vitality and the pleasure of faith! In eating and drinking, a man is not a producer, but a *consumer*—he is not a doer or a giver, for he simply takes in. If a queen should eat, if an *empress* should eat, she would become as completely a receiver as the pauper in the workhouse. Eating is an act of *reception* in every case. So it is with faith—you have not to *do*, to *be*, or to *feel*, but only to *receive*! The saving point is not a something which comes forth of you, but the *reception* of a something imparted *to* you. Faith is an act which the poorest sinner, the vilest sinner, the weakest sinner, the most condemned sinner may perform because it is not an act requiring power on *his* part, nor the going forth of anything *from* him, but simply the *receiving* into himself! An empty vessel can receive, and receive all the better because it is empty. Oh soul, are you willing to *receive* Jesus Christ as the free gift of divine mercy? Do you, this day, say, “I have so received Him”? Well then, you have eaten

His flesh and drunk His blood! If you have *received* the incarnate God in your soul, so that you now trust in Him and in Him alone, then you have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood.

The process of eating involves another matter which I can hardly call part of it, but yet it is indissolubly connected with it, namely, that of *assimilation*. What is received in eating descends into the inward parts, and is there digested and taken up into the body. Even so, faith takes up and absorbs into the man the heavenly bread, Christ crucified. "The word preached," we read in one place, "did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Now, in the original there is the idea of food taken into the body, but never getting mixed with the gastric juices, and consequently remaining undigested, unassimilated, unprofitable, and even injurious. Faith is to the soul what the gastric juices are to the body; as soon as Christ is received into the man, faith begins to act upon Him—to extract nutriment from His person, work, and offices, and so Christ becomes taken up into the understanding and the heart, builds up the entire system of manhood, and becomes part and parcel of the renewed man. Just as bread when it is eaten becomes dissolved and absorbed and afterwards is turned into blood, and flows through all the veins and goes to make up the body, even so is Christ the soul; He becomes our life, and enters mysteriously into vital union with us. As the piece of bread which we ate yesterday could not now be taken away from us, because it is a part of ourselves, even so does Jesus become one with us. You ate the bread yesterday, and whereabouts it is now no philosopher can tell; part of it may have gone to form brain, and other portions to make bone, sinew and muscle, but its substance is taken up into *your* substance, so that the bread dwells in you now and you in it, since it makes up your bodily house. This is to feed upon Jesus Christ—to take Him in so that your *life* is hid with Him, till you grow to be like He—till your very life *is* Christ, and the great fact that Jesus lived and died becomes the mightiest truth of God under heaven, to your mind, swaying your whole soul, subduing it to itself, and then elevating it to the highest degree. "For the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not from now on live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." Even as flowers drink in the sunlight till they are tinted with rainbow hues, so do we receive the Lord Jesus till we become comely with His comeliness, and He lives, again, in us. This it is to eat His flesh and drink His blood.

But now I will make a series of remarks somewhat out of order with the view of setting forth this mysterious eating and drinking in a clearer manner.

Observe that *Christ is as necessary to the soul as bread is to the body*. Meat and drink are absolutely requisite—and so you must have Christ or you cannot live in the true sense of that word. Take away food from the body it must die—deny Christ to a man, and he is dead while he lives. There is in us a natural desire after meat and drink, an appetite which springs out of our necessity, and reminds us of it—labor to feel just such

an appetite after Christ! Your wisdom lies in your knowing that you must have Jesus to be your personal Savior, and in acknowledging that you will perish if you do not receive Him, and it is well with you when this knowledge makes you crave, and pine, and pant for Him. Hunger after Him! Thirst after Him! Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Him, for He *will fill them*.

*Meat and drink do really satisfy.* When a man gets bread and water, having eaten enough he has what his nature requires. The need is real and so is the supply. When you get Christ, your heart will obtain exactly what it needs; you do not yourself fully know what the needs of your soul are, but rest assured, that known or unknown, your necessities will all be supplied in the person of Jesus Christ; and if you accept Him, as surely as meat and drink stop hunger and thirst, so surely will He satisfy the cravings of your soul. Dream no longer of any satisfaction apart from Him, and ask for nothing beyond or beside Him. Christ is all and more than all! He is meat and drink, too. Be content with Him and with nothing short of Him; Hunger after Him more and more, but never leave Him to spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not.

Beloved, *a hungry man never gets rid of his hunger by talking about feeding, but by actually eating.* Therefore do not so much *talk* about Christ as actually *receive* Him. Look not on supplies of food and say, "Yes, these will satisfy me—oh, that I had them," but eat at once! The Lord beckons you to the banquet, not to look on, but to sit down and feast! Sit down at once! Ask not for a second invitation, but sit down and feed on what is freely presented to you in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. You need Him to be formed in you the hope of heaven—but this can never be unless you receive Him into your inmost soul.

*In healthy eating there is a pleasure.* No healthy person needs to be flogged to make him eat, for the palate is conscious of pleasure while we are feeding—and truly, in feeding upon Jesus there is a delicious sweetness pervading the whole soul. Right royal are His dainties! Nothing can more delight immortal banqueters than Jesus delights believers! He satiates the soul; a thousand heavens are tasted in the Savior's body and blood. If ever you lose your relish for Christ, rest assured that you are out of health; there can be no surer sign of a sad state of heart than not to delight in the Lord Jesus Christ; but when He is very sweet to your taste; when even a word about Him, like a drop from the honeycomb, falls sweetly upon your tongue—then there is not much the matter with you—your heart is sound at the core! Even though you should feel faint, it is a faintness of nature, and not a failure of grace! And if you feel sick, if it is sickness after Him whom your soul loves, it is a disease which it would be well to die of!

*Eating times as to our bodies come several times a day—so take care that you partake of the flesh and blood of Jesus often and often. Do not be satisfied with yesterday's receiving of Jesus, but receive Him again today; do not live upon old fellowships and experiences, but go to Jesus hourly, and be not content till He fills you again and again with His love.*

I wish that we could become spiritually like certain animals that I know of which stand in the stall and eat all day long, and half through the night too. Here I would gladly possess the appetite of the horse-leech and never feel that I must pause! Happy is that Christian who can eat abundantly of heavenly meat, as the spouse bids him, and never cease eating while Christ is near, but feed on and on till far into the night—and then awake with the dawn to feed on the bread of heaven.

*It is well to have set times for eating.* People are not likely to flourish who pick up their food just as they can, and have no regular meals. It is well to have settled times when you can sit down to the table and take your food properly. Assuredly, it is wise to have appointed periods for communing with Christ, for meditating upon Him, for considering His work, and for receiving His grace. You know with children it is, “little and often,” and so with us, let it be line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. A bit between regular meals often comes very sweet to a laboring man, and so though you have special seasons for getting alone with Christ, do not deny yourself a snatch by the way. Get a wafer made with honey between meals, and lay it on your tongue to sweeten your mouth—a choice thought, a Scripture text, or a precious promise about Jesus.

I am sure there is one thing I can say about this feeding upon Christ that *never was a man guilty of gluttony in feeding upon Christ’s flesh and blood!* The more you eat of Christ, the more you will be able to eat of Him. We readily weary of any other food, but never of this heavenly bread! We are often in an ill condition in reference to our Lord because we have not had enough of Him, but we can never have too much; when we receive Him to the fullest, we still find that He enlarges our capacity, and we are all the more able to enjoy His preciousness.

Observe that the text tells us that the believer is to *eat His flesh and drink His blood*, for observe that Christ is meat and drink too, He is all-in-all, and all-in-one. A man must not only eat Christ, but he must drink Christ—that is to say he must not receive Christ one way only, but all ways, and not a *part* of Christ, but *all* of Christ—not merely Christ’s flesh as incarnate, but Christ’s blood as the slaughtered sacrifice and bleeding Lamb. You must have a whole Christ and not a divided Christ! You have not truly received Christ if you have only said I select this and that virtue in Him; you must open the door and let a full Christ come in to take possession of your soul. You must receive not merely His work, offices, graces, but Himself, His whole self. Those receive no grace at all who reject the blood of Christ, for that has special mention. Oh, what hard stings I have heard said, even of late, about those that preach the blood of Christ! Let them say on if they will—it is at their peril! But as for me, my brothers and sisters, I hope I shall deserve their censures more and more, and preach the blood of Christ yet more abundantly, for there it *nothing* that can give satisfaction to the soul and quench that fierce, strong thirst which is aroused within our nature, but the blood of Jesus as of a Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world!

Beloved, it is one sweet thought that *the flesh and blood of Christ are food suitable for all conditions*. This suits babes in grace, and is equally suitable for old men; this suits sick Christians—they cannot have a daintier morsel, and this suits Christians in the full vigor of their strength. This is meat for morning and meat for night and meat for midday; this is meat to live by and meat to die by—yes, he that eats it shall never see death! This is meat for feast days, and this is meat for days when we mourn and sorrow; this is meat for the wilderness and meat for the royal gardens; meat I was about to say for heaven itself—for what better food shall our souls find even there, than His flesh and blood? And remember all the Lord's people are free to eat it—yes, and every soul that hungers for it is welcome! No one needs to ask whether he may have it, for it is set forth to be food for all believing souls, whatever their previous character may have been! Come and welcome, come and welcome, hungry, thirsting souls, come eat His flesh and drink His blood!

Thus have I tried to set forth in broken accents what it is to eat His flesh and drink His blood. It is to take a whole Christ into you by trusting yourself entirely to Him as a man trusts his life to the bread he eats, and the water he drinks. How do you know bread will feed you? How do you know water will sustain you? Well, you know by *experience*—you have tried them; you have found that bread and water are good for you. Why do you not take plaster of Paris? Why do you not drink vitriol? You know better! You know you can trust bread to build you up, and water to refresh you, and even so you do not take in priestcraft and false doctrines, but the blessed person and work of Jesus Christ in His life and in His sacrificial death. You take these in, for you feel that you can feed upon them—these are the dainty provisions that your soul loves!

**II.** Now let us briefly consider WHAT ARE THE VIRTUES OF THIS EATING AND DRINKING OF CHRIST. Turn, now, to your Bibles, and in the 53<sup>rd</sup> verse you find that this act is essential. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you.” It is *essential*, for if you have no life in you, you have nothing that is good. “No life in you.” You know the modern theory that there are germs of life in all men which only need developing. Universal Fatherhood spies some good in all of us, and what he has to do is to educate it and bring it out. This is the philosophical notion, but it is not Christ's way of putting it! He says, “Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you.” No, not an atom of true life! There is no life to be educated; the sinner is dead and in him there is no good thing whatever. If ever there is to be any good thing it will have to come *into* him—it must be an importation—and it can never come into him except in connection with his eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ! But suppose a man has many convictions of sin, and he begins to see the evil of sin and he dreads the wrath to come? This is hopeful, but I solemnly remind any of you who are in this state, that unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man you have no life. Until you have believed in Christ, you have no life; until you have washed in His precious blood, you are still dead in sin! Oh, do not be satisfied be-

cause you *feel* some legal convictions; do not sit down in thankfulness because you are somewhat disturbed in mind; you never must be satisfied until you have received Christ! You have NO LIFE in you till you have received Christ!

But perhaps you have attended upon ceremonies; you may have been baptized and taken the sacrament. Yes, but if you have never eaten Christ, taken Him *into* you, you have no life in you! You are dead while you live! Now, here is a proof in our text that life does not mean *existence* as people now talk, who, when they read that “the c dies,” say that means that he goes out of existence. Ungodly men have an existence in them, but that is a very different thing indeed from *eternal* life, and you must never confuse existence with life or death with non-existence—they are very many leagues apart from one another! The unconverted man, not having Christ, has no life in him at all. You members of the church, have you life in you—*real* life? You have *not* if you have not eaten the flesh of Christ! You may have been professors many years, but did you ever eat Christ and drink Christ? If not, you have NO life in you! You may be excellent moral people; your characters may be patterns to others; there may be everything that is beautiful about you; but if Christ is not in your heart, you are the child of nature, finely dressed, but *dead*. You are not the living child of grace—you are the statue beautifully chiseled, but like the cold marble there is no life in you! Nothing but Christ can be life to the soul, and the highest excellences to which human nature can reach apart from Him fall short of salvation. You MUST have Jesus, or death abides in you and you abide in death! That is the first virtue of feeding upon Christ, it is absolutely essential.

Now, secondly, it is *vital*. Read the next verse—“Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” That is to say he has been quickened by receiving *into* himself a *whole* Christ—he is, therefore alive! Though he may be sometimes led to doubt it by his state of heart, yet if he has really received Christ, he has been quickened from the dead and is alive! And what is more, he *always shall be alive*, for he “has *eternal* life.” Now, a life that can possibly die out is evidently not *eternal* life, and the life which the Arminian gets as the result of his faith, according to his own statement, is *not* eternal life because it may come to an end. Good soul, I know if he has *really* believed in Jesus, he will sweetly find out his mistake and his life will go on living under temptation and trial, for it shall be in him, “a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” It shall be “a living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever.” Oh, let us believe the precious doctrine of the final perseverance of the Saints! “He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood *HAS* eternal life.” He has it now! It is a life that shall last as long as God Himself—eternal as Jehovah’s throne!

And then, as to the body, that will die, will it not? Yes, but such is the power of the life which Christ puts into us, that the body, itself, shall rise again! We have our Lord’s pledge for it—“I will raise him up at the last day.” As yet the body is dead because of sin, though the spirit is life because of Christ’s Righteousness in us, but there is a redemption coming

for this poor frame and for this material world in which we dwell. When Christ shall come, then the creation shall be delivered from the bondage under which it was placed, and our material bodies with the rest of creation, shall be emancipated! The bodies of the saints will be delivered from all imperfection, corruption, and defilement! We shall live again in the glorious image of Christ, and the Lord shall fulfill His gracious word, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." This eating and drinking of Christ, then, is vital.

In the third place it is *substantial*, "for My flesh is *meat indeed*, and My blood is *drink indeed*." This is opposed to the unsubstantial character of symbols. The Jewish feasting was a mere shadow; "but," says Jesus, "My flesh is *meat indeed*." This is also said in contradistinction from carnal food. Carnal food being eaten only builds the body, and then disappears, but it cannot touch the *soul*. But feeding upon Christ, the soul is fed and fed unto life eternal, so that Jesus claims to be, "*meat indeed*." Do you ever attend a ministry where the preacher preaches anything and everything but Christ? Do you get fed? Well, if you are of a windy sort, you may get blown up with the east wind as wild asses are when they snuff it up, but I know if you are a child of God, it does not matter who preaches, or how poor his language—if he preaches Christ you always feel as if you were fed; your soul is satisfied with marrow and fatness when Christ is the subject! There is no such meat for the soul as Christ—and the sweetest refreshment is from the weakest parts of Christ—for God's strength is perfect in His weakness! You say to me "What do you mean?" Well, our Lord in the text says, "My *flesh* is meat indeed," not, "my Godhead." "My *blood* is drink indeed," not My resurrection and ascension; not "My second advent," but My *weakness* as a man, My death as a man, My sufferings, My griefs, My groans—*these* are the best food for believers! Do you not find it so? O I rejoice to hear of Christ as coming a second time, but there are times when that doctrine does not yield me an atom of comfort! The brightest stars that charm the day for a poor benighted pilgrim are those which burn around the cross! Strange that we should turn to that spot where sorrow culminated to find our purest comfort, but it is so—"My flesh is meat indeed"—Christ in His weakness! "My blood is drink indeed"—Christ pouring out His soul unto death! This is the truest and best food of the heart! Now, brethren, if you want to grow in grace, feed on Christ. If you would become strong in the Lord, feed on Christ. If you want a something that will build you up in all parts permanently and well, feed on Christ, for other things are meat and drink, but His flesh is *meat indeed*, and His blood is *drink indeed*. Substantial fare is this!

And, lastly, another virtue of this feeding is that *it produces union*. Notice the next verse—"He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me, and I in him." How wonderful is that word—"dwells in Me." You get by taking Christ into you as a whole Christ to live in Christ, and Christ in you! There is this difference between the two privileges—to live in Christ is the peace of justification. You believe in Him, you trust yourself with Him, you feel that you died with Him, and that you rose with

Him, that you have gone to heaven with Him, and therefore you are accepted in Him, and so you live in Him! For *Him* to live in *you* is another thing, namely, the peace of sanctification, for when you have fed on Jesus, He enters into you and abides in you, living again in you. He speaks through your lips, loves with your heart, looks through your eyes, works with your hands, and witnesses among the sons of men by your tongue—He lives in you! Oh, wondrous union! Blessed union! The next verse makes it more wonderful still, for it says “As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me.” Three living things; the living Father, the living Son, and then the living believer! There is the Father with life in Himself as God; then there is the Son as Mediator, God-man, deriving life from the Father; and then the believer, taking the life which came from God through Jesus Christ. O blessed union is this, not merely with *Jesus*, but through Jesus with the *Father*. So that Christ says, “I live, and because I live, you shall live also.” He lives by the Father and we live by Him—and all this because we receive Him and feed upon Him!

Oh, my brothers and sisters, I charge you, open your mouth wide after Christ and take Him into your very self! Give Him lodging in your heart; yes, let Him dwell forever in the best pavilion of your nature, in the rarest place of your soul! Hunger after Him! Feed on Him every day, and when you have done so, and He dwells in you and you in Him, then tell others about Him and spread His dear name abroad, that hungry, perishing sinners may know that there is corn in Egypt, and bread to be had in Jesus! And may many come and eat and drink of Him as you have done. I charge you, brothers and sisters, remember this, and the Lord bless you, for His name’s sake. Amen.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 6:26-65.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—410, 819, 613.**

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# THE HEART FULL AND THE MOUTH CLOSED

## NO. 1289

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the Lord: That you may remember, and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for all that you have done, said the Lord God.”  
Ezekiel 16:62, 63.***

A VERY extraordinary chapter this 16<sup>th</sup> of Ezekiel! A minister could scarcely read it in public; he certainly would not like to explain its metaphors to a general audience, nor are we called upon to do so. To read it in private is another thing, and to have it read for you by the Holy Spirit, and to be made to see, and to *feel* its meaning, not merely as describing the Israelites, but as very much setting forth *yourself*, is a very different matter. Believe me, it is a lesson which if it is well learned, will never be forgotten. It is a part of the Holy Spirit's business to convict us of sin; and when He takes a chapter like this, and puts us through our paces verse by verse, and makes us eat the bitter herbs which each verse contains, and as He makes us feel as if we were drinking the water into which the dust of our idols had been cast, when they had been broken and ground down, like the golden calf of the Israelites; when He makes us feel the grit between our teeth in every drop we drink, I say it is a lesson well worth receiving, and one that is likely to stick by us all our days.

There are two very amazing things in this chapter; which is the more amazing is hard to tell. The first is the extraordinary *sin of Israel*. God speaks of it in the strongest imaginable language; He represents Judah's sin as being greater than the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, though both Sodom and Gomorrah had been destroyed for their abominations. He compares Judah's backslidings to the lewdness of a woman who forgets her marriage vows, and sins blatantly with many lovers, adding filthiness to filthiness, and so He makes sin to appeal exceedingly sinful, as a violation of the heart's love to God, and the soul's chastity towards the Most High. A very dreadful thing is sin as set forth in this chapter! The other amazing thing is *God's grace*—how when He began with Israel, He found her like an infant cast out in her blood, naked and unwashed, and He took her up in all her filthiness, and said to her, “Live,” and washed, cleansed, and clothed her. He hung her ears with jewels, and when she grew to riper years she turned aside from Him—turned His mercies into occasions of provocation, and made His blessings to be instruments of sin. He describes Himself as pardoning her again and again, and yet she continued to invent new sins, looking down all the while upon her sisters Sodom and Gomorrah, and reckoning herself very superior to them, and yet she was behaving worse than they, and going deeper and deeper into

rebellion against the Lord. Yet His mercy follows her, His love still pursues her; and He makes the chapter to culminate in His mercy with such words as these—“Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish unto you an everlasting covenant. And I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the Lord: that you may remember, and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for all that you have done, said the Lord God.”

Two words, if you can learn them, will teach you the deepest practical wisdom—*sin and grace*. No one ever measured either of them—except one, and He, when He measured them, was in a bloody sweat, and poured out His soul unto death. George Herbert quaintly sings—

***“Philosophers have measured mountains,  
Fathomed the depths of seas, of states, and kings;  
Walked with a staff to heaven, and traced fountains,  
But there are two vast, spacious things,  
The which to measure it does more behoove:  
Yet few there are that sound them—sin and love.”***

Only our suffering lover, the Lord Jesus Christ, knows the two to their perfection. May we be helped to enter a little further into the double secret while we commune together.

The first exercise to which I shall invite you is this—let us think of *the condition into which the grace of God has brought all believers*. God is pacified towards them. “When I am pacified toward you for all that you have done, said the Lord God.” Then, secondly, let us think of *the knowledge which has been imparted thus to all believers*—they know the covenant, they know the Lord, and they know themselves; and they are made to remember and to be ashamed. Finally, in the third and principal place, let us dwell upon *the silence which from now on and forever is induced in all believers*. “You shall never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I am pacified toward you for all that you have done.”

**I.** So, then, first of all, let us review THE BLESSED CONDITION INTO WHICH EVERY BELIEVER IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HAS BEEN BROUGHT BY THE SOVEREIGN ACT OF GOD’S MERCY. He or she has been brought into such a condition that God can say to him, “I am pacified toward you for all that you have done.”

The Hebrew word which here sets forth forgiveness and pardon properly signifies to *cover* a thing with that which adheres and sticks to the thing covered—not with dry dust or leaves, which could be easily removed, but with glue or pitch, so that the thing hidden cannot easily be brought to sight again. The same word is used concerning Noah’s ark. “You shall pitch it, or cover it, within and without with pitch.” All the planks were to be covered with the pitch; not with a filmy paint that might barely color them, but with a thick pitch; a sticky substance which would adhere to the substance of the wood, and penetrate it and cover it altogether. When God forgives our sin, He covers us as completely as the wood of the ark was covered within and without with pitch; our sin is covered and hidden right away from His observation. Child of God, I beg you to think of this for a moment! God is pacified towards you because

your sin is covered—all of it—yes, it is all gone. As far as God is concerned, your sin has ceased to be; He laid it on Jesus Christ your substitute, and He took it and bore the penalty for it—no the thing itself, He, as your scapegoat, carried your sin right away, and it is lost in the wilderness of forgetfulness. Into the depths of the sea He has cast your iniquities; In His own tomb He has buried your offenses. What said the Scripture? “He has finished transgression, and made an end of sin.” Grand work! *Made an end of it*; and if there is an end of it, why there is an end of it, and it has gone! This day, O believing child of God, there is fulfilled towards you that gracious word—“In those days, and in that time, said the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.” Through faith in Jesus your transgressions are all removed as far from you as the east is from the west. The depths have covered your sins; there is not one of them left. The Lord is pacified for *all* that we have done, so that no ground of quarrel remains.

O believer, God is pacified towards you, for your sin is covered; it is put away, all of it, and altogether. since you have believed in Jesus Christ, your sin has not become dimly visible, neither by searching may it be seen as a shadow in the distance, but God sees it no more forever! He has not merely taken away some of its results, some of the fiercer judgments that might have broken forth had not Christ intervened, but He has utterly removed all the penal consequences of it. The sin is covered in the most emphatic sense. God has turned away all the fierceness of His anger, and you may say, “O God, I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.” The many, the countless hosts of sin that you have committed since your childhood are all scattered as a cloud, and the one black sin, which cost you more regret than many scores of others, has been removed as a thick cloud. The one repeated sin which grew into a habit which seemed as though it mastered you completely, and brought you into utter bondage—it too has died into the tomb of the great Substitute. They are all gone—no enemy remains. In the sepulcher of Christ they are buried never to rise. Not one of these dead things shall live, for the efficacy of the death which slew them is eternal! They cannot rise against you from the grave; no, not one of them, while sun and moon endure, no, while God endures, for *He* said it—“They shall not be mentioned against you anymore, forever.” “Who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” It is truly sweet to think of this! God is pacified towards His people for all that they have done, altogether pacified, for their sins have ceased to be.

And this is not occasionally true, but *always* true; not only so in happier moments, when we enjoy a sense of it, but *always*, whether we have a sense of it or not! The standing of a believer does not depend upon *his* recognition of his standing. There are times when, if he could have the entire world for it, he could not read his title clear—no, he could not spell the capital letters of that title. There are times when he sees his sin, but cannot see his pardon; yet he is pardoned for all that—pardoned while self-condemned! The Israelites, when they were inside their houses, could not see the blood sprinkled on their doorposts. How could they? By

what strange process would they be able to see the blood outside the door while they sat within at the table? No, and it was not *their* seeing the blood that saved them, for if you turn to the Book of Exodus you find the Lord saying, “When *I* see the blood I will pass over you.” God always saw the blood—that was the main point in the matter, and therefore it was sprinkled where the destroying angel could see it as he flew upon his errand of God’s wrath. Glory be to God, when I cannot see the blood of Christ myself, my God can see it! If I have ever looked, by an act of faith to the Lord Jesus, I am saved! If I am resting in Him, I am forgiven! And when my eye of faith is dim and my sense of rest in Christ is overloaded with a yet deeper sense of my own unworthiness, my standing is still not altered, my security is not affected, and the pacifying of the Lord towards me is not changed one jot or tittle. At all times, in the dark as well as in the light, when I am downcast as well as lifted up, the Lord is pacified towards His people.

I would to God that the Lord’s people grasped this more fully, and lived in the power of it more completely! May God grant we may! O my soul, sinful and unworthy though you are, there is a peace established between you and your God which will never be broken—a league which will never be violated! God has thoughts of peace towards you. Does not the word so mean? When I am *pacified*—“when I am *peace-ified*”—“when I have made peace towards you.” God thinks of nothing but peace towards His children. “Peace, peace,” He says. He is the God of peace, the fruit of His Spirit is His peace, the very name of His Son is Peace! The heaven to which He is bringing us is everlasting peace, and even now the peace of God which passes all understanding keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. The believer goes forth with joy, and is led forth with peace. His heart, his mind, his conscience are filled with peace towards God. There is peace; there is nothing but peace, between my soul and God. Oh, what a joyous thought this is! Grasp it, Christian, and let your spirit exult in it!

And all this, remember, is written in our text concerning a people who had plunged into wondrous sins! I have already remarked that I could not explain all that God has said about Israel in this chapter; it would be improper. Nor do I think any man ought to try to tell another all the evil which he has seen in himself. Sometimes we tell to our fellow Christians about our own sense of unworthiness, but you are not always speaking to edification. It has happened to me sometimes that the brother to whom I have spoken of myself has not believed a word I have said; he has looked me in the face, and he has said, “You are not well, I fear. I am sorry to see you so low in spirits.” Indeed, I only spoke the truth, and did not tell him one-half of the unworthiness I felt; but he did not know the wormwood and the gall, nor ought I to have wished to make him drink of my cup. That same brother, perhaps, has come to me with his story of his own failures and transgression and sins, and then it has been *my* turn to wonder. I have looked at him and I have said—“bless you! I wish I were half as good as you are, and half as faithful in my Master’s service.” Every man must bear his own burden; my friend does not know my humiliation before God, neither do I see any unworthiness in my friend,

compared with to what he sees and feels. We need not tell our neighbors all that we feel about ourselves, any more than this chapter can ever be explained to every carnal ear.

But oh, brothers and sisters, no man living has ever exaggerated his own sin, or thought too meanly of himself. There does not live beneath heaven any man whose sense of sin is as deep as the sin really is. I find when I am talking with inquirers, and they are overburdened with a sense of sin, that the only thing to say to them is, "It is all true, and every bit you are saying." "Oh, but," they say, "You do not know." "No," I say, "nor yet do you. You are 10 times worse than you think you are." "Oh sir, but I feel myself to be utterly lost." "Yes, and so you are; you are only feeling the truth." "But I feel as if I were driven to despair." "And so you ought to be, for if you are looking to yourself, there is nothing but despair for you." Do not interrupt the young convert when he begins to say that he is distressed by a sense of sin, and if he describes sin in dreadful terms, let him go on to do so, for the more he abhors sin, the better. The trembling penitent is near the truth, for his sin is indeed great and terrible. If you make him out to be a *little* sinner, you will next offer him a *little* Savior, a *little* Christ, and a *little* gospel. No, let him go on with that sense of sin; I would even pray God to make him feel it more and more! Meanwhile it is your privilege to present to him an infinite atonement, and a God willing and able to forgive. Tell him that God sent not His Son into the world to save the righteous, or to call those to repentance who have no sin to be repented of—that the whole scheme of redemption is so magnificent because it deals with an infinite evil, and it is made to a grand scale because the mischief it has to deal with is hideous beyond all conception. If a man feels sin to be unutterably horrible, so much the better! Do not try to get low thoughts of sin, but be humbled in the dust, for then Christ is glorified. The greatness of the sin reveals the greatness of the redeeming sacrifice, and the direful nature of the disease declares the divinity of that Physician's skill who is able to put it all away!

Child of God, return with grateful restfulness to the memory of your complete deliverance from the wrath of God due to sin. God is pacified towards you concerning all your sin thus described in all its heinousness, hideousness, and horror. Whatever conception of it you have now obtained, and it may be a very, very alarming one, yet in all its terrible-ness God is pacified towards you concerning your sin! Although your conception may fall far short of the truth, yet, as far as that whole truth about sin is concerned, God is pacified towards you in the person of His dear Son. I wonder what God's thought of sin is. He has thrown some little light upon it in this chapter, but when He hung up His dear Son upon the tree, *then* He declared sin to be a monster indeed! When God Himself bore the pangs of death that He might save His creatures from sin, when all the waves and billows of sin's stormy deep rolled over the Incarnate God, and when He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" what must His thoughts have been concerning sin! But God never thought worse of sin than it is. He only thought the truth, and it is as sin is in its truth, and as Jesus felt it in its truth when He bore it on the

tree—it is as in that true idea of sin that He has put it all away, and He is pacified towards us today.

Come, dear children, come into your Father's bosom, He is pacified towards you! Come back, you wanderers; come home, you troubled ones; the great and glorious God, who is exceedingly angry at sin, whose whole nature boils like a cauldron against everything that is evil—is nevertheless pacified, completely pacified, even towards the ungodly and the guilty, through Jesus Christ our Lord; and when you come believing in Him who died for the ungodly, and resting in Him who was a sacrifice for sinners, you shall feel that He is pacified towards you, and all is well. There is our blessed standing—God help us to rejoice in it!

**II.** We pass on, secondly, to notice WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED IN THE PROCESS OF REACHING THIS PEACEFUL STANDING. We have learned three things. I do not say that all Christians have clearly discovered them, I wish they had; but I do know some Christians who have learned these very points thoroughly.

First we have learned *salvation by a covenant*. “I will establish My covenant with you.” He who knows how to pronounce the word “covenant” is on the road towards being a thorough theologian! Salvation by covenant! The thought is charming, for we were lost by a covenant. Father Adam stood for us, and represented us in the old covenant of works. If Adam will keep that covenant, he and all his children shall be blest. Alas, our foundation was too frail! Our first parent was not able to bear the responsibility of the covenant, and therefore he fell, and we all fell in him to our fatal cost. Some have inquired, “Was this just?” Do not raise that question, because that is the loophole of your hope! The devils, when they fell, fell each one for *himself*, and so they could never rise again! But we fell by *another* in a covenant made with another; here, then, was the way to restore us again! As we sinned *representatively* it was possible for us to satisfy the law by a representative! Here was the opening for the way of salvation! By a second covenant head man may be redeemed, and therefore Jesus Christ comes, the second Adam, and God makes a covenant with Him, which covenant runs thus—“If He will bear the penalty of sin—if He will keep the law, then, all that are in Him shall be delivered from every sin, and the righteousness of the second Adam shall be imputed to them, and they shall be loved and blessed as if they were righteous.” Oh, matchless mystery of love! Have you ever learned this? Some of you young people who have lately been converted, have you ever learned the doctrine of the covenant of grace? Do you know what it is to be *in* Christ, and *accepted in* Christ, because the Lord has made Him to be a covenant for His people—a leader and commander to the people? And have you nestled down beneath our Lord's perfect atonement and His perfect righteousness, and said, “These are mine, for He is my Adam, and I am in Him; and God saves me now, not because of what I did or am, but because of what my covenant surety was and is. I am saved through Him, my standing is in Him”? He who understands this covenant has learned something very full of consolation, for he knows that it is a covenant which he cannot break, for it was not made with him personally, but made *for* him in his great substitute and surety, Christ Je-

sus. Christ has not broken the covenant, and only He could do so. He kept it, and therefore the promise is sure to all His people, and it is a covenant “ordered in all things and sure”—a covenant from which God will never turn aside. “My covenant I will not break,” He says, “nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.” HE has sworn by Himself, because He could swear by no greater—by two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie, that He might give strong consolation to the heirs of the promise.

Certain brethren tremble when they hear us thus discourse upon the believer’s privilege and security, but we cannot help that. Isaac lives at home and rejoices in his birthright, and if Ishmael and his mother love slavery better, they must have it. Nevertheless, what says the Scripture? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondsman shall not be heir with My son, even with Isaac.” As for those who are the children of the promise, and inherit through the promise, their name is Laughter, as the name of Isaac was, and they shall rejoice, for they are the true heirs; neither shall they ever be driven out, for in Isaac was the Seed to be called forever. So said the Lord, and so shall it stand. It is a blessed thing to learn the covenant of grace!

The next thing we have learned while reaching our happy condition of peace with God is the lesson that *Jehovah is indeed God*. Read those solemn words, “You shall know that I am the Lord.” To be saved in a way that makes us know that God is God is to be taught aright. I believe that this is one of the lessons least known throughout the church; and in the world it is not known at all. That God is God is easy to say but hard to *know*. I learned it when the Lord brought me to Himself, and I have been learning it more and more in many ways as He has taught me and brought me to bow before Him. I have learned His *justice*, and if ever I hear men talking about the injustice of everlasting punishment for sin, I have found no echo in my conscience to that observation, because, if I could be lifted up into God’s place, I feel that the very first thing I should have to do would be to eternally condemn such a guilty thing as I myself have been and am. As I have judged my own soul, I have had to pronounce over it that very sentence which God pronounces over all the ungodly—“Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity.” I have had to say, “Amen,” in my soul to all the divine denunciations of evil. I have thus in my conscience learned that He is a just God, and thus has one of the great Attributes of Deity been made known to me.

I have also been made to learn *His sovereignty*. I remember the time when I thought that if God saved everybody in the world but me I could not blame Him. I have to come to His feet and feel, “I have no rights, and make no claims.” Shaking my hands free of anything like an appeal to what I am as His creature, or as His servant, I have felt that I have forfeited all the rights of creatureship by my sin, and I have put myself absolutely at His disposal, beseeching Him to reveal His undeserved favor to me. My ears have even been tutored to find music in that awful declaration, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” But, oh, this doctrine does not seem to be known by a large number of people. They will not come to

it; they cannot bite the dust nor bow so low as that. "Man is a noble creature, and his rights must be considered." "God must deal alike by all." Many are these proud and arrogant boasts, which to my soul read like blasphemy, and yet men calling themselves *Christian ministers* give utterance to them! This I know, that He is God, and does as He pleases with His grace. He taught me this before He stretched out the silver scepter, and said, "I am pacified towards you."

And oh, how we have to learn *His power*. The power of God is seen by the natural eye in some measure in storms and tempests, but, believe me, it is never seen with the *inner* eye by any man as well as when the Lord overcomes his sin. He has seen his sin, and he has felt no more able to grapple with it than the dry leaf with the hurricane, and yet the Lord has suddenly stopped the fury of that sin, and delivered the man, so that he has said, "Now I know that You are God, for who but God could have done this for me? Who but You could have chained my imperious passions and broken the iron yoke from off my neck?" Then has the man felt the omnipotence of Jehovah!

Above all we learn that precious word, "*God is love*"; but there is no understanding it until you are actually broken down under a sense of sin, and are led to see that your sin deserves the hottest hell. Then when you hear the Lord say, "But, nevertheless, for My own sake have I forgiven you, and through Jesus Christ My Son have I put all this sin of yours away: it shall never be mentioned against you anymore forever"—then the eyes look up and say, "love! I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You!" Such love! Such matchless love! Such amazing love! One cannot talk about it without longing to get away to some secret place to pour out your soul before God with tears instead of words, to think that He should forgive: so freely, so richly, and so completely forgive. If you would know the Godhead, you must behold it in the person of Jesus Christ while you look up to Him and see Him through your tears. In Him you see yourself crucified as a rebel and a traitor, deserving nothing but God's wrath; and then in Him you see God over all exalted, dispensing mercy, not because of man's merit, or even because of man's prayers or tears, or anything like goodness in man—but simply because He wills to do it, to display the majesty of His stupendous grace in passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin.

The third lesson which is connected with our deliverance is this, "That you may remember and be ashamed." We have learned *ourselves*. To remember and to be ashamed—that is not comfortable. Who likes to remember and be ashamed? Some of you good people can remember your whole lives, but you do not feel at all ashamed. Why should you? With so much of your own excellence to glory in, why should you be ashamed? But, remember, if the Lord is ever pacified towards you, you *will* remember, and you *will* be ashamed—so that no good can come from the self-contentment which you are so loath to lose. You will be ashamed if ever you are pardoned. You will be ashamed at being unable to discover any excuse for your sin. Once you could have found 20 excuses, and had your choice of them, but now that the Lord has forgiven you, you cannot find *one*, and as you turn them all up—those old excuses of yours—those

fig leaves of yours, with which you once hoped to cover your nakedness, you despise them, and think you never saw such flimsy things! You are doubly ashamed to think that you ever invented such excuses—ashamed to think that you could have been such a fool as to dream that there was any reason in your excuses, that what made sin worse should have seemed to you at any time to make it better. You are ashamed now to think how it was that you lived all those years in sin and unbelief. I was utterly amazed to think that I had not believed in Jesus Christ long before. Was that all—to trust in Christ? Why, I had been going all round the world to *do* something, and *feel* something, and *be* something, and there it was: I was to be nothing! Christ was to be *everything*, and I was to be thus saved. I was just to take salvation freely as a gift to me. I was ashamed. I could not invent an excuse for having remained in unbelief, though until the Lord was pacified with me I stubbornly said, “You know I cannot believe.” I had hosts of excuses, while I was unforgiven, but they were all gone when mercy forgave me. Have you ever tried to put two things straight before your eyes—your own life, and God’s character: you before God, and God before you? Have you not felt that you could not look at them both, for you were ashamed and could not comprehend them? You used to say, “Oh, that sin was the result of my upbringing; that was the product of bad example.” Or you passed it off by saying, “Ah, I made a mistake that time.” Now that you are saved your conduct seems to you to have been *all* mistakes, *all* blunders, *all* mischiefs, *all* bad, *all* horrible. You are ashamed, do not know what to say, you cannot defend yourself. Oh, what a blessed thing it is when a man is so ashamed that he cannot speak for himself anymore, but leaves Jesus Christ to speak for him—when he is so ashamed that all he can do is to sit still and admire, and wonder, and adore, and love, and bless, and praise, and magnify God for such unexpected mercy!—

**“Why was I made to hear Your voice,  
And enter where there’s room,  
While millions make a wretched choice,  
And rather starve than come?”**

Why did You love *me*? Why did You bear with *me* so long? Why was I gently led to yield myself to Your sway? Why were *my* eyes opened? Why was I not left to willful blindness as others were? I thought once I could have explained it, but now I cannot, for it is past finding out. “O God, I am ashamed. Your very love confuses me as much as my sin does. I am in a maze, I am perplexed, I am astounded!” Thus is the word fulfilled. “You shall remember and be ashamed.”

My brothers and sisters, I hope the Lord, when He brought you to know Himself, taught you these three things—your standing in the covenant, His own glory as the God of that covenant, and your own less-than-nothingness as He utterly perplexes and astounds you, both with *your* guilt and with *His* mercy.

**III.** The last thing is this—THE SILENCE WHICH IS FOREVER INDUCED. “You shall never open your mouth anymore because of your shame.” It takes a great deal to fill a man’s mouth, and almost as much to shut it. Some men’s mouths never will be filled till the sexton gives them a spade full of dirt, for their greed is insatiable, and half the world

would not be enough for them. Some men's mouths never will be stopped except by the coffin lid. Their motto is, "While I live I'll crow;" and so they will, for boasting is bred in their bones, and it will come out of them. Though they have nothing to boast of, yet as long as they breathe they will brag. But when God saves a man He takes means to end his self-exaltation most effectually, so that he will never open his mouth anymore in his own praise. He stops him from all boasting about what he is and what he has been and what he thinks he shall be. If you find any man talking about how excellently he has lived and what a commendable person he has been, you may be sure that God has never been pacified towards him! When a man cries, "But is not our morality something? Is there not a great deal to be said in favor of those who are sober and righteous?"—you may know that God has never been pacified towards that man, for if it were so he would never open his mouth anymore about his morality; he would be as ashamed of his morality as other men are of their outward sins, for he would see it to be a poor imperfect thing at best. Our morality is a very pretty thing, when people look at it who are in the blindness of nature; but when we bring our morality under the microscope, and look at it as *God* looks at it, what a horribly immoral thing this so-called morality is! You begin to look below the surface, and you discover that a certain man refrained from outward sin, not because he would not have delighted to do wrong, but because he was a little too shrewd and did not want to injure his own interests. He was not such a fool as to fall into vulgar sin; that is to say, his *selfishness* saved him! Sometimes the man who did actually transgress, had more generous impulses than the other who did not sin, because his sneaking selfishness kept him within the lines of outward consistency. When you come to look at very much of morality, it will not bear inspection. It is a very pretty thing, like the moss and the fungus growing out of putridity: a very pretty thing until you understand where it came from. If any man who believes himself to have been moral and sinless will only begin to look at the *reasons* why he has been so innocent, and search himself, he will often discover that inside all that purity of his there has been a mass of pride, self-conceit, self-seeking, indifference to God, and every detestable thing imaginable! When the Lord shows a man all this, and casts him down into the ditch till he abhors himself, and then cleanses him in the precious blood till He is pacified towards him, he will never open his mouth about that matter again.

Neither will a man who has been cleansed in this way open his mouth again against divine sovereignty. It seems to some minds to be a very fine thing to talk about the rights of moral agents, and rail at all idea of the Lord exercising the prerogatives of *kingship*. They love to go to the verge of blasphemy to show that they are not so foolish as to be Calvinistic. When the spiritual dandy hears the Biblical doctrine that he has sinned against God, and that if he is to be saved it must be all of grace, he is too fine a fellow to believe that truth of God; he does not want to enter heaven like a criminal, or to receive pardon like a convict; he inclines to a more genteel gospel. Now, if the Lord is pacified towards that man, you will never hear another word of that sort from him. "Oh, no," he will say,

“let the Lord live forever, and let Him be king!” He is the man above all others who loves to hear of God as absolute! He knows how gracious, how strong, how truly good He is. He has heard the language of Paul ringing in his heart as well as in his ears—“No, but O, man, who are you that replies against God?” And he has answered, “I dare not reply, for I am less than nothing; and I would not reply if I could, for I love God and I bless His name.” one of the sweetest notes that ever falls upon that man’s ears is—“The Lord reigns.” He loves to think that Jehovah reigns, and if it were in his power to restrict His reign, and abridge His absolute authority, he would not do so. He wishes Him to be king forever, and sit as Lord upon the floods, world without end. In that matter, then, the man’s mouth it shut forever.

So, also, dear friends, this way of salvation shuts a man’s mouth as to all murmuring and complaining against God upon any score whatever; for, he says, “If the Lord has pardoned me, let Him do what He wills with me.” Our proud flesh exalts itself against the will of the Lord, and says, “It is hard that you should always be poor when you would have done so much good with money. It is hard that you should be so often ill while you are so useful. It is hard that you should have so little talent, when God knows that if you had great abilities you would have been so zealous, and led the van in the church of Christ, for you love Him so much.” Ah, dear friends, but when grace forgives us we never talk so! We say, “No, my Lord, I am so unworthy that if You favor me to be a doorkeeper in Your house I will be grateful for it. If I am permitted at the last to get inside the gates of heaven to sit among Your children as the meanest of them, I shall be forever grateful to Your mighty love, and bless Your gracious name. I have no quarrels to pick with You. I have no demands to make of You. ‘Not as I will, but as You will.’ If I can glorify You on a bed of sickness, I will lie there, and cough to Your glory! If I can glorify You in a mud cottage, I will dwell there, and starve on a few pence a week to Your glory! If I can honor You in rags, or in the poorhouse, so let it be. Yes, if in death it will honor You for me to have a pauper’s funeral or none at all, so let it be. I belong to You from this day forth. I am such a sinner, so forgiven and so indebted to almighty grace that I can never open my mouth anymore to find fault, for You have dealt so kindly and so lovingly with me.” I pray that spirit may rest upon you, beloved friends.

Now, I wish I could hope that all of you had tasted of the grace and love of God as some of us have done; but I dare not flatter you; I fear that many of you are utter strangers to this matter. It ought to encourage everyone here who has not found peace with God to hear us tell of what we feel of our own sinfulness, because, sinner, where one sinner gets through there is room for another! If there is a prison door, and that door is broken down, and one gets out, another man who is in the same prison may safely say, “Why should I not escape, too?” Supposing we were all beasts in Noah’s ark, and we could not get down from the ark to the ground except by going down that slanting ramp which most of the painters have sketched when they have tried to depict the scene. Well, we must go down that ramp. Are you afraid? Are you, sheep and hares,

afraid that the ramp will not bear you up? Listen, then. I am an elephant, and I have come down out of the ark over that ramp, and therefore it is sure that all of you who are smaller than I am can come down too. There is strength enough to bear up the hare and the coney, the ox and the sheep, for it carried the elephant. The way down has been trod by that heavy, lumping creature—it will do for you, whoever you may be. Ever since the Lord Jesus Christ saved me, I made up my mind to one thing, namely, that I should never meet another person who was harder to save than I. Somebody said to me once when I was a child, when it was very dark, and I was afraid to go out, “What are you afraid of? You won’t meet anything uglier than yourself.” Surely as to my spiritual condition that is true! I never did meet anything uglier than myself, and I never shall. And if there is a great, big, black, ugly sinner here, I say, sinner, you are not uglier than I was by nature, and yet the Lord Jesus Christ loved *me*! Why should He not love *you* too? I tell you that though Jesus Christ is omniscient, and it is saying a great thing to say what He could not see, yet I do venture to say that Jesus Christ could not see *anything* in me to love. What if He cannot see anything good in you? Then we are on a par, and yet I know He loves *me*, why not *you*? That He loves me I know. Bless His name, I know He loves me, and I love Him, too. If He loved me when there was nothing in me to love, why should He not love you when there is nothing in you to love? Oh, turn that ugly face towards the lovely Savior, and trust Him! I put it in a pleasant way and you smile, but I want to get it into your *hearts*: I want some poor, trembling sinner to say, “I shall remember that. I do think myself an ugly sinner, but I will come to Christ, and trust Him.” If you do, you will never regret it, but you will bless God forever and ever, and so shall I! And when we get to heaven we will talk about it, and we will say, “Here we are, a pair of huge, horrible sinners. We came to Jesus Christ, and He took us in, and, blessed be His name, we will praise Him as long as ever we live.” That we will, I guarantee you! Do you not feel sure of it? God bless you, for Christ’s sake.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 51.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—51, 546.**

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# **GODLY FEAR AND ITS GOODLY CONSEQUENCE**

## **NO. 1290**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and His  
children shall have a place of refuge.”  
Proverbs 14:26.***

IN the Book of Proverbs you meet with sentences of brief wisdom, which, to all appearances, belong entirely to this world, and pertain to the economy of the life that now is. I do not know whether it is true, but it was said that years ago our friends in Scotland had a little book widely circulated and read by all their children, which consisted of the Proverbs of Solomon; They say that it was the means of making the Scots, as a generation, more canny, shrewd, and wiser in business than any other people. If it is so, I should suggest that such a book be scattered throughout England as well, and, indeed, anywhere and everywhere! The book might have been written, at least some parts of it, by Franklin or Poor Richard, for it contains aphorisms and maxims of worldly wisdom, compact but profound, sometimes poetic, but always practical. Has it never surprised you that there should be such sentences as these in the Book of Inspiration—secular proverbs, for so they are—secular proverbs intermixed with *spiritual* proverbs—the secular and the spiritual all put together without any division or classification? You might have expected to find one chapter dedicated to worldly business, and another chapter devoted to golden rules concerning the spiritual life; but it is not so. They occur without any apparent order, or at any rate without any order of marked division between the secular and the spiritual—and I am very glad of it. The more I read the Book of Proverbs, the more thankful I am that there is no such division, because the hard and fast line by which men of the world, and I fear some Christians, have divided the secular from the spiritual, is fraught with innumerable injuries. Religion, my dear friends, is not a thing for churches and chapels alone; it is equally meant for countinghouses and workshops, for kitchens and drawing rooms. The true Christian is not only to be seen in the singing of hymns, and the offering of prayers, but he is to be distinguished by the honesty integrity, the courage and the faithfulness, of his ordinary character. In the streets and in the marketplaces, or wherever else the providence of God may call him, he witnesses the good confession. It is easy to secularize religion in a wrong sense. There are many, I doubt not, that desecrate the pulpit to worldly ends. How can it be otherwise, if “*livings*” are to be bought and sold? I cannot doubt that the sacred desk has been a place simply for earning money, or for gathering fame, and that sacred oratory has been as mean in the sight of God as the common language of the streets. I do not doubt that many people have put religion as a show-card into their business, and have tried to make money by it. Like Mr. By-

ends, they thought that if, by being religious, they could get a good wife—if, by being religious, they could be introduced into respectable society—if, by being religious, they would bring some excellent religious customers to their shop, and if, indeed, by being religious they could get themselves to be esteemed, it would be a very proper thing to do! Now, this is making religion into irreligion; this is turning Christianity into selfishness; this is the Judas spirit of putting Christ up for pieces of silver, and making as good a bargain as you can out of Him; and this will lead to damnation, and nothing short of it, in the case of anybody who *deliberately* attempts it. Woe to that man! He is a son of perdition. Better for him he had never been born! Instead of profaning the spiritual, the right thing is to spiritualize the secular till the purity of your motives, and the sanctity of your conscience in ordinary pursuits shall cause the division to vanish. Why, there should be about an ordinary meal enough religion to make it resemble a sacrament. We should wear our garments, and wear them *out* in the service of the Lord, until they acquired as much sanctity as the very vestments of a consecrated priesthood. There should be a devout spirit in everything we do. “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him.” No, it is not a less holy thing to be the Christian merchant than to be the Christian minister. It is not a less holy thing to be the mother of mercy to your own children than to be the sister of mercy to the sick children of other people in the hospital ward. It is not a less sacred thing to be the married wife than it is to be the virgin consecrated to Christ.

Wherever you are, if you discharge the duties of your calling as in the sight of God, you can, by prayer and thanksgiving, saturate your lives with godliness and make every action drip with sanctity, till, like Ashur of old, it shall be said of you that you have dipped your foot in oil. So shall you leave the mark of grace wherever you leave footprints. Let us endeavor to be so minded, and refrain from sorting out our actions, saying to ourselves, “In this thing I am to be a Christian: in the other thing I am to be a businessman.” “Business is business,” says somebody. Yes, I know it is, and it has no business to be such business as it very often is. It ought to be Christianized, and the Christian that does not Christianize business is a dead Christian—a savorless salt, and with what shall such salt be savored when the salt, itself, has lost its flavor? Mix up your proverbs. Be as practical as Poor Richard counsels, and then be as spiritual as Christ commands. You need not be a fool because you are a Christian. There is no necessity to be outwitted in business; there is no necessity to be less shrewd, less sharp; there is no necessity to be less pushing because you are a Christian. True religion is sanctified common sense, and if some people had got a little common sense with their religion, and some others had got a little more religion with their common sense, they would both be the better for it. And this Book of Proverbs is just this common sense, which is the rarest of all senses, saturated and sanctified by the presence of God, and the power of the gospel ennobling the pursuits of the creature.

Let this suffice by way of introduction. Now we are going to plunge into the text. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and His children shall have a place of refuge."

**I. WHAT IS THIS FEAR OF THE LORD?** The expression is used in Scripture for all true godliness. It is constantly the short way of expressing real faith, hope, love, holiness of living, and every grace which makes up true godliness. But why was *fear* selected? Why did it not say, "*Trust* in God is strong confidence"? Has not religion been commonly described by *faith* rather than by *fear*? In legal indictments it is sometimes said of a man, that he, "not having the fear of God before his eyes," did such-and-such. Why is the *fear* of God selected? One would say that, according to the general theology of this period, we ought to have selected *faith*. But the Spirit of God has not given us the phrase—faith in God. He puts fear, because, after all, there is a something tenderer, more touching, more real about *fear* than there is about some people's faith, which faith may very readily verge upon presumption! But in speaking of fear, we must always discriminate. There is a fear with which a Christian has nothing to do. The fear of the slave who dreads a taskmaster we have now escaped from. At least we ought to be free from such bondage, for we are not under the law, which is the taskmaster, but we are under grace, which is a paternal spirit, and has given us the liberty of sons. Brothers and sisters, if you labor under any dread of God which amounts to a slavish fear of Him, do not cultivate it. Ask God to give you that perfect love of which John tells us casts out fear, because fear has torment. Do not be *afraid* of God, whatever He does with you. The kind of fear commended in the text is not such as appalls the senses, and scares the thoughts. It is a fear that has not anything like being *afraid* mixed with it; it is quite another kind of fear. It is what we commonly call *filial* fear of God, like the child's fear of his father. Just think for a minute, what is a child's fear of his father? I do not mean an *evil* child, a child that is obstinate, but a young man who loves his father—who is his father's friend, his father's most familiar acquaintance. Thank God, some of us have children whom we can look upon as near and dear friends, as well as dutiful sons and daughters, to whom we can speak with much confidence and love. What is the fear that a well-ordered, well-disciplined, beloved child has of his own father?

Well, first, he has an awe of him, which arises out of admiration of his character. If his father is what he should be, he is to that son a real model. The youth looks upon what his father does as exactly what he would like to do, and what he aims to copy. His judgment is to his son almost infallible. At any rate, if he sees reason to differ from his father, he is a long while before he brings himself to prefer his own judgment. He has seen his father's wisdom in other matters so often that he mistrusts his own apprehension, and would rather trust to what his father tells him. He has a profound conviction that his father is good, kind, wise, and could not do anything, or ask *him* to do anything which would not promote his own good. So he feels a sort of awe of him—a fear of him—which prevents his questioning what his father does as he would have questioned anybody else. He is prone to conjecture that his father may have got some reason behind him that would explain what he does

not understand. He would not give another person credit for having that concealed virtue, but he has such an esteem for his father—his dear father—that he fears to raise any questions about his father’s character, his conduct, or his conclusions. In fact, that character so rules his admiration, and commands his respect that he does not *think* of questioning it. Well, now, dear friends, how far higher must be our fear of *God* in this view of the matter? How could we question Him? No, whatever He does, we say, “It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him.” Like Aaron, when his two sons were stricken down, and that as a summary punishment of their transgression, it should be said of us, as it was recorded of him—“He held his peace.” Aaron could not say anything against God, however severe the stroke was. So, brothers and sisters, we cannot judge God. I hope we have given up that folly. We ought to be afraid to do it. Sometimes terrible horror takes hold upon me, when I now and then, meet with a brother or sister (I hope in Christ) who will tell me that God has taken away a dear child, and they cannot forgive Him. “That cannot be right, sir.” Oh, it is a dreadful thing for us to get into such a state of heart that we question anything that God does! No—“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Is it meet, do you think, to imagine that our heavenly Father can do anything that is unkind or unwise towards us? It is not possible! The *Lord* has done it! Let that be your ultimatum. We fear Him too much to question what He does. Our reverence of Him makes us jealous of ourselves.

A child, also, without any fear of his father in the wrong sense, is sure to be very deferential in his father’s presence. If his father is in the way, and if quiet is needed in the house, he will take his shoes off his feet, and be very quiet lest his father should hear, and he should disturb the unruffled calm. He watches carefully, and studiously guards his conduct, lest anything he does amiss should reach his father’s ear, and grieve his father’s heart. Now it would be very wrong for a child merely to restrain himself in his father’s presence out of respect for him, and then break the bounds with unbridled licentiousness in his father’s absence, as I fear many do. But you and I need not fall into this danger, because we are always in the presence of our heavenly Father in every place. Who among us that fears God as he ought would wish to do anything anywhere which is wrong, and offensive to Him, seeing that—

***“Wherever we roam, wherever we rest,  
We are surrounded, still, with God”?***

Daring were the person that could insult a king to his face, and commit a trespass in his presence! A sense of the presence of God, a conscience that prompts one to say, “You God see me,” fosters in the soul a healthy fear which you can easily see would rather inspire than intimidate a man. It is a filial, childlike fear, in the presence of one whom we deeply reverence, lest we should do anything contrary to his mind and will. So, then, there is a fear which arises out of a high appreciation of God’s character, and a fear of the same kind which arises out of a sense of His presence.

Further, every child, of the sort I have described, fears at any time to intrude upon his father’s prerogative. When he is at home he feels that there are some points in which he may take many liberties. Is it not his

home? Has he not always been there? But there are some things of which, if they were suggested to him to do, he would say, "Why, it is impossible; only my father may do that! I cannot give orders as if I were the master! I cannot expect to govern! I am here, and I am glad to be here, but I am under my father; I must not presume to exercise the control to which he has an exclusive right." Now, that is one of the fears which a child of God has. "No," he says, "how should I venture to stand in the place of God? God bids me—it is not for me to object or to ask, 'Shall I or shall I not?' That would be to usurp the place of ruler, to be a master to myself, to ignore the fact that the Lord, alone, is the ruler. Such a thing God appoints; then it is not for me to wish the appointment different. Should it be according to my mind? Am I the comptroller? Is divine providence put under my supervision? No," says the child of God, "I cannot do anything so inconsistent with a dutiful allegiance." There are some things which he feels would be arrogating a position unbecoming altogether in a creature, and much more unbecoming in a creature that has received the spirit of fear whereby he cries, "Abba, Father." O brothers and sisters, it is well to have a fear of getting to feel great—a fear of getting to feel good—a fear of getting to feel *anything* that would violate your fealty, or disregard the worshipful reverence you owe to the Most High, as if you took sinister license because you were given a sacred liberty, or refused to do homage because you had received favor! Oh no, the virtuous child does not thus slight his indulgent father; neither must we ever think irreverently of our covenant God.

Holy fear leads us to dread anything which might cause our Father's displeasure. A good child would not do anything which would make his father feel vexed with him. "It vexes me," he says, "if it vexes my father." So let there always be with us a fear to offend our loving God. He is jealous, remember that! It is one of the most solemn truths in the Bible, "The Lord your God is a jealous God." We might have guessed it, for great love has always that dangerous neighbor, jealousy, not far off. They that love not, have no hate, no jealousy—but where there is an intense, an infinite love like that which glows in the bosom of God, there must be jealousy! And oh, how jealous He is of the hearts of His people! How determined He is to have all their love! How I have known Him to take away the objects of their attachment, one after another—break their idols, and deprive them of their precious vanities—all to get their hearts wholly to Him, because He knew it would never be right with them while they had a divided heart. It was injurious to themselves, and so He is jealous of that which injures them, and jealous of that which dishonors Him.

Let us have this holy fear very strong upon us, and we shall avoid anything which might grieve the Spirit of God. A true child of the kind I have tried to describe—and I hope there are some about—is always afraid of doing anything which might cast a suspicion upon his love and his respect to his father. If he feels that he has done something which might appear discourteous, or be interpreted as akin to rebellion, he is eager to explain at once that he did not mean it. Or, if he has made a mistake, he is eager at once to rectify it, and would say, "Father, do not read my conduct severely. I love You with all my heart. I may have erred; I *have* erred; I beg to express my deep regret and repentance." He could not

bear it that his father should think, “My child has no esteem for me, no respect for me, no love for me.” It ought to go hard with every Christian when he thinks he has given God cause to doubt his love. I should suspect he has, when he finds cause to suspect it himself. When you say in your soul, “Do I love the Lord or not?”—just think whether God may not be saying it—whether Jesus Christ, the ever blessed, may not feel cause, next time He meets you, to say to you, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? *Indeed*, do you love Me?” Three times He may have to put that question because you have given Him a treble cause for mistrusting you, as to whether, indeed, your heart is right before Him. We know that the Lord knows all things, and He knows that we love Him. We fall back on that, but still we would not so act that the action should look as if we did not. We do not want so to think, or speak, or do anything that should give just cause for suspicion to the All-wise One as to the reality of our professions of love.

Fear, then—this blessed fear—is what we must all cultivate, and the Lord grant that we may have it, fully matured and fitly exercised, for “blessed is the man that fears always.”

**II.** But, now, giving our meditation a more cheerful turn, let us follow the teaching of our text. It says that this fear has strong confidence in it. **WHEREIN IS THAT CONFIDENCE SEEN?** The history of men that have feared God may perhaps enlighten us a little on this matter. It is written concerning Job that he was a man that “feared God and eschewed evil.” Satan was permitted to tempt him, and he came into deep trouble, but how blessed was the confidence of Job in all his trouble! How brave a thing it was to say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!” How grand it was of him to say in answer to his wife: “What? Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?” Best of all that was one of the noblest resolves that ever mortal uttered, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” A man up to his neck in trouble—no, with the billows going over him, and yet his confidence in God is not moved—no, not for a single moment. He declares that, if God does not set him right now while he lives, yet he believes that his God, his kinsman, lives, and that, if he dies, yet after his death God would avenge him. “I know,” says he, “that my avenger lives, and though after my death the worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, and I shall get right somehow.” He feels sure about that, so his confidence is strong, and it lessens not in time of trouble. You see the same implicit confidence in Habakkuk. He draws a dreadful picture—“Though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall.” He foresees the full stress of the calamity, and prophecies that it *shall* come to pass. “Yet,” he said, “will I rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation.” That was the simple consequence of his fear of the Lord. He feared, and therefore trusted. He knew the grandeur of the divine character. He trembled to impute wrong or unfaithfulness to God; he feared Him too much to have one hard thought of Him, or to utter one mistrustful word about Him; so in the grandeur of that fear he felt a strong confidence! Both Job and Habakkuk experienced, and even tested this, and there are

many schooled in the same school, who have spoken after the same valiant fashion when all God's waves and billows have gone over them.

That confidence will not only appear in time of trouble, but it will appear in acts of *obedience*. The Lord calls His people to obey Him, and sometimes obedience requires great self-denial. We may have to surrender what we greatly prize for Christ's sake. It is not always easy to be confident in doing that which demands quick decision. We may be prone to parley or to do as though we were driven, yielding to stern compulsion rather than surrendering with sweet submission. But to do it with strong confidence can only come to us from having the fear of God before us. Now, Abraham feared the Lord with all his heart, and when the Lord said, "Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and offer him up for a burnt offering upon a mountain which I will tell you of"—if he had not feared God wonderfully, and dreaded to do anything that would look like rebellion against His orders, he would have said, "What! Commit murder—for it will come to that—slay my own dear child?" But no, though he could not understand it, he felt sure that God had some meaning in it—that God could not be ordering him to do what was wrong—that there must be a way by which it would be made right. Besides, he remembered that in Isaac was his seed to be called, and his descendants were to come out of Isaac. How, then, can God keep His promise? How can He fulfill the covenant? This did not distress Abraham, but being "strong in faith, he staggered not through unbelief." Therefore he rose up early in the morning and prepared the wood. I have looked with tears at the spectacle of that old man, far advanced in years, preparing the wood, and then putting the wood upon Isaac, and then going with him, and telling the servants at the bottom of the hill that they must stay lest they should interrupt the consummation of that wondrous deed of faith. And then Isaac says to him, "My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" It must have brought the heart of Abraham into his mouth. Still he seemed to swallow that dreadful thought, and he said, "My Son, God will provide Himself a lamb." And he takes Isaac and lays him on the altar, and draws a knife—going through with it—right through with it, to the very last, with wondrous heroism; till the Lord stopped his hand. But for his deep fear of God he would never have had the confidence to go through with such an act of obedience.

Although the Lord does not call you and me to such strong tests as that, yet He does try our faith. I have known sometimes when a man in order to do his duty has had before him what appeared to be a terrible dilemma—"I shall have to give up my employment! If I do that, what is to become of my children? Were I a single man I would do it without hesitation. I would face poverty; I would go down to the docks to ask for day labor. But there are the *children*. The children—what is to become of the children?" You see you cannot feel like Abraham, who gave up his darling child for God. You are staggered. Yes, but if your fear of God is very strong, you will say, "I cannot make a compromise with any sin. I cannot persevere with that sinful line of business in which I am engaged. Is this the ultimatum? Then it admits of no alternative. If God should leave me and my little children to starve, yet I must put all into God's hands. It is

His to provide, not mine. He does not allow me to do a wrong thing under any circumstances. So here goes for God and for righteousness.” If you have got a great fear of God, that is what you will do, but if you have not the reverence you will not have the confidence. For lack thereof you will timorously shrink back into the sin which galls you. May God give you the heroic confidence which springs from a deep fear of Him. The same confidence, the same loyalty to God will develop itself when persecution is involved. There are in this world, men who hate true religion, and the experiences which occur to true believers are consequently often very painful. If we have much fear of God, we shall have strong confidence, but if we have not the fear of God, then the fear of *man* will make us waver. Look yonder; Nebuchadnezzar’s image of gold on the plains of Dura. A great many people stand about the colossal figure who are of the race of Shem, monotheists—that is to say, believers in one God; not polytheists, whose creed might excuse their idolatry. Listen now! At the sound of flute, harp, sackbut, and all kinds of music, the herald proclaims that whoever will not bow down and worship the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace! How quickly does this recreant race of Protestant people swallow their principles; see how they succumb, with their heads in the dust, worshipping the golden image. They had not much fear of the one God, and so they break all His laws. They have more fear of Nebuchadnezzar and his furnace than they have of Jehovah the God of Israel. But here are three young men, captives in Babylon, who stand before the king, and when asked why it is that they have not worshipped his gods and the image which he has set up, they declare that they will not worship his god or fall down before his image. They speak positively. They say, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, but, if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not worship your gods or the image which you have set up.” Look at the king’s fury! See how the devil lights up his face with lurid glare, how a legion of devils possesses him. “Heat that furnace seven times hotter than it has known,” he says, “and cast these daring rebels therein.” The men are calm, unrushed by his rage, unmoved by his threats. They do not even take off their hats to him. There they stand, in their clothes, and their hats, calm and quiet. They defy the king, because who needs have a fear of Nebuchadnezzar that has a fear of Jehovah? Who needs fear a king that fears the King of kings? So they consent to be put into the furnace, for in the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence.

It was bravely done by old Hugh Latimer when he preached before Henry the Eighth. It was the custom of the Court preacher to present the king with something on his birthday, and Latimer presented Henry VIII with a pocket handkerchief with this text in the corner, “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”; a very suitable text for bluff Henry! And then he preached a sermon before his most gracious majesty against sins of lust, and he delivered himself with tremendous force, not forgetting or abridging the personal application. And the king said that next time Latimer preached—the next Sunday—he should apologize, and he would make him so mold his sermon as to eat his own words. Latimer thanked the king for letting him off so easily. When the next Sunday came, he stood up in the pulpit and said—“Hugh Latimer, you are this day to

preach before the high and mighty prince Henry, King of Great Britain and France. If you say one single word that displeases His Majesty, he will take your head off; therefore, mind what you say.” But then he said, “Hugh Latimer, you are this day to preach before the Lord God Almighty, who is able to cast both body and soul into hell, and so tell the king the truth of God outright.” And so he did. His performance was equal to his resolution. However, the king did not take off his head; he respected him all the more. The fear of the Lord gave Latimer strong confidence, as it will any who cleave close to their colors—

**“Fear Him, you saints, and you will then  
Have nothing else to fear!”**

Drive right straight ahead in the fear of the everlasting God and whoever comes in your way had better mind what he doing! It is yours to do what is right, and deny everything they devise that is wrong. God will bless you therein, and you shall praise Him!

Moreover, this fear of God declares itself in other things besides braving trouble and enduring. It will be a tower of strength to you when you stand up to bear witness to the truth of God. Have you anything to say for Jesus, you will say it in a very cowardly and in a sneaking manner if you have not a great fear of God; but if you fear God much, you will be like Peter and John, of whom when the council saw them it is said, “they wondered at their boldness.” The fear of God will make you bold in speaking God’s word.

Or should you fall down in sheer exhaustion, instead of standing up in sound enthusiasm; the fear of God will prove a potent restorative. Even if you are overthrown for a time, you shall overcome at the last. In the Book of Micah we read, “Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for though I fall, yet shall I rise again.” He that really fears God expects to conquer, even though for a time he seems to be defeated. This fear will come out gloriously in confidence in the hour of death. If we fear God we shall, like Stephen, fall asleep, even if it is amid a shower of stones. Glorious is the confidence with which Christians depart from this life when they can depend on the God whom they fear with reverence and serve with readiness!

**III.** I must hasten on to notice, in the third place, though not to dwell upon it as I could wish—UPON WHAT IS THIS CONFIDENCE BUILT? The fear of the Lord brings strong confidence, but why?

Why; because they that fear God know God to be infinitely loving to them, to be immutable and unchangeable, to be unsearchably wise and omnipotently strong on their behalf! How can they help having confidence in such a God? They know, next, that a full atonement has been made for their sins. Jesus has borne the wrath of God for them; how can they help being confident? They know that this same Jesus has risen from the dead and lives to plead for them, and in their ears they can hear the almighty pleas of Jesus always speaking in their favor. How can they help having confidence? They believe that this same Jesus is head over all things to His church, and ruler of providence. How can they help being confident in Him? To Him all power is given in heaven and in earth. They believe that everything is working together for their good. I ask again, how can they help being confident? They believe that the Spirit of

God is in them, *dwells* in them! What confidence can be too staunch and steadfast for men who know this to be true? They know that there is a mysterious union between them and the Son of God; that they are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. What confidence can be too implicit? They know that there are two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie—His promise and His oath, whereby He has given them strong consolation. With such strong consolation they may well have strong confidence—

***“The gospel bears my spirits up;  
A faithful and unchanging God  
Lays the foundation of my hope  
In oaths and promises and blood.”***

Oh, what unwavering confidence may be based on this firm foundation (Christ) which God has laid for His people! But time fails me; I cannot enlarge upon it.

**IV.** Let me therefore close with a fourth reflection—HOW THIS CONFIDENCE AND THIS FEAR ARE FAVORED OF GOD! Observe the promise. “His children shall have a place of refuge.” So, then, you see that those who fear God, and have confidence in Him, are His children. They have a childlike fear, and then they have a childlike confidence, and these are the marks that they are His children. And what a favor is this! “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” Oh, dear friends, there is a heaven lying asleep inside those words—*His children*. There is paradise eternal couched within that word—Abba, Father. If you know how to say it with the spirit of adoption, you have the earnest of the inheritance within you; you have got a heaven, a young heaven within your spirit. Oh, be glad! To be a child of God is greater than to be an angel. Why, were Gabriel capable of envy, he would envy you who are the children of the Most High, however poor or sick or downcast you may be. “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.”

“His children shall have a place of refuge.” Take heart, for this is a grand thought for you that fear Him and confide in Him; you shall have a place of refuge! There is Noah. All the world is about to be drowned. In vain might one climb to the tops of the mountains, for the waters will cover their highest pinnacle. Must Noah be drowned, then? Is his destruction inevitable? No, but there is an ark for him. God will not pull up the floodgates of heaven till Noah is shut in the ark. There is Lot—evil Lot. He has been acting very badly, and has got away down there in Sodom. Still, he is a child of God, and he is vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, proving that he has some fear of God in his heart. Well, what does the Lord say? “Hurry up,” He says, “for I cannot do anything till you have come out here.” Lot must get to Zoar. There must be a little city to shelter Lot. God cannot burn Sodom and Gomorrah till He has got Lot safe out of the way. He must find a refuge for His children. Well, there are His people down in Egypt. God is going to smite the firstborn, and He has ordered an angel to do it, and that angel is swift to obey His message—swift to do His bidding, and he will slay the firstborn of Israel as well as of Egypt when he goes upon his terrible errand. He will make no distinctions. Yes, but there are the blood marks over the

door, and the angel sees that the bloody sacrifice has been offered in that house, and he passes by. God's people must have a place of refuge, and He found them one in Egypt when the angel was let loose, and the angel of death was there.

So it happened all along through Scripture history. God sent a famine into the land, and after the famine some that had fled the country came back, and, among them, Naomi and Ruth. What is to become of Ruth? She has been a heathen. But she has come to fear God. She has put her trust under the shadow of the Almighty's wings. What is to become of Ruth? Well, she must go and glean in the fields of him who is next of kin, and she found a place of refuge in his bosom. God takes care, you see, of those that fear Him and have confidence in Him. But there is another great famine, and all the country is barren for three long years. According to the word of God, there is neither dew nor rain, and there is no food, but there is one man there who fears the Lord above all the rest, and that is Elijah. Well, he must have a place of refuge. There, you see, by the brook Cherith He sits him down, and ravens, that were more likely to rob him than to feed him, come to bring him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening. I heard some time ago of a poor woman who was very hard pressed for food; but she remembered the promise of God, and she knelt down and appealed to Him that He would provide her bread. Just afterwards a friend came in who brought a loaf of bread to her, saying that this loaf of bread was bought for her husband, but her husband was not well, and he was unable to eat it because they found that a mouse had been eating it, and it so turned him that he could not eat the bread. But the loaf was not hurt; "And," said the friend, "I dare say you will eat it; I have cut away the part that the mouse touched." Oh, yes, God can make a *mouse* do it, or ravens do it. His people shall have a place of refuge. When the brooks are dried up and the ravens are gone, there is a widow woman over there who has to sustain Elijah, and that woman's cruse is nearly empty, and her barrel of meal nearly all spent; but, still, her house is the place of refuge for Elijah, and God provides for him there!

When the Lord Jesus was here, He knew that Jerusalem was to be destroyed, and He knew that His disciples were to be there; but if history is to be believed—and I suppose it is—no Christians perished in the destruction of Jerusalem; yet they were very numerous. There is no mention of them by Josephus. They were all gone away, many of them to the little city called Pella, and other places beyond the River Jordan, because Jesus told them, when they saw Jerusalem compassed with armies, they might know that its destruction was near. So He counseled such as were in Judea to flee to the mountains, and thus when that destruction came, which was the most terrible calamity that ever happened on the face of the earth, His people had a place of refuge. And now, brothers and sisters, whatever is going to happen—and there are some that predict dreadful things—as for me, I do not know what is going to happen, and, which is another thing, I do not care—for His people shall have a place of refuge! "Though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and are troubled, though the mountains shake with the swellings thereof. There

is a river, the streams of which shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” If it should ever come to this—that the whole earth should rock and reel, or burn and smoke and seethe, or burn, like a cauldron, into one boiling mass—if there is no room for God’s people on the earth to find a refuge, He will find a refuge for them in the clouds. They shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. But, somehow or other, His people shall have a place of refuge. *His children shall have a place of refuge.* Lay hold on that. There is a refuge for you somewhere, Christian, even in the matter of ordinary providence, and there is always a mercy seat for you to go to. There is always the bosom of Christ for you to fly to. The fear of the Lord does not drive you *from* Him; it drives you *to* Him, and when it drives you to Him you have got a place of refuge!

I find that Moses Stewart reads the text differently from anybody else, and I am not sure that he is wrong. He says the text means that the children of those that fear God shall have a place of refuge, and if so, this is not the only passage of Scripture that proves it. There are many precious texts that speak of our children. Let us try to grasp the promise for our children as well as for ourselves, and pray for them that they may have a place of refuge. There are some believers going to be baptized tonight. I hope they have got a firm grip of that gospel promise that Paul uttered, where he says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and your house.” The jailer did, you know, and we find that it is said, “He was baptized, and all his house”; and for this reason—that he believed in the Lord, rejoicing with all his house. Oh, we can never be satisfied till we see all our house converted, and all our household baptized, and all those that belong to us belonging also to the Lord our God, for thus it is, “His children shall have a place of refuge.” May God bless you, dear friends, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMONS—PSALM 38.**

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# THE BEST BURDEN FOR YOUNG SHOULDERS NO. 1291

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth.”  
Lamentations 3:27.***

YOKE-BEARING is not pleasant, but it is good. It is not every pleasant thing that is good, nor every good thing that is pleasant; sometimes the goodness may be just in proportion to the unpleasantness. Now, it is childish to be always craving for sweets; those who by reason of use have had their senses exercised should prefer the wholesome to the palatable; it ought to reconcile us to that which is unsavory when we are informed that it is good. A little child is not easily reconciled that way, because, as yet, he cannot think and judge, but the man of God ought to find it very easy to quiet every murmur and complaint as soon as he perceives that, though unpleasant, the thing is good. Since, my dear friends, we are not very good judges ourselves of that which is good for us anymore than our children are, and since we expect our little ones to leave the choice of their diet with us, will it not be wise of us to leave everything with our heavenly Father? We can judge what is pleasant, but we cannot discern that which is good for us, but He can judge, and therefore it will be always well for us to leave all our affairs in His hands, and say, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” Since we are quite certain upon Scriptural authority that whatever the Lord sends to His people will work out for their benefit, we ought to be perfectly resigned to the Lord’s will; no, much more, we ought to be thankful for all His appointments even when they displease the flesh, being quite certain that His will is the best that can be, and that if we could see the end from the beginning it is exactly what we should choose, if we were as wise and good as our heavenly Father is. Our shoulders bow themselves with gladness to the burden which Jesus declares to be profitable to us: this assurance from His lips makes His yoke easy to bear.

Our text tells us of something which, though not very comfortable, is good—“It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth!” The illustration is drawn from cattle. The bullocks have to bear the yoke. They go in pairs, and the yoke is borne upon their shoulders. The yoke is somewhat burdensome. If the bullock is not broken when it is young, it will never make a good plowing ox; it will be fretted and troubled with the labor it will have to do; it will be very hard work to drive it and the farmer will accomplish but little plowing. It is good for the bullock to be brought into subjection while it is young, and so it is with all sorts of animals—the horse must be broken while he is a colt, and if a certain period of that horse’s life is allowed to pass over without its being under the trainer’s hand, it will never make a thoroughly useful horse. If you want to

train a dog you must take him while he is young, and teach him his work. That is the metaphor. It is just so with men. It is good for us that we are broken-in while we are yet young, and learn to bear the yoke in our youth.

If you take the text naturally as uttering a truth of ordinary life, it is still worth considering. Even apart from the grace of God, and apart from religion, it is a great blessing for a man to bear the yoke in his youth! That is to say, first, *it is good for us when we are young to learn obedience*. It is half the making of a man to be placed under rule, and taught to bear restraint. When young people grow older they will have to be very much a law unto themselves, there may be no father living to warn them lovingly, and no mother to gently guide them; young people will be older people, and govern themselves, and no one is fit to do that till he has learned to be obedient. The proverb is, “Boys will be boys,” but I do not think so, for they will be *men* if we let them have time, and unless they learn self-restraint and habits of obedience while they are boys, they are not likely to make good men. He who cannot obey is not fit to rule—he who never learned to submit will make a tyrant when he obtains power. It is good that every child should be broken-in, delivered from his foolish self-will, and made to feel that he has superiors, masters, and governors, and, then, when it shall come his turn to be a leader and a master, he will have the more kindly empathy to those who are under him. You can be sure of this, that if he does not learn the drill of obedience he will never be a good soldier in the battle of life.

*It is good for young people to bear the yoke, too, in the sense of acquiring knowledge in their early days.* If we do not learn when we are young, when shall we learn? Some, who have begun to study late in life, have yet achieved a good deal, but it has been with much difficulty. If you do not use the machinery of the mind in youth, it gets rusty, but if it is used from the very first, and kept continually in action and well oiled, it will go on easily throughout the whole of life. Our early days are favorable to the acquirement of knowledge, and every lad that is an apprentice should make the best of his apprenticeship—he will never make much of a journeyman if he does not. Every man that is starting in life, while he is yet young should do all that he possibly can to acquire full equipment, for if he does not, he will know the absence of it sooner or later. If a man starts upon life’s voyage, and has left his anchor at home, or forgotten his provisions, he will find out his deficiencies when he gets to sea, and when the storm begins to howl through the cordage he will wish that he had listened to the dictates of prudence, and had been better prepared for life’s perilous voyage.

It is good for young people, too—we are now talking about the natural meaning of the passage—*good for them that they should encounter difficulties and troubles when they begin life*. The silver spoon in the mouth with which some people are born is very apt to choke them. There are hundreds of people who have never been able to speak out because of that dreadful silver spoon! It is not every man that is the richer in the long run, even in mere gold and silver, for having commenced with capital. I believe you will generally find that the rich men, who have been

“self-made,” as they call it, came to London with a half-crown in their pockets. I have noticed that thirty pence is about the amount they leave home with, and that half-crown, neither less nor more, becomes the nest egg of a fortune. Young men who begin with thousands of pounds often end with nothing at all. It is good for a man that he should have a rough battle when life begins—that he should not be lapped in dainty ease, and find everything arranged according to his will—he will never develop his muscles; he will never make a man unless there is hard work for him to do. Those long hours, that stern thinking, those weary bones, and all that, of which young people nowadays are very apt to complain about, though they do not work half as hard as their fathers, nor above a tenth as hard as their grandfathers—all these things within reason and measure help to make men, and I only hope that the easier times, which are now happily in fashion, may not breed a softer and a less manly nature among our young men. It is good for a man that he should bear the yoke of labor, trial, and difficulty in his youth, and if we could lift the yoke from every weary shoulder it would not be wise to do so. Many a man who has succeeded in life is very thankful to God that he had in his early years to bear a little poverty, and to work hard and toil, for he never would have come to be what he is if it had not been for the strengthening and educating influence of trial.

It is not, however, my business to preach about these matters at any length; I am not a moral lecturer, but a minister of the gospel. I have fulfilled a duty when I have given the first meaning to the text, and now I shall use it for nobler ends.

**I.** First of all, IT IS GOOD TO BE A CHRISTIAN WHILE YOU ARE YOUNG. It is good for a man to bear Christ’s yoke in his youth.

I shall not ask you to pardon me if I speak here as one who has tried and proved it. Surely I may do so without egotism, for it is not my own honor, but God’s, that I shall speak of! What the Lord has worked in me—of that I will speak. At 15 years of age I was brought to know the Lord, and to confess Him, and I can therefore speak as one who bore the yoke in his youth; and, young people, if I have never to address you again, I should like to say to you, it has been good for me. Ah, how good I cannot tell you, but so good that I earnestly wish that every one of you would bear my Master’s yoke in his youth; I could not wish you a greater blessing!

For, see, first, the man whose heart is conquered by divine grace early is *made happy soon*. That is a blessed prayer in the psalm, “O satisfy us *early* with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.” Very few people, if they understood it, would wish to postpone happiness; young hearts generally ask to be happy *now*. To have sin forgiven is to be unloaded *now* of that which is the prime cause of sorrow. To receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith is to be clothed with peace *now*. To be reconciled to God is to have a spring of consolation within your soul *now*. To know yourself to be God’s child is to have the greatest joy out of heaven, and to have it *now*. Who would wish to postpone it? Young Christians may die, but it is of small consequence if they do, for being early in Christ, they will be early in heaven! Who would not wish to be

safe as soon as possible? Who desires to tarry in the land of peril, where a point of time, a moment's space, may shut you up in hell? To be early secured from the wrath to come—early endued with a sense of security in Jesus Christ—why surely it does not need many words to prove that this is good!

Besides, while early piety brings early happiness, let it never be forgotten that *it saves from a thousand snares*. There are things which a man who has lived long in sin knows, which he wishes he could forget! God's grace rinses your mouth after you have been eating the forbidden fruit, but the flavor is very apt to linger and to return; songs which are libels upon God, and upon decency, once heard, will attack you in the middle of a prayer; and words which, if you could forget them, you might be willing to lose your memory for that purpose, will invade your most hallowed seasons. It is a great mercy of God that if a man is 70 or 80 years of age, yet if he shall believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be saved! Eleventh hour mercy is very sweet. But what a double privilege it is to be set to work in the vineyard while yet the dew is on the leaves, and so to be kept from the idleness and the wickedness of the market place in which others loiter so long.

It is good for a man to bear Christ's yoke in his youth because *it saves him from having those shoulders galled with the devil's yoke*. It preserves him from the fetters of that pitiful slavery into which so many are brought by habits long acquired and deeply seated. Sins long indulged grow to the shoulders, and to remove them is like tearing away one's flesh. Be thankful, young people, that the Savior is ready to receive you while you are yet young, and that He gives you the promise, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." Happy are they who entertain the Redeemer in the morning, and so shut out the evil spirit all day long!

There is this goodness about it, again, that *it gives you longer time in which to serve God*. If I were taken into the service of one whom I loved, I should like to do him a long day's work; if I knew that I could only work for him one day, I should strive to begin as soon as the gray light of dawn permitted me to see, and I would continue at work far into the evening, cheerfully active, so long as a glimmer remained. If you are converted late in life you can only give to our Lord Jesus the shades of evening. Blessed be His name, He will accept eventide service; but still, how much better to be able to serve the Lord from your youth up, to give Him those bright days while the birds are singing in the soul, when the sun is unclouded, and the shadows are not falling; and then to give Him the long evening, when at eventide He makes it light, and causes the infirmities of age to display His power and His fidelity. I think I know of no grander sight than that of a gray-haired man who has served the Lord Jesus from his youth up.

There is this goodness about it yet further, that *it enables one to be well established in divine things*. "They that are planted in the courts of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." A tree transplanted takes a certain time to root, but when it becomes well established it produces abundant fruit. There must be time for striking root in divine things; everything in the kingdom of grace is not to be learned in 10

minutes. I bless God that a man who has believed in Jesus only one second is a saved man; but he is not an *instructed* man; he is not an established man. He is not trained for battle; nor tutored for labor. These things take time. When we are converted, we go to Christ's school; we sit at His feet and learn of Him. Now, who is the best scholar? All other things being equal, I should expect to find the best scholars in school to be those who come early. Eleven o'clock scholars do not learn much; evening scholars, with a good master and great diligence, may pick up *something*, but scarcely so much as those who have been at the school all day! Oh, how blessed it is to begin to know Christ very early, because then you can go on comprehending with all the saints the heights and depths of that which surpasses knowledge. No fear that you will ever exhaust this knowledge. It is so infinitely great and blessed that if we lived 7,000 years in the world, there would still be more to know of Christ, and we would still have to say, "Oh, the depths." We need not be afraid, therefore, if we are converted when we are 10, or 15, or 20 years of age, we shall live to wear out the freshness of religion. Ah, no, we shall love it more and understand it better, and by God's grace practice it more fully as the years roll over us! Therefore it is good to begin soon.

And then, let me say, *it gives such confidence in later life to have given your heart to Jesus young.*

I am glad to see some boys and girls here tonight. Now, my dear children, God may spare you to become old men and old women, and when your hair is gray and you are getting feeble, and you know that you will soon die, it will be very delightful to be able to say, "O Lord, I have known You from my youth, and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not." There will be much force in the plea, for if we have a faithful servant, we do not cast him off when he grows old. "Ah," you say, "he cannot do much now. The old man is getting very feeble, he cannot see or hear as he used to do, and he is slow in his movements—but, then, you see, the good old fellow has been in our family ever since he was a boy, and you do not think we are going to turn him out now?" No, the Lord will not cast off His old servants. He will not say to them "I have had the best of you; I have had your young days, and I have had your middle life, but now you may go begging, and take care of yourself." No, that is how the Amalekite or the Ishmaelite might talk, but the God of Israel never forsakes His people. He says, "Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made you; and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." O, you who have given yourselves to Jesus through His rich and sovereign grace while you are young, I know you feel it a sweet plea to urge with God—"Now, Lord, forsake me not." So, then, young people, if you would lay by a precious treasure of consolation when those that look out of the windows are darkened, if you would have strength for the time of weakness, if you would have comfort for the day when the mourners go about the streets, if, above all, you would be supported when you are going to your last home, yield yourselves to Jesus now. Oh, that this very night you may bow your shoulders to the

easy yoke of the meek and lowly Savior; so shall you find rest unto your souls.

**II.** I shall now give another meaning of the text. May the Holy Spirit bless it; secondly, **IT IS GOOD FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS THAT THEY BEAR THE YOKE OF JESUS.** What do we mean by that?

A good number of you have been lately converted, and to you I speak most earnestly. It will be for your good as long as you live, to render to Jesus *complete obedience at the very first*. Some Christians seem to me to start to Canaan all in a muddle; they do not begin their pilgrimage in the right pilgrim fashion. Every young Christian when he is converted should take time to consider, and should say to himself, "What am I to do? What is the *duty* of a Christian?" He should also devoutly say to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, show me what You would have me to do," and wait upon the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Two young lads were not long ago converted to God; one of them attended here, the other at another place of worship. They talked to each other about what was the right way of confessing Jesus Christ; they did not quite know, but they meant to find out. They borrowed the keys of a neighboring independent chapel, and went inside and spent some hours day after day reading together the New Testament, and turning to every passage which refers to baptism. The result was that they both of them came and were baptized in this place. I wish that all Christians in commencing would look at that ordinance, and at every *other* point in dispute, and see what God says about it. Search the Scriptures and see for yourselves. Do not say, "I have always been with the Episcopalians, and therefore I ought to do as they do." Or "I have always been with the Baptists," or "with the Wesleyans." My dear friends, these people cannot make rules for us. Here is our guide—this Bible! If I want to go by the railway, I use Bradshaw, and do not trust to hearsay, and if I want to go to heaven I must follow the Bible. There is another book which people will ask you to attend to. Well, we will say nothing against that book, only it is not *the* book. *The* book is this volume, the blessed Bible! You should begin by feeling, "My Lord has saved me; I am His servant, and I mean at once to take His yoke upon me. I will, as far as ever I can, do what He would have me do. There are some sins into which I shall most likely fall. Watch as I may, I shall sometimes make a slip, but here are some things which I can be right about, and I will take care that I am right about them." Now, if you young people begin conscientiously studying the word of God, and desiring in everything to put your feet down where Christ put His feet, I am sure it will be good for you. You will grow up to be healthy Christians, and men and women of no ordinary stature. But if you do not begin with searching the word, but take your religion second-hand from other people, and do what you see other people do, without searching, why, you will lack that noble independence of mind and courage of spirit, and, at the same time, that complete submission to Christ which make up the main elements of a noble-minded Christian.

It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth, in the next place, namely, *by attaining clear instruction in divine truth*. We ought to go to the Lord Jesus Christ to learn of Him, not merely about ordinances

and actions, but about what to think and what to believe. Oh, how I wish that every one of us had begun, with regard to our doctrinal sentiments, by presenting our minds to Christ like a sheet of clean paper for His Holy Spirit to write the truth of God on! Alas, we begin with many a line upon us written by the pen of prejudice. Dear friend, if you are converted to God, you are now to sit at the feet of *Jesus* to learn everything from *Him*—not to take *your* views *to* Him! Those are common expressions, “my views,” and “my opinions,” and “I am of such a persuasion.” Beloved, be persuaded by Christ, for *that* is the only persuasion worth following. Take your *views* from Him; no other views of eternal and heavenly things are worth having. “Oh,” says one, “but then they might not happen to be your views.” Just so, and I do not ask you to take my views! On the other hand I charge you before God never to believe anything because *I* say it, but to listen only to my Master, and yield your faith only to the infallible Bible! We urge this upon you because, even if you believe the truth of God because we say it, you have not believed it in the right way. Truth is to be received because it is *true*, and because Jesus Christ’s authority *proves* it *to you* to be true, not because any poor mortal who happens to preach is supposed to possess authority to decide such questions. We have no authority to assert anything to be the truth of God upon our own *ipse dixit*; we are simply the trumpets at the lips of Christ when we speak with power; and sometimes, alas, we blow our *own* trumpets instead of leaving Jesus Christ to blow through us, and then we are worse than useless. I charge you bear the yoke in your youth by studying hard to know what is the Way, the truth, and the Life from the lips of Jesus Christ, Himself, being taught of the Spirit of God. It is good for you to do this.

*It is also good for young converts to bear the yoke by beginning to serve Jesus Christ early.* I like to see mothers when they brings their little ones to the house of God put a penny into their hands, and teach them early to contribute to the cause of Christ; and when people are converted there is nothing like their having something to do very soon. Not that they are to attempt to do the major things which belong to the more advanced and instructed; for, concerning some of these, we should apply the rule, “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he falls into the condemnation of the devil.” But there is work for every believer to do in Christ’s vineyard. There is work for children, there is work for young men, work for young women, and it is good to begin early. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was so pleased with the widow’s mite, is very pleased with a child’s love to Him. We big people are very apt to think, “What can a little girl do for Jesus?” Oh, but if that little girl does not do *something* for Jesus, now that she is saved, she will very likely grow up to be an idle Christian, and not serve God in later years as she should. I like to see the little trees which they put into our gardens, you know, the little pyramids and other dwarf trees; I like to see them even from the first bear just a little fruit. I think, sometimes, that pears, when there are only one or two on the tree, are far finer in flavor than those on the big tree which too often have lost in *quality* what they have gained in quantity. That which is done for Jesus Christ by young Christians, by weak Christians, by timid Christians,

often has a very delicate flavor about it, precious to the taste of Jesus. It is good to begin serving Him in our youth.

“Ah,” says one, “I shall begin when I can preach.” will you? You had better begin writing a letter to that young friend with whom you went to school. You had better begin by dropping a tract in an area, or by trying to speak to some young person of your own age. Pride will prompt you to wish to be great, but love to Jesus will teach you that the small things are acceptable with Him. It is good for young men—good for young women—that as soon as they are converted to God they should bear the yoke of service.

It is also good that when we begin to serve God that we should bear the yoke in another sense, namely, *by finding difficulties*. If it were in my power to make the way of serving Christ very easy to every young Christian here, I would not do it. If it were possible to make all Sunday school work pleasant, I would not do it. If it were possible to make standing up in the open air to preach a very easy thing, I would not make it so! It is good for you that you bear the yoke. It is good that your service should involve self-denial, and try your patience. It is good for you that the girls should not be very orderly, and that the boys should not be very teachable when you get them in the class. It is good for you that the crowd should not stand still and listen very meekly to you, and that infidels should put ugly questions to you when you are preaching in the street. It is good, I know, for the young minister to encounter curious church members, and even to meet with an adversary who means to overthrow him. It is a good thing for a true worker for the devil to labor to put him down, because if God has put him up, he cannot be put down, but the attempt to overthrow him will do him good, develop his spiritual muscles, and bring out the powers of his mind! A very easy path would not be profitable to us. Consider David after Samuel had put the oil on his head, and anointed him to be the future king of Judah; it would have been a very bad thing for him to have waited in inglorious ease and slumbered away the interval. But take David and send him into the wilderness to keep the sheep; bring him to Saul’s court and let Saul throw a javelin at him—send him to fight with Goliath; banish him afterwards to the tracks of the wild goats, and compel him to live in the dens and caves and make him fight for his life, and by this process you will educate a hero, fit to rule Israel. He comes to the throne no longer a youth and ruddy, but a man of war from his youth up, and he is, therefore, ready to smite the Philistines or the children of Ammon as the champion of the Lord of hosts. It is good, then, to bear the yoke in the sense of undertaking service for Jesus and finding difficulty in it.

And it is good yet further, *to meet with persecution in your youth*. If it were possible to take every young Christian and put him into a pious family and not let him go into the world at all, but always keep him in his mother’s lap—if it were possible to take every working man and guarantee that he should only work in a shop where they sing Psalms from morning to night, where nobody ever swears, where nobody ever utters a word of chaff against him—why, I say, if it were possible to do this, I do not know that it would be wise to do it! To keep people out of temptation

is exceedingly proper, and none of us have any right to put a temptation in another's way; but it is good for us to be tempted, sometimes, otherwise we would not know the real condition of our hearts, and might be rotting with inward pride while blooming with outward morality. Temptation lets us know how weak we are, and drives us to our knees. It tests our faith and tries our love—and lets us see whether our graces are genuine or not. When religion puts on her silver slippers and walks out with her golden earrings, everybody is quite content to go with her, but the honest, hearty Christian will follow Jesus Christ's truth when she goes barefoot through the mire and through the slough, and when her garments are bespattered by unholy hands. Herein is the trial of the true, and the unmasking of the deceitful. It would not be good for us to be kept from persecution, slander, and trial; it is good for a man that he bears this yoke in his youth. A Christian is a hardy plant. Many years ago a pine tree was brought to England. The gentleman who brought it, put it in his hothouse, but it did not develop in a healthy manner. It was a spindly thing, and therefore the gardener, feeling that he could not make anything of it, took it out and threw it on the dunghill. There it grew into a splendid tree, for it had found a temperature suitable to its nature. The tree was meant to grow near the snow; it loves cold winds and rough weather, and they had been sweating it to death in a hothouse. So it is with true Christianity. It seldom flourishes as well in the midst of ease and luxury as it does in great tribulation! Christians are often all the stronger and better because they happen to be cast where they have no Christian companions, or kindly encouragements. As liberty usually favors the hardy mountaineers whose rugged hills have made them brave and hardy, so does abounding grace, as a rule, visit those who endure the great fight of affliction, and through much tribulation inherit the kingdom.

Once more, I believe it is good for young Christians *to experience much soul-trouble*. My early days of thoughtfulness were days of bitterness. Before I found a Savior I was plowed with the great subsoil plow of terrible convictions. Month after month I sought but found no hope. I learned the plague of my heart, the desperate evil of my nature, and at this moment I have reason to thank God for that long wintry season. I am sure it was good for my soul. As a general rule there is a period of darkness somewhere or other in the Christian life—if you do not have it at first it is probable you will not endure it again; but if you do not have it at first it is just as likely you will pass through the cloud at some other time. It is well to have it over with. "It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth." Some friends seem to have found a patent way of going to heaven. If their way is the right one I am sure I am very much delighted, but I am rather dubious, for I meet with those who have tried the high-level railroad, and are greatly discouraged because the train does not run as smoothly as they expected. They have been living a whole fortnight—well, not *quite* without sin—but very near it. They have triumphed and conquered altogether, and gone up in a balloon for a fortnight. Of course they have to come down again—and some come with an awful fall! The best of them come, and say, "Dear pastor, I am afraid I am not a child of

God. I feel so wretched, and yet I felt so happy and holy. I have said, "Yes, you see you went up, and so you had to come down. If you had *kept* down you would not have had to *come* down." That going up in a balloon to the stars frightens me about some young people; I wish they would continue humbly to feel that they are *nothing* and nobody, and that Christ is *everything*. It is much better on the whole that a man should be timid and trembling than that he should early in life become very confident. "Blessed is the man that fears always" is a Scriptural text—not the slavish fear, nor yet a fear that doubts God, but still a fear. There is a difference between doubting God and doubting yourself; you may have as much as you like of the last till you even get to self-despair, but there is no reason whatever why you should doubt the Lord! "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth," to be made to feel the weight of sin, and the chastening hand of God; and to be left to cry out in the dark and say, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him that I might come even to His seat." These ordeals are of essential service to the newborn Believer, and prepare him alike for the joys and the sorrows of his spiritual life.

**III.** I am going to finish with this last head. Practically, brothers and sisters WE ARE ALL OF US IN OUR YOUTH. I see some gray heads and bald heads here, and yet they belong to persons in their minority. My dear brother, though you are 70 and more, yet you have not come of age in the heavenly kingdom; for if you were of age you would have your estates. None of us will come of age till we enter heaven. We are still under tutors and governors, because we are even now as little children. We have not come to that period in which we are fit for all the joys of heaven, for if we were we should be taken home to our Father's house to enjoy our inheritance at once. We are still in our youth. Well, it is good for us at this present time that we should bear the yoke, and continue to bear it. It is good, my dear brothers and sisters, that we who have gone some distance on the road to heaven should still have something to bear, because it enables us to still honor Christ! If we do not *suffer* with Him, how can we have fellowship with Him? If we have no crosses to carry, how can we commune with our Lord, the chief cross-bearer? Let us be glad that we are not spared tribulations; that we are not screened from affliction; but are permitted to glorify God by patience, by resignation, and by unshattering faith. Do not ask the Lord that you may have no trouble, but rather remember you have only a little while in which you can be patient—only a little while in which you can be a cross-bearer, and therefore it behooves you to use each moment well. A few more revolving suns and you will be where there is no more cross to carry, no sorrow to bear, and, therefore, where there is no room for patience, and no opportunity of being acquiescent in the divine will. Be content to bear the yoke now, for it is but a little while, and this honor will be no longer yours.

It is good for us all to bear the yoke, too, because thus *old Adam is kept in check*. A wonderfully vivacious thing is that old Adam. He has been reported dead a good many times, but to my certain knowledge he is still very brisk! When we are in trouble, proud old Adam often seems to be quiet, and does not so well succeed in keeping us from prayer, and,

consequently, in time of trouble, we often enjoy our very sweetest seasons of devotion. By the Lord's goodness we escape the trial, but, alas, old Adam soon lifts up his proud head again. He says, "Ah, you are a favorite of heaven, your mountain stands firm. Your affliction has been sanctified to you, and you have grown in grace very wonderfully. The fact is, you are a very fine fellow." Yes, that is old Adam's way, and whenever he sees an opportunity he will return to his old game of flattery. Whenever you are tempted to be vain, say to yourself, "I know you, old Adam. I know you, and will not yield to your crafty devices." What happens when we become self-satisfied? Why, the yoke returns upon our shoulders heavier! We fall into another trouble, and then old Adam is up in the stirrups again, and begins to grumble and rebel. The flesh begins proudly to despair, whereas a little while before it was boasting! Trials, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, are a great help to overcome corruptions. It is a very hard matter for a man to be rich and prospering in this world, to be at ease and have a long stretch of health, to have everything exactly as he likes, and yet to be a Christian. When the road is very smooth, many fall but when the way is rough there is good grip for the feet, and we are not so likely to stumble. When trials come, they whip us home to our heavenly Father! Sheep do not stray as much when the black dog is after them; his barks make them run to the shepherd! Affliction is the black dog of the Good Shepherd to fetch us back to Him; otherwise we would wander to our ruin. We are not better than David, and we may honestly confess as he did, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept Your word." Therefore it is good for us spiritually young people, even though old as to the flesh, that we should bear the yoke while we are still in our youth.

Besides, dear friends, it makes you *so helpful to others* to have known affliction. I do not see how we can sympathize if we are never tried ourselves. I know a beloved brother who is perhaps 50 years of age, who never had a day's sickness, and he told me he scarcely knew what physical pain was except when a heavy person trod on his toes! Well, now, he is a good brother; but when he tries to sympathize with another, it is like an elephant picking up a pin, or Hercules with a cane; he does do it, by God's grace, but it is a thing to be wondered at. If you tell him that you feel very low in spirits, he looks at you and tries to say very kind things, but he does not understand your despondency. Now, it would be a great pity for a Christian minister to be lacking in the power to sympathize—would it not? Oh, thank God for troubles, because they make the heart tender, and they teach the lips the art of consolation. You can be a Boanerges without trouble, but you never can be a Barnabas; you may be a son of thunder, but you will never be a son of consolation. As we wish to serve others, let us thank God that He qualifies us to do so by making us bear the yoke in our youth.

Once more, is it not good to bear the yoke while we are here, because *it will make heaven all the sweeter*. Oh, how sweet heaven will be to that bedridden woman, who has lain these 20 years upon her weary couch, and scarcely had a night's unbroken rest! What rest heaven will be to her! I know a good man within two miles of this place who has laid 18

years without moving. I do not know a happier man than he is. It is a treat to see him; but still what a change it will be—from that bed from which he cannot rise—to stand on the sea of glass, and forever wave the palm branch, and draw forth music from the celestial harp. What a transformation! How great the change for a poor Christian woman dying in a workhouse, to be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom! What a change for the martyr standing at the stake, burning slowly to death, and then rising to behold the glory of his Lord! What a change for you, dear old friend, with all those aches and pains about you, which make you feel uneasy even while you are sitting here! Ah, graybeard, you will be young soon! There will be no wrinkles on your brow! You will not require those spectacles! You will not need that staff to lean upon—you will be as strong as the youngest here! As you stand before the throne of God you will scarcely know yourself to be the same old woman you used to be, or the same sickly man you were a little while ago. You will be stripped of the house of clay, and your young soul will leap up from the old body and be present with the Lord! And then the grave will be a refining pot in which the dross of the flesh will be consumed; and by-and-by your body will rise, no longer old and haggard and worn, but full of beauty, like your Master's glorious body. This should give joy to you at all times—it must be good for you to bear the yoke, seeing heaven will by that means be made more fully heaven to you when once you reach its everlasting rest—

***“The way may be rough but it cannot be long  
So let's smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song!”***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
LAMENTATIONS 5.**

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# THE SOUL-WINNER

## NO. 1292

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 20, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that wins souls is wise.”  
Proverbs 11:30.***

I HAD very great joy last night—many of you know why, but some do not. We held our annual meeting of the church, and it was a very pleasant sight to see so many brothers and sisters knit together in the heartiest love, welded together as one mass by common sympathies, and holding firmly to, “one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.” Think of a church with 4,900 members! Such a community has seldom been gathered in any age, and in the present century it is without parallel. “O Lord, You have multiplied the people, and increased the joy. They joy before You as the joy of harvest.” It brings tears into one’s eyes to look upon so many who declare themselves to be members of the body of Christ. The hope that so many are plucked as brands from the burning, and delivered from the wrath to come is in itself exceedingly consoling, and I felt the joy of it while communing with my brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. On thinking it over afterwards, however, it seemed to me that there is a higher joy in looking at a body of believers than that which arises from merely regarding them as saved. Not but what there is a great joy in salvation, a joy worthy to stir the angelic harps. Think of the Savior’s agony in the ransom of every one of His redeemed, think of the work of the Holy Spirit in every renewed heart, think of the love of the Father as resting upon every one of the regenerate. I could not if I took up my parable for a month, set forth all the mass of joy that is to be seen in a multitude of believers if we only look at what God has done *for* them, promised *to* them, and will fulfill *in* them! But there is yet a wider field of thought and my mind has been thinking about it all day—the thought of the capacities of *service* contained in a numerous band of believers, the possibilities of blessing *others* which lie within the bosoms of regenerate persons. We must not think so much of what we already are, as to forget what the Lord may accomplish by us for others! Here are the coals of fire, but who shall describe the conflagration which they may cause?

We ought to regard the Christian Church not as a luxurious hostelry where Christian may each one dwell at his ease in his own inn, but as a *barracks* in which soldiers are gathered together to be drilled and trained for war; we should regard the Christian Church not as an association for mutual admiration and comfort, but as an arm with banners, marching to the fray to achieve victories for Christ, to storm the strongholds of the foe, and to add province after province to the Redeemer’s kingdom! We may view converted persons when gathered into church membership as so much wheat in the granary, and we thank God that it is there, and that so far the harvest has rewarded the sower—but far more soul-

inspiring is the view when we regard those believers as each one likely to be made a living center for the extension of the kingdom of Jesus! Then we see them sowing the fertile valleys of our land, and promising before long to bring forth some 30, some 40, some 50, and some a hundredfold! The capacities of life are enormous—one becomes a thousand in a marvelously brief space; within a short time a few grains of wheat would suffice to seed the whole world, and a few true saints might suffice for the conversion of all nations! Only take that which comes from one ear, store it well, sow it all—again store it next year, and then sow it all again—and the multiplication almost exceeds the power of computation! O that every Christian was thus year by year the Lord's seed corn! If all the wheat in the world had perished except a single grain, it would not take many years to replenish all the earth, and sow her fields and plains. But in a far shorter time, in the power of the Holy Spirit, one Paul or one Peter would have evangelized all lands! View yourselves as grains of wheat predestinated to seed the world! That man lives grandly who is as earnest as if the very existence of Christianity depended upon him, and is determined that to all men within his reach shall be made known the unsearchable riches of Christ.

If we whom Christ is pleased to use as His seed corn were only all scattered and sown as we ought to be, and were all to sprout and bring forth the green blade and the corn in the ear, what a harvest there would be! Again would it be fulfilled, "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains"—a very bad position for it—"the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." May God grant us to feel tonight some degree of the Holy Spirit's quickening power while we talk together, not so much about what God has done for us as about what God may do *by* us, and how far we may put ourselves into a right position to be used by Him.

There are two things in the text found laid out with much distinctness in its two sentences. The first is—*the life of the believer is, or ought to be, full of soul-blessing*—"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life." In the second place—*the pursuit of the believer ought always to be soul-winning*. The second is much the same as the first, only the first head sets forth our unconscious influence and the second our efforts which we put forth with the avowed objective of winning souls for Christ.

**I.** Let us begin at the beginning, because the second cannot be carried out without the first; without fullness of life within there cannot be an overflow of life to others. It is of no use for any of you to try to be soul-winners if you are not bearing fruit in your own lives; how can you serve the Lord with your lips if you do not serve Him with your lives? How can you preach with your tongues His gospel, when with hands, feet, and hearts you are preaching the devil's gospel, and setting up antichrist by your practical unholiness? We must first have life and bear personal fruit to the divine glory, and then out of our example will spring the conversion of others! Let us go to the fountainhead and see how the man's own life is essential to his being useful to others. **THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER IS FULL OF SOUL-BLESSING:** this fact we shall consider by means of a few observations growing out of the text, and first let us remark that

*the believer's outward life comes as a matter of fruit from him.* This is important to notice. The fruit of the righteous—that is to say, his *life*—is not a thing fastened *upon* him—it grows *out* of him. It is not a garment which he puts off and on, but it is inseparable from himself; the sincere man's religion is the *man* himself, and not a cloak for his concealment; true godliness is the natural outgrowth of a renewed nature, not the forced growth of pious hothouse excitement. Is it not natural for a vine to bear clusters of grapes? Is it not natural for a palm tree to bear dates? Certainly as natural as it is for the apples of Sodom to be found on the trees of Sodom, and for noxious plants to produce poisonous berries, when God gives a new nature to His people, the lily which comes out of that *new* nature springs spontaneously from it. The man who has a religion which is not part and parcel of himself will by-and-by discover that it is worse than useless to him; the man who wears his piety like a mask at a carnival so that when he gets home he changes from a saint to a savage, from an angel to a devil, from John to Judas, from a benefactor to a bully—such a man, I say, knows very well what formalism and hypocrisy can do for him, and he has no vestige of true religion. Fig trees do not bear figs on certain days and thorns at other times, but they are true to their nature at all seasons. Those who think that godliness is a matter of vestment, and has an intimate relation with blue and scarlet, and fine linen, are consistent if they keep their religion to the proper time for the wearing of their sacred pomposities, but he who has discovered what Christianity is knows that it is much more a *life* than an act, a form, or a profession. Much as I love the creed of Christendom, I am ready to say that true Christianity is far more a life than a creed. It is a creed, and it has its ceremonies, but it is mainly a *life*—it is a divine spark of heaven's own flame which falls into the human bosom and burns within, consuming much that lies hidden in the soul, and then, at last, as a heavenly life, flaming forth, so as to be seen and felt by those around.

Under the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit a regenerate person becomes like that bush in Horeb which was all aglow with Deity. The God within him makes him shine so that the place around him is holy ground, and those who look at him feel the power of his hallowed life. Dear brothers and sisters, we must take care that our religion is more and more a matter of outgrowth from our souls. Many professors are hedged about with, "You must not do this, or that," and are driven onward with, "You must do this, and you must do that." But there is a doctrine, too often perverted, which is, nevertheless, a blessed truth of God, and ought to dwell in your hearts. "You are not under the law but under grace"; therefore you do not obey the will of God because you hope to earn heaven, or dream of escaping from divine wrath by your own works, but because there is a life in you which seeks after that which is holy, pure, right, and true, and cannot endure that which is evil. You are careful to maintain good works, not from either legal hopes or legal fears, but because there is a holy thing within you, born of God, which seeks, according to its nature, to do that which is pleasing to God. Look to it more and more so that your religion is real, true, natural, vital—not artificial, constrained or superficial. We all need a religion which can live either in

a wilderness or in a crowd; we need a religion which will show itself in every walk of life and in every company. Give me the godliness which is seen at home, especially around the fireside, for it is never more beautiful than there! Give me the godliness that is seen in the battle and tussle of ordinary business among scoffers and gainsayers as well as among Christian men. Show me the faith which can defy the lynx eyes of the world, and walk fearlessly where all scowl with the fierce eyes of hate, or where there are no observers to sympathize and no friends to judge leniently! May you be filled with the life of the Spirit, and your whole conduct and conversation be the natural and blessed outgrowth of that Spirit's indwelling!

Note next that *the fruit which comes from a Christian is fruit worthy of his character*—"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life." Each tree bears its own fruit and is known by it. The righteous man bears righteous fruit—and do not let us be at all deceived, brothers and sisters, or fall into any error about this—"he that does righteousness is righteous," and "he that does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother." We are prepared, I hope, to die for the doctrine of justification by faith, and to assert before all adversaries that salvation is not of works. But we also confess that we are justified by a faith which *produces* works, and if any man has a faith which does *not* produce good works, it is the faith of devils! Saving faith appropriates the finished work of the Lord Jesus, and so saves by itself alone, for we are justified by faith without works—but the faith which is without works cannot bring salvation to any man! We are saved by faith without works, but not by *a* faith that is without works, for the real faith that saves the soul works by Christ's love and purifies the character! If you can cheat across the counter, your hope of heaven is a cheat too; though you can pray as prettily as anybody, and practice acts of outward piety as well as any other hypocrite, you are deceived if you expect to be right at last! If as an employee who is lazy, lying, and loitering, or if as an employer you are hard, tyrannical, and unchristian-like towards your employees, your fruit shows that you are a tree of Satan's own orchard, and bear apples which will suit *his* tooth! If you can practice tricks of the trade, and if you can lie—and how many do lie every day about their neighbors or about their goods?—you may talk about being justified by faith all you like, but all liars will have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone! And among the biggest liars you will be, for you are guilty of the lie of saying, "I am a Christian," whereas you are not! A false profession is one of the worst of lies, since it brings the utmost dishonor upon Christ and His people. The fruit of the *righteous* is *righteousness*—the fig tree will not bring forth thorns, neither shall we gather grapes from thistles. A tree is known by its fruit, but we cannot judge men's *hearts*, and must not try to do so. We *can* judge their *lives*, and I pray God we may all be ready to judge our *own* lives and see if we are bringing forth righteous fruit, for if not, we are not righteous! Let it, however, never be forgotten that the fruit of the righteous, though it comes from him naturally, for his newborn nature yields the sweet fruit of obedience—yet it is always the result of grace which is the gift of God! There is no truth of God

which ought to be remembered more than this, "In Me is your fruit found." We can bring forth no fruit except as we abide in Christ! The righteous shall flourish *as a branch*, and only as a branch! How does a branch flourish—by its connection with the stem, and the consequent flowing in of the sap, and so, though the righteous man's righteous actions are his own, yet they are always produced by the grace which is imparted to him, and he never dares to take any credit for them! He sings, "Not unto us, but unto Your name give praise." If he fails, he blames himself; if he succeeds, he glorifies God! Imitate the righteous man's example—lay every fault, every weakness, and every infirmity at your own door, and if you fall in any respect short of perfection—and I am sure you do—take all that to yourself and do not excuse yourself. But if there is any virtue, any praise, any true desire, any real prayer—*anything* that is good—ascribe it all to the Spirit of God! Remember, the righteous man would *not* be righteous unless God had *made* him righteous, and the fruit of God's righteousness would never come from him unless the divine sap within him had produced that acceptable fruit. To God alone is all honor and glory!

The main lesson of the passage is that this outburst of life from the Christian, this consequence of life within him, *this fruit of his soul becomes a blessing to others*. Like a tree, it yields shade and sustenance to all around. It is a tree of life, an expression which I cannot fully work out tonight as I would wish, for there is a world of instruction compressed into the illustration. That which to the believer himself is fruit becomes to others a tree—it is a singular metaphor, but by no means a lame one. From the child of God there falls the fruit of holy living, even as an acorn drops from the oak; this holy living becomes influential and produces the best results in others, even as the acorn becomes itself an oak, and lends its shade to the birds of the air. The Christian's holiness becomes a tree of life. I suppose it means a living tree, a tree calculated to give life and sustenance to others. A fruit becomes a tree! A tree of life! Wonderful result this! Christ *in the Christian* produces a character which becomes a tree of life. The outward character is the fruit of the inner life—this outer life itself grows from a fruit into a tree, and as a tree it bears fruit in others to the praise and glory of God. Dear brothers and sisters, I know some of God's saints who live very near to Him, and they are evidently a tree of life, for their very *shadow* is comforting, cooling, and refreshing to many weary souls. I have known the young, the tried, the downcast go to them, sit beneath their shade, and pour out their troubles, and they have felt it a rich blessing to receive their sympathy, to be told of the faithfulness of the Lord, and to be guided in the way of His wisdom. There are a few good men in this world whom to know is to be rich; such men are libraries of gospel truths, but they are better than books, for the truth of God in them is written on *living* pages! Their character is a true and living tree—it is not a mere post of the dead wood of doctrine bearing an inscription, and rotting at the same time, but it is a vital, organized, fruit-producing thing—a plant of the Lord's right hand planting!

Not only do some saints give comfort to others, but they also yield them spiritual nourishment. Well-trained Christians become nursing fa-

thers and nursing mothers, strengthening the weak, and binding up the wounds of the broken-hearted. So, too, the strong, bold, generous deeds of large-hearted Christians are of great service to their fellow Christians, and tend to raise them to a higher level. You feel refreshed by observing how they *act*—their *patience* in suffering, their *courage* in danger, their *holy faith* in God, their *happy faces* under trial—all these nerve you for your own conflicts. In a thousand ways the sanctified believer's example acts in a healing and comforting way to his brothers and sisters, and assists in raising them above anxiety and unbelief. Even as the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the people, so the words and deeds of saints are medicine for a thousand maladies.

And then what fruit instructed believers bear! They are sweet to the taste of the godly. We can never trust in men as we trust in the Lord, but the Lord can cause the members to bless us in their measure, even as their head is ever ready to do. Jesus alone is the tree of life, but He makes some of His servants to be instrumentally to us little trees of life by whom He gives us fruit of the same sort that He bears Himself, for He puts it there, and it is *Himself* in His saints causing them to bring portly golden apples with which our souls are gladdened! May we every one of us be made like our Lord, and may His fruit be found upon our branches!

We have put into the tomb during the last year many of the saints who have fallen asleep. Among them there were some of whom I will not at this moment particularly speak—whose lives as I look back upon them are still a tree of life to *me*. I pray God that I may be like they! Many of you knew them, and if you will only recall their holy, devoted lives, the influence they have left behind will still be a tree of life to you. They being dead yet speak; hear their eloquent exhortations! Even in their ashes live their blessed fires—kindle your souls in their warmth. Their noble examples are the endowments of this church! Her children are ennobled and enriched as they remember their walk of faith and labor of love. Beloved, may we every one of us be true benedictions to the churches in whose gardens we are planted. “Oh,” says one, “I am afraid I am not much like a tree, for I feel so weak and insignificant.” If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed you have the commencement of the tree beneath whose branches the birds of the air will yet find lodging. The very birds that would have eaten the tiny seed come and find lodgment in the tree which grows out of it! And people who despise and mock you, now that you are a young beginner, will one of these days, if God blesses you, be glad to borrow comfort from your example and experience!

But one other thought on this point. Remember *the completeness and development of the holy life will be seen above*. There is a city of which it is written, “In the midst of the street thereof, and on every side of the river was there the tree of life.” The tree of life is a heavenly plant, and so the fruit of the Christian is a thing of heaven! Though not transplanted to the glory land, it is getting fit for its final abode. What is holiness but heaven on earth? What is living unto God but the essence of heaven? What are uprightness, integrity, Christ-likeness? Have not these even more to do with heaven than harps and palms, and streets of purest

gold? Holiness, purity, loveliness of character—these make a heaven within a man's own bosom! And even if there were no place called heaven, that heart would have a heavenly happiness which is set free from sin and made like the Lord Jesus! See, then, dear brothers and sisters, what an important thing it is for us to be indeed righteous before God, for then the outcome of that righteousness shall be fruit which will be a tree of life to others, and a tree of life in heaven above, world without end. O blessed Spirit, make it so. And YOU shall have all the praise!

**II.** This brings us to our second head. THE PURSUIT OF THE BELIEVER SHOULD BE SOUL-WINNING. For "he that wins souls is wise." The two things are put together—the life first, the effort next; what God has joined together let no man put asunder.

It is implied in our text that there are souls which *need* winning. Ah me, all souls of men are lost by nature. You might walk through the streets of London and say of the masses of men you meet upon those crowded pavements with sighs and tears—"Lost, lost, lost!" Wherever Christ is not trusted—the Spirit has not created a new heart, and the soul has not come to the great Father—there is a lost soul. But here is the mercy—these lost souls can be won! They are not hopelessly lost! Not yet has God determined that they shall forever abide as they are; it is not yet said, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still," but they are in the land of hope where God's mercy may reach them—for they are spoken of as capable of being won! They may yet be delivered, but the phrase hints that it will need all our *efforts*. "He that *wins* souls." What do we mean by that word *win*? We use it in *courtship*; we speak of the bridegroom who *wins* his bride, and sometimes there is a large expanse of love, many a pleading word, and much wooing before the valued heart is suitor's own. I use this explanation because in some respects it is the very best, for souls will have to be won for Christ in this fashion, that they may be married to Him. We must woo the sinner for Christ—that is how hearts are to be won for Him. Jesus is the bridegroom, and we must speak for Him, and tell of His beauty, as Abraham's servant, when he went to seek a wife for Isaac, acted as a wooer in his stead. Have you ever read the story? Then turn to it when you get home, and see how he talked about his master, what possessions he had, and how Isaac was to be head of it all, and so on. And then he finished his address by urging Rebecca to go with him. The question was put to her, "Will you go with this man?" So the minister's business is to commend his Master and his Master's riches, and then to say to souls, "Will you be wedded to Christ?" He who can succeed in this very delicate business is a wise man.

We also use the term in a *military* fashion. We speak of winning a city, a castle, or a battle. We do not win victories by going to sleep. Believe me, castles are not captured by men who are only half awake; to win a battle requires the best skills, the greatest endurance, and the utmost courage; to storm fortresses which are regarded as almost impregnable, men need to burn the midnight oil and study well the arts of attack. And when the time comes for the assault, not a soldier must be a laggard, but all force of artillery and manhood must be brought to bear on the point assailed. To carry a man's heart by main force of grace, to capture it, to break

down the bars of brass, and dash the gates of iron in pieces requires the exercise of a skill which only Christ can give. To bring up the big battering rams and shake every stone in the sinner's conscience; to make his heart rock and reel within him for fear of the wrath to come, in a word, to assail a soul with all the artillery of the gospel needs a wise man, and one awakened to his work! To hold up the white flag of God's mercy, and if that is despised, to use the battering ram of threats until a breach is made, and then with the Sword of the Spirit in his hand, to capture the city, to tear down the black flag of sin, and run up the banner of the cross needs all the force the choicest preacher can command and a great deal more! Those whose souls are as cold as the Arctic regions, and whose energy is reduced to the vanishing point are not likely to take the city of Mansoul for Prince Emanuel. If you think you are going to win souls, you must throw your soul into your work just as a warrior must throw his soul into a battle—or victory will not be yours.

We use the words "to win" in reference to *making a fortune*, and we all know that the man who becomes a millionaire has to rise up early, and sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness. We know it takes a deal of toiling and saving, and I know not what besides, to amass immense wealth. We have to go in for winning souls with the same ardor and concentration of our faculties as old Astor of New York went in to build up that fortune of so many millions which he has now left behind him. It is indeed *a race*, and you know that in a race nobody wins unless he strains every muscle and sinew. They that run in a race all run, but only *one* receives the prize—and that one is generally he who had more strength than the rest; certainly, whether he had more strength or not, he put out all he had, and we shall not win souls unless we imitate him in this.

Solomon declares in the text that, "He that wins souls is wise," and such a declaration is all the more valuable as coming from so wise a man. Let me show you why a true soul-winner is wise. First, *he must be taught of God before he will attempt it*. The man, who does not know that he was once blind but now he sees, had better think of his own blindness before he attempts to lead his friends in the right way. If not saved *yourself*, you cannot be the means of saving others! He that wins souls must be wise unto salvation first for himself. That being taken for granted, *he is a wise man to select such a pursuit*. Young man, are you choosing an objective worthy to be the great aim of your life? I do hope you will judge wisely, and select a noble ambition. If God has given you great gifts, I hope they will not be wasted on any low, sordid, or selfish design. Suppose I am now addressing one who has great talents, and has an opportunity of being what he likes—of going into Parliament, and helping to pass wise measures, or of going into business and making himself a man of importance? I hope he will weigh the claims of Jesus and immortal souls as well as other claims. Shall I addict myself to study? Shall I surrender myself to business? Shall I travel? Shall I spend my time in pleasure? Shall I become the principal fox hunter of the county? Shall I lay out my time in promoting political and social reforms? Think them all over, but if you are a Christian, my dear friend, nothing will equal in en-

joyment, in usefulness, in honor, and in lasting recompense the giving yourself up to the winning of souls! Oh, it is grand hunting, I can tell you, and beats all the fox hunting in the world in excitement and exhilaration! Have I not sometimes gone with a cry over hedge and ditch after some poor sinner, and kept well up with him in every twist and turn he took till I have overtaken him, by God's grace, and been in at the death, and rejoiced exceedingly when I have seen him captured by my Master? Our Lord Jesus calls His ministers fishermen, and no other fishermen have such labor, such sorrow, and such delight as we have! What a happy thing it is that you may win souls for Jesus, and may do this though you abide in your secular callings. Some of you would never win souls in pulpits—it would be a great pity if you tried—but you can win souls in the workshop, in the laundry, in the nursery, and in the drawing room! Our hunting grounds are everywhere—by the wayside, by the fireside, in the corner, and in the crowd. Among the common people Jesus is our theme, and among the great ones we have no other. You will be wise, my brothers, if for you the one absorbing desire is that you may turn the ungodly from the error of their ways. For you there will be a crown glittering with many stars which you shall cast at Jesus' feet in the day of His appearing!

Further, it is not only wise to make this your aim, *but you will have to be very wise if you succeed in it*, because the souls to be won are so different in their constitutions, feelings, and conditions, and you will have to adapt yourselves to them all! The trappers of North America have to find out the habits of the animals they wish to catch—and so you will have to learn how to deal with each class of sinners. Some are very depressed; you will have to comfort them. Perhaps you will comfort them too much, and make them unbelieving; and, therefore, possibly instead of *comforting* them you will need sometimes to administer a sharp word to cure the sulkiness into which they have fallen. Another person may be frivolous. If you put on a serious face you will frighten your bird away—you will have to be cheerful, and drop a word of admonition as if by accident. Some people again will not let *you* speak to them, but will talk to you! You must know the art of putting a word in edgeways! You will have to be very wise, and become all things to all men, but your success will prove your wisdom. Theories of dealing with souls may look very wise, but they often prove to be useless when actually tried. He who by God's grace accomplishes the work is a wise man, though perhaps he knows no theory whatever. This work will need all your wit, and far more and you will have to cry to the great Winner of Souls above to give you of His Holy Spirit.

But, mark you; he that wins souls is wise because *he is engaged in a business which makes men wiser as they proceed with it*. You will bungle at first and very likely drive sinners off from Christ by your attempts to draw them to Him. I have tried to move some souls with all my might with a certain passage of Scripture, but they have taken it in an opposite light to what it was intended, and have started off in the wrong direction. It is very difficult to know how to act with bewildered inquirers; if you want some people to go forward you must pull them backwards; if you

want them to go to the right you must insist upon their going to the left, but by God's grace they go to the right directly. You must be ready for these follies of poor human nature. I know a poor aged Christian woman who had been a child of God 50 years, but she was in a state of melancholy and distress from which nobody could awaken her. I called several times, and endeavored to cheer her up, but generally when I left she was worse than before. So one time I called to see her I did not say anything to her about Christ or religion. She soon introduced those topics herself, and then I remarked that I was not going to talk to her about such holy things, for she did not know anything about them. I told her she was not a believer in Christ, and had been no doubt a hypocrite for many years. She could not stand that, and asserted, in self-defense, that the Lord above knew her better than I did, and *He* was her witness that she did love the Lord Jesus Christ. She scarcely forgave herself afterwards for that admission, but she could never talk to me quite so despairingly anymore! True lovers of men's souls learn the art of dealing with them, and the Holy Spirit makes them expert soul surgeons for Jesus. It is not because a man has more abilities, nor altogether because he has more grace, but the *Lord* makes him to love the souls of men intensely, and this imparts a secret skill, since for the most part, the way to get sinners to Christ is to *love them to Christ*.

Beloved brothers, I will say once more, *he who really wins souls for Jesus; however he wins them, is a wise man*. Some of you are slow to admit this. You say—"Well, so-and-so, I dare say, has been very useful, but he is very rough." What does his roughness matter if he wins souls? "Ah," says another, "but I am not built up under him." Why do you go to hear him? To be built up? If the Lord has sent him to pull down, let him pull down! And you go elsewhere for edification, but do not grumble at a man who does one work because he cannot do another! We are also too apt to pit one minister against another, and say you should hear my minister. Perhaps we should, but it would be better for *you* to hear the man who edifies you, and let others go where they also are instructed. "He that wins souls is wise." I do not ask you how he did it. He sang the gospel, and you did not like it, but if he won souls he was wise! Soul-winners all have their own ways, and if they do but win souls they are wise. I will tell you what is *not* wise and will not be thought so at the last, namely to go about the churches doing nothing yourself and railing at all the Lord's useful servants! Here is a dear brother on his dying bed; he has the sweet thought that the Lord enabled him to bring many souls to Jesus, and the expectation when he comes to the gates that many spirits will come to meet him. They will throng the ascent to the New Jerusalem, and welcome the man who brought them to Jesus! They are immortal monuments to his labors; he is wise. Here is another who has spent all his time in interpreting the prophecies, so that everything he read of in the newspapers he could see in Daniel or Revelation. He is wise, so some say, but I had rather spend my time in winning souls! I would sooner bring one sinner to Jesus Christ than unpick all the mysteries of the divine word, for salvation is the thing we are to live for! I would to God that I understood all mysteries, yet chief of all would I proclaim the mystery of

soul-saving by faith in the blood of the Lamb! It is comparatively a small matter for a minister to have been a staunch upholder of orthodoxy all his days, and to have spent himself in keeping up the hedges of his church. Soul-winning is the main concern! It is a very good thing to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, but I do not think I should like to say in my last account, "Lord, I have lived to fight the Romanists and the State church, and to put down the various erroneous sects, but I never led a sinner to the cross." No, we will fight the good fight of faith, but the winning of souls is the greater matter—he who attends to it is wise! Another brother has preached the truth of God, but he did so polish up his sermons that the gospel was hidden. Never a sermon was fit to preach, he thought, until he had written it out a dozen times to see whether every sentence would be according to the canons of Cicero and Quintilian—and then he went and delivered the gospel as a grand oration. Is that wise? Well, it takes a wise man to be a thorough orator, but it is better not to be an orator if fine speech prevents your being understood! Let eloquence be flung to the dogs rather than souls lost! What we need is to win souls, and they are not to be won by flowery speeches! We must have the winning of souls at heart, and be red hot with zeal for their salvation—then, however much we blunder, according to the critics; we shall be numbered among those whom the *Lord* calls wise!

Now, Christian men and women, I want you to take this matter up practically, and to determine that you will try this very night to win a soul! Try the one next to you in the pew if you cannot think of anybody else. Try on the way home; try with your own children. Have I not told you of what happened one Sunday six months ago? In my sermon I said, "Now, you mothers, have you ever prayed with each of your children, one by one, and urged them to lay hold on Christ? Perhaps dear Jane is now in bed, and you have never yet pleaded with her about eternal things. Go home tonight, wake her up and say, "Jane, I am sorry I have never personally told you about the Savior, and prayed with you, but I mean to do it now. Wake her up and put your arms round her neck, and pour out your heart to God with her!" Well, there was a good sister here who had a daughter named Jane. What do you think? She came on Monday to bring her daughter Jane to see me in the vestry, for when she woke her up and began, "I have not spoken to you about Jesus," or something to that effect, "Oh, dear mother," said Jane, "I have loved the Savior these six months and wondered why you had not spoken to me about Him." And then there was such kissing and rejoicing! Perhaps you may find that to be the case with a dear child at home, but if you do not, so much the more reason why you should begin at once to speak! Did you never win a soul for Jesus? You shall have a crown in heaven, but no jewels it! You will go to heaven childless! And you know how it was in the old times, how the women dreaded lest they should be childless! Let it be so with Christian people! Let them dread being spiritually childless! We *must* hear the cries of those whom God has given to be born unto Himself by our means! We *must* hear them, or else cry out in anguish, "Give me converts or I die!" Young men, old men, and sisters of all ages, if you love the

Lord get a passion for souls! Do you not see them? They are going down to hell by the thousands! As often as the hand upon the dial completes its circuit, hell devours multitudes! Some of them are ignorant of Christ, and others willfully reject Him! The world lies in darkness—this great city still pines for the light of God! Your own friends and kinsfolk may be dead before this week is over! Oh, if you have any humanity, let alone Christianity; if you have found the remedy, *tell* the diseased about it! If you have found life, proclaim it to the dead! If you have found liberty, publish it to the captives! If you have found Christ, tell of Him to others! My brothers in the college, let this be your choice work while studying, and let it be the one objective of your lives when you go forth from us. Do not be content when you get a congregation, but labor to *win souls* and as you do this God will bless you. As for us, we hope during the rest of our lives to follow Him who is *The* soul-winner, and to put ourselves in His hands who makes *us* soul-winners, so that our life may not be a long folly, but may be proven by results to have been directed by His wisdom!

O you souls not won to Jesus, remember that faith in Christ saves you! Trust in Him! May you be led to trust in Him for His name's sake. Amen.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 10.**

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# THE UNKNOWN WAYS OF LOVE

## NO. 1293

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 14, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do you  
know not now; but you shall know hereafter.”  
John 13:7.*

THESE words of our Lord were spoken in answer to Peter's exclamation of surprise, "Lord, do You wash *my* feet?" It was a very natural expression of astonishment, and one which deserved no censure, but at the same time it was not a very wise remark, for although it was a marvelously condescending act for the Lord Jesus to wash His disciples' feet, He had already performed a greater condescension by coming upon the earth at all in the form of a *man*. For the Son of the Highest to dwell among mortals in a human body, capable of being girt about with a towel, and able to take a basin and pour water into it, is a far greater marvel than that He should, being a man, leave the supper table and act as a menial *servant* by washing His disciples' feet! Had Peter understood what his Master had prophesied and explained to him, namely, the Lord's approaching sufferings and death, he would have seen that for his Master to take a towel and basin was little compared with His having our iniquities laid upon Him, and being made a sacrifice for sin! It surprises you much to see the Lord of glory wear a towel—does it not amaze you still more to see Him clad in the purple robe of mockery? Are you not still more astonished to see His clothes stripped from Him, and to hear Him cry upon the cross, "I can see all My bones: they look and stare upon Me"? It is amazing that He should take the basin in the upper room, but surely it was more extraordinary that He should take the cup in the garden, and drink in its full bitterness till He sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground! To wash the disciples' feet with water was certainly a surprising action, but to pour out His heart's blood to wash *us all* was by far the greater, for this involved His death, His making His grave with the wicked, and His being numbered with the transgressors! The expression of Peter is thus seen to be very natural, but not very profound. Dear brothers and sisters, do you not think it very likely that our pretty pious speeches, which strike us as very proper, and seem to our friends to be very commendable, will one of these days appear to be mere baby prattling, and do even now appear so to the Lord Jesus? Those choice sayings and holy sentences which we have read with admiration, and greatly valued; even those are not like the words of Jesus for solid intrinsic weight and worth, but may in other lights appear far less beautiful than they do now. I have myself proved in different humors and frames of mind that the very things which struck me as being so very deep and gracious have at other times appeared to be one-sided, shallow,

or questionable. We *know* in part, and *prophecy* in part; our highest attainments here are those of little children, and even for the close student, the deeply experienced Christian, the venerable man of years and the graciously anointed instructor of the churches, there is no room for boasting.

Note next, that our Savior answered Peter's speech in the words of the text which are as admirable for their tone as for their matter. Which should we admire the more in this reply, its meekness or its majesty? To Peter's ignorant simplicity how gentle He is! "What I do you know not now; but you shall know hereafter." And yet how royally He confronts Peter's objection, and how distinctly His majestic Personality puts down the too conspicuous individuality of Peter! "What I do *you* know not now." How perfect the blending of the majesty and the meekness! Who shall tell which of the colors is better laid on? This is *always* the way of our Lord Jesus! You shall find, through life, beloved, that whenever Jesus Christ comes to rebuke you, He will do so powerfully but gently; He will speak as a friend, and as a king. You will feel both His love and His authority, and acknowledge the power of both His goodness and His greatness. His smile shall not make you presume, nor shall His royal glance cause you to tremble. You will find His left hand supporting you while in His right you see His imperial scepter. Blessed Savior, are You more meek or more majestic? We cannot tell, but certainly to our hearts You are both kind and kingly, sweet and sovereign, gracious and glorious!

**I.** Let us now come to the words themselves. We have looked at the occasion of them, and at the manner of them, and we will now weigh their matter. The words themselves have suggested to me many thoughts, and among them, first, that IN OUR LORD'S DOINGS THERE IS MUCH WHICH WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND. Our text is not merely true about the washing of the feet, but it is true concerning all that our Lord does—"What I do you know not now." We may know the *external* part of what He does, or think we do, but there is more in His actions than any of us can conceive. The external is not all; there are wrapped up within the mercies which we perceive other and yet greater mercies as yet unknown to us. You traverse the soil of Canaan, drink of its rivers, and are refreshed by its corn and wine and oil, but the goodly land has hidden riches, its stones are iron, and out of its hills you may dig brass. The brooks of which you drink derive their coolest waters from springs which have tapped "the deep which lies under." If you know in some measure what Jesus does, the whole mystery is not altogether laid bare to your eyes; there are folds of His manifold grace which as yet are unopened. The work of Jesus is beyond you—it is lower than your fall, higher than your desire; it surpasses you and is altogether too high for you! You simply cannot attain to its measurement. Who can by searching find it out unto perfection?

Our lack of knowledge of the divine doings is a wide subject, and I shall not attempt to explore its boundaries, but shall restrain myself by the text. Brothers and sisters, there are many things that God does which we cannot understand now, and probably never shall. For in-

stance, why did He permit evil, at first, and still tolerates it? To this inquiry the divine answer would be "What I do you know not." Leave that alone! It is our highest wisdom to be ignorant where God has not enlightened us; it is great folly to pretend to know when we do not; there lives not a man, nor ever *will* live a man, who has even an approximation to an understanding of the dread mystery of the existence of moral evil! The bottom of this abyss no mind can reach! He is foolhardy who ventures on the plunge. Leave this dread secret alone, you cannot endure the white heat which burns around it. Many a man has lost the eyes of his reason while trying to peer into this fiery furnace; what have you to do with that which God conceals from you? It is God's business, not yours! The thing was done before you were born, and He who permitted it can answer for Himself if He cares to do so. And, with regard to predestination—that God ordains all things, and has before His eyes the chart of everything that has been, is, or shall be is most true! But who knows the depths of foreknowledge and destiny? To sit down and pluck the eternal purposes to pieces, to question their justice and impugn their wisdom is both folly and audacity! Here the darkness thickens, and out of it comes forth the proclamation—"What I do you know not." The things which are revealed belong to us and to our children—but as to the unrevealed, if it is to the glory of God to conceal a thing, let it be concealed! Jesus has torn the veil of the holy place, and into the secret of divine love you may now freely enter, but other veils which He tears not, you may not touch. Some truths of God are closed up from our understanding even as the ark of the covenant was shut against prying eyes. Let us not violate their sanctity lest we meet the doom of the men of Bethshemesh, but let us zealously guard them as priceless treasures that we may obtain the blessing which rested upon the house of Obededom. The same remark applies to the great designs of God in providence. He is pleased in prophecy to tell us what He has meant by His providence and perhaps it will be one of the enjoyments of the future state to see the hand of God in the whole current of history, but while incidents are occurring we must not expect to understand their drift and bearing. The wonderful tapestry of human history, all woven in the loom of God's infinite wisdom, will astonish both men and angels when it is complete; but while it is yet unfinished it will not be possible for us to imagine the completed pattern. From between those wheels of providence, which are full of eyes, I hear a voice which says, "What I do you know not now."

So we will confine ourselves to the loving acts of the Lord Jesus Christ, since what the Lord was doing with Peter was not very mysterious, nor a deed of transcendent power, nor of stern justice. He was humbly girding Himself with a towel and pouring water into a basin to wash his followers' feet. It was a very simple matter, and evidently a very gracious, kind, and condescending act; but yet, even concerning that, Jesus said, "What I do you know not now."

My brothers and sisters, even the acts of our Lord Jesus Christ in His loving condescension we do not fully understand. Ah, think a minute—how can we? Does not our Lord's love always surpass our knowledge,

since He Himself is the greatest of all mysteries? Let me read these words to you—"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He arose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself." Do you understand the higher and the lower points of this transaction? You must comprehend them *both* before you can see what He has done! "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands." Can you see the glory of this? Jesus our Lord was conscious that His Father had made Him Head over all things to His church, and that He had laid the government upon His shoulders, and given Him the key of David that He might open, and no man shut, and shut, and no man open. He knew assuredly that at His belt swung the keys of heaven and death and hell, and that having fulfilled the commission of the Eternal God He was about to return to His throne. Have you grasped the idea? Do you perceive the glory of which Jesus was conscious? If you have done so, then descend by one long sweep—He, this Lord of all, having all things in His hands, takes off His garments, foregoes the common dress of an ordinary man, and places Himself in the undress of a servant, and He wears a towel that He may wait upon His own disciples! Can you follow Him from such a height to such a depth? A superior in the East never washes an inferior's feet—Christ acts as if He were *inferior* to His friends! He acts as if He were inferior to those poor *fishermen*; those foolish scholars who learned so slowly, and with whom He had spent so much time, and yet they did not know Him—those 12 men who soon forgot what they knew, and needed Him to explain again and again, line upon line, and precept upon precept! Having loved them to the end, He stoops to the extreme of stooping, and bows at their feet to cleanse their defilement! Who, I say, can compute the depth of *this* descent? You cannot know what Christ has done for you because you cannot conceive how high He is by Nature; neither can you guess how low He stooped in His humiliation and death. With an eagle's wing you could not soar so high as to behold Him as God over all, blessed forever, sitting at the right hand of the Father, the adored of cherubim and seraphim! Nor could you dive, even if you dared to take a plunge into the abyss, until you reached the depth of, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!" And yet you must *somehow* know the interval, I was about to say the infinity, between these two points of height and depth before you can know what Jesus has done for you.

Moreover, think awhile. Was anything that Jesus did understood while He was doing it? He is born a baby in Bethlehem, but who knew what He did in the manger? A few shepherds, and two or three favored saints discerned the Savior in the baby, but to the mass of mankind He was unknown. God came on earth, and angels sung His advent, but O earth, your Lord might have said to you, "What I do you know not now." He lived here the life of a carpenter's son—that life was the most august event in all human history, but men knew not what it was or what it meant. "The world knew Him not." He came forward to preach the gospel—did they know who it was that spoke as never man spoke? Did they

comprehend what He spoke? Ah, no, for He was hid from their eyes! At last He laid aside the life He had so strangely taken—who knew the reason of His death upon the cross? Did even His disciples know, though He had told them? When the earth shook, and graves were opened by His last cry, did even His own followers understand what a sacrifice had been offered? No, and until the Spirit was poured upon them from on high they did not comprehend that it behooved Christ to suffer. He could say to each of His own disciples, of all that He had done, “What I do you know not now.”

This is true too of every separate gift which our Lord’s love has given to His people. You have been justified in Jesus Christ, but do you fully know the wondrous righteousness with which justification by faith has endowed you? You are accepted in the beloved, but did any one of you ever realize what it is to have full acceptance with the Father? I know you have realized the fact, and rejoiced in it, but have you *known*, yes, *can* you know the full sweetness of its meaning? You are one with Christ, and members of His body; do you comprehend that? You are joint heirs with Christ! Do you know the full significance of that? He is betrothed to you in an everlasting marriage! Do you know what that means? Ah no, these wonders of His love, we hear of them, and we believe them, but, “What I do,” He said, “You know not now.”

Our Lord is doing great things by way of preparing us for a higher state of existence! We shall soon be rid of this vile body, and be released from this narrow world; we are going to a sphere more suited for our heaven-born life where we shall be the comrades of angels, and commune with the spirits of the just made perfect—and serve the Lord day and night in His temple. But what glory shall be, we do not know, for the ear has not heard it, nor the eye beheld it, nor the heart conceived it. As for the preparations which are going on within us to make us ready for this sublime condition, we know that they are being carried on, but we cannot as yet see their course, their separate tendencies, and their ultimate issues. The instrument does not comprehend the tuner! The tuner fetches harsh sounds from those disordered strings, but all those jarring notes are necessary to the harmonious condition which He is aiming to produce; if the discords were not discovered, the music of the future would be marred. My brothers and sisters, concerning *all* that Christ has done it is true, “What I do you know not now.” Oh, if His work were little we could measure it! If His love were scanty we could know it! If His wisdom were finite we could judge it! But where everything is past finding out, who can pretend to know? Remember, that in our salvation Christ Himself is the sum and substance. In it every attribute of His divinity is brought into exercise to the fullest, He makes it His glory, counting our salvation to be His coronet and crown jewels; and therefore it is not at all marvelous that we should not know what He does.

**II.** Our second thought is a sweet one. OUR LACK OF UNDERSTANDING DOES NOT PREVENT THE EFFICACY OF OUR LORD’S WORK. “What I do you know not now.” Peter does not know what Christ is doing when He washes his feet, but the Master washes them just as clean

whether Peter understands it or not. Jesus did not say, "There, Peter, you do not understand what I am doing by washing your feet, and so I shall not wash them until you do." No, no; He moves on with the basin and towel, and washes them clean, though Peter does not know why. Is not this a great mercy, brothers and sisters, that the blessings which Christ bestows upon us are not dependent for their efficacy upon our capacity to understand them? Just look out a little in the world and see how true this is. A mother has her little child on her lap, and she is washing its face; the child does not like the water, and it cries. Ah, Baby, if you could understand it you would smile! The child cries and struggles in the mother's arms, but it is washed all the same—the mother waits not for the child to know what she is doing, but completes her work of love. So is the Lord often exercising divine acts upon us, and we do not appreciate them, neither are we pleased; perhaps we even strive against His work of love, but for all that, He perseveres and turns not away His hand because of our crying. Does the tree understand pruning? Does the land comprehend plowing? Yet pruning and plowing produce their good results! The physician stands at the bedside of the patient and gives him medicine, medicine which is unpalatable, and which in its operation causes the patient to feel worse than he was before. The sufferer cannot understand this, and therefore he draws unhappy conclusions. But the power of the medicine does not depend upon the patient's understanding its qualities, and therefore it will do him good, though it puzzles him by its strange manner of working. If a fool eats his dinner, it will satisfy his hunger as much as if he were a philosopher and understood the processes of digestion! This is a great mercy of God, for the most of men can never become philosophers! It is not necessary for a man to be learned in the nature of combustion in order to be warmed by the fire. A man may be ignorant of the laws of light, and yet be able to see. He may know nothing of acoustics, and yet be quick of hearing. A passenger, who does not know a valve from a wheel, enters a carriage at the station, and he will be drawn to his journey's end by the engine as well as if he were learned in mechanics. It is the same in the spiritual as in the natural world. The efficacy of spiritual forces does not depend upon our capacity to understand them. I have mentioned this very simple fact because it really is necessary for us to remember it. We know so much, or think we do; we think it so essential that we should form a judgment of what the Lord is doing.

Ah, dear brothers and sisters, there are more essential things than this! It is better to trust, to submit, to obey, to love, than to know. Let the Lord alone; He is doing rightly enough, be sure of that. Is He to be questioned and questioned again by *us*? Are *we* to judge His judgment? Dare we demand answers to our impertinent inquiries, and say, why this and why that, and why the other? Were He a God if He would submit to such examination? If we call ourselves His disciples, how can we justify a spirit which would arraign our Lord? Be still and know that He is God! What more would you know? Remember that the things which you understand are for your good, but they can only bring you a small amount of benefit

because they must be in themselves small, or you would not be able to measure them. When a great, deep good is coming to you, you will not be able to comprehend it, for your comprehension is narrow: yet it will be none the less but all the more a blessing because you know it not! Joseph is gone, and here is his bloody coat. "Without doubt he is torn in pieces! All these things are against me! Ah, how my heart is broken with the loss of my darling child; I cannot understand it; it cannot be right." So talks poor Jacob, but it *was* right, all the same for that! Joseph was on the sure road to Pharaoh's throne, and to providing for his brethren in the land of Egypt. So it is with you, my brothers and sisters, under your present trial and affliction; you cannot understand it now, but that does not make a pennyworth of difference! It is working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! Be content to let faith rule, and knowledge wait, and what you know not now you shall know hereafter.

**III.** A third thought is that OUR NOT BEING ABLE TO KNOW WHAT THE LORD DOES SHOULD NEVER SHAKE OUR CONFIDENCE IN HIM. I hope, dear brothers and sisters, our faith in Christ does not rest upon our capacity to *understand* what He does! If so, I fear it is not faith at all, but a mere exercise of self-conceited carnal reason. Some things which the Lord has done bear upon their very forefront the impression of His infinite love, but I hope you know enough of Him now to be able to believe that where there are no traces of His love apparent to you, His love is as surely there. I rejoice in that part of my text which runs thus, "What I do." This washing of the feet was not being done by Bartholomew, or Nathanael—it was the personal act of the Lord Himself. Now, when the Master and Lord is doing it, who needs to raise a question or to suggest an inquiry? It must be right if He does it—to question His conduct would be an insult to His majestic love. Do you know Christ? Then you know the character of His deeds. Do you know your Lord? Then you are sure that He will never act unkindly, unbecomingly, or unwisely. He can never send a needless sorrow, or wantonly cause a tear to flow. Can He? Here, then, is the question, not—why is it done?—but, who is doing it? And if the Lord is doing it, we can have no doubt about the excellence of His design! We believe that He is right when we cannot see that He is right. If we do not trust Him far beyond what we know, it will show that our confidence in Him is very limited. When a person only obeys another because he chooses to obey, and sees it a proper thing to do, he has not the spirit of implicit obedience at all; and when a person only confides in another as far as he can see that he is safe, he is a stranger to implicit confidence. Confidence has its sphere beyond the boundaries of knowledge; where judgment ceases, faith begins. "What I do you know not now." Ah, most beloved of our souls, You spoke the truth in that, but we can reply to You that we know and are sure that what You do is supremely good!

**IV.** Fourthly, OUR LACK OF UNDERSTANDING AS TO WHAT OUR LORD DOES GENERALLY SHOWS ITSELF MOST IN DEFERENCE TO HIS PERSONAL DEALINGS WITH OURSELVES. "What I do you know not now" refers to His washing Peter's feet. Brothers and sisters, if there is anything which we are not likely to understand thoroughly well it is that

which has to do with *ourselves*. We are too close home to see clearly. In this case the looker-on sees more than the player. We generally form a better opinion of the character, position, and needs of another than we do concerning ourselves. It is said of Moses' face that everyone saw it shine but one man—and that was Moses—for he could not see his own countenance. So also if a man's face is black, it is black to everybody but himself—he does not see his own spots. We cannot form accurate estimates of ourselves, and so we must not expect when Christ is personally dealing with us, that we should be able to understand what He does to us. Besides, if the Lord is dealing with us in an afflicting way, we are generally in an unfavorable state of mind for forming any judgment at all, being, as a rule, too disturbed in mind by the affliction itself. When a hospital patient is under the knife, he is a poor judge of the necessity of the operation or the skill of the surgeon. Later, when the wound has healed, he will judge better than he can do when the knife is just cutting through nerve, and sinew, and bone. Judge nothing before the time! You are not in a condition to judge, and therefore do not attempt it. When you are smarting under the rod, your opinions, estimates, and forecasts are about as much to be depended upon as the whistling of the wind or the dashing of the waves. Cease from judging, calculating, and foreboding—believe that He who ordains our lot orders all things in kindness and wisdom!

I do not wonder that Peter was puzzled and could not understand his Lord's procedure, for it is always a hard thing for an active and energetic mind to see the wisdom of being compelled to do nothing! Here is a man who can drag a net to the shore full of big fishes, and instead of using his strength, he is made to sit still and do nothing! Peter, the hardy, vigorous worker, must sit down like a gentleman, or a cripple, and do nothing! He does not understand; he has been very useful, and he thinks he could be useful now. He could at any rate wait at the table, or carry the basin, or wash his fellows' feet if it must be done. But he is bound to sit still and do nothing, and he does not understand it. Brothers and sisters, the hardest work a man has to do who wants to serve the Lord Jesus is to stand aside in forced inactivity, and take no share in what is going on! It is hard to be put on the shelf among the cracked crockery, and to be of no more use than a broken vessel while yet you feel you could be useful if you had but strength to leave your chamber. The proud idea that you have been wonderfully useful tempts you to repine at being laid among the lumber, and you feel it to be a very mysterious business altogether.

Then, what is worse, not only can Peter not do anything, he is a *receiver* from others, and must be waited on by them, and chiefly by his Master, whom he at other times loved to serve! To have his feet washed must have appeared to a hardy fisherman like Peter, a strange luxury. He would say, "Cannot I do it myself? I am not used to be waited on." To sit there, and, while doing nothing, to be also engrossing the care of another, must have been an unusual position to him. It is very unpleasant for an active man to be unable to work and to be dependent upon others for every little detail and necessity of life. To borrow other people's

strength, and tax other people's care, is not desirable. To stand in need of anxious prayers, and to awake pitying thoughts, seems strange to those who have been accustomed to *do* rather than to suffer. "Why," you seem to say, "I have prayed for *them!* I have worked for them! Are they now to pray and work for me? I have fed the sheep; are the sheep going to feed me? I have washed the saints' feet; are they going to wash mine? Am I to be dependent upon others, and not be able to lend a hand or lift a finger"? Ah, well, we must not ask questions, but we are very apt to do so. We do not know, and we become inquisitive, but the Savior says, "What I do you know not now."

All the while there is very prominent in our minds a sense of insignificance and unworthiness which makes our receipt of favors the more perplexing. "What?" asks Peter, "I, unworthy Peter, shall I be washed by the Lord Jesus Christ"? So it seems to us unworthy sinners, "Why should God's people be thinking about *me*, and careful about *me*? Why has the Lord Himself deigned to make my bed in my sickness? Why has His blessed Spirit condescended to be *my* comforter, applying precious promises to me? Why all this to *me*?" We do not comprehend it; we are lost in wonder, and it is no marvel that we are.

Yet, dear brothers and sisters, if our eyes are opened, the Lord's afflicting dealings are not so wonderfully mysterious after all, for we need purging and cleansing even as Peter needed his feet washed. We greatly need the sacred purging of Jesus' love for the removal of daily defilement. Sometimes trials in business, sad bereavements, acts of ingratitude, pains of sickness, or depressions of spirit are just the basin and the water and the towel in which our Lord is washing our feet. We are clean through the blood of Jesus, but the daily cleansing we still need! It is a wonder that some of us are ever out of the furnace, for our dross is so abundant. I shall not be surprised if I find myself often under the flail, for the straw and the chaff are plentiful in me. Some metals are so apt to rust that it is no wonder that they are often burnished; some soils need a deal of plowing—they are very apt to cake and grow hard, and therefore must be broken up. So it is with us, there is a need for what the Lord is doing.

In Peter's case there was a need of fellowship, for our Lord said, "If I wash you not you have no part with Me." You cannot have fellowship with Christ unless He does this or that for you. No, especially unless He tries you, for how shall you know the suffering Savior unless you suffer yourself? Communion with the afflicted Redeemer is promoted by our personal afflictions. There was a need yet again for Peter and the rest to learn the lesson of washing their brothers' feet by seeing the Lord wash theirs. No man can rightly wash another's feet till his own feet have been washed by his Savior. It is in the kingdom of Christ a law that there must be *experience* before there can be expertness. You must be comforted or you cannot comfort; you must find His mercy yourself or you cannot lead others in the search; you must be washed or you cannot wash. Thus there were good reasons for our Lord's act, but they were not seen by Peter, nor do the motives for our Lord's dispensations towards us always

appear upon the surface. When Jesus Himself is dealing with us, especially if it is in a way of *trial*, we do not understand it and He has need to say, "What I do you know not now."

**V.** Our last thought for the present is—UPON THIS POINT AND UPON MANY OTHERS WE SHALL ONE DAY BE INFORMED. "What I do you know not now, *but you shall know hereafter.*" That "hereafter" may be very soon. Peter knew within a few minutes what Jesus meant, for He said to him, "Know you what I have done unto you? If I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet." Thus the light was not long in breaking. Why are you in such a hurry when you are in trouble to begin spelling out an *evil* reason for God's dealings, when, if you will but wait you shall know the right reason in a short time? A child is in an ill temper because there has been a rule made by the father and not explained, and so it sits down and sulks, and thinks of some unkind, ungenerous motive on the father's part. In a minute or two after it understands it all, and has to eat its own words, it confesses, "How bad of me to impute such unkindness to my dear loving father who is always seeking my good." If you will get reasoning in haste about your Lord's dispensations, you will have to take all your reasoning back, and you will have to afflict your soul for being so hasty; therefore wait awhile, for "you shall know hereafter," and that "hereafter" may be very near.

Peter understood his Master's washing his feet better after his sad fall and threefold denial. I should not wonder that when the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and he went out and wept bitterly, the penitent disciple said to himself, "Now I begin to see why my Lord washed my feet." When he perceived how badly he needed washing, he would prize the token which his Lord had given him. He saw his own frailties and imperfections as he had not seen them before, for he had said, "Though all men should be offended, yet will I never be offended," but after his sad denial he knew himself to be as apt to err as the rest of the brothers. At a certain point of your experience you will possibly discover the explanation of your present adversity. After the Lord had met with Peter at the sea and had said to him, "Feed My sheep," and "Feed My lambs," another method of explanation was open to him. When Peter began to be a pastor and to deal with the souls of others, he would clearly see why his Master washed his feet, for he would find that he had much to do of the same kind of service. Often does our work *for* Jesus unfold the work *of* Jesus, and we know our Lord by being called to follow in His footsteps.

Yonder in heaven, best of all, Peter understands why the Master washed his feet, and surely sometimes Peter must inwardly smile to think of what he once thought and said. Peter sings amid the heavenly throng, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood," and then he thinks to himself, "In my folly in the days of my flesh I said to Him, 'You shall never wash my feet.' I loved Him when I said it, but what monstrous folly lay in my speech!" Ah, he understands it now, and we shall understand as he does soon! All things will be clear when we once pass into the region of light. I anticipate the blessed confidences

of heaven! How blessed will be those familiar revelations of mysteries so long obscure! What sweet communications there will be between God and His people in the world to come! I look forward to the time when we shall see the knots untied, and the riddles all explained—then shall we see the good of apparent evil, and the life which lay in the bosom of death. Could we hear the stories of pilgrims who have reached home they would run like this—“I was traveling a pleasant road, blessing God for so delightful a pilgrimage, but suddenly a huge rock fell across my path, and I had with regret to turn back and traverse a more rugged road. I never understood why until I came home to heaven and now He tells me, ‘Child, there was a precipice but a little way in front, and you would have been dashed to pieces, and therefore I blocked up your way.’” Another who has reached the desired haven will tell us, “The vessel in which I sailed was wrecked; she struck upon a rock, and on a broken fragment of her timbers I swam to shore. I could never comprehend the reason for this calamity till now. Now I learn that the ship was being steered by evil hands to a shore where I would have been made a slave and kept in life-long captivity, and there was no way of deliverance but by dashing the boat to shivers, and landing her passengers where they would be free.”

Brothers and sisters, you will, probably, bless God in heaven more for your sorrows than your joys! When you once ascend the celestial hills you will see that the best blessings came to you in the roughest garments; your pearls were found in oyster shells, and your jewels were brought out of Egypt. Sickness, trial, adversity, bereavement, and pain have been more truly angels of God to you than your wealth, your health, your strength, your comfort—ininitely more so than your laughter and your ease! O brothers and sisters, we shall know hereafter. Well, as we shall know hereafter, we may leave the knowing till then, and give all our attention now to obeying and trusting!

I have done when I have added a warning to those out of Christ. There are some in this congregation who do not know my Lord. I have been much exercised in my mind about you while I have been confined to my chamber, and unable to address you, and my prayer has been that the Holy Spirit would bless to your conversion the messages of my brothers who have kindly occupied this pulpit. If you still remain unconverted, I would like to say to you that you do not know what God has been doing with you, and you do not know what He is doing with you now; but you will know hereafter. You have Sabbath days, but you do not know their value; you will value them differently by-and-by when you lie dying, and especially when you are called before the judgment seat of God! You have your Bible, and you neglect it; you do not know that God has sent a love letter to you in that form; you will know it when you stand before His awful bar! Some of you have been pleaded with very often, and earnestly entreated to lay hold on eternal life; and the Lord has backed up our entreaties by sending sickness to you and personal trouble. Well, you have not known much about it, and you have not *wished* to know, but you will *have* to know hereafter! If you die without Christ, you will wake up in eternity and cry, “Ah me, that ever the Lord should call me and I refuse;

that He should stretch out His hand and I should disregard.” In hell it will be an awful discovery, “I was the subject of gospel invitations, I was the object of earnest entreaties, but I continued in my sin, and here I am, eternally lost!”

What I earnestly desire should happen would be that you should this morning find out what the Lord has done for you, and should understand it, and should open your eyes and say, “Here am I, a man who has lived long in sin, and I have been spared on purpose that God might save me before I die.” Or perhaps it will take this form—“Here I am, a young man, and I came in here this morning with no precise motive, little knowing what God was about to do with me, but I know it now; He has brought me here that I may, this morning, believe in Jesus, and give my heart to Him!” O hearers of the gospel, if you once come to know what God has really done *with* you, and *for* you, you will hardly forgive yourselves for your conduct towards Him! You will say, “Did He really love me so, and redeem me with such a price, and have I been so unkind and thoughtless towards Him?” You will upbraid yourselves and chasten yourselves, and grieve to think you should have treated so good a friend so terribly! O may the divine Spirit this morning open your eyes to know what the Lord Jesus does for you, and His grace shall be magnified in you! Amen and amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 13:1-17.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—327, 689, 778.**

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# THE ANCHOR

## NO. 1294

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 21, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil; where the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.”***  
***Hebrews 6:17-20.***

FAITH is the divinely-appointed way of receiving the blessings of grace. “He that believes shall be saved,” is one of the main declarations of the gospel. The wonders of creation, the discoveries of revelation, and the movements of providence are all intended to create and foster the principle of faith in the living God. If God reveals anything it is that we should believe it; of all the books of Holy Scripture it may be said, “These are written that you might believe, and that believing you might have life.” Even if God conceals anything, it is that we may be able to confide in Him; since what we *know* yields but little space for trust compared with the *unknown*. Providence sends us many different trials; all meant to exercise and increase our faith, and at the same time in answer to prayer it brings us varied proofs of the divine faithfulness which serve as refreshments to our faith. Thus the works and the words of God cooperate to educate men in the grace of faith. You might imagine, however, from the doctrine of certain teachers that the gospel is “Whoever *doubts* shall be saved,” and that nothing could be more useful or honorable than for a man’s mind to hang in perpetual suspense, sure of nothing, confident of the truth of no one, not even of God Himself! The Bible raises a mausoleum to the memory of its heroes, and writes upon it as their epitaph “these all died in faith”; but the *modern* gospel derides faith, and sets up instead the new virtue of keeping abreast with the freshest thought of the age! That simple trust in the truthfulness of God’s word, which our fathers inculcated as the basis of all religion, would seem to be at a discount now with “men of mind” who are able to cope with “modern thought.” Shame upon professed ministers of Christ that some of these are worshipping at this shrine, and are laboring after the repute of being intellectual and philosophical by scattering doubts on all sides! The doctrine of the blessedness of *doubt* is as opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ as darkness is to light, or Satan to Christ Himself; it is invented as a quietus to the consciences of those proud men who refuse to yield their minds to the rule of God.

Have faith in God, for faith is in itself a virtue of the highest order, and no virtue is more truly excellent than the simple confidence in the eternal which a man is helped to exhibit by the grace of the Holy Spirit. No, not

only is faith a *virtue* in itself, but it is the mother of all virtues. He that believes becomes strong to labor, patient to suffer, fervent to love, earnest to obey, zealous to serve. Faith is a root from which may grow all that can adorn the human character; so far from being opposed to good works, it is the ever-flowing fountain from where they proceed. Take faith away from the professed Christian, and you have cut the sinew of his strength; like Samson you have shorn him of his locks, and left him with no power either to defend him or to conquer his foes. "The just shall live by faith"—FAITH is essential to the vitality of Christianity, and anything which weakens that faith weakens the very mainspring of spiritual power! Brothers and sisters, not only does our own experience teach us this, and the word of God declare it, but the whole of human history goes to show the same truth of God. Faith is force. Why, even when men have been mistaken, if they have believed the mistake they have displayed more power than men who have known the truth, but have not heartily believed it; for the force that a man has in dealing with his fellow men lies very much in the force of conviction which his beliefs have over his own soul. Teach a man the truth of God so that his whole heart believes in it, and you have given him both the fulcrum and the lever with which he may move the world!

To this very moment the whole earth is tremulous like a mass of jelly beneath the tread of Luther, and why? Because he was strong in faith! Luther was a believer in the word of God, and the schoolmen with whom he had to contend were mere disputers; the priests, and cardinals, and popes with whom Luther came into contact were mere traders in dead traditions, therefore he smote them hip and thigh, with great slaughter. His whole manhood believed in what he had learned of God—and as an iron rod among potters' vessels, so was he among the pretenders of his age! What has been true in history all along is most certainly true now; it is by believing that we become strong—that is clear enough. Whatever supposed excellences there may be in the much vaunted receptive condition of the mind, the equilibrium of a cultured intellect, and the unsettled judgment of "honest" disbelief, I am unable to discern them, and I see no reference to them in Scripture. Holy Writ neither offers commendations of unbelief nor presents motives nor reasons for its cultivation. Experience does not prove it to be strength in life's battle, or wisdom for life's labyrinth. It is near akin to credulity, and unlike true faith, it is prone to be led by the nose by any falsehood. Unbelief yields no consolation for the present, and its outlook for the future is by no means comforting. We discover no intimation of a sublime cloud-land, where men of self appreciating brain power will eternally puzzle themselves and others; we hear no prophecy of a celestial hall of science where skeptics may weave fresh sophistries, and forge new objections to the revelation of God. *There is a place for the unbelieving, but it is not heaven!*

Coming to our text, whose tone is far removed from all uncertainty, we see clearly that the Lord does not desire us to be in an unsettled condition, but would put an end to all uncertainty and questioning. As among men a fact is established when an honest man has sworn to it, so "God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath." Condescending to the

weakness of human faith, He Himself swears to what He declares, and thus gives us a gospel *doubly* certified by the promise and oath of the everlasting God! Surely angels must have wondered when God lifted His hand to heaven to swear to what He had promised, and must have concluded that from then on there would be an end of all strife because of the confirmation which the Lord thus gave to His covenant.

In working out our text, I must direct you to its most conspicuous metaphor. This world is like a sea—restless, unstable, dangerous, and never at one stay. Human affairs may be compared to waves driven with the wind and tossed. As for ourselves, we are the ships which go upon the sea, and are subject to its changes and motions; we are apt to be drifted by currents, driven by winds, and tossed with tempests. We have not yet come to the true *terra firma*, the rest which remains for the people of God. God would not have us carried about with every wind, and therefore He has been pleased to fashion for us an anchor of hope most sure and steadfast, so that we may outride the storm. I shall not attempt to preach from the whole of the great text before us, for it would require at least seven years, and a Dr. John Owen, or a Joseph Caryl to bring forth a tenth of its meaning! I am simply going to work out the one set of the truths of God suggested by the image of an anchor, and may God grant that all of us this morning who know the meaning of that anchor may feel it holding us fast by its grip within the veil! And may others who have never possessed that anchor before be enabled to cast it overboard this morning, for the first time, and feel throughout all the rest of their lives the strong consolation which such a holdfast is sure to bestow upon the believing heart!

**I.** First, let me call your attention to THE DESIGN OF THE ANCHOR of which our text speaks.

The design of an anchor, of course, is to hold a vessel firmly to one place when winds and currents would otherwise remove it. God has given us certain truths which are intended to hold our minds fast to truths of God, holiness, and His perseverance—in a word, to hold us to Him. But why hold the vessel? The first answer which would suggest itself would be *to keep it from being wrecked*. The ship may not need an anchor in calm waters, when upon a broad ocean a little drifting may not be a very serious matter, but there are conditions of weather in which an anchor becomes altogether essential. When a gale is rushing towards the shore, blowing great guns and the vessel cannot hold her course, and must surely be driven upon an iron-bound coast, and then an anchor is worth its weight in gold! If the good ship cannot be anchored there will be nothing left of her in a very short time except for here and there a spar; the gallant vessel will go to pieces, and every mariner drowned; now is the time to let down the anchor, the best bower anchor if you will, and let the good ship defy the wind. Our God does not intend His people to be shipwrecked—shipwrecked and lost forever; however, they would be if they were not held fast in the hour of temptation. Brothers and sisters, if every wind of doctrine whirled you about at its will, you would soon be drifted far away from the truth as it is in Jesus—and concerning it you would make shipwreck; but you cost your Lord too dear for Him to lose you; He bought you at too great a price, and sets too great a store by you for Him

to see you broken to pieces on the rocks; therefore He has provided for you a glorious holdfast, that when Satan's temptations, your own corruptions, and the trials of the world assail you, *hope* may be the anchor of your soul both sure and steadfast. How much we need it! For we see others fall into the error of the wicked, overcome by the deceivableness of unrighteousness, and left forever as castaways. "Having no hope and without God in the world." If you have done business on the great waters for any length of time, you must be well aware that were it not for everlasting truths of God which hold you fast, your soul had long since been hurried into everlasting darkness, and the proud waters had long before this have gone over your soul. When the mighty waves have lifted themselves up your poor boat has seemed to go down to the bottom of the mountains, and had it not been for His unchanging Love and immutable faithfulness, your heart had utterly fainted. Nevertheless here you are today convoyed by grace, provisioned by mercy, steered by heavenly Wisdom, and propelled by celestial power! Thanks to the anchor, or rather to the God who gave it to you, no storm has overwhelmed you; you are under way for the port of glory!

An anchor is also needed to keep a vessel from discomfort, for even if it is not wrecked, it would be a wretched thing to be driven here and there, to the north, and then to the south, as winds may shift. Unhappy is he who is the creature of external influences, flying along like thistle-down in the breeze, or a rolling thing before the whirlwind! We require an anchor to hold us so that we may abide in peace, and find rest unto our souls. Blessed be God there are solid and sure truths, infallibly certified to us which operate powerfully upon the mind so as to prevent its being harassed and dismayed. The text speaks of "strong consolation"; is not that a glorious word—we have not merely consolation which will hold us fast, and bear us up against the tempest in times of trouble, but *strong consolation*, so that when affliction bursts forth with unusual strength like a furious tornado, the strong consolation like a sheet anchor, may be more than a match for the strong temptation, and may enable us to triumph over all. Very restful is that man who is very believing—

***"Hallelujah! I believe!  
Now the giddy world stands fast,  
For my soul has found an anchor  
Till the night of storm is past."***

An anchor is also needed to *preserve us from losing the headway which we have made*. The vessel has been making good way towards port, but the wind changes and blows in her teeth; she will be borne to the port from which she started, or to an equally undesirable port unless she can resist the foul wind! Therefore she puts down her anchor. The captain says to himself, "I have got so far, and I am not going to be drifted back; down goes my anchor, and here I stop." Saints are sometimes tempted to return to the country from where they came—they are half inclined to renounce the things which they have learned, and to conclude that they never were taught of the Lord at all. Alas, old Adam and Satan endeavor to drive us back, and were it not for something sure to hold to, back we would go. If it could be proven to be as certain cultivated teachers would have us believe, that there is nothing very sure, although black is black, it is not very black, and though white is white, it is not very

white. If it could be proven that from certain standpoints there is no doubt black is *white*, and white is *black*; if it could be proven, I say, that there are no divine certainties, no infallible truths—then we might willingly surrender what we know or *think* we know, and wander about on the ocean of speculation—the waifs and strays of mere opinion! But while we have the truth of God taught to our very souls by the Holy Spirit, we cannot drift from it, nor will we though men count us fools for our steadfastness. Brothers and sisters aspire not to the charity which grows out of uncertainty; there are saving truths of God, and there are “damnable heresies.” Jesus Christ is not yes and no; His gospel is not a cunning mixture of the gall of hell, and the honey of heaven flavored to the taste of bad and good. There are fixed principles and revealed facts. Those who know anything experimentally about divine things have cast their anchor down, and as they hear the chain running out, they joyfully say, “This I know, and have believed; in this truth I stand fast and immovable; winds may blow and crack their cheeks, but they will never move me from this anchorage; whatever I have attained by the teaching of the Spirit, I will hold fast as long as I live.”

Moreover, the anchor is needed *that we may possess constancy and usefulness*. The man who is easily moved and believes this today and that tomorrow, is a fickle creature; who knows where to find him? Of what use is he to the younger sort and the feeble folk, or indeed to anyone? Like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed, what service can he render in the work of the Lord, and how can he influence others for good? He believes not! How can he make others believe? I believe that the orthodox *disbeliever* is more largely a creator of infidelity than the heterodox believer—in other words I fear that the man who earnestly believes an error has a less injurious influence upon others than the man who holds the truth of God in indifference, and secret unbelief; this man is tolerated in godly company, for he professes to be one of ourselves, and he is therefore able to stab at piety beneath her shield. The man knows nothing, certainly, but only hopes and trusts, and when defending truth, he allows that much may be said on the other side, so that he kisses and stabs at the same time.

Our God has provided us an anchor to hold us fast lest we be shipwrecked, lest we be unhappy, lest we lose the progress we have made, and lest our character should become unstable, and therefore useless. These purposes are kind and wise; let us bless the Lord who has so graciously cared for us.

**II.** Secondly, I invite you to consider THE MAKE OF THE ANCHOR—“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation.”

Anchor-making is very important work. The anchor-smith has a very responsible business, for if he makes his anchor badly, or of weak material, woe to the shipmaster when the storm comes! Anchors are not made of cast iron, nor of every kind of metal that comes to hand, but they are made of *worked* iron, strongly welded, and of tough, compact material, which will bear all the strain that is likely to come upon it at the worst of times. If anything in this world should be strong, it should be an anchor, for upon it safety and life often depend. What is our anchor? It has two

great blades or flukes to it, each of which acts as a holdfast. It is made of two *divine things*. The one is *God's promise*, a sure and stable thing indeed! We are very ready to take a good man's promise, but perhaps the good man may forget to fulfill it, or be unable to do so, but neither of these things can occur with the Lord—He cannot forget, and He cannot fail to do as He has said. Jehovah's promise, what a certain thing it must be; if you had nothing but the Lord's bare word to trust to, surely your faith should never stagger! To this sure word is added another divine thing, namely, *God's oath*. Beloved, I scarcely dare speak upon this sacred topic; God's oath, His solemn assertion, His swearing by Himself. Conceive the majesty, the awe, the certainty of this! Here then are two divine assurances, which like the flukes of the anchor hold us fast. Who dares doubt the promise of God? Who can have the audacity to distrust His oath?

We have for our anchor two things, which, in addition to their being divine, are expressly said to be immutable—that is, two things which cannot change. When the Lord utters a promise He never runs back from it—“the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” Has He said and shall He not do it? Has He promised and shall it not stand fast? He never changes, and His promise abides from generation to generation. Then comes the oath, which is the other immutable thing; how could that be altered? God has pledged the honor of His name, and it is not supposable that under such circumstances, He will retract His engagements, and deny His own declarations! Ah, no—

***“The gospel bears my spirit up.  
A faithful and unchanging God  
Lays the foundation for my hope  
In oaths, and promises, and blood.”***

Notice next of these two things that is said—“*Wherein it is impossible for God to lie.*” It is inconsistent with the very idea and thought of God that He should be a liar. A lying God would be a mistake in *language*, a self-evident contradiction. It cannot be, God must be true—true in His nature, true in His thoughts, true in His designs, true in His acts, and assuredly true in His promises and true in His oaths. “Wherein it is impossible for God to lie”; oh, beloved, what blessed holdfasts have we here! If hope cannot rest on such assurances, what could it rest upon?

But now, what is this promise, and what is this oath? The promise is the promise given to Abraham that his seed should be blessed, and in this seed should all nations of the earth be blessed, also. To whom was this promise made? Who are the “seed”? In the first place, the Seed is Jesus, who blesses all nations, and next, our apostle has proved that this promise was not made to the seed according to the flesh, but to the seed according to the spirit. Who, then, are the seed of Abraham according to the spirit? Why, believers; for He is the father of the faithful, and God's promise, therefore, is confirmed to all who exhibit the faith of believing Abraham. To Christ Himself, and to all who are in Christ, is the covenant made sure, that the Lord will bless them forever and make them blessings.

And what is the oath? That may refer to the oath which the Lord swore to Abraham after the patriarch had offered up his son, for which see the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Genesis. But I think you will agree with me if I say it

more probably refers to the oath recorded in the 110<sup>th</sup> Psalm, which I would have you notice very carefully—"The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." I think this is referred to because the 20<sup>th</sup> verse of our text goes on to say, "Where the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." Now, beloved, I want you to see this anchor. Here is one of its holdfasts—God has promised to bless the faithful; He has declared that the seed of Abraham, namely believers, shall be blessed, and made a blessing. Then comes the other arm of the anchor which is equally strong to hold the soul, namely, the oath of the priesthood, by which the Lord Jesus is declared to be a priest forever on our behalf; not an ordinary priest after the manner of Aaron, beginning and ending a temporary priesthood—but without beginning of days or end of years, living on forever! Jesus is a priest who has finished His sacrificial work, has gone in within the veil, and sits down forever at the right hand of God, because His work is complete, and His priesthood abides in its eternal efficacy! This is a blessed anchor to the soul—to know that my priest is within the veil; to know that my King of righteousness and King of peace is before the throne of God for me, representing me, and therefore I am forever secure in Him. What better anchor could the Comforter Himself devise for His people? What stronger consolation can the heirs of promise desire?

**III.** We have no time to linger, though tempted to do so, and therefore I ask you to advance in the third place to notice OUR HOLD OF THE ANCHOR. It would be of no use for us to have an anchor, however good, unless we had a hold of it. The anchor may be sure, and may have a steadfast grip, but there must be a strong cable to connect the anchor with the ship. Formerly it was very common to use a hemp cable, but large vessels are not content to run the risk of breakage, and therefore they use a chain cable for the anchor. It is a grand thing to have a solid substantial connection between your soul and your hope; to have a confidence which is surely your own, from which you can never be separated!

Our text speaks plainly about this laying hold of the anchor in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> verse—"That we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." We must personally lay hold on the hope; there is the hope, but we are bound to grasp it and hold it fast. As with an anchor, the cable must pass through the ring, and so be bound to it, and so must faith lay hold upon the hope of eternal life! The original Greek signifies "to lay hold by main force, and so to hold as not to lose our hold when the greatest force would pull it from us." We must take firm hold of the firm truth of God! Ah, brothers and sisters, as some men have a cloudy hope; they would seem to have a very doubtful way of laying hold upon it. I suppose it is natural it should be so. For my part, I desire to be taught something certain, and then I pray to be certain that I have learned it. Oh to get such a grip of the truth of God as that old warrior had of his sword, so that when he fought and conquered he could not separate his hand and his sword, for his hand clung to his sword as if it were glued to it! It is a blessed thing to get hold of the doctrine of Christ in such a way that you would have to be dis-

membered before it could be taken from you, for it has grown into your very self! Mind you have a sure hold of your sure anchor!

“Well,” says one, “but *may we* lay hold upon it”? My answer is, the text says it is “set before us”—to, “lay hold of the hope set before us.” You may grasp it for it is set before you! If any of you were very faint and hungry, and came to a person’s house, and he said “Sit down,” and you sat down at the table, and when you sat there, the master set before you a good piece of meat and some very pleasant fruits, and the like, you would not long question whether you might eat them, but would infer your liberty to do so because the food was set before you! Assuredly this is the welcome of the gospel! The hope is set before you! For what purpose is it so set? That you may turn your back upon it? Assuredly not! Lay hold upon it, for wherever truth of God is met with, it is both our *duty* and our *privilege* to lay hold upon it. The entire guarantee that a sinner needs for laying hold on Christ is found in the fact that God has set Christ forth to be a propitiation for our sins! Christian, you are in a storm—here is an anchor! Do you ask, “May I use that anchor”? It is set before you for that very purpose! I guarantee you there is no captain here but what if he were in a storm, and saw an anchor set before him, he would use it at once and ask no questions. The anchor might be none of his; it might happen to be on board as a piece of merchandise—he would not care an atom about that! “The ship has got to be saved; here is an anchor; over it goes!” Act thus with the gracious hope which God provides for you in the gospel of Jesus Christ; lay hold on it now and evermore

Now, notice that our hold on the anchor should be a present thing and a conscious matter, for we read, “which hope we *have*.” We are conscious that we have it. No one among us has any right to be at peace if he does not know that he has obtained a good hope through grace. May you all be able to say, “which hope *we have*.”

As it is well to have a cable made of the same metal as the anchor, so it is a blessed thing when our faith is of the same divine character as the truth of God upon which it lays hold. It needs a God-given hope on our part to seize the God-given promise of which our hope is made! The right mode of procedure is to grasp God’s promise with a God-created confidence; then you see that right away down from the vessel to the anchor the holdfast is all of one piece, so that at every point it is equally adapted to bear the strain. O to have precious faith in a precious Christ! A precious confidence in precious blood! God grant it to you, and may you exercise it at this very moment!

**IV.** Fourthly, and very briefly, let us speak of THE ANCHOR’S HOLD OF US. A ship has hold upon her anchor by her chain cable, but at the same time the most important thing is that the anchor keeps its hold upon the ship, and so, because it has entered into the ground at the bottom of the sea, holds the vessel hard and fast. Brothers and sisters, do you know anything about your hope holding you? It will hold you if it is a *good* hope; you will not be able to get away from it! Under temptation, depression of spirit, trial and affliction, you will not only hold your hope—that is your *duty*, but your hope will hold you—that is your *privilege*! When the devil tempts you to say, “I will give it all up,” an unseen

power will speak out of the infinite deeps, and will reply, "But I shall not give *you* up; I have a hold of you, and nothing shall separate us." Brothers and sisters, our security depends far more upon *God's holding* us than our holding onto Him. Our hope in God, that He will fulfill His oath and promise, has a mighty power over us—far more than equal to all the efforts of the world, the flesh, and the devil to drag us away!

How is it that our divine anchor holds so fast? It is because it is, in its own nature, sure—"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both *sure* and *steadfast*." It is, in itself, sure as to its nature. The gospel is no cunningly devised fable—God has spoken it; it is a mass of fact; it is pure, unalloyed truth with the broad seal of God Himself set upon it. Then, too, this anchor is "*steadfast*" as to its hold. It never moves from its lodgment. It is sure in its nature, and steadfast when in use, and therefore it is practically safe. If you have believed in Christ unto eternal Life, and are expecting that God will be as good as His word, have you not found that your hope sustains you and maintains you in your position?

Brothers and sisters, the result of the use of this anchor will be very comfortable to you. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both *sure* and *steadfast*." It will not prevent your being tossed about, for a ship at anchor may rock a good deal, and the passengers may be very seasick, but she cannot be driven away from her moorings! There she is, and her passengers suffer discomfort, but they shall not suffer shipwreck! A good hope through grace will not altogether deliver you from inward conflicts, no, it will even *involve* them; it will not screen you from outward trials—it will be sure to *bring* them; but it will save you from all real peril. I may say to every believer in Jesus that his condition is very like that of the landsman on board ship when the sea was rather rough, and he said, "Captain, we are in great danger, are we not"? As an answer did not come, he said, "Captain, don't you see great fear?" Then the old seaman gruffly replied, "Yes, I see plenty of fear, but not a bit of danger." It is often so with us; when the blinds are out and the storms are raging there is plenty of fear, but there is no danger. We may be much tossed, but we are quite safe, for we have an anchor of the soul both *sure* and *steadfast* which will not move.

One blessed thing is that our hope has such a grip of us that we know it. In a vessel you feel the pull of the anchor, and the more the wind rages the more you feel that the anchor holds you. Like the boy with his kite—the kite is up in the clouds where he cannot see it, but he knows it is there, for he feels it pull; so our good hope has gone up to heaven, and He is pulling and drawing us to Him. We cannot see our anchor, it would be of no use if we *could* see it; its use begins when it is out of sight, but it pulls, and we can feel the heavenly pressure!

**V.** And now, lastly, and best of all, THE ANCHOR'S UNSEEN GRIP, "which enters into that within the veil." Our anchor is like every other—when it is of any use it is out of sight. When a man sees the anchor, it is doing nothing, unless it happens to be some small stream anchor or in shallow water. When the anchor is of use it is *gone*—there it went overboard with a splash! Far down there, all among the fish, lies the iron holdfast, quite out of sight. Where is your hope, brothers and sisters? Do

you believe because you can *see*? That is not believing at all! Do you believe because you can *feel*? That is *feeling*, it is not believing! But “blessed is he that has not seen, and yet has believed.” Blessed is he who believes against his feelings, yes, and hopes against hope! That is a strange thing to do, hoping against hope, believing things impossible, and seeing things invisible. He who can do that has learned the art of faith! Our hope is not seen; He lies in the waves, or, as the text says, “within the veil.” I am not going to run the figure too closely, but a mariner might say that his anchor is within the watery veil, for a veil of water is between him and it, and so it is concealed. Such is the confidence which we have in God, whom having not seen we love—

***“Let the winds blow, and billows roll,  
Hope is the anchor of my soul!  
But can I by so slight a tie,  
An unseen hope, on God rely?  
Steadfast and sure, it cannot fail,  
It enters deep within the veil,  
It fastens on a land unknown,  
And moors me to my Father’s throne.”***

Although our anchor is out of sight, yet thank God He has taken a very firm grip, and “entered into that which is within the veil.” What hold can be equal to that which a man has upon his God when he can cry, “You have promised, therefore do as You have said”? What grasp is firmer than this, “Lord, You have sworn it, You can not run back. You have said that he that believes in You is justified from all sin. Lord, I believe You, therefore be pleased to do as You have said. I know You cannot lie, and You have sworn that Christ is a priest forever. I am resting in Him as my priest who has made a full atonement for me. I therefore hold You to Your oath—accept me for the sake of Jesus’ sacrifice. Can You reject a soul for whom Your own Son is pleading? He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto You by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for me—my Lord, this is the hold I have upon You, this is the anchor which I have cast into the deep, mysterious attributes of Your wondrous nature! I believe You, and You will not make me ashamed of my hope.” Oh, brothers and sisters, what a hold you have upon the living God when you rely on His oath and promise! Thus you hold Him as Jacob held the angel, and the blessing you will surely win at His hands.

Note next, that when an anchor has a good grip down below, the more the ship drags the tighter its hold becomes. At first, when the anchor goes down, perhaps it drops upon a hard rock, and there it cannot bite, but by-and-by it slips off from the rock, and enters into the bottom of the sea. It digs into the soil, and as the cable draws it on, it goes deeper and deeper till the anchor almost buries itself; and the more it is pulled upon the deeper it descends. The anchor gets such a hold at last that it seems to say, “Now, Boreas, blow away, you must tear up the floor of the sea before the vessel shall be let go.” Times of trouble send our hope deep down into fundamental truths of God. Some of you people who have never known friction, you rich people who have never known need, you healthy folks who were never ill a week—you have not half a grip of the glorious hope that the tried ones have! Much of the unbelief in the Christian Church comes out of the easy lives of professors. When you come to

rough it, you need the solid gospel. A hard-working hungry man cannot live on your whipped creams, and your fine drinks—he must have something solid to nourish him, and so the tried man feels that he must have a gospel which is true, and he must believe it to be true, or else his soul will famish! Now, if God promises and swears, have we not the most solid of assurances? The firmest conceivable faith is no more than the righteous due of the thrice Holy and faithful God. Therefore, brothers and sisters, when greater trouble comes believe the more firmly, and when your vessel is tossed in deeper water believe the more confidently! When the head is aching, and the heart is palpitating, when all earthly joy is fled, and when death comes near, believe the more! Grow surer and surer that your Father cannot lie; yes, “Let God be true and every man a liar.” In this way you will obtain the strong consolation which the Lord intends you to enjoy.

The text concludes with this very sweet reflection, that though our hope is out of sight, we have a friend in the unseen land where our hope has found its hold. In anxious moments a sailor might almost wish that he could go with his anchor and fix it firmly. That he cannot do, but we have a friend who has gone to see to everything for us! Our anchor is within the veil—it is where we cannot see it—but Jesus is there, and our hope is inseparably connected with His person and work! We know of a certainty that Jesus of Nazareth, after His death and burial, rose from the grave, and that 40 days afterwards, in the presence of His disciples, He went up into heaven, and a cloud received Him. We know this as an historical fact, and we also know that He rose into heaven as the comprehensive seed of Abraham, in whom are found all the faithful. As He has gone there, we shall surely follow, for He is the first fruits of the full harvest. According to the text, our Lord Jesus has gone within the veil *as our high priest*. Now, the high priest within the veil is in the place of acceptance on our behalf. A Melchisedec high priest is one who has boundless power to bless and to save unto the uttermost. Jesus Christ has offered one bloody sacrifice for sin, namely, Himself, and now He sits down at the right hand of God forever, even the Father. Brethren, He reigns where our anchor has entered! We rest in Christ’s finished work, His resurrection power, and His eternal kingship. How can we doubt after this?

We are next informed that Jesus has gone within veil *as the forerunner*. What is a forerunner if there are not others to run after him? Jesus has gone to lead the way! He is the pioneer, the leader of the great army, the first fruits from the dead! And if He has gone to heaven as a forerunner, then we who belong to Him will follow after! Should not that reflection make our hearts glad?

We are told next that as the forerunner, our Lord has *for us* entered—that is entered to take possession in *our* name. When Jesus Christ went into heaven, He did as it were look around on all the thrones, and all the palms, and all the harps, and all the crowns, and said, “I take possession of all these in the name of My redeemed. I am their representative, and claim the heavenly places in their names.” As surely as Jesus is there, the possessor of all things, so shall we also each one come to his inheritance in due time!

Our Lord Jesus by His intercession is drawing us to heaven, and we have only to wait a little while, and we shall be with Him where He is. He pleads for our home-bringing, and it will come to pass before long. No sailor likes his anchor to come home, for if it does so in a storm, matters look very ugly. Our anchor will never come home, but it is *drawing us home!* He is drawing us to Himself, not downwards beneath devouring waves, but upwards to ecstatic joys! Do you not feel it? You who are growing old, do you not feel its home-drawings? Many cords hold us here, but they are getting fewer with some of you—the dear wife has faded away, or the beloved husband has gone; many of your children have gone too, and a host of friends. These are all helps to draw you upward! I think at this very moment you must feel as if your boat were about to change by some magic power from a ship which floats the waters to an eagle which can fly the air! Have you not often longed to mount while singing—

***“Oh that we now might grasp our guide!  
Oh that the word were given!  
Come, Lord of hosts, the waves divide,  
And land us all in heaven!”***

My cable has grown shorter of late, a great many of its links have vanished. I am nearer my hope than when I first believed. Every day hope nears fruition! Let our joy in it become more exultant. A few more weeks or months, and we shall dwell above, and while we shall need no anchor to hold us fast, we shall eternally bless that divine condescension which produced such a holdfast for our unstable minds while tossed upon this sea of care!

What will those of you do who have no anchor? A storm is coming on! I see the lowering clouds, and hear the distant hurricane! What will you do? May the Lord help you at once to flee for refuge to the hope set before you! Amen.

## **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HEBREWS 6.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN IN BOOK”—230, 193, 632.**

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# OUR LORD'S HUMANITY A SWEET SOURCE OF COMFORT NO. 1295

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Then there came again and touched me one like the  
appearance of a man, and he strengthened me.”  
Daniel 10:18.***

WE are not able, as yet, to bear the full revelation of divine things. If any intellect had been strong enough, if any heart had been pure enough to see the exceeding glory of the covenant angel, surely Daniel possessed such a head and heart; but even he fell upon his face, and was cast into a dead swoon, for he was unable to bear the sight of the man clothed in linen, whose “body was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning.” We ought to be thankful that our God has revealed no more. The word of God is as excellent in its darkness as in its brightness. Had it unveiled more, its discoveries would have been no more beneficial—perhaps they had been less profitable. As it is, there is far more within this book than you and I have seen as yet, and we need not wish that more had been written. If we entertain such a desire, our loving Lord may silence us with the words, “I have many things to show unto you, but you cannot bear them now.”

It appears from our text that, when weighed down under a sense of the divine presence, the readiest method of consolation is found in the touch of a certain sublime, mysterious, human hand. I know it is very usual to say that the personage who appeared to Daniel was the angel Gabriel, but I cannot bring myself to believe that he is the angel of this chapter. Surely this glorious being was that uncreated messenger of the covenant who, though not born into our nature in Daniel's day, yet took upon Himself the similitude of a man for a time, as He had done before when on special occasions He appeared to others of the saints before His actual incarnation! Even if we grant that an *angel* was the person who touched Daniel, still the truth which I wish to bring out will be none the less clear, namely, that even if an *angel* should wish to comfort us, he must assume a visible *human* form, and he must lay upon us a sympathetic hand like our own so that there shall be at any rate, “the appearance of a man,” or otherwise we shall not be strengthened. If this is granted as true, I shall not insist upon the text immediately referring to Christ, but I shed the general principle, and say this—comfort is best brought to men by a *man*, and if we are to be strengthened, the touch of “one like the appearance of a *man*” is needed. Therefore we may without difficulty rise to the reflection that it is always to us the richest and highest comfort, as believers in Christ that the Lord Jesus is a man, and when He strengthens us, it is full often by laying His human hand upon us. He reveals His kinship with us, and our spirit is consoled and

strengthened by a sense of His union with us. My one objective is, by the Spirit's aid, to draw water from the ancient well of our Lord's *humanity*.

The Son of God is also the Son of man. We none of us doubt His Deity, and therefore we shall be able to spend all our time in this sermon in musing upon His manhood, and the joys contained in that truth of God. Jesus is God. But Jesus was born, Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose again, and Jesus is in heaven, *as a man*. He is God and man in one person, but there is no confusion of natures; He is neither a deified man nor a humanized God. His Godhead is altogether Godhead, and His manhood altogether manhood. We must not divide the person, nor confuse the natures; He is as truly man as if He were not God, and as truly God as if He had never assumed the nature of man. It is of His manhood that we are now about to speak. We shall not attempt to prove it, but shall simply endeavor to show how the touch of the hand of Jesus, the man, strengthens us.

**I.** And, first, dear friends, does it not cheer us WHEN WE LABOR UNDER A SENSE OF LONELINESS?

If we are true to Him, we are strangers and sojourners with Him, as all our fathers were. Before His cross we find ourselves to be strangers in this land, even as He was, for as the world knew Him not, so it knows us not, and as it placed Him outside the camp, so also does it make aliens of us. It is sweet to feel, when walking the separated path, "I am a stranger with You"—a stranger in the world as You are, an exile as You were; in such solitude the manhood of Jesus is a delicious cordial!

Some feel alone because *they are the only ones of their house who serve the Lord*. How you wish it were otherwise! It is your daily prayer that all your kindred may be followers of Christ, but they are not so. Perhaps they openly oppose you, and make your life unhappy through their hard speeches. Well, there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother! There is a brother who will hear what you have to say, no, who knows all that is in your heart before you utter it! He is the antitype of Joseph, and He knows what it is to be separated from His brethren. Of all that ever lived He was the loneliest, by far, and therefore He sympathizes with the forsaken ones.

*The child of God as he grows in grace becomes lonelier* under certain aspects, just as the higher mountains have fewer familiarities, till Mont Blanc speaks to no equal in his awful height, but communes only with himself. They that serve God much and well—and draw near to His innermost presence—in that proportion draw away from men, as to deriving comfort from them. But, oh, there are no heights to which Jesus has not risen, no attainments which He has not surpassed! That glorious man is with you—with you in the singleness of heart with which you serve your God! He is with you in the perfect consecration which the Holy Spirit has given you, with you in the intimate fellowship of your soul with the eternal Father! In your highest flight of ecstasy there is still a man at your right hand saying, "Fear not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God."

It falls to the lot of some Christians to stand alone *in their contention for the faith*. Perhaps there is made known to them what has not been re-

vealed to others, or which being revealed, others have refused to see—or seeing have been afraid to declare. In such cases true-hearted men find themselves standing very much alone, at least for a time. They have a treasure which others do not prize, and they are bound to show it, for to this end was the treasure placed in their earthen vessel. God has not committed it to them for themselves alone, but He has put them in trust with the gospel for the good of others, and they must speak it out. If when they do so they hear no sympathetic answer, but are met in the spirit of controversy and unkind rebuke, it is blessed for them to know that “the faithful and true witness” is the champion of every honest testimony.

He stood alone as our atoning sacrifice, and into that loneliness we never intrude, but *in all other work He is our companion*, even He who is called “The man Christ Jesus,” and therefore we shall be cheered by His presence if we find ourselves without earthly helpers. Oh, if we had our choice between having an angel to always live in our house, and to know our secrets, or to have the man Christ Jesus to be our constant friend, we should not deliberate in our choice, but choose our Lord's company at once! An angel would often afflict us—we would be afraid to confess our littleness to him, we would fear that he would think them meanness. His unsuffering nature we would suspect of contempt, and we would be ill at ease in his presence. But such a feeling as that does not cross our mind when we have to deal with one who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities! We know our Lord to be true man, and therefore we speak to Him with familiarity, and make Him our heart's dearest companion. Lonely one, take care that you have no secrets apart from Jesus! *Love* your loneliness rather than seek to escape from it, if it brings you nearer to Him! You will do well to be always ready for Christian fellowship, yes, and to *seek* it, but do not live on it, for fellowship with Jesus is sweeter than fellowship with saints' Master! I know that fellowship with saints is poor stuff if it comes not through fellowship with the saints' Master. When communion comes from *His* hands, and we come to the feast in *His* company, then every brother and sister who sits at the table adds to our enjoyment, but if we approach the table to see *them*, and forget *Him*, then everybody adds to our discomfort, and forms another veil to hide the Lord. Cling to the Christ of the garden and the cross, and find, O lonely one, your sweetest joy in the thought that He is a man such as you are! Sing with me those sweet lines—

***“When gathering clouds around I view,  
And days are dark and friends are few,  
On Him I lean, who not in vain  
Experienced every human pain!  
He sees my needs, allays my fears,  
And counts and treasures up my tears!”***

**II.** How sweet it is to feel the touch of the humanity of Christ WHEN WE ARE HUMBLED IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

I know not, brethren, whether you are often favored to behold the shining of the divine glory, and to feel the warmth of it in your own soul. This I know—if you are, you find it a wearing and breaking joy. If we had more of it, it might be a destroying delight, for “even our God is a con-

suming fire," and when we come nearest to Him, and best understand that He is love, the glory of that love overcomes us! We cannot eat much honey, neither can we endure much sensible enjoyment of the divine glory—I mean much *comparatively*, for of course it is much to us, but it is not much compared with what He could reveal if we were able to endure it! Have you ever felt what it is to be as if you were *not*—to see your comeliness turned into corruption, your excellence all despoiled, and yourself not only lying low in the presence of God, but being as if you had no being at all—as if you had no separate existence in the presence of such wondrous Majesty, such awe-inspiring love? You feel no dread; far from it! And no unhappiness, but the very reverse—you yourself seem gone, and God is all-in-all. A blessed extinction of *self* makes room for infinite love! There is not one covenant blessing but what, if we understood it, would have this humbling effect upon us; every gift which God bestows upon His chosen, if rightly understood and truly grasped, would make us say with Abraham, "I that am but dust and ashes," or make us sit down with David and exclaim, "Why this to *me*? Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" Now, at such times of self-annihilation, it is strengthening to the mind, which is almost ready to expire beneath the load of heavenly glory, to feel the *touch of that hand*, and to perceive that He who is our God is also very near. It is bliss to me to perceive that the Creator has become one with the creature, for Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem; Jesus ate, drank, slept, wept, bled and died—and now He sits at the right hand of the Father; and so, notwithstanding the awe which crushes me, I see an infinite Condescension—no, I perceive a near kinship which draws me close to God Himself; so that I say, "My Father," and with the next breath, "My Brother, my Friend, my Husband, my Best-Beloved." I wonder what we would have done if we had known so much of God, and had not known Christ! I suppose I am speaking paradoxically, and saying what I should not say, for we never could have known God except in Jesus Christ in such a way as we do know Him; but if such a thing had been possible, it would have been destructive to us! But now, God in Jesus Christ, how blessed! God *out* of Christ, we know nothing of, nor need we. Luther used to say, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God." Beware of attempting to deal with God apart from the Mediator, for no man comes unto the Father but through His Son, Christ Jesus!

Thus have we felt the touch of the human hand strengthening us when we have fallen prostrate under a deep sense of the glory of God.

**III.** Thirdly, brothers and sisters, for here, perhaps, you sisters take precedence over us—IN SORROW—oh, how blessed it is to feel the touch of the man's hand!

Bodily pain is the portion of many of God's people. They are seldom long without it. Weakness, constant weakness, keeps many of God's precious ones tied to the bedchamber or to the house, and often the beloved means of grace are taken from them because of their inability to come up to the assembly of God's saints. Others endure the affliction of poverty—with all their economy and industry, they find it difficult to provide things honest in the sight of all men. Some true Christians are naturally

of a somber temperament, and to them even summer weather has a wintry aspect. The Lord has allotted to each one of His children a cross to carry, and His loving wisdom led Him to do so. Those who are for the most part without trial, are usually the weakest in the church of God; they are usually the least spiritual, the least instructed in experimental truth, and altogether the least knowledgeable in divine things. We have our sorrows, but have we not found by actual experience that the choicest consolation for sorrow is the fact that Jesus Christ knows all about it and is with us in it? How often has that verse run through my soul like a trumpet note to urge me onward when otherwise I should have retreated from the battle?—

***“In every pang that rends the heart,  
The man of sorrows had a part.  
With boldness, therefore, at the throne  
Let us make all our sorrows known.”***

There is no abyss of grief into which Jesus has not descended! Sickness of body and pangs of soul, bereavement, poverty, scorn, slander, desertion, treachery—He knows all these things! Malice, envy, contempt, and deadly hate all shot their fiery darts against Him; He has sounded the deeps of the ocean of sorrow. Did He not say that He was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death, and did not the sweat of blood which covered His face show how terrible were the inward agonies through which His soul was passing? Prince of sorrow are You, O Jesus! Emperor in the realm of woe, are You, O Christ; You could say far more truly than the prophet of old, “I am the man that has seen affliction.” Now, brothers and sisters, our bitter cup is sweetened, for His dear lips have touched the brim; no, He has drained it to its dregs! Now, brethren, our hard sorrow is softened because it is only a piece from that loaf of which He ate the most. Well may we be satisfied to go through the valley of tears, for it is “the King’s dale,” and all along it we can track His footprints. We know them, for they show the marks of the nails; they are the footprints of the Crucified! Joined with us in every grief and woe, He is always at our side when our hearts are heavy. He carried up to heaven the same human heart which was pierced below—and there He remembers Calvary, and all the griefs He suffered on our behalf. He still sympathizes with us. I delight in that thought of one of our hymn writers, where he says—

***“Yet even after death His heart  
For us, its tribute poured.”***

After our Lord was dead His heart yielded blood and water for our sakes, so that after death He was still in sympathy with us. Jesus still gives His heart to His people. Glory be to His name! Who among you will refuse to shoulder your cross now? Did you lay it down just now and say, “I can carry it no longer? I must give up in despair”? Why, He carries the heavier end for you! Put your shoulder to the burden which He consecrates by His fellowship. It will grow light when you think that He once carried it! When Alexander’s troops were on long marches, that which cheered them was that Alexander always walked as far as they; if they were very thirsty in the broiling sun, and if any water was to be found, of course they brought it first to Alexander. Should they not first consider their king? But he nobly put the cooling draught aside, and said, “As long as a sick

man needs water, Alexander will go without." This made each warrior strong, for his king fared as he fared. Let this strengthen us tonight. Jesus Christ puts His hand upon us, and says, "Fear not. I am with you in your sorrow. My heart is as your heart; therefore be of good cheer."

**IV.** I will not dwell long on any one thought, but leave you to dilate upon it. The fact that Jesus Christ is a man, such as we are, should greatly comfort us in ALL OUR STRUGGLES.

It seems hard, this battle of life, this "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the many"—this fighting against sin, this contention against inbred corruption, this warring against spiritual wickedness in high places; and we are apt to think sometimes, "Can we ever win? Is not the battle too difficult?" In such moments look at yonder man who sits upon the throne of God! He is the typical man, the representative to us of what manhood should be, no, of what through His grace it is! He wrestled hard, as hard as you do, but He won the victory! You are tempted; does that cause you doubt? He was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet He did not sin. Are you distressed by the contentions of godless men? "Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be weary and faint in your minds." The struggle is not as difficult with you as it was with Him. You have an easier battle to fight, and you have God's promise that, as your days, your strength shall be. Now, as He overcame, finding strength enough for His conflict, He is to you a living prophecy of what you shall do through Him! Yes, brothers and sisters, you shall trample sin beneath your feet, you shall take the strongholds of the adversary, and grace shall reign within your heart! The world, the flesh, and the devil, that trinity of evils, shall be overcome by you; you shall be a conqueror, no, listen! "More than a conqueror through Him that loved you."—

***"As surely as He overcame,  
And triumphed once for you;  
As surely you that love His name,  
Shall triumph in Him too!"***

"Did a man ever do that?" asked a bold spirit concerning some renowned achievement, "for if one man did it, another man shall." It was a brave speech! But let us apply it to Christ for a moment. Did He, a man, live in the midst of this world amid fierce temptations—and did He come out of that scorching furnace with not so much as the smell of fire upon Him? Then the eternal God can work the same in other men, and we may believe, no, we may be *confident* that the victory shall be unto us through the blood of the Lamb! Be of good courage, O sons of men, for the Son of man has won the victory! Throw not away your confidence. Let not your swords be laid aside. Jesus, Jesus the representative man, has conquered, and therefore those who are in Him, "strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man," shall conquer also! Herein is comfort.

**V.** Further, brothers and sisters, in the fifth place, what a blessed thing it has been to look at the manhood of Jesus Christ AT TIMES WHEN WE HAVE BEEN DECEIVED IN OUR BRETHREN.

Our natural tendency to idolatry tempts us to confide in man. Among religious people there always has been a tendency, much to be deplored, to lean a good deal upon men of eminence—upon ministers, leaders, and

men of experience. We get a great deal of good from them, blessed be God, and therefore we conceive a high opinion of them as indeed we may rightly do if we attribute all that is praiseworthy to the God who gave it. But every now and then we pass beyond the proper confidence which a younger brother may place in an elder, and we pin our *faith* to the man's sleeve, and make our hope, in a measure, dependent upon his sincerity. This is the peculiar sin of young Christians, but I have sometimes met with it in simple-hearted persons even in extreme old age. The "dear minister," the "venerable man of God"—they have looked far too much to him; alas, there has come a discovery that man is only man, and that some men are not saints though they talk in a saintly manner! There has been the explosion of a profession, the total casting down of an idol, and the breaking of it to pieces—and at such times the faith of many has been grievously staggered; even those who are somewhat more established, have nevertheless received a grievous blow. We have seen Judas again, and Demas, and Hymenaeus, and Philetus, and old Ahitophel rising from the dead, and we have been filled with grief. At such times it is most cheering to remember that there is one man who will never deceive us! There is one who has not uttered a Promise which He will not fulfill, nor won from us a confidence which He will not more than justify. It is such a blessed thing to see *Jesus* standing there—honesty, integrity, uprightness, righteousness incarnate, truth His very nature with no sinister motives or desires to make Him subtle for His own gain, but altogether disinterested—living for the glory of God, and the good of His people!

To get back into His bosom again, and to nestle there and feel—"Child, here is a heart that is always warm with true love. You are safe here"—this is rest indeed! To get back to Jesus and say, "Now am I neither of Paul, nor of Apollos, nor of Cephas, but of Christ." To hear the news of religious strife in this denomination and that, and, amidst the clashing elements of different ecclesiastical parties, to say, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"; and clinging to Jesus, to feel "But *this* is not vanity, *this* is reality, *this* is the truth of God!" Oh, to stay with Jesus, brothers and sisters—never to stir away from Him, and to feel that the truth which you can trust, the integrity on which you can rely is embodied in the man Christ Jesus! Is not man the meanest thing in all creation? Do you not feel him to be so when he deceives you? But, then, when you look at Jesus, how manhood rises in your esteem. After all, He is capable of something grand and glorious, and you bless the Lord Jesus who has by the sublime perfection of His character redeemed our nature from its frightful degradation.

**VI.** Again, I hope I shall not weary you. Surely I may continue to draw out the silken threads of such a subject. Children of God will find the doctrine of Christ's humanity to be wonderfully comfortable to them IN SEASONS OF DOUBT.

Many of you are free from grievous doubts, and I would be the last to sow them in your minds. I love Cowper's picture of the poor woman with her pillow and bobbins, who only knew her Bible, true, and left all the philosophies in the world to those who cared for them. But there is a class of disciples like Thomas who think much, and are apt to doubt

much; they do not love doubts—they hate them, yet their doubts often go very deep, and undermine the most precious doctrines. The men are really steadfast in the faith, but it costs them many exercises and painful questions. They ask, “How is this? And, “Why is that?” Perhaps they have more brains than heart. I suppose many of us get into that condition, and do you know to me a sight of my Lord is my great security—a sheet anchor which has held me fast in times of skepticism and doubt. I cannot doubt when I see *Him!* When I turn over the Bible, and read of His character, I find it impossible to be a disbeliever! If any *man* invented the character of Christ, I will worship him—He *must* be divine to have created such perfection! It seems to me that if the life of Jesus were not a fact, the very fiction would be a creation demanding perfect holiness in the inventor; who but a perfectly Holy being could have conceived a character like that of our Lord and Master? Every other character has its flaw. Man may be likened to a statue I once saw in Cambridge, which I think is in Trinity College Library now—a statue of Byron. I remember looking at it from one point of view, and the gentleman who showed it to me said, “There, sir, there is the poet!” Yes, and a noble face it is, full of high thought, and rare imagination; and you admire the man. “Come round to this point,” said my conductor, “for there is the man who dared defy the Deity.” You could see at once the semi-maniac Byron, lost to all pure and devout emotion! The artist had sketched the duplicate man, the true Byron, a man both great and wicked!

Now, if some artist able to exhibit the whole truth could thus set you forth in marble, your friends might go to ever so many points, and say, “Beautiful! Beautiful! Admirable! Commendable! Lovely!” and so on; but when they came to some one point (and some of us may be very thankful that people do not get to that point) they would exclaim, “Alas,” and they would not like to say much more! They would feel the conviction that things are not altogether what they seem to be, and that flaws are discoverable in those they most admire. It is not so with Jesus. Survey Him before and behind, on the right and on the left. Come upon Him at midnight; look at Him in midday. Watch Him as a child; see Him as a man. Look at Him alone; behold Him in company. See Him in His pomp as He rides through Jerusalem; see Him in His shame as they hound Him to His death. From every point He is perfect, absolutely perfect; you cannot improve Him, you cannot hint at a fault in Him! This is to candid minds a solid establishment, rendering it hard to be a doubter; and it becomes to believers who love their Lord and Master a blessed chain which holds them fast, so that they cannot give up the truth of God they have received, for they have not followed cunningly devised fables. If Peter and James and John, when they saw their Lord transfigured, were convinced, so are we also when we view His human life on earth, for His whole career is the transfiguration of humanity—a wonderful display of how poor human nature's garments can be made whiter than any fuller can make them—how the brightness of manhood can excel the glory of the sun at noonday! This consoles us amidst the battle of doubtful thought.

**VII.** Further, dear brothers and sisters, how blessedly the touch of our Redeemer's human hand COMFORTS US IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

Unless the Lord comes, "It is appointed unto all men once, to die." In the presence of death and the grave, when we really get to look at them, there is hardly one among us who does not begin to ask himself, "Is it all right?" Must we die? We shrink back—we cannot bear it! "Shall I rise again? If, after my skin, worms devour this body, shall I, in my flesh, see God? Does it seem likely? Is it possible? Can these dry bones live?" We have read the burial service many times, and heard it read over our friends. We have thought that we believed in the resurrection, but when it comes to *ourselves*, and we are about to die, and sickness tells upon us, and then we ask the question over again, "Shall we rise? And is it true? Is it *really* true?" Often and often have I put myself through my paces over that question, and this is where I always land—I know that the man Christ Jesus rose from the dead. I am sure of that. How do I know it? No fact in human history was ever better attested, or even so well attested as this—that Jesus, who was crucified, did truly rise from the dead. The witnesses are so many. Read Paul's summing up of the evidence in Corinthians. He shows that sometimes Christ was seen by one disciple alone, then by twelve, and on one occasion, at any rate, by 500 witnesses at once! Jesus showed Himself alive by indisputable proofs—we are sure that He rose from the dead. Well, then, I know that *I* shall too, for the apostle, by inspiration, has put the two things together—"If Christ rose not, then is there no resurrection of the dead. But if Christ rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" One man has broken from the prison of the grave, and therefore so will all who are like He! Brothers and sisters, in the Gaza of mortality, we shall escape from this city, for our Samson rose in the morning, and took away the gates, posts, bars and all, and carried them to the top of the hill! The gates of the grave are open—pass through, you redeemed of the Lord! He has torn away the bars of the sepulcher; it is a dungeon no longer; the tomb is now a bedchamber where you shall sleep a little while, till your body shall be prepared for the Lord's embrace—

***"What, though our inbred sins require  
Our flesh to see the dust,  
Yet as the Lord our Savior rose,  
So all His followers must."***

**VIII.** Once more. Children of God, the manhood of Christ ought to be a great comfort to you WHEN YOU ARE SEEKING TO DO GOOD AMONG YOUR FELLOW MEN.

This is an awful world, this world of human beings. If you ride along the main streets, it looks to be a very respectable city, but just go down the side streets! And from these, turn into the courts and alleys! Enter Jack Ketch, or Tiger Bay; visit those regions where the means of livelihood are sin, where drunkenness is the chief delight, where debauchery has ceased to be pleasure, and has become an occupation—where every evil is transacted unblushingly. Oh, God! When we think of what humanity is, even where Christianity keeps it within bounds, and then think of what it is when left to itself to bow down before blocks of wood and stone, and offer orgies of vice as the adoration of God, we might justly say, "Oh, it is a foul thing! Leave it alone! It scarcely deserves pity." If we could but entertain the comfortable notions of the Corinthian brethren, and believe

that the world is not to be converted, how relaxed we might be! We could sit down and care no more for this poor earth, because the Lord Jesus is coming, and the thing will end—and there is nothing for us to do but to pull here and there a man off the sinking ship, for the kingdoms of this world are never to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ—and He is never to have dominion from sea to sea. At any rate, not by the ordinary method of the proclamation of the gospel—and we may as well go to bed and enjoy ourselves, for effort is needless where success is hopeless! So they tell us, and if I could believe them, I could sleep more soundly at nights, but I believe that the world is to be converted to God, and that here on this battleground, and by the same weapons with which the fight began, the conflict will be fought out to the glorious end! And I believe sin shall be trodden down by the Lord's people, who will win the victory through His blood! Still, look at fallen human nature. Whitefield used to say that it was half beast and half devil. He was very near the mark, but I question whether both beast and devil are not slandered by being compared with man when he is left to himself. Fallen man is a horrible creature, and each one of us may see a specimen in his own natural heart. But, oh, brothers and sisters let us gird up the loins of our minds and be encouraged! Let us look beyond the fall, and see what humanity once was, and what it may yet become! Jesus took human nature upon Him, and thereby did it the highest honor—an honor which has more than rolled away its reproach. Though free from sin, yet His nature was human, and in assuming such a nature, Jesus showed the value which He set by our race. He thought it worth His while to live, to suffer, to bleed, to *die* for such poor things as we have been speaking! He thought it worth His while to preach to a woman who had had five husbands, and was still living in sin. He thought it worth His while to permit His feet to be washed by a woman who had been a sinner; worth His while to mix with tax collectors and sinners—the common vulgar people of the great cities, for He was a physician, and He had come to heal the sick.

Never let us give way for a solitary moment to the proud feeling that anybody is below us, or that any human being is so mean that he is not worth looking after—and so bad that it is really of no use to hope to benefit him. Have I not heard it insinuated with regard to fallen women, “Oh, it is very melancholy work to have to deal with them, and probably it would be better to let them alone”? “And these children in the streets,” say some, “these waifs and strays—would it not be better to let those eminent Christian dignitaries, the parochial authorities, instruct them in the poorhouse? Would it not be better to let the grosser evils alone? They are so hideous! Drunkenness, poverty, uncleanness—they so abound in this great city that one runs great risks, and undergoes much pollution in coming near them.” Very superior beings sometimes talk in this fashion. I mean rather to say that *conceited* dimwits thus speak! Is there one being on the face of the earth so degraded that you and I might not have been *more* degraded still if the Lord's grace had been withheld? Does there live on the face of the earth one incarnation of wickedness that can possibly excel what *we* might have been if exposed to the same influences and denied the restraints of His love? How, then, can we talk of

sinner as being beneath *us*? Jesus Christ stoops indeed, but for *you and me* it is almost impossible to stoop, for we are already down so low that we are near to the very lowest—and there is no great stoop possible on our part! This always cheers me. If my Master would give me a house full of convicts who had been imprisoned many times, and given over as hopeless, I should feel great confidence in preaching the gospel to them because I should think, “Now, I am in the very place in which my Master would have chosen to place *His* pulpit.” Did He not come to save us who are convicts under the law of God? And if He has done that, let us never despair of the worst of felons! Never despair of a creature for whom Jesus died! Never despair of a creature the likes of which you may see by myriads before the eternal throne, singing, “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” City missionary, Bible woman, brother, sister, you who work among the lowest of the low—let the Master's hand touch you and give you strength!

Now, I have done when I have said a few inviting words to those here present who do not know much of the Redeemer, and have not yet believed in Him.

Do you feel yourselves guilty before God? Do you wish for His mercy? Come, then, and come *NOW*, for Jesus Christ, a man like yourselves, invites you! Remember, you cannot go to God without a mediator, but you may go to *Christ* without a mediator, and you may go just as you are. You need no introduction to Jesus! I know that you can go and tell another man like yourself your sins, for some are so foolish to do so. They confess their sins to the priests, as Judas did, but you know Judas then went and hanged himself, which was a very likely thing to do after such a confession. But if you will go and tell your sins to Jesus, who is a man, and something more than a man, He will hear your story and it will not pollute His ear. He will listen to it, and He will do more—He will effectually absolve you! Have you not felt now that you have grown up to be big fellows, that you wished you were boys again, so that you could go at night and tell mother all that you had done wrong during the day, so that mother might kiss you, and you would go to bed feeling that everything was right again? Well, there is no mortal to whom you can go for such forgiveness now, but the Lord Jesus Christ will be to you all that your mother was when you were a child. Go and tell Him all about it, and ask Him to wash you in His blood, and cover you with His righteousness—and He will forgive you as freely as your own kind mother would have done! Jesus Christ will feel for you, for He knows all your temptations and weaknesses; if there is any sort of excuse to be made for you, He will make it. He did that for His murderers when He said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” For that which cannot be extenuated at all, He has something a great deal better than an excuse—namely, His own atoning sacrifice.

He will tell you, “Simply trust Me, and I will save you.” Do not be afraid to come and tell Him all about your case. He will not spurn you! Did He ever spurn a sinner yet? The dogs eat the crumbs under His table, and He never drives them away. Dog of a sinner, you may come to His feet, and He will make something better than a dog of you! But you

tell me, "The man Jesus is in heaven." So much the better, for if He were here on earth in this Tabernacle, then He would not be over in Seven Dials, and Golden Lane, and over in North and East London, or away there in Scotland and Ireland, or across the seas! But being in heaven, He is within equal reach of us all, wherever we may be! And whoever darts a thought after Him, or a wish towards Him, and above all, whoever *trusts* Him, shall find in Him eternal life!

Sinner, you have not to deal with an absolute God; you have to deal with God *in* Jesus, the man! Come, then, to Him, for He has come to you. The ladder, Christ Jesus, you know, has its foot on earth, and its top in heaven. The higher we ascend, the more we shall delight to think of the glory of Christ! But our *first* business is to think of the foot of the ladder, and I want you tonight to know that its foot stands on earth, *just in front of you!* Jesus was such as you are; not sinful, that He could not be; but in all else like you—poor, and suffering, as you are. Now, put your foot on the first rung of the ladder, His manhood, and His bloody sacrifice upon the cross. Trust that, and you shall climb till you ascend where the full Deity of the incarnate Savior blazes forth! And you shall rejoice in His second advent, and all the splendors of His future reign. Tonight you may leave those higher things alone. Begin at the *bottom* of the ladder, and commence to climb! The Lord help you! The Lord bless you! May He lay His hand on you at this moment, poor sinner! That will melt your heart! That will cheer your spirit! That will give you life from the dead! May He do it for His name's sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—DANIEL 10.**

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—820, 260, 761.**

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# GONE, GONE FOREVER

## NO. 1296

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 28, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And as your servant was busy here and there, he was gone.”  
1 Kings 20:40.***

THE parable which the prophet acted before Ahab was simple and natural. A soldier in the heat of the fight was charged by an officer to take care of an important prisoner. “Keep this man,” he said, “and if you allow him to escape, your life shall answer for it, or you shall pay a talent of silver.” The soldier’s one business from that moment was to look after his captive; he had received command to do so from his superior officer, and his first and last work was to see that the prisoner was safely kept. However, he had other things to do belonging to himself—his family and the like, and turning his thoughts in that direction, he forgot his charge, and the prisoner very naturally seized the opportunity to escape, and so the soldier exclaims, “While I was busy here and there, he was gone.” The neglectful guard had no cause to be surprised that such was the case, but he was not prepared to bear the penalty, and therefore he came before the king to ask that he might be pardoned for his neglect. The king replied at once, “You have stated your case, and decided it; your own carelessness has lost us the captive, and you know the penalty.” This story was originally told in order to touch the conscience of King Ahab, who had allowed Benhadad, king of Syria, to escape when providence had put the cruel monarch into his hands on purpose that he might receive his doom. Ahab is no more, but this Scripture is not, therefore, like a spent shell, there is truth and power in it! Its teaching is applicable to us also. Ahab is gone to his account, and the dogs have licked his blood; we may forget the guilty monarch, and incline our own ears and hearts to hear what the parable may have to do with us. We, too, have received a charge—have we neglected it? We have had time and opportunity within our keeping—have they gone? Let us search and see whether it is so or not. When the rebellious king had received this warning he went to his house heavy and displeased, and it may be that the subject of this morning will be far from agreeable to many, yet will it be well for their souls if they become heavy with the burden of repentance and displeased with themselves. Oh that the Spirit of God would speak home to all our hearts, and save us from a course of life which may cost us a thousand bitter regrets!

**I.** And first let us think of THE OBLIGATION which the text suggests, that we may solemnly admit that we are under a higher obligation still. This man being engaged in warfare was bound to obey the orders of his superior officer; that officer put into his custody a prisoner, saying, “Keep this man,” and from that moment he was under an obligation from which

nothing could free him. It is a law of discipline in the army that what a man is bid to do by legitimate authority he must do, and therefore, the man's chief business was to detain his captive till he could hand him over to the officer. Dear friends, you and I are under personal obligation from the moment of our entrance upon years of responsibility, and that obligation is this—to serve, honor, and glorify God. Every man is bound to serve his Creator, and live to His glory; that this is most just is clear as the sun in the heavens if we will but think a little. Alas, it is a subject upon which some men have *never* thought, nor will they *care* to think. Of *themselves* they have been more than a little thoughtful; their duty to their neighbor they have also in some measure considered, but their obligation to God does not seem to have ever crossed their minds; they forget God, and live, in fact, as if there were none, or as if they were not bound to serve Him! The practical language of their life is like that of Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" They would not be unjust to a neighbor, but they practice constant injustice towards their Maker! The prophet asks, "will a man rob God?" But, alas, thousands of lives are one long robbery of the Almighty, one perpetual disregard of claims founded upon eternal justice!

That we are bound to serve God is clear, because *we derive our being from Him*. We would never have existed if it had not been for His power; we would cease to exist at this instant if that power did not sustain us in being. Surely that existence which was originated by God should be spent to His honor, and the being which hourly depends upon Him should be used for His glory! Children owe obedience to their parents, and much more do creatures owe a debt to their Creator—that debt is a consecrated life—a debt which is always due since the life is daily being maintained by fresh divine power.

*It was for this end that the Almighty made us*, and for nothing short of this, that we might glorify God and enjoy Him forever. When a man fashions a vessel or a tool, it is that it may answer the purpose for which he designed it, and if it does not answer his design he casts it away. What man will keep a horse or a cow if it yields him no benefit? And if a dog never acknowledged you as its master, who among you would long call it your own? God has made us that we may glorify Him, and if we do *not* honor Him we miss the end and object of our being. I care not what you do or what you are; though you should be owners of a score of counties, if you love not God your soul is poor and degraded; though men should set you on a column high in the air, and account you a hero, if you have not lived for God you have lived in vain! As the vine which yields no cluster is useless, so is a man who has not honored God. As an arrow which falls short of the mark, as a fig tree which yields no figs, as a candle which smokes but yields no light, as a cloud without rain, and a well without water, is a man who has not served the Lord. He has led a wasted life—a life to which the flower and glory of existence are lacking. Call it not life at all, but write it down as animated death!

*To the service of God a thousand voices call us all*. I know not where we can walk without hearing those impressive calls. Lift up your eyes to the

midnight sky, and every star exclaims, "We shine to Jehovah's praise—do you?" Cast your eye upon the field bespangled with living jewels, for each flower whispers, "I bloom to the great Maker's praise—do you?" Listen to the birds, whose tuneful choirs are occupied with the praises of the Lord, and they inquire of you, "Have you no music for the Lord?" The very dust that is borne in the air moves according to His laws, and asks us why we disobey. Everything above, beneath, around, majestic or minute, if we will but listen, all say to us, "We are all the servants of the Most High, why wait *you* not within His courts?" Man's obligation to serve his Maker is even greater than that of any other of the creatures around him, for he is the Maker's masterpiece in which divine Skill is seen to perfection; his body was curiously worked by the fingers of infinite wisdom, and as for his soul, it is of the loftiest order of created things, and is akin to angels, so that if any created being ought to serve the Lord by whom it lives, *man* is that creature! Moreover, standing first in the scale of visible beings, having dominion over all the works of God's hands, man should be first in loyalty to the great King; to him the laborious ox bows its willing neck; for him the horse foregoes the wild freedom of the plains; to him the sheep yield their fleece for his covering, and their flesh for his food; for man the fish leap from the stream, and the birds drop from the wing; he has dominion over all the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air, and reigns as God's vicegerent over the brute creation—all this, and yet this exalted being forgets the sovereign who has lent him His authority, and denies the homage which is due to his liege Lord! Brothers and sisters, it ought not to be; gratitude exclaims against the revolt of a being so highly favored!

A great argument for our obligation to glorify God is found in the fact that *in this service men find their highest honor and their truest happiness*. To serve some beings would be degrading; to be the vessel of the devil is to bring upon yourself disgrace and sorrow, but to serve the Lord is more honorable than to wear a prince's ermine, and as for happiness the angels find it heaven, and redeemed spirits acknowledge it to be their bliss, while those on earth who most fully do the will of the Lord confess themselves to be the happiest of men. It is a seraph's glory that he gives glory to God, and there we must find ours. friend, you and I are so constituted that we never can be right unless we run in the groove of obedience to the great First Cause; this is the orbit in which we can safely move; all else is chaos, and leads to misery. Wander out of the way of God's Honor and you stumble among the dark mountains, and lose yourself amidst tangled briars and piercing thorns. If, then, it is man's health, happiness, and honor that he should serve God, surely his duty lies in that direction, and it is the height of folly to neglect it!

Let this, also, never be far from our memories, that *there is a day coming when we must all of us give an account of our lives, and the account will be based upon this inquiry—How have we served and glorified God?* In that tremendous day, whose awful splendor shall cause the pomp of kingdoms to turn pale, the one great question will be, "How have you lived in reference to God?" Remember our Lord's own description of the

judgment. He makes service rendered to Himself the test and touchstone; “I was hungry and you gave Me meat; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink.” What you did for Him, or what you did *not* do for Him, will be the hinge on which judgment shall turn! True, your actions towards your fellow men enter into that account, for the clothing of the naked, and the giving of drink to the thirsty are introduced as evidence of service done for the Lord, but then these deeds were done as unto Him, and were part and parcel of that service which is His due. If there is nothing done unto the Lord, if to the Lord no reverence is rendered, if to the Lord no love is returned, then there can be no sentence for you but this, “Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

I would leave this point, but I think I hear the inquiry—“Are we, then, to leave our business, shut up our shops, forsake our families, betake ourselves to solitude, and spend our time in prayer and devotion?” I did not say that! I have not even *hinted* at such folly! I said that you are under obligation to serve God—surely this does not imply that you are to avoid those services? When the Lord bade Jonah serve Him in Nineveh, was it not flat rebellion which led him to flee into Tarshish? Certainly that was not the way to keep His command! In your own callings, where God has placed you, you are to glorify Him. It is not fighting a battle for a man to run out of it, to avoid the contest and the trial which comes out of it—yet that is exactly what it comes to when a man gets to a monastery or a woman to a nunnery! Thus duty is *shirked* under the pretence of more easily fulfilling it, and God’s glory is sacrificed under the plea of promoting it! Did He make men to be immured in cells, or women to be buried alive in religious prisons? ‘Tis an ill use to which to put an intelligent being, and a sheer waste of the Creator’s revenues! You cannot win the battle by quitting the field. Stand where your Captain has placed you, fight in His strength, and endure till victory crowns you. There is a way of glorifying God in your present position whatever it may be. A merchant or a working man, a mistress or a nurse girl, a king or a pauper, has each one a work to do; we are, or ought to be, all servants in the one great house, doing this or that as the Master appoints, and all equally glorifying God as His grace enables us. Our service to God lies not out of the way of daily life, but in it; see to it, then, that you are diligent therein!

“But are we not to serve our fellow men?” Who said you were not? There are two tables of the law; the first contains the precepts towards God, the second the commands towards men—but they are both God’s law. He that does good to his fellow men for *God’s sake* is serving God; in fact this is one of the noblest ways in which men serve God when they pursue the good of their fellows that thereby God may be glorified. Still, man is not our master, but our fellow *servant*. The Lord has an undivided right to us, to every motion of our body, to every faculty of our mind, and every capacity of our entire nature; for, “It is He that made us, and not we ourselves, we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.”

**II.** Secondly, our text contains A CONFESSION—“*He was gone.*” The man was under obligation to take care of his prisoner, but he had to con-

fess that he was gone. I anxiously desire to deal with your consciences as I will deal with my own, while I ask how many of us have to confess that though under obligations to God we have not fulfilled them? Alas, it may be said of many an opportunity for glorifying God, "It is gone."

First, we have lost many opportunities for serving God which arise out of the periods of life. We were children, and when the little child brings Jesus its "Hosanna," its early praises are very sweet to Him. Ah, boys, below here, and children all around me, I hope you will not have to say, "My childhood is gone; I cannot praise Jesus with a girl's voice or a boy's tongue now, for my childhood passed away in disobedience and folly. Oh, how lovely would I have looked in Christ's eyes if I had served Him as a child, but it is too late now, the bud is withered, the early dew is dried up, and my morning sacrifice is not offered." As for you, young men and women, it is a great thing to serve God in your youth. There is a fire and vigor, and elasticity of life about our earliest manhood which we lose when we arrive at the prime of life; and Jesus deserves to have us at our very best. It is a glorious thing to give our brightest days to Jesus, but I know there are some here who have already to look back upon early manhood wasted and gone—gone forever! Then we come upon another period in which we become heads of households with a family of children about us; here are golden opportunities; the young trees can be bent, the pliant branches can be inclined this way or that while yet young, but they soon grow beyond our culture. Ah, men and women, who have lived without God all the time that you have had children under your roof, and now they have all grown up without the fear of God, with what grief must you confess your opportunities gone from your grasp! You cannot influence your children now; that opportunity is gone past recall. You cannot talk to your son now, as you might have done when you could take the fair-haired boy upon your knee and kiss him and tell him of Jesus. Your daughter is a mother herself now, and you cannot speak to her as you could have done when she was a child at home. Those days of instruction and persuasion are *gone*. Perhaps I address some who were once in business, and had considerable influence over a large number of workmen and others, but they have now retired from active engagements, for the infirmities of age have come upon them. It is a sad fact if upon looking back they are obliged to say, "A thousand chances of doing good are gone; I am out of that condition and position which afforded me such means of usefulness, and now I mourn that I did not avail myself of them." Ah, my dear friend, it is sad for you if you have to look back so far, and to admit that your talent was buried in the earth, and brought in no interest for Jesus.

Another form of regret may arise out of the changes of our circumstances. A man had once considerable wealth, but a turn of providence has made him poor; it is a very unhappy thing if he has to confess, "I did not use my substance for God when I had it. I was an unfaithful steward, and wasted my Master's goods, and now I am no longer trusted by Him, my property is gone." Another may have possessed considerable ability of mind, but through sickness or declining vigor he may not be able now to

do what he once did; it is grievous if he has to say, "Oh that I had spoken for Christ when I could speak; oh that I had used my brain for Him while yet my thoughts were clear and my perceptions quick; but now, alas, my capacity is gone." To rue a change and to remember that you neglected to use your opportunity must be very painful, and yet it falls to the lot of very many. He is poor indeed who once was rich, and used not his wealth for God! And he is fallen indeed who, when he stood aloft, used not his standing for his Maker's praise.

Remember also, dear friends—I must ask each one to take it home to himself—the time which has not been employed in Christ's service is gone. If you have not lived unto God, how many years have now gone with some of you? I pray you now to number the years which have rolled away. Your candle is burning low in the socket, and as yet your work is not begun! Time is going and eternity approaching; will you never wake up?

As time has gone so also have many persons gone to whom we might have been useful. Thousands have passed away during our short span of life. Have you not had to say, "I ought to have spoken to So-and-So who was in my employment, but he died without hope before I had warned him—and he is gone where no words of mine can ever reach him"? Oh, how many have passed away since I first began to address this audience, and if I could charge myself with unfaithfulness to you in preaching the word of God, how would I have to regret each funeral, and to remember each tomb, and say, "There lies one for whom I can render no acceptable account at the last, for I have been unfaithful, and kept back the Truth of God." I thank God that I have not this to burden my heart. Do not let it be so with any of you!

Sometimes, however, the confession of the thing gone concerns noble ideas and resolves. You had great ideas, and if they had but been embodied in action something good would have come of them; but where are the ideas now? Were they not smothered in their birth? You resolved to do great things; the plans were thoroughly arranged, and your whole heart was eager to carry them out; but delay chilled the goodly purposes till they all died of cold, and they lie buried in forgetfulness. You dreamed well, but there you stopped. As for actual work for the Lord, you had other fish to fry, and therefore you failed to cast out your net; you allowed the season for activity to go by, and so your excellent ideas and resolutions melted into thin air, and they are gone.

Yes, and there may be some here from whom a vast wealth of opportunity has passed away. They have been blessed with great means, and a large substance, and if these had been laid out for Jesus Christ year after year many a lagging agency would have been quickened, and many a holy enterprise which has had to be suspended for lack of means might have gone on gloriously. They could have supplied the sinews of war in the form of money, but they have stinted the Lord's bank and kept the work small and struggling. Their gold and their silver, according to their profession, belonged to Christ, but they have kept them to themselves. What account will they render for this? I am sure that *I* cannot tell! Let

*them* look to it! Others have possessed *mental* endowments; they were men of clear thought and fluent speech, and they could have led the way in many good works, but they have kept in the rear, and lived in indolence. How will they answer for this? I would not be in their places for the world! O my God, if I had a hair upon my head that I had not consecrated to You, I could not dare to live, lest I be found at heart a traitor to You! Yet are there hundreds, but I must not judge them, their Master will judge them at the last, who call themselves Christians, whose consecration does not go so deep but what you might peel it off with your fingernail. Scratch a Russian, they say, and you find a Tartar; and so there are some professors who need but a slight brushing, and you will find unconsecrated self beneath; they have not given themselves up in deed and of a truth unto God. It cuts me to the quick to remember that I have met with men whose possessions have amounted to millions, who have given me an earnest grip of the hand, and thanked me for the gospel I have preached, and have expressed the deepest interest in the Lord's work, and yet they have known its needs and have given nothing to carry it on, and they have even passed into eternity and left nothing of their substance to assist the cause which they professed to love. The smallness of the gifts of some religious rich men staggers me beyond expression, I know not how to comprehend them. Are they hypocrites? Or do they misunderstand their position? He who does great wonders knows how to save; but I remember also that He whose fan is in His hand and who will thoroughly purge His floor, knows how to judge between hypocritical profession and real consecration to His service! That barren fig tree of which we read this morning, and that servant who wrapped his talent in a napkin—those parables mean something, and they mean much to any of you who have large talents committed to your trust, and who are doing next to nothing in your Master's service.

Worst of all, brothers and sisters, what will be the cry of a man when he comes to die, when, dying, he looks back upon his whole life and says, "I was busy here and there, and I did nothing for Christ; my life is gone"? And then he looks into the dim future, and, seeing no brightness there, he cries, "Woe is me, my soul is lost; I tried to gain the world, and I have lost my soul. Everything that I did with so much toil and effort now turns out to be mere trifling, for my soul is lost forever, and all is lost forever. Would God I had never been born, for what a dreadful thing to have been born and to have lived and missed the objective for which I was created!" May this dreadful ruin of soul, life, and *everything* never happen to any one of you, *and yet, it may*.

**III.** Thirdly, we have before us THE EXCUSE which was made—"As *your servant was busy here and there, he was gone*." The excuse is, "I was so busy"; which, first of all, is no excuse, because a soldier has no business to have any business but that which his commander allots to him. His sole duty was to watch his prisoner, and the one great business of every man here below is to glorify God. "But have we no secular business?" you ask. I have already told you that you are to glorify God *in* your daily business, and *by* that business. You will not need to sell a yard of

calico or a pound of sugar for less because you seek God's glory; you will not, probably, need to spend five minutes less in your worldly business in order to serve God. Consecrate all that you do by doing it unto Him, and then do as much as you like. It may make a difference in your mode of doing it—it should do so where that mode is not what it should be; but you can serve God in and by your common calling. Religion does not interfere with work, but sanctifies it! So, being busy is no excuse for being ungodly.

When the man said he was "busy here and there," he cut away the only excuse he could have had, because that showed he had *ability*. If he had said, "I was sick and could not stir; I had lost an arm, and could not hold the prisoner; I was smitten with a fit, and was unconscious"—there would have been an excuse; but no, he was "busy here and there," and if he could do one thing, he could have done another thing. If he had ability enough in one way, why did he not turn that ability to use in the way which his duty required?

Then, again, what he had done was evidently done to please himself. He was "busy here and there." Who told him to be "busy here and there"? He set *himself* work which was not cut out for him. Very well, then he was serving *himself* instead of his Master, and was robbing his Lord of his time and ability in order to give it to himself; making himself his own king, and casting off his allegiance to the Lord.

Still, he says he was "busy." Now let us see what he has accomplished. Here is a man who has been busy all his life, and what has he done? Done? He has made a good deal of money! That is something, is it not? He has collected a great store—for *himself*. Not having served the Lord, but having lived to make money, he has evidently thought more of gold than of God, and so he has been an idolater, and has thought less of his Maker than of his own pocket. He has despised the Lord and preferred his own gain. That is clear, and what is this but to rebel against the Most High? What a poor thing hoarding money is! When you are dead what can your wealth do for you? Yes, those horses will have more plumes on their heads, and there will be more men in shabby black to get you off the empty hearse, and drink at the public house on the way home from your funeral. No doubt there will be more tomfoolery over you than there would have been if you had been a poor villager, and had been decently borne on men's shoulders to your grave; and there will be more quarrelling among your heirs, and perhaps a longer lawsuit over your property, and more pickings for the lawyers than there would have been had you heaped up less of the yellow earth. To have it said, "He died worth an immense sum," is the consummation in a great number of cases, but what is that? Is the dead man better off for having been a millionaire? To use money rightly is a pleasure, but to die and leave it all unused is utter misery. To heap it up for others to squander is poor work, I had as soon break stones on the road. To be the devil's rake that another may be his pitchfork is a poor ambition. Yet this is the story of many men; they are busy here and there for selfish ends, and all hope of serving God is gone!

I hear one of you say, "My departed friend was not busy about wealth, he sought the love and honor of his fellow citizens, and aspired to honor." Yes, but if he served not the Lord it is clear that he loved the praise of men better than the praise of God, and what good can that do him now that he lies in the cold grave? There was a record of his name in *The Times*, and many people said, "Another eminent man is gone," but what of that? What is *honor* when a man lies stark and stiff within his winding sheet?

Here is another man who says, "But I have lived for learning; I have sought after knowledge, as for hidden treasure." But, my dear friend, if you have not lived for *God*, you have thought every knowledge worth having but the knowledge of the Most High! You have arranged and classified the different orders of flies and beetles, or put into scientific order the flowers of the field and the stars of the firmament—I do not decry your knowledge, on the contrary, I value it, but how is it that you neglect its highest branch? Science of every kind may wisely be sought after, but not at the expense of serving God! The naturalist can readily serve God in his researches and discoveries; every science can be used for God's glory; but if the science is pursued apart from the glory of God, it is as insulting as if a man should say, "Great God, Your creatures I wish to understand, but as for Yourself, I care not to know or honor You." Is not this a grievous fault?

What has the man who has forgotten his God been doing? Well, some men cannot give half as good an account as I have already given. Doing? Why, some of them have lived for seeking pleasure and killing time! Too many in this luxurious city are only clothes horses for tailors and milliners, or shall I call them patent digesters, dissolving daily great stores of good meat and drink, and so on. Their one question in the morning is, "How shall we amuse ourselves today?" A *rat* lives a better life than the mere gentleman about town who has nothing to do—at least the rat does not consume so much, and having no conscience it has not as much to answer for. This creature, six feet in his boots, has not the sixth part of anything good to recommend him! His soul seems to be of no use to him but to act as salt to keep his body from corrupting. It is an awful thing to be a man and yet no man! There are plenty of such about. For all the good they are you might cut better men out of brown paper, they are all sham and show. Alas, this is true of women as well as men, for the Scripture says, "She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives."

But what are some busy about? Alas, they are even worse than the poor fools I have just now described, for their pleasure is found in vice; they are busy in indulging their vile passions and eternity alone will reveal the characters ruined, and the lives blasted by their wickedness! They are gentlemen all the same, you know, and, having plenty of money, they can marry any man's daughter. Shame that it should be so. Ah me, what a wretched thing it will be to them to have lived a rotten life, and to have been busy only about how to indulge base passions at the cost of others' souls!

Some who think themselves a better sort have lived to criticize others, to find fault with the way in which earnest men are serving God, to tell how things *ought* to be done though they never do anything themselves, to show the mistakes of the virtuous and successful, and to weave plans and projects which they never carry out. They look into the future and see what is going to happen and into the past and see what ought to have happened, and to spin fine theories, and I know not what—where can be the good of all this? And yet in such things many a life has been frittered away, laboriously wasted in scheming how to do nothing at all! Oh, may that never be your lot, to be busy here and there, and thus to let life leak away while none of its work is done!

Oh that I could speak with a voice which could reach every heart! I grudge the smiles which I caused just now, but I only created them that they might help me to thrust graver thoughts into your minds. Brothers and sisters, is it not a sad thing to have neglected that which is evidently the main business of life? If I am God's creature, I must have been meant to serve God, and if I have not served Him, even as a creature, I have not done what I was meant for; but if I profess to be a Christian, then the thing assumes a more solemn form. Have I professed to be bought with Jesus' blood, and not to be my own, and have I lived as if I *were* my own? I profess to be filled with the Spirit of God by being regenerate—have I lived like one who has been born-again? If I have been baptized upon a profession of my faith, I gave myself up to be buried in the water professing that I was dead to the world—have I been dead to the world? I said that I was going to live in newness of life as one risen from the dead—have I so lived? Oh, professing Christians, have you been true to your professions, or have those professions been only lies? Conscience, answer me, I charge you! O Spirit of God, quicken the conscience of everyone here, so that none may be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin! To serve God is the only thing worth living for, and when we lie upon the sick bed and begin to look into the future, we judge it to be so. It makes a good man greedy to serve God when he thinks that his life will soon be over. He condemns himself for every wasted hour, and laments that his every faculty has not been spurred to the uttermost in the service of Him who bought him with His blood! I never yet heard regrets from dying men that they had done too much for Christ, or lived too earnestly for Him, or won too many souls, or given too much of their substance to the cause of God—the regrets all lie the other way. God save us from them for His mercy's sake!

**IV.** Fourthly, there remains THE UNALTERABLE FACT—"While I was busy here and there, he was gone." Could you not seize him again? "No, he is gone." Is there no making up for past neglect? No recapturing the missing one? No, he is gone, clean gone. I want you all to remember this morning that if any portion of life has not been spent in God's service *it is gone*. Time past is gone. You can never have it back again, not even the last moment which just now glided by. Go, gather the morning dew which has been exhaled by the sun; go, gather the clouds which yesterday poured forth their rain; go, gather the sunbeams which fell upon the

earth last summer! If you cannot accomplish any of those tasks, do not even *hope* to recover the time which has departed. It is gone; omnipotence itself cannot give it back to you!

With the time, remember, your *life* has gone, and there is no living it over again. We have sometimes been foolish enough to say, "Oh if I could live my life over again!" Why say it? You cannot live it over again; it is gone! Whatever omnipotent grace may do, it cannot alter your past life; it will be eternally what you have made it. When the moments were like hot wax, you set your seal upon them, and the seal is there forever. What your life has been the truth reports it forever; throughout eternity it will not be possible for you to change the complexion of a single moment in which you have lived. You cannot alter the past, though you should forever sigh, "Oh, that I had availed myself of that opportunity! Oh, that I had then been self-denying! Oh, that I had abounded in work which glorified Christ." You cannot recall an act, nor unsay a word, nor revoke a negligence.

Remember, also, that future diligence will not be able to recover wasted time. You may hold your next captive, but you cannot get back the prisoners that have already escaped you. Young man, you are not yet twenty-five, and there is a grand time before you. Use it, use it well; but you cannot get back the years between 15 and twenty-five. They are gone, and if misspent, are gone forever. A man of 60 may yet do something, but what of the long wasted years already past? I suppose Luther was past 40 before he began his life work, and yet he accomplished a splendid result for Christ. But even Luther could not get back his years of unregeneracy and superstition. Time is on the wing; use it *now*. Do not loiter, for you can pluck no feather from the wing of time to make it loiter too. It flies, and if you would use it, use it now. Awake yourself, and sleep no longer. If you would indeed be true to God who made you and to Christ who bought you with His precious blood, use yourself now to the fullest conceivable extent for the glory of your Lord and Master.

How shall we conclude? This sermon sweeps like a rough north wind right through us all. What shall we do? I will suggest to you what to do. Let us all fly to Jesus, who can forgive the guilt of the past! Is there one man or woman here who can say, "I have nothing to confess; no negligence can be laid at my door"? I must plainly declare that I am not one. I have much to mourn over. Friends, I will be chief mourner, and I will lead the way to the cross. There let us bemoan ourselves before our Savior. His precious blood can make us clean! We will look to it; we will trust in its merits. We are clean if we believe in Him. That righteousness of His, without a flaw, can cover us; let us put it on, and stand accepted in the Beloved.

When this is done, what next? Let us come to Christ again and ask Him to heal us of the lethargy of disobedience which has taken hold on us so long. Some of us have forgotten our God, we have lived as if we were under no obligations to Him, and even those of us who have been quickened by His Holy Spirit have not served Him as we should. Lord, let

Your precious blood heal us now, that we may think only of You and of Your glory, and may we from now on live for You alone!

Once more, let us come to Christ that we may feel new motives and receive new inspirations. Have you never heard of men who have had a mighty turn? They have met with something which has given a life-long twist to their nature, so that they are new men. You knew them very well one day, but when you met them the next time you scarcely recognized them; they had become so changed and so absorbed by a subject of which they began to talk at once, to you. You thought them strange, but I wish we were each one strange in that same way! I would that my Lord Jesus Christ would meet every one of you this afternoon, and reveal Himself to you! I do not ask that you should see Him with your *bodily* eyes, but I wish your *spiritual* eyes might be opened that you might see Him, and that He would show you His hands, His feet, and His side, and say to you, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, and I have given Myself for you. Behold, I lay upon you these My pierced hands. You are Mine, and therefore I charge you live as one that is alive from the dead. From now on as surely as My Father sent Me into the world so I send you."

May this happen to each one of us, and then we shall lead new lives, and those lives will be so much to God's glory, that men will take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus in some new and strange way, and have learned of Him! God bless you to this end, for Christ's sake Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
LUKE 13:1-9; 19:12-26; 1 KINGS 20:35-43.**

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—196, 645, 769.**

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# MY GOD

## NO. 1297

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 30, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“My God.”  
Psalm 91:2.*

IF YOU were to find honey in a tree, and should wish to give some of it to your friends, I can imagine you cautiously taking it up in your hands, carrying it very carefully; and yet when you reached the company, you would find to your sorrow a large part of it would have oozed out between your fingers, so that you had failed to convey to others what was so delicious to yourself. I fear I shall be in the same condition when this sermon is done, and therefore I am the more eager to assure you at the beginning that the honey which I wish you to partake of is indeed of the very richest kind! My text has been, to my own heart sweeter than honey and the honeycomb! Have you ever been in the Alps, or in some other region where the scenery is peculiarly impressive? And has there happened a singular conjunction of sun and cloud, of brightness and shadow which has made the view before you to be transcendently sublime, or surpassingly beautiful? If so, when you have reached your companions, you have tried to tell them what you have seen, but in proportion as the scene has been exquisite and charming, you have been conscious of your inability to convey to them any satisfactory idea of the spectacle. If it had been a commonplace affair you could have accomplished the description, and conveyed your impression of it to other minds, but because of its being so altogether superior and out of the common way, you have failed after the most earnest endeavors to succeed, and you have exclaimed, “Ah, you should have been there yourselves! Had you seen with your own eyes, you would then have understood my descriptions, but now the task of description is hopeless. Had you been there you would have known that I do not exaggerate; on the contrary, you would have felt that when I had spoken under the greatest excitement, I fell far short of the admiration which the scene awakens.” It happens to me in happy hours that a text of Scripture becomes peculiarly delicious to my heart, even as marrow and fatness to the feaster, and these two words have been so. They filled my spirit with sweetness even to the fullest, but I fear that I cannot convey that sweetness to you. I have seen in these two words such a wonderful display of divine condescension, of the Lord's favor to His chosen, and of the intense delight which springs out of that condescension and favor that had I but been in the pulpit at the time, I could have preached with freedom, but now I do not find it so easy. Expression limps today where enjoyment *leaped* yesterday! I pray God the Holy Spirit may help you to see in the text what I have seen in it, even if I cannot

point it out to you, and then our meditation will be remarkably delightful and profitable to us. May the Spirit of God bring fullness of meaning out of the text to your understanding, and to your hearts, and may we all rejoice together as we go out of this Tabernacle, each one of us saying “The Lord is my portion, says my soul.”

I. First let us think of these TWO WORDS TOGETHER. And to get at them, let us see when they have occurred in sacred history; let us consider some of the more remarkable and special occasions upon which children of God have used these two words together, and have said “My God.”

First, this is *the young convert’s early confession*. The first instance we will give is Ruth, who lovingly said to Naomi, “Where you dwell I will dwell: where you go I will go: where *you* lodge I will lodge: your people shall be my people, and your God my God.” That last resolution was the avowal of a *spiritual* change; she might have been determined to lodge and to abide with her mother-in-law, and there would have been but little in it; but when it came to this—“Your God shall be *my* God,” then there was hope that she had been delivered by the grace of God from the bondage of idolatry, and had come to put her trust under the wings of Jehovah, the living God! Ah, dear young converts, if the Lord has revealed your sinful state to you, and has led you to Jesus Christ to find life and salvation, you will come forward and give yourself to the Lord, and declare, “I will be Your servant, for You are my God.”—

**“Lord, You are mine, forever mine,  
My heart is filled with joy divine!  
Henceforth You shall my treasure be,  
And I will find my all in Thee.”**

You will next give yourself to the church according to the will of God, and you will tell the church that you do so because from now on the God of the church and the God of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be your God. You mean to dwell with the Lord’s people, and live and die with them, for their God is your God.

Some of you have lately been converted, or profess to have been so. I trust your profession is thoroughly truthful, but be sure you examine yourselves. Have you taken God to be your God? Not to be a mere name to you, nor as a sacred word to sing about and pray about—but as truly *God* to you? Is God in very deed your *God*? If He is, He will rule your soul; He will dominate your whole spirit, and sway His scepter over your whole heart. No man is truly converted until God takes His right place in relationship to him. The wicked forget God; the men of Belial defy God; the infidel denies God, but the child of God acknowledges God, submits to His authority, and gives Him the throne of his heart. He does not give the Lord a *secondary* place, and permit *self* to be first, for that would be to *deify self* and insult the Lord! He makes God to be *God*, that is first and sole in authority and power! This is a sure index of true conversion—when God is *God* in your soul. As I have already said, God is not God to a great many; He is but a name, and nothing more to them; but when He becomes *God*—and it is a great word that—when He takes the place

which the Creator, the Redeemer, the God should occupy, then is the soul converted indeed! Now, whether we were converted yesterday, or have known the Lord for 20, 30, or 40 years, I trust we can address our mother, the church, and say as Ruth said to Naomi, "Where you lodge I will lodge: your people shall be my people, and your God my God."

These words, in the next place, may be regarded as *the statement of the Christian's belief*; I mean here not merely his first confession of it, but his later statement of it; here is our creed and our confession of faith! Take Thomas for the illustration. He has been very skeptical. Poor Thomas! He seems to have had too much brain, and too little heart; he was always for fighting his way through intricate questions, and for answering tough objections; if he were alive now, if the grace of God had not improved him, he would have been a "modern thought" divine, a critical brother suggesting more problems than all the rest of us could solve! He must have tokens, marks, and evidences, or else he will not believe; but he is highly indulged, and the Savior permits him to put his finger into the prints of the nails, and his hand into His side, and when he has done so, Thomas by a strange but blessed logic infers the Deity of Christ from His wounds. He was the first, I believe, who had ever done so, but certainly not the last, and having from the very wounds of his Lord's body inferred His Deity, Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" In this plain, decided testimony to our Lord's divinity, we all unite. It is the heartfelt confession of faith of every Christian in reference to the Lord Jesus; there is no room for two opinions on that point; if there are any professing Christians in this world who do not call Christ their God—well, brothers and sisters, we are sorry for them, and pray the Lord to give them spiritual life and light; but as for us, the man who bled on Calvary is "very God of very God" to us, and that in the broadest and deepest sense. As the angels bow before Him, so also do we; we count Him "worthy to receive divine honor and power." There are many differences of opinion in the church of God which may be tolerated, but this is beyond all controversy, and can never be a moot point; here our protests against error must be firm and unmistakable. I admired a remark that was once very merrily made by good William Gadsby when a Unitarian chapel had been erected near a Baptist place of worship. The story has been told to me that someone in the vestry was greatly mourning over the circumstance, and saying what a sad opposition it was. Gadsby said, "Well, man, I do not see any opposition in it." "But surely it is a great opposition, Mr. Gadsby; they deny the Deity of Christ!" "Why, man," said Gadsby, "that is no opposition! Suppose you kept a baker's shop and sold good bread, and a man came and opened an ironmonger's shop opposite; would you call that an opposition? Certainly not, it is a different line altogether." And so it is. Where we preach the Deity of Christ, that is one line of things; but where that is denied, we *cannot* regard it as another form of *Christianity*! It is a different thing, altogether, quite as different as iron would be from bread. The Socinian is nearer akin to the Muslim than to the Christian; he who does not acknowledge the Deity of Jesus

disowns Him altogether; I cannot see how Jesus Christ can be anything but one of two things—either the Son of God, or else a gross impostor who allowed His disciples to think him divine—and used the virtues of His character to support His claim; all the worse an impostor because He had a fine moral sense, and yet employed even virtue's self to aid His blasphemous ambition. He must have been either God or an arch-deceiver! Brothers and sisters, we will have no mincing of matters about that point! Charity is all very well, but the truth of God comes first. "First pure, then peaceable," is a good barometer for our judgment on such points. On the matter of our Lord's Godhead we cannot for an instant hesitate; we do not merely believe Jesus Christ to be God, but we risk our eternal future upon that truth of God! I am a lost man, I know, and for me there can be nothing but eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord if the Savior, Jesus Christ, is not divine! But He *is* divine! This we will maintain in the teeth of all men as our confession of faith—Jesus Christ, the Son of the Highest, very God of very God, is my Lord and *my God!*

Thus, *my God* is the first and last confession of faith of those who are under the new covenant; it is the utterance both of the babe in grace and of the more advanced Christian.

Furthermore, my brothers and sisters, the words, "My God," have often been used to declare *the determination of the believer when he has been surrounded by opponents and persecutors*. Grandly did old Micaiah use this expression when the false priests were round about him! Prophets who pretended to be inspired delivered their oracles, and old Micaiah said, "As the Lord *my God* lives. Whatever *my God* says unto me that will I speak." Neither less nor more did he speak, because he believed in Jehovah as being his God, and submitted himself entirely to Jehovah's sway. The false priests worshipped Baal, Moloch, and Ashtaroth—but old Micaiah cared not what they worshipped—he knew who was his God, and he avowed his God to their teeth. O, you who call yourselves the people of God, be always ready to stand up for Jehovah in whatever company you may be, for there are many gods and many lords in our land at this time, and multitudes of professed Christians have turned aside from worshipping the God of Israel! They have set up new gods, and the Eternal is despised. The Old Testament, they tell us, is an uncouth and harsh revelation; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not at all the God of their fancy, for He is too terrible, too severe, too righteous, too just! They want a milder, gentler God, and they pretend that Jesus Christ has revealed quite a different Deity from the God of the Old Testament. Ah, brothers and sisters, in this they greatly err, for the Lord changes not, and is the same today under the gospel as He was yesterday under the Law! We believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "The God of the whole earth shall He be called." We worship the God of Israel, the God who made the heavens and the earth, the God who divided the Red Sea, the God who spoke in thunder from Sinai; we believe that Jesus Christ has not come to reveal to us a new Deity, but to de-

clare unto us the God who is from the beginning. Ours is the song of Zacharias—"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began." "This God is our God forever and ever; He shall be our guide even unto death."—

***"The God of Abraham's praise is  
Who reigns enthroned above,  
Ancient of everlasting days,  
And God of love!  
Jehovah, Great I AM!  
By earth and heaven confessed,  
I bow, and bless  
Your sacred name,  
Forever blest!"***

The words "my God" may well express *the secret vow of the believer as he consecrates himself to the Most High*; of this we have an instance in the life of Jacob. He said, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace: then shall the Lord be *my God*." We have each said that, I hope, many times, when we have renewed our vows unto the Lord. Though we have known the Lord for 20 or 30 years, yet, as we have needed Him anew in time of trouble, or as He has revealed Himself to us afresh in a way of deliverance, we have laid hold upon Him by faith over and over again, and said, "Yes, He is *my God*." Have you ever felt your heart full to overflowing while thinking over such a text as this, "My Beloved is mine and I am His"? I do not know a more delightful contemplation for a quiet hour alone than to weigh each syllable of that promise, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Look it over, turn it over, taste it, feed on it, digest it, and see the mutual possession, even as in those other texts, "The Lord's portion is His people," and "The Lord is my portion, says my soul." Christ is ours, and we are Christ's. You cannot, dear friend, do better than oftentimes hand over again the title deeds of your soul to God, yes, not of your soul only, but of everything you have, for if you make an inventory of all you have to the last penny it is your Lord's. Even so is the Lord altogether yours, and you should often renew your grasp of Him. Take Him to be your only Lord and God as long as you live, and while others boast in their treasures, be it your joy to cry, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon the earth that I desire besides You!" Thus with two words, "*My God*," we avow our faith both in the presence of our enemies and before our Lord Himself.

But I cannot linger here. I must have you notice next, that these words, "My God" have sometimes afforded *the deepest possible comfort to children of God in times of terrible trouble*. When our dear Lord and Master was in His greatest woe—when all the waves and billows of Judgment were going over His soul, the exclamation which came from Him at the climax of His grief was, "My God! My God." True, it was attended with the question, "Why have You forsaken Me?" but still, as with a two-handed

grip, He seemed to get a hold of God when He said, “*My God! My God!*” Driven to extremity, He settled His heart on that one point. There was the anchor hold of His hope, “My God, My God.” He did not say, “My disciples.” They had all forsaken Him; He could not call on His mother and siblings—they were powerless to console. No arm, angelic or human, could minister to His aid; He was alone in the grasp of death, unsupported and unsustained, forsaken of earth and heaven, and left a prey to the powers of darkness; but this—this was the cry which kept Him alive, and gave Him strength to bear even to the end. “My God,” He said, “they have not robbed Me of You! My God, I will still appeal to You! Though You hide Your face and seem to forsake Me, yet I know You are still Mine, and I hold fast to You to the end! My God! My God!” You will never have to use those words in so dire an extremity of woe; but if you ever come into deep waters, may you have grace to say, “My God,” for if you do you will soon be enabled to shout, “It is finished.” “My God,” is a love note in days of peace, and a war cry for hours of battle; it is mighty in times of joy, but it is still more potent in nights of sorrow. The man who can say “My God,” is a match for death and hell; by that watchword he shall master sin and overthrow all the hosts of the world, the flesh, and the devil. In this sign you may conquer; the watchword of victory is, “My God.”

Once more. *Those words have been heard in cases precisely the opposite of deep distress.* When very marvelous deliverances have been enjoyed, the expression “My God” has frequently come from the lips of those who have experienced them. When Miriam took her timbrel, and went forth in the dance because God had overthrown Pharaoh and his hosts, she sang a song which Moses had composed for her, and you will remember that one of the verses was—“He is *my God*, and I will prepare Him a habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.” She had never reached that point, “He is my God,” until Pharaoh’s hosts and his chosen captains had been drowned in the Red Sea—then she felt proud that she had such a God, and her faith exulted as she beheld His arm made bare! Think also of Daniel, and that happy moment when he exultingly called Jehovah his God. When the prophet had been all night in the lion’s den, Darius comes, and with a plaintive cry he asks if Daniel yet lives; he is afraid the lions have devoured him. Do you notice Daniel’s answer? He says, “*My God* has sent His angel, and has shut the lions’ mouths.” You do not wonder that he said “My God,” do you? I do not think he could have coolly said “*God*—God has sent His angel.” He could not have spoken so coldly! The deliverance he had experienced, the great goodness of God in keeping him alive that night in the lions’ den, made him feel that he must, with arms of love and faith, embrace the Omnipotent Preserver, and call Him “My God.” Beloved, if you have experienced joyous deliverances of the same order, you have learned to say, “My God.” If you have seen your sins drowned in the Red Sea you have said, “My God,” and if the lions have been chained, and you have escaped their jaws, you, too, have said, “My God.” I earnestly hope that if the trouble which has now come upon you should prove to be sharper and more grievous than any

before, it may turn out to have been sent in order that you may say “My God,” with a deeper emphasis, and feel your soul more fully filled with the blessed meaning of those two matchless monosyllables!

So much, then, about the times when these words have been used; may the Spirit of God lead us to those specialties of experience in the midst of which these words shall become the frequent language of our hearts.

**II.** Briefly let us notice in the second place what this FIRST WORD, “MY”—“MY God” means. In what sense and respects can God be *mine*? He fills heaven and earth—can I call Him *mine*? “His tender mercies are over all His works.” I cannot set a hedge around His benevolence, or claim a monopoly of His compassion. How, then, can I call Him *mine*? He is so inconceivable! He is boundless in nature! His every Attribute is Infinite! A man may call a *province* his own, for if it is within his compass, he can travel over it, or sail round it. An emperor may call thousands of square miles his own but still, the eagle’s pinion or the dove’s light wing can soar from boundary to boundary of his empire! The broadest dominion may be mapped and measured, but how can I call that mine which I cannot even *conceive*? If my thought cannot compass it, shall my heart *possess* it? Yes, yes, so the text says! “My God.” love *possesses* what reason cannot even look upon!

Still, what does this mean, this daring appropriation? Why, it must mean this among other things—first, that *I acknowledge Him to be my God*. Whatever gods others may have, Jehovah is God to me! To whomever Jehovah may be a name, he is *God* to me and as Father, Son, and Spirit, three persons in one blessed Unity, I adore Him! He may be despised and rejected; there may be other names set up in competition with Him, but to me—to *me*—He is the only God! I wish that you in this assembly may all say at once, most heartily and distinctly—“Let others do as they will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” I hope you will avow yourselves this day to be His people, and take the God of Israel, the God and Father of your Lord Jesus Christ, to be your God. That is a part of the meaning. There is an acknowledging the Lord to be our God.

But, next, *the words imply a personal recognition of Him*. Venus and Jupiter and Bacchus—those ancient deities of Greece and Rome, we have all talked about them as myths and fictions, but as actual gods we ignore them—they are no gods to us! Some of us read classical books in our boyhood; I am sure they have done us more harm than good, but we have read them, and therefore we know all about the imaginary history and doings of those most disgusting gods and goddesses; but we are very well aware that they are dreams and lies—we know no such beings—they are nothing to us! We have heard also of Juggernauts, and of the thousands and millions of gods of the Hindus, but we have no acquaintance with them. I have felt thankful when I have seen likenesses of Krishna and Siva, that they were no relations of mine! There is one god with an elephant’s head, and another god with a cat’s head; I am delighted to

think that I was never on speaking terms with such monsters, and could never call them mine! If they are gods to others, they are not so to us—we know them not, their names we despise, and their pretensions we detest. But, brothers and sisters, we know *our* God! It is true we have not seen Him at any time. “You saw no similitude,” He said when He spoke to His people from the top of Sinai. We have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape. Yet as spirits speak to spirits we have been cognizant of the action of the Spirit of God upon our spirits; you and I know that we have often been moved by one another’s spirits. This very night while I am speaking, my spirit is known of your spirit, and you are recognizing my spirit while I speak. In much the same way the Holy Spirit, by His mysterious operations, has come into contact with our spirits so that though we know Him not by sight, hearing, taste, or smell—all of which deceive us, yet we recognize Him by an inner and infallible sense which was created in us at our regeneration by the hand of God! That there is a God we know by *spiritual* perception; He has opened our ears so that we hear His voice; He has given us new sight by which we perceive Him, and are even more assured of His presence than we could be if we had the evidence of our eyes and ears! He is not a God in cloudland to us; He is intensely real and true! He is a God with whom we speak; He is a God who calls Himself our friend, our Father; a God who invites us to come and reason with Him; a God who assures us of the love of His heart! He is a God who tells us His secrets, for, “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” O men of the world, we are as sure of the existence of God and of His being ours as ever you can be sure of your gold or your lands! And we are as truly acquainted with Him as you are with your friends! Therefore it is that He is no longer simply God to me, but He is “*My God.*” Just as when I know a man by familiar communion, he is not merely a friend, but he is, “*my friend,*” so has it come to pass between God and us; and by each believer He is fitly styled, “*My God.*”

I hope the matter has proceeded further than that. We not merely know that He is God, and have not only recognized His divine existence, but we have come into *a relationship with Him.* There is a natural and necessary relationship between God and His creatures, but it is not always recognized. When it is discerned by the soul, because the Spirit of God illuminates the heart, man rises into a new relationship to God, and feels as he never felt before. For instance, he comes into the relationship of a pardoned child. Oh, if you have ever been forgiven, you will know Him that forgave you, and you will say, “*My God.*” If you feel the Spirit of adoption now within your heart, you will know who adopted you, and you will cry, “*My God, my Father.*” You receive of His bounty according to the gift of His grace from day to day, and therefore while consciously receiving abundant mercies from the Lord, you learn to say, “*My God will supply all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*”

The heart of the matter lies in this—“*My God*” means that *we have appropriated Him to ourselves.* We take Him by a daring act of faith to be from now on God to us, and all that He is we take to be ours forever and

ever. May we do this? Brothers and sisters, may we do this? Ah, yes, appropriating faith is warranted in the covenant, for the covenant runs thus, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." It is justified also by the act of God, for did He not give His Son? And when He gave His Son to redeem us, could He withhold anything from us? Did He not in that act virtually give us Himself, for Christ is in the Father, and the Father is in Him, and He that has received Jesus has received the Father! Say "My Savior," and you need not be afraid to say "My God." Moreover, not merely does the covenant guarantee it, and the act of God justify it, but there is the witness of the Spirit within us which has taught us our right to say, "My God." When we have said unto the Lord, "You are my God," the Holy Spirit has not chided us, nor smitten our conscience, nor rebuked us for presumption, nor humbled us for pride on that account; but, on the contrary, peace has followed—calm rest, holy joy, quiet trustfulness, and assured confidence—all of which are the true fruits of saying, "My God," and at the same time the genuine works of the Spirit of God. Thus we know that we have not erred when we have made this claim. Moreover, dear friends, we may expect our confidence and assured appropriation to become stronger and stronger as life goes on. We have not been wrong in saying, "My God," for we have grown into saying it more and more in proportion as the Lord has sanctified us. As we conquer sin, we say, "My God," more assuredly, and as we grow in grace we say, "My God," with greater confidence. Therefore it cannot be wrong. We expect in heaven to say, "My God," still more positively. Beloved, how boldly we shall say it there! No sin, no doubts, no clouds to divide us from Him; *then* shall we know that the Infinite Jehovah is ours to enjoy forever and ever! Oh, it is not crowns of gold, it is not music of sweetest harps, it is not palm branches or white robes of victory that our souls will most delight themselves in—we shall triumph in "God our exceeding joy!" "At His right hand are pleasures forevermore." We shall in heaven always find it bliss to say to ourselves, "God is mine." What God *does* is great, what God *has* is great, but what God *is*, is far more than what He does or has, because He can do and have infinitely more than He ever has done or has created; yet it is God, Himself and what He *is* which is *ours* forever! In grasping the Lord by faith, and saying, "He is mine," what a sweep the soul has made! It has, as it were, encompassed eternity, set its own seal upon infinity, and appropriated all sufficiency!

**III.** Finally, let us spend two or three minutes upon the LAST WORD—"My GOD." "GOD!" What does it mean? Ah, now, you have asked me a question which I cannot answer! The wise man was asked, "What is God?" and he requested that he might have a day to consider his answer. When the sun had set, he said that he must have three days, for in thinking of it, the subject grew. They gave him three days, and when these were over he demanded six days more, for the subject was greater than ever. When they called upon him at the six days' end, he claimed 12 days more, for the subject was still beyond him. They bade him take the 12 days, and they would hear the result of his thoughts. The next time

he said that he must have a month; and, at the month's end, he gave them no information, but assured them he must have a year. When the year was over he confessed that he would need a lifetime—he would *never* be able to tell them what God was as long as he lived! There is no defining the Incomprehensible One! Yet, brothers and sisters, you and I can call Him, "My God."

Let us reflect upon His being ours as to *His nature*, His person, His essence. There is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—Three in One. Then the Father is my God—He has loved me, He has chosen me, He has begotten me, He has provided for me—He is my Father, my all. Then, too, the adorable Son is mine—Jesus, the Redeemer, the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Intercessor, the Judge—He is mine. Then the Holy Spirit is mine—the Instructor, the Quickener, the Sanctifier, the Comforter. Dew, fire, wind, dove—whatever the metaphor under which He veils Himself—He is mine. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit—to these beloved and glorious persons of the one undivided Godhead, faith says, "My God."

When I have thought of the blessed persons let me think of *His attributes*. Omniscience is mine—the Lord knows everything for me. Omnipotence is mine—He will do everything for me. Justice is mine, reconciled to me by the death of Jesus. Mercy is mine, enduring forever. Truth is mine—He will keep His promise. Immutability is mine—He changes not, and therefore I am not consumed. Rehearse all the attributes peculiar to the divine nature, and say unto the Lord, "You are my God, and therefore all Your blessed perfections and glorious attributes are mine."

Think of Him again *in what He has done*, as well as in what He is. As Creator He is my Creator—not merely as creating me, but as making "all things" for me—that I may richly enjoy them. Whatever I look upon I may enjoy because He made it; He has made all things holy, and the curse which sin engendered He has removed through the death of His Son. And now as I traverse the world I may delight myself in the works of the Creator, and say, "These are Your glorious works, Parent of good, Almighty; and You give them to me that I may see You in them, and enjoy them to Your honor." The Lord is also our Redeemer, and the believer calls Him "my Redeemer" and "my God." It was *my God* that poured out His life unto death upon the bloody tree. *My God* has loved me and given Himself for me. The Lord is, moreover, the Sanctifier. He carries on the work of grace in the soul, and in this He is my God. He is the God of providence and rules all things according to His will—and in that character He is my God. The Lord Jesus Christ will come to judge the world—and heaven and earth shall pass away before the glory of His face; but He that shall make heaven rock and reel is my God—and He that shall make the rocks run like rivers, and the stars fall like withered leaves from the tree is my God, the God of my salvation! Oh, is it not blessed to think of God in any light or aspect under which you are able to conceive Him, and then be able to say at the end of it all, "He is my God in all His works and in all His relationships, in all His attributes and all His Glories"? To me it is

the utmost bliss at this moment to claim with each one of my brothers and sisters that He is *my God*.

Do you know, if you could once say this—and I wish that every man, woman, and child in this house, could from the heart say, “My God”—if you could say this, it would sweeten so many things to you! This Bible—how you would love this precious Bible, for then you would say, “It is my book now, because it is my Father’s book—my God’s book.” You would value every line of it! There would be a new sweetness in every single verse because it is your Father’s handwriting, inspired by His own Spirit—that Spirit which belongs to *you*, and it tells you of your own Savior—the Savior who loves you, and who gave Himself for you. If you could call God your own, you would love the Sabbath supremely, because you would say, “It is my day because it is the Lord’s Day—the day of my risen Savior. He has taken it to Himself and enclosed its hours for His own—and from now on I prize its earliest and its latest moments because they are His.” A sense of the Lord’s being yours would make you love His people too. When I first came to London from the village where I formerly preached, I was very glad to see anybody who came from that region, and if I had seen a dog wag its tail that I had once seen in that village I would have been pleased! I would have loved anybody for the sake of the dear old place, and surely when you can say, “My God,” you love all the Lord’s people! Many a young Christian has been deceived by hypocrites because of his love to Christians—and that love is sometimes ruined by ill deeds; but where there is overflowing love to the Father, there will be affection for the family. Be it ours to show it! If you see in any man anything that is like Christ, love him for it! If he is not all you would like him to be, remember that you, also, are not all you ought to be. Surely if Jesus Christ loves a man, you should love him too. Seek your brothers’ and sisters’ good and aim at benefiting them because they are one of Christ’s members. Love for Christ’s sake all those who can say “My God.”

I do not know, but I seem to myself to have talked away, and to have missed my aim and objective altogether, compared with what I have felt while meditating in private upon these dear and blessed words, “My God.” It is a deep well, but the water is cool and sweet if you can draw it up. “My God”—there is more than satisfaction in the words! If you have no money, never mind; you are rich if you can say, “My God.” If the husband is buried, if the children have gone home to heaven, do not despair, your Maker is your husband, if you can cry, “My God.” If your friends have forsaken you, if those who ought to have sustained you have been cruel and unkind to you, He changes not, and He bids you call Him, “My God.” If the unkindness of men drives you to say “My God,” you will be a gainer by it! *Anything* which weans from earth and weds to heaven is good! I saw yesterday a park in which they were felling all the trees, and yet there were the poor crows building on elms that were marked to be cut down. I thought to myself, “You foolish birds to be building your nests there, for the woodman’s axe is ringing all around, and the tall elms are tumbling to the ground.” We are all apt to build our nests on

trees that will be cut down. We get to love the creature and to say, “My this,” and, “My that”; and from this weakness our sharpest sorrows arise. If you build nowhere but on the Tree of Life, which never can be felled, if you build nowhere but on the rock of ages which can never crumble, happiness will be yours of a safe and lasting kind—but you can only do this by saying “My God”!

Now, I dare say, there are some unconverted people here who wonder what we are making all this fuss about. They have their own hoarded treasures and cherished possessions, and they see no beauty in God that they should desire Him. No, but let me tell you—you who have no God and no Savior—the day will come when you would give your eyes, no, you would give your very *lives*, if you could say “My God.” Men have been worth thousands of pounds, and when they have lain a-dying without God they have said of their gold, “It will not do!” They have had their moneybags brought to the bed, and pressed them to their heart, and said, “They will not cheer my soul, they will not calm my spirit.” If you do not die crying out, “Woe is me that I die without God,” yet, at any rate, after death, when you shall have risen from the dead, and you see the Judge, and you stand as a criminal before His bar, you will think yourself ten thousand times ten thousand fools in one that you ever lived and died without God and without Christ! How will infinite anguish rip your heart while you have to confess, “I tried to gain the world, but lost my soul! I am a fool of the worst order! Alas, that I should be such a maniac!” O sinner, I wish you would go to Jesus! May God’s Spirit lead you to Jesus tonight! Cry mightily to God that He would give Himself to you through Jesus Christ, the Savior! He will do it, for He waits to be gracious. Try Him! And God bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 37.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—774, 198.**

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# GATHERING TO THE CENTER

## NO. 1298

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 4, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“They came to Him from every quarter.”  
Mark 1:45.*

THE fact as it stands is well worthy of our notice, and offers considerable encouragement to us; the multitudes came to hear our Lord, and to see His miracles; He could not be hidden—wherever He appeared a congregation soon assembled; indeed the crowds became too large, and too pressing, “insomuch that they trod one upon another.” Few preachers suffer from our Lord’s difficulty, but it was a frequent necessity with Him to use means to diminish the crowds, and therefore He repaired to desert places, or took boats and crossed the sea.

I gather from this, dear friends, that notwithstanding the holiness of our Lord’s doctrine, and the way in which it runs counter to the desires of the carnal heart, notwithstanding the plainness of His rebukes, and the way in which He lays pride in the dust, there is a remarkable attractiveness to all kinds of men in the teaching of the Lord Jesus. If we would find a topic calculated to interest the masses, we need not go abroad for novelties—the old, old gospel will best collect the eager anxious throng. Other things being equal, you shall find that more men will be drawn together to hear of Christ than to listen to any other topic, and this will continue year after year while other subjects have lost what temporary interest they once possessed. Give a man any other theme you please, and let him expound upon it three or four times a week in the same place to the same audience, and it will not be long before his hearers will be weary, and he himself will be worn out. I do not believe it would be possible to retain year after year a mass of attentive hearers, and send them away longing for more with any theme except Jesus Christ and Him crucified! If you bring Jesus forth, the people will continue to come to Him from every quarter, for the prophecy of Jacob is still true, “To Him shall the gathering of the people be.”

The attraction in the instance before us was not only Jesus *preaching*, but Jesus displaying His healing power. The works which He did bore witness of Him until the people asked, “What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” The news of lame men leaping, and lepers cleansed brought the people together; even thus let but Jesus be in any congregation manifesting His saving work—Jesus breaking hard hearts, Jesus binding up broken spirits, Jesus reclaiming the outcasts, Jesus gathering the lambs in His bosom, Jesus in action—then be sure of this, the people will come together till you will have to cry “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?” The best advertisement for Jesus is the personal testimony of every soul whom He has blessed!

To blaze abroad His fame you need hire no hack writers or mercenary tongues—they shall speak best of Him who tell about the things which they have done touching the king, whose tongues are as the pens of ready writers because their hearts dictate the matter. They have experienced His power, and therefore they cannot but speak what they have seen and felt! Jesus Christ healing, and spoken of by those whom He had healed drew multitudes to Himself in the olden times, and I gather from this the expectation that if any of us will preach Christ in Christ's way, accompanied by Christ's power in the healing of men, we shall even in desert places see the people coming together, and all the more so because He has been lifted up upon the cross, and therefore will draw all men unto Him.

But, dear friends, there was an inner circle. The mere hearers did but come to Him in the lowest sense. I do not think Jesus Christ set much store by drawing multitudes around Him to listen to His words or look upon His miracles; I am sure He did not, for He sought to avoid such popularity, and therefore He forbade the leper to speak of his cure, and He withdrew Himself to escape from the people. If He had considered that success was to be measured by the size of His audience, He would have remained where the crowds were assembled; but He formed a more accurate judgment, and knew that as the heap upon the threshing floor contains abundance of chaff, even so in the great gatherings of mere *hearers* there are multitudes whose adherence is of little value. Beloved, if men only come together to hear the gospel, our work will end in dreary disappointment, and the gatherings on the Sabbath will prove to be wretched wastes of time! But my text can be carried as a matter of fact, very much further, for disciples came to Jesus from every quarter in a far better sense. He called by His mysterious power one and another who became His followers, and they came to Him in the best sense; we read that He went into a mountain and called whom He would, and they came to Him—this was a better coming; of them it may be said, “They came to Him from every quarter.” It is very beautiful to see what a mixture Christ's disciples were; there were fishermen, but they were not all of that class, for there was among them a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews; there was a devout Nathanael, but there was also a publican to whose house salvation came; they were not all of the lower ranks, for among the holy women who ministered to him were some from Herod's court, and one who is called “the beloved physician” followed Him as his Lord. They were not all of commendable characters, for a woman that was a sinner was His true disciple, but there were others against whom no moral fault has ever been alleged; they came to Him drawn by His mysterious power from every portion of the land, from every condition and rank, from many phases of mind, and types of character—“they came to Him from every quarter.”

That is the matter of fact—I am now going to use the fact *typically*. I believe that as it was literally true that men came to hear our Lord, and others came to believe on Him from every quarter, so it still is—and unto the Lord Jesus Christ men and women in the preaching of the gospel are still coming from every quarter.

I. I will begin with the exterior ring again. OF THE OPEN OR PROFESSIONAL COMING TO CHRIST it may be said with a great deal of sorrow, "They came to Him from every quarter."

The gospel when it is preached draws many to itself who are not saved by it; the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net which men cast into the sea, and it gathers fish of every kind. There is a day coming in which they will put the good into vessels, and cast the bad away, but throughout this dispensation there will be every kind in the net. Tares will grow with the wheat, and fruitless branches will be in the vine. Men come to Christ by the avowal of Christianity, by the appropriation of its ordinances, and the subscribing of its creed—and in this sense they still come to Him from every quarter. You must not imagine that in this church all who have come to Christ nominally have really come; do not indulge such a delusion, for if you do you will certainly be deceived! You may belong, my dear brothers and sisters, to some little Bethel or select Ebenezer, but do not indulge the hope that all who professedly come to Christ even there, though they are all so admirably sound and orthodox, have all of them really come to Jesus, for even *there* a mixture will be found. "Many are called and few are chosen." You shall take any 12 you will, but you cannot be sure but what one of them is a devil, for among the 12 selected by the Master, Judas Iscariot was found. They come to Christ from *every* quarter—from the land of hypocrisy and formality as well as from the country of sincerity.

Many came to Christ in His day, and followed Him from the lowest of motives; loaves and fishes were good bait then, and they still are; we have not many of these attractions in *this* church, but in certain quarters there are large loaves of very choice bread exceedingly well buttered, and there are fishes too of the best kind—great fishes well cured, whose savory smell is dear to many. A taste for the church loaves and fishes is pretty common still, so that many come to the church, and nominally to Christ, from the quarter of the land called *selfishness*, and so they make a gain of godliness.

Some came to our Lord merely to receive benefits to their bodies; they brought a blind eye to be healed, or a withered arm to be restored, but they obtained no *spiritual* gifts. Thus do many derive benefit from the religion of Jesus of a moral and mental kind, but they miss the nobler gifts of the *spiritual life*. No doubt many are charmed by Christian society, by the comforts of religious worship, and by the degree of respectability which arises out of a profession—but they are not saved souls. We must not wonder when the loaves grow small, and are only made of barley, and the fishes decrease in number if the mere hangers-on show us their true quality and disappear! He who comes to Christ for what he can get of worldly goods will leave Him when poverty and shame lie in the way.

A number came to Christ out of admiration of His eloquence, for He spoke as never man spoke, and it is no wonder that a woman of the multitude exclaimed in admiration, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the paps that gave You suck!" How true, however, was our Lord's reply, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." He turned her mind to something *better* than admiration, namely, *believing* reception! But with such a speaker, and with such gracious matter it was no marvel

that among His followers were found admirers of the speaker as well as believers in the Savior. We must not wonder if we still find that some profess to come to Christ because He is eloquently set forth by His ministers, or because the poetical beauties of the Bible, and the natural charms of religion win their tastes, and hold them with their spell. But it is a poor coming which arises from this and nothing more!

A large number came to our Lord like the region of transient enthusiasm. "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go," said one, but he failed to do so. There were stony-ground hearers in those days whose blade of promise, because it had no depth of earth, sprang up very speedily, but as speedily withered away. Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, if the stony-ground hearers perplex and disappoint us! They still come to Jesus from Pliable's country, and come only to go back to their own place.

There were those who came to Jesus Christ through misunderstanding His character; if they had known Him better, they would not have followed Him as far as they did, and they proved this, for when they discovered more, they went back and walked no more with Him. When He began to unveil certain parts of the truth of God concerning Himself which had been hidden before, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can bear it?" When His cross became more apparent, and their vision of an earthly kingdom grew more and more dim, they proved that they had followed Him under an error, for they went their way. And no doubt many today profess the name of Jesus who are not aware what discipleship really involves; they do not know Him nor His cross, nor the truths of God He came to teach, and we may expect to see these go back when fuller discoveries shall startle them. They came to Him from every quarter.

Brother minister, friend working in the Sunday school, laborer for Christ in any low district—you may fairly expect that the people will come to Christ, but do not expect that they will all come from the land of honesty and truth! Do not count all fish that come to the net, or it may happen that your sure disappointment will dampen your zeal and diminish your confidence in the gospel. Expect to take good fish in your net, but reckon upon finding the dog fish there too, breaking your lines, and attacking your other fish. Out of the best haul a fisherman ever makes there is something to throw away! When you sow good seed, look for wheat to spring up, but be not surprised if tares spring up also! Just now the sun and the showers are making the corn grow fast, but the weeds are growing too. It must be so. Those influences which cause the good to be more lively appear to awake the energies of the evil one. Whenever the devil is asleep, the church is asleep, but whenever the church wakes, the devil wakes too. Every worker for Christ may reckon on mixed results—and when they come he must not despair as though some strange thing happened to him. Yet let us be thankful that many came to Jesus from the land of sincerity, men convinced that He was the Christ, men like the disciple to whom He said, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you." Some in coming gave Him their whole hearts, and from then on sat at His feet and received His words. Some of the best were with Him, though there were some of the worst; grateful hands were there which could break an alabaster box, and pour

it out for His sake, as well as cruel hands which could clutch the blood-stained pieces of silver—the price of His betrayal.

I leave that point when I have asked you from what quarter *you* came. Are you true men and women, or spies? Do you come from the assemblies of deceit, or from the abodes of sincerity? Search and look! “Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith. Prove your selves. Know you not yourselves that Jesus Christ *is in you*, except you are reprobate?” I pray God that none of us may be found reprobate in that day!

**II.** Secondly, we will advance to something nearer and better. OF THE FIRST REAL *SPIRITUAL* COMING TO CHRIST BY FAITH it may be said in the words of the text, “They came to Him from every quarter.” Let me here employ an illustration. Seeking rest and health last week, I seated myself for a little while near a very rustic church which stands empowered in the woods. As I sat there I moralized upon the various paths which led up to the church porch; each trail through the grass came from a different quarter, but they all led to one point. As I stood there this reflection crossed me—even thus men come to Christ from all quarters of the compass, and if indeed saved, they all come to Him. There is a path yonder which rises from a little valley; the little church stands on the hillside; there is a brook at the bottom, and worshippers who come from the public road must cross a rustic bridge, and then ascend the hill. Such comers rise at every step they take. Many burdened ones come to Christ from the deep places of self-abasement—they know their sinfulness, and feel it; their self-consciousness has almost driven them to despair! They are down very low, and every step they take to Christ is a step upwards. They have a little hope as they look to Him, and then a little more till it comes to a humble trust; then from a feeble, trembling trust it rises to a simple faith, and so they advance till when they stand near to Jesus they reach to the full assurance of faith. Thus from soul distress and self-despair they come to the Lord Jesus, and He receives them graciously. Through the churchyard there was another path, and it ran uphill from where I stood, and therefore everyone who came that way *descended* to the church door. These may represent the people who think much of themselves; they have been brought up in morality, and lived in respectability in the town of Legality; they have never turned aside to the grosser vices, and are among the models of behavior. Every step these good people take towards Christ is downward; they think less of themselves and still less; regret leads to repentance, repentance to bitter grief, and grief leads to self-abhorrence. So they come down to the level where Jesus meets with sinners, by admitting they are *nothing*, and that Christ is *all*. The two paths which I have mentioned were supplemented by a third which led through a thick and tangled forest—a narrow way wound between the oak trees and the dense underbrush, and I noticed that it led over a boggy place through which stepping stones had been carefully placed for the traveler, that he might not sink in the mire. Many a seeker has found his way to Jesus by a similar path; dark with ignorance, and thorny with evil questions, the path winds and twists about, and leads through the Slough of Despond where a man had better pick his steps very carefully or he may sink in despair. Those whom di-

vine grace leads, arrive at rest in Christ, but it is through the woods and through the slough.

Once more, I recognized another path which came in from the farmer's fields—through lands where the plow and the sickle are busy each in its season, so that those who come from that quarter to worship come across the place of toil, and may fitly represent those who are full of earnestness and effort, and have as much need of Jesus as any. They do not know yet the way of salvation, but they follow after righteousness by the law, and strive to enter in at the strait gate in their own strength. But if they ever come to Christ they will have to leave those fields, and the plow and sickle of their own strength—and submit to receive Jesus as their all-in-all.

Now, do not suppose that the trails which I have mentioned are the *only* ones. There is only one Christ, but many are the quarters from which men come to Him; it would be impossible to describe all the ways by which men come to Christ, and all the quarters from which they come. To our first believing we are all led by the Spirit of God, but very singular are the experiences of God's people, and perhaps each man has a road peculiar to himself. We do not know all the ways by which souls arrive at Christ; but there is this mercy—*He* knows the ways by which His redeemed are coming to Him, and He knows where they are. I remember being at Wootton-Under-Edge in Mr. Hills' garden, and being informed that on the Sabbath morning the quaint old gentleman would go into his garden and watch the people coming to the meeting house. He would sit in his garden with his telescope in the center of an amphitheatre of hills, and observe the country people coming down, and look for any peculiar action. He then might mention it in his sermon, very much to the astonishment of the persons concerned! Our Lord Jesus sitting in the center to which His redeemed are coming sees them all, even when they are yet a great way off. If we can conceive a soul millions of miles off from Him, as far off as a comet is gone from the sun when it wanders to its utmost tether, yet our Lord Jesus Christ knows where the wanderer comes from, and notes the time when the turning begins, and the hour when the face is set towards Himself! He can spy out grace in a man's heart long before the man himself is conscious of it, and long before the most hopeful minister in the world could see a trace of divine life in the soul. What a mercy of Christ this is! They come to Him from every quarter, and He knows where they come from, and how far they are on the road!

Let us pray for all who are coming to Christ as well as for those who have actually laid hold upon Him—"Lord Jesus, we pray You help those who are coming Your way; draw them till they come nearer; far away as they are, yet make them near." We do not always know when men are coming, but when we perceive some little desire in that direction, let us imitate the great father in the parable, and run to meet them, and see if we can help them on the journey. Perhaps they need another stepping stone to be placed for them, and we may drop one where their feet can reach it, or like Help in "Pilgrim's Progress" we may help them out from the slough into which they have slipped. Do this for Christ's sake!

Remember, that of all who come to Christ from every quarter, never one was disappointed with Him yet. They come from various regions, drawn by the hope that Jesus will supply their needs—and He does supply them! All sorts of people who come to Christ believingly find in Him all that is needed to meet their peculiar cases. Sweet also is the thought that He never casts out a sinner come from where he may. They arrive from different quarters, but He has no prejudice against Galilee or Judea, or Tyre or Sidon—He receives all comers! The elder in the Book of Revelation asked a deeply interesting question, “From where did they come?” and, blessed be God, it is one which will never be answered to the prejudice of anyone who draws near to Jesus by faith! O sinners, you may come from the thieves’ kitchen, or from the convicts’ cell; you are as welcome to Jesus as those who come from homes of virtue! You may come from the seat of the scorner; you may come from the bench of the drunk, and if you come you shall receive a hearty welcome! You too, O hopeful ones, may come from the home of piety, and from the school of truth—and when you come, you will find the gates set wide open to receive you! Come from the tents of Jacob, or from the tents of Kedar; come from the holy mountain or from the lonely wilderness and you shall all alike find that He will in no way cast you out!

It is a very pleasant reflection to us that when needy souls draw near to Jesus they cause Him no sorrow, but rather bring Him joy. All His redeeming work is done; He has only to receive the recompense due to Him. They come, says one, with the burden of their sins, and lay them upon Him. I answer this is only true in a certain sense, and must not be misunderstood. It is a great joy to think that no burden can come on our Lord’s shoulders now—no man can lay sin upon Christ anymore—it was laid on Him by the Father long ago, and since He has made full Atonement for it, not a particle of it remains! Each redeemed one has cost Christ His life already, and therefore as each one actually comes, he costs Him nothing! On the contrary, He sees in each one the recompense for the travail of His soul. If we saw sinners coming by thousands to Christ, and knew that He would have to bear the chastisement of their peace, and be bruised again for their iniquities, we might well be sorrowful! But it is not so—He has finished the atoning work! Agony and pain are all over, and now as the redeemed come to Him, they gladden His heart, they increase His praise, they reward His pains. Oh that they would come in troops, like the flocks of Carmel for number! I may say in rustic language, “The more the merrier!” Let them gather from every quarter, each one bringing with him a crown of love for the redeemer’s brow!

Brothers and sisters, there is no fear that the multitudes will cease to come from every quarter. The Greek word might be rendered, “They kept on coming to Him from every quarter.” Even thus it is now. They are coming, they *always* will be coming, there will never be a time when they will not come! In the prophetic words of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm we are told that “they shall come.” We fall into a dull state at times, and but few are converted, yet the Lord revives us by His Spirit, and thousands are saved! We had notable evangelists among us preaching the gospel, and some persons imagined that when they were gone we should see no more of

the work, but it is not so; sinners are still coming to Jesus, and they will come. The question for each one of my hearers is this—Am *I* coming, or *have I* come to Jesus? They came from every quarter—have I come? You strangers from beyond the sea; you good people from the country, are *you* coming to Jesus? You Londoners who regularly hear the gospel in this house, are *you* coming? You who only occasionally listen to it, are *you* coming to Jesus? God grant that it may be said this morning of this mixed assembly, “They came to Jesus from every quarter!”

**III.** Thirdly, since coming to Christ is not a matter of once in your life, and the Scripture says plainly, “Unto whom coming,” to show us that the Christian is *always* coming to Christ, we will therefore follow out our point in reference to THE DAILY COMINGS OF SAVED SOULS TO JESUS. Here, too, they come to Him from every quarter. Let us think a minute. This morning the desire of every renewed soul here has been to come to Christ—and I hope that desire has been fulfilled to us all. If so, we have come to Him from every quarter! You who are very poor have forgotten your poverty this morning, and found exceedingly great riches in Him, and on the other hand, I trust that you who are wealthy have forgotten your worldly treasures and rejoiced to be only rich in Him! If you have had a trying week, a perplexing week, a week of losses and crosses, you have nevertheless approached Him from that quarter, and found Him a sure solace for your cares. Another has had a week of prosperity and success, but you too have not been content till you could leave the best things of earth to embrace the Lord from heaven! From all points of experience you have come! Among the number of God’s people here this morning who have had communion with Christ, what a variety of outward circumstances would be found in the quarters from which they have come!

Men and women come to our Lord from every quarter as to mental pursuits. The great student, the critic, the profound mathematician, the acute philosopher—all these when taught of the Holy Spirit delight to come to Jesus for rest! I am sure I speak their mind when I say it is a great relief on Sunday to have done with puzzling problems, and feed upon the simplicities of Jesus. I have heard say that men of great minds when they come to hear a sermon, if they detect an attempt at something very fine on the part of the preacher, and meet with displays of mere intellect, they turn away disappointed, and say, “We have had enough of this all week.” The Sabbath is a day of rest, and that minister breaks the Sabbath in spirit who leads the people into the bondage of human wisdom instead of setting before them the Lord Jesus in whom alone they can find rest for their souls! There are a few, blessed be God, who come to Jesus from the quarter of human culture, and are delighted to come! These find more in Jesus Christ simply preached than the most capacious mind can take in; blessed be God, thousands who are not philosophers or mathematicians are doing the same; their thoughts are not very deep or penetrating, but they come to Christ in deed and of a truth, and receive Him gladly. It is astonishing what a great deal of Christ some very ignorant people can take in; converse with a godly old shepherd—the man may scarcely know his letters, but listen how he speaks of divine things! Go and sit with a poor Christian woman in her cottage, who never

went beyond the village, and never will unless an inhospitable sect should forbid her bones to be laid in the public graveyard with congenial rites—but she knows her Savior, and many a memorable fact will she tell you concerning Him! These grace-taught saints know more about Christ, though the world calls them ignorant, than the most learned men can possibly know by human teaching! Thus you see they come to Jesus Christ from every quarter of mental condition.

And I thank God they come to Christ from all points of theological thought. My brother over yonder who loves the eternal purposes, how readily he comes to Jesus from considering the covenant and the everlasting decrees of grace. It is pleasant to come over the eternal hills to Jesus! My other friend over yonder, does not love this way; I wish he did; but he dwells mainly upon the responsibility of man, and upon the great love of God to all mankind, yet he comes to Jesus across the plains of infinite benevolence, and delights to see in Jesus the sinner's all-in-all. John Wesley sings—

***“Jesus, lover of my soul.”***

And Toplady, who viewed things from another point of view, sings—

***“Rock of ages, cleft for me.”***

They come from every quarter! Thank God that it is so! Different lines of thought about the truth of God meet in Jesus, even as all great railways meet in London!

I trust we have come to Christ from every quarter of our own spiritual experience. We have been cast into the deeps, but “out of the depth, have I cried unto You, O Lord, and You heard me.” Upon the heights also we have stood, but there we have sung, “You make my feet like hinds' feet; You make me to stand upon my high places.” We have exulted in God, and we have comforted ourselves in God! We have delighted ourselves in the light of His countenance, and we have also rejoiced under the shadow of His wings. From all quarters of emotion we have turned to the beloved of our souls.

And so from different characteristics of mind have souls come to Christ. Mary is contemplative, and for her there is a seat at the Master's feet. Peter is active, and for him there are sheep to be fed, and lambs to be tended. In our Lord persons of various dispositions can all find what they need; the loving mind which dives deep, and is a little inclined to the mystic school, can find in Jesus the fullest scope, even as Madame Guyon did. Warm hearts need no other fuel for their flame than the Love of Jesus—see how that theme kept George Herbert in a perpetual glow! And you, too, my brothers and sisters, active and energetic, you who spend and are spent in philanthropic works and deeds of devotion to God, you find in Jesus Christ all that can sustain your ardor and sanctify your activities. From every quarter saints come to our Lord as to a living well, and never come in vain! It makes my Lord so much the more precious to me when I remember that He is so precious to multitudes of others! 'Tis true He is so necessary and so satisfying to my own soul that He seems as if He had been prepared on purpose for me; infinite wisdom could not devise a Savior who suited my case more fully; it does, however, increase my joy in Him that thousands, and tens of thousands think the same, each one for himself! Tradition says of the manna that it tasted just as

every man desired, and was grateful to every palate, and it is so with the bread of heaven—it has a choice adaptation to each believer's need, and a fullness to supply the necessities of each tried heir of the kingdom! You may have a whole Christ to yourself and yet millions of happy spirits are doing the same, and living upon His inexhaustible stores! Rejoice, my brothers and sisters, in this, for to the generous heart this piles up the ecstasy, and gives us heaven upon heaven in the fact that so vast a number as well as ourselves find their all in Jesus! Not only do we come to Him, but grace brings other believers to Him from every quarter.

Let it be one of our aims always to be path-makers—to clear the ways for our brethren to come nearer to our Lord. When we see them coming from the woods, let us show them the way over the trail; or if they find it hard to climb the steep ascent from the valley, let us lend them a hand; if we fear that they are too high up, let us show them the way down by walking humbly ourselves. Wherever they are, let it be our endeavor to bring them to Christ! Our Lord Jesus is the common meeting place of saints—let us commune with all who commune with Him; let us maintain gracious communion with those who love Him, and we shall be blessed thereby. My brother knows something about my Lord that I do not—and I know something about Him which he has not yet learned—therefore we can aid each other by blessed communion. In the olden times “they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another,” and I know it was good talk, for God Himself listened to it. It is said that “the Lord listened and heard,” and He thought so much of what was spoken that He made a volume of it, “and a book of memorial was written for them that feared the Lord and thought upon His name.”

**IV.** Lastly, brothers and sisters, my text is full of THAT GREAT GATHERING WHICH IS APPROACHING NEARER EVERY MOMENT, and which will be complete when—

***“The entire chosen race  
Shall meet around the throne,  
Shall bless the conduct of His grace  
And make His wonders known!”***

Saints come to Jesus in Glory from every quarter! He is the center of the church. Many have reached the Lord up yonder, and are now bowing before His throne. Men of every age are there, from Adam to Moses, from Joshua to the time of the kings and the prophets—and even to this hour they continue to come to Him; they come from every quarter of the globe, and from every race and tribe; what a gathering it must be! Heaven is cosmopolitan, and Christ has abolished all distinction between Jew and Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free—they all meet in Him and He is all and in all. What a mixed company, and yet how uniform in their joy, and in their satisfaction in Him. David said, “I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness.” You are not David, but you can say the same! Yes, we shall meet in Him from every quarter!

The main point to dwell upon is that they, wherever they hail from, all come to *Him*. It is a very pleasant prospect to think of meeting our fellow servants in heaven, but it must never be allowed to bear comparison with the prospect of meeting the Master! Of course we shall see them all. Old John Ryland said most quaintly—

***“They all shall be there, the great and the small;  
Poor I shall shake hands with the blessed St. Paul,”***

and no doubt we shall! Like peers we shall sit in that royal house of lords; we each one shall take his own seat in that parliament of kings, for He has “made us kings and priests unto God.” What companions we shall have! What most high and solemn communion with the best and purest spirits that ever scattered light over the darkness of this world! But here is the point, we shall be with *Him*. We shall not care much, I believe, about anything else compared with being with Him where He is, and beholding His glory. This is heaven to me! We shall come to the general assembly, and church of the firstborn—but then, since Christ is in them *all*, and they are all members of *His* body, it will be only another form of coming to Him, and will by no means interfere, but rather enlarge our fellowship with our glorious Head!

I would like to say, just to finish, that I believe this idea of coming to Christ from every quarter is capable of an expansion which I leave for you to think upon, and will not, therefore, explain at length. The day comes when the Lord Jesus will “gather together in one all things which are in Him, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.” Then shall He head up all the things which are in Him, and these shall come to Him from every quarter. Of this His mysterious person is the prophecy and foretaste! Is it not wonderful what a gathering up of everything there is in the person of our blessed Lord? The material universe has a part in Him, for He was born into that flesh and blood which links us to the inanimate matter beneath our feet. With mind in its lower form He is akin, for He had and has a human soul. To spirits He is brother, for He is the head of the spiritual seed. To crown all, with God Himself He is one! God, considered in His absolute Godhead, stands alone, and a gulf divides Him from all creatures, but God in Christ Jesus takes the whole sweep of creation into Himself, and when you shall behold Him in the ages to come, this will more and more clearly appear to you. The glorious Christ of God brings all creation to a focus, and unites it in one around His person. We shall understand this better by-and-by; meanwhile it is sweet to muse upon it. I saw a scene depicted upon a painted window of the church of St. Etienne, in Lyons, which struck me very much. It represents our Lord after the temptation in the wilderness, when He was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto Him. The angels are depicted as bringing Him fruits and drinks, bread and meat, and making harmony on instruments of music. Above Him the sun shines softly upon Him; over His head is a tree bearing fruit, the branches of which seem to bow to Him, laden with mellow refreshment. At His feet a little stream warbles as it flows, and causes the grass and the wild flowers to flourish around Him. While the flowers are blooming for Him beneath, tender doves above Him are cooing with delight, and birds of the air are pausing to sing to Him. A gentle fawn is fearlessly drinking from the brook close to His hands, while a lion, humbly lying down before Him, is paying Him homage. A rabbit is feeding at ease right by the wild beast. Everything is happy, peaceful, and at home. The angels and the rabbits, the lion and the gazelle, the heavens above, and the flowers beneath all meet in Him—even the sun seems to have become a lovely flower, and turns to the yet

greater light! Jesus is the center of them all! I admire the artist's thought—it has truth within it. Our Lord has blessed and consecrated the very earth; for it felt the impressions of His holy feet, and the water of the river is no longer common or unclean, for was He not buried in baptism there? Every sunbeam is now gracious, for the sun has looked on HIM! The lower creatures too are to be treated tenderly, for *He* loved them. They came to Him from the time when the oxen fed from His manger where He lay as a baby to the day when the ass was not divided from her foal when He rode through the streets of Jerusalem. Let us treat all things reverently, for He condescended to think of them all. From the angels down to the waves of the sea, and the clay of which He made healing ointment, all things in their spheres ministered upon Him, and so they came to Him from every quarter! And the day comes when the creatures emancipated from the bondage to which they have been unwillingly subjected shall find redemption in Him (Rom 8:21)! To Him shall they come from every quarter, as many as are in Him, and both the lowest material and the loftiest spirit shall rejoice in the new heavens and the new earth, where righteousness dwells. Then shall dragons and all deeps, mountains and all hills, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl, kings of the earth, and all people praise the name of the Lord; while the heavens, and the heaven of heavens, angels, sun and moon, and stars of light shall magnify His glory! Then shall the trees of the forests rejoice before the Lord! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MARK 1:9.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—416, 425, 436.**

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# LOVE'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

## NO. 1299

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 11, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"We love Him, because He first loved us."  
1 John 4:19.***

VERY simple words, but very full of meaning; I think I might say of this sentence what the poet says of prayer—it is "the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try"—and yet it is one of the "most sublime strains that reach the majesty on high." Take a little believing child, and ask her why she loves the Savior, and she will reply at once, "Because He loved me, and died for me." Then ascend to heaven where the saints are perfect in Christ Jesus, and put the same question, and with united breath the whole choir of the redeemed will reply, "He has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." When we begin to love Christ, we love Him because He first loved us, and when we grow in grace till we are capable of the very highest degree of spiritual understanding and affection, we still have no better reason for loving Him than this, "Because He first loved us."

This morning in trying to preach from the text, I would pray the Holy Spirit that every person here may first *feel* it. It is amazing the difference between a text read and heard, and a text *felt* within the soul. Oh, that you this morning, may be able to say from your hearts because you cannot help saying it, "*We love Him.*" If I were to say no more, but sit down in silence, and if you were all to spend the next three quarters of an hour in exercising the emotion of love to God, it would be time most profitably spent! It is beyond measure beneficial to the soul to take her fill of love with the Lord Jesus; it is the sweet cure for all her ailments for her to have leisure to delight in the Lord, and faith enough to dwell at ease in His perfections. Be sure then to let your hearts have room, scope, and opportunity for indulging and inflaming the sacred passion of love to God. If the second part of the text shall also be made equally vivid to you by the power of faith—"*He first loved us*"—your hearts will be satisfied as with marrow and fatness! If the exceeding love of God in Christ Jesus shall be shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit, you will need no sermon from me—your inward experience will be better than any discourse! May your love like a drop of dew be exhaled, and carried up into the boundless heaven of God's love; may your heart ascend to the place where your treasure is, and rest itself upon the heart of God! Blessed shall you be if in your hearts Christ's love and yours shall both be fully known and felt at this moment! O, blessed Spirit, cause it to be so! Thus should we have the text in action—and that is a thousand times better

than the mere quiet letter. If you have visited the picture galleries at Versailles, where you see the wars of France from the earliest ages set forth in glowing colors upon the canvas, you cannot but have been struck with the pictures, and interested in the terrible scenes. Upstairs in the same palace there is a vast collection of portraits. I have traversed those galleries of portraits without much interest, only here and there pausing to notice a remarkable countenance; very few persons linger there—everybody seems to walk on as quickly as the polished floors allow! Now why is it that you are interested in the portraits downstairs, and not by those upstairs? They are the same people; very many of them are in the same dress; why do you not gaze upon them with interest? The reason lies here—the *portrait* in still life as a rule, can never have the attraction which surrounds a scene of stirring *action*! There you see the warrior dealing a terrible blow with his battle-ax, or the senator delivering an oration in the assembly, and you think more of them than of the same bodies and faces in repose. Life is impressive! Action awakens thought! It is just so with the text. Look at it as a matter of doctrinal statement—“We love Him, because He first loved us”—and if you are a thoughtful person you will consider it well. But feel the *fact* itself, *feel* the love of God—know it within your own soul, and manifest it in your life, and how engrossing it becomes!

May it be so by the power of the Holy Spirit this morning! May you be loving God while you are hearing, and may I be loving Him intensely while I am preaching!

With this as an introduction, I shall use the text for four purposes. First, *for doctrinal instruction*; secondly, *for experimental information*; thirdly, *for practical direction*, and fourthly, *for argumentative defense*.

**I.** We shall use the text briefly, for DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTION—and one point of doctrinal instruction is very clear, namely, that *God's love to His people is first*. “He first loved us.” Now, be sure of this point of doctrine because forgetfulness about it is connected with much error, and with more ignorance. The love of God to us *precedes* our love to God; according to Scripture it must be first in the most eminent sense because it is eternal! The Lord chose His people in Christ Jesus from before the foundations of the world, and to each one of His people that text may be applied—“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love.” His mercy is from everlasting to them that fear Him; from all eternity the Lord looked upon His people with an eye of love, and as nothing can be *before* eternity, His love was *first*. Certainly He loved us before we had a being, for did He not give His Son to die for us nearly 1900 years ago, long before our infant cries had saluted our mother's ears? He loved us before we had any desire to be loved by Him, yes, when we were provoking Him to His face, and displaying the fierce enmity of our unrenewed hearts! Remember “His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sin.” “God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” When we had not as yet one throb of spiritual

feeling, one pulse of hope, or one breath of desire, the Lord loved us even then!

The love of God is *before* our seeking. He draws us before we run after Him. We do not seek that love—that love seeks us. We wander further and further from it, resist it, and prove ourselves unworthy of it; our nature and our practice are such that they offer nothing congenial to divine love; but the love of God arises in its freeness, and stops our mad career by its power over the conscience and the will. “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you,” is the voice of Sovereign grace! Let our response be, “By the grace of God we are what we are!”

The Lord's love is before any repentance on our part. Impenitent sinners never would repent if God did not love them first. The Lord hates sin, but yet He loves sinners; He compassionately loved us when sin was pleasant to us, when we rolled it under our tongue as a sweet morsel, when neither the thunders of His law nor the wooing of His gospel could persuade us to turn from it. When in our bosoms there were no convictions of sin, when there were no evangelical lamentations because of offenses against a gracious God, He loved us! Today, brothers and sisters, we are possessors of faith in Jesus Christ, but our faith in Jesus Christ did not come *before* His love; on the contrary our faith rests in what that love has done for us of old. When we were unbelieving, and hard of heart; when we resisted the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and put from us the word of eternal life, even then the Lord pitied us, and had mercy upon us—and continued still to invite, to entreat, to persuade until at last the happy hour came when we believed, and entered into a sense of His love. There are many things about you now, beloved of the Lord, which are the objects of divine approval, but they were not there at first. They did not precede divine love, but are the *fruits* of it. To use an old English word which has somewhat lost its meaning, the love of God is *preventing* love—it goes before any right motions of the soul, and in order of time it is *first*, before any desires, wishes, aspirations, or prayers on our part. Are you devout today? Yet He loved you not at the first because you were devout, for originally you were not so; His love was *before* your devotion. Are you holy today? Blessed be His name for it! But He loved you when you were unholy. Your holiness *follows* His love—He chose you that you might be holy! You are becoming like He by the sanctifying influences of His blessed Spirit, and He loves His image in you, but He loved you when that image was not there. Yes, He looked on you with infinite compassion when you were heirs of His wrath even as others—and the image of the devil was conspicuous both upon your character and your nature. However early in life you began to love the Lord, His love was first. This is very amazing, but blessed be His name, we know that it is true, and we rejoice in it!

The fact is that the love of God, as far as we know anything about it, had no reason derived from us upon which to ground itself. He loved us because He would love us, or, as our Lord put it, “Even so, Father, for so

it seemed good in Your sight.” He had reasons in His own nature. Good reasons fetched from the best conceivable place, namely from His own perfections; but those reasons He has not been pleased to communicate to us. He bids us know that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion, and thus He tries the loyal submissiveness of our hearts, and I trust we are able to bow in reverent silence to His Righteous Will.

Divine love is its own cause, and does not derive its streams from anything in us; it flows spontaneously from the heart of God, finding its deep wellsprings within His own bosom. This is a great comfort to us because being uncreated, it is unchangeable! If it had been upon us because of some goodness in *us*, then when the goodness was diminished His love would diminish too. If God had loved us second, and not first, or had the *cause* of His love been in *us*, that cause might have altered, and the supposed effect, namely His love, would have altered too. But now whatever may be the believer's condition today—however he may have wandered, and however much he may be groaning under a sense of sin—the Lord declares, “I do earnestly remember him still.” The Lord did not love you at first because you had no sin—He foreknow all the sin you would ever have—it was all present before His sacred mind, and yet He loved you, and He loves you still! “I am God. I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” O blessed love of God, since You are first we will give you the first place in our thoughts, the highest throne in our hearts, the royal position in our souls! We glorify You, for You are first!

Another part of the doctrine of the text is this, that *the love of God is the cause of our love to God*. A thing may be first, and another second, and yet the first may not be the *cause* of the second; there may be no actual link between the two, but here we have it unmistakably—“We love Him *because* He first loved us,” which signifies not merely that this is the motive of which we are conscious in our love, but that this is the force, the divine power which created love in us. I put it to you, would we have loved God had He not first given His Son to die for us? Had there been no redeeming Sacrifice, would we have had any love to God? Unredeemed men left to go on like fallen angels in their sin would have had no more love of God than fallen angels have. How could they? The great foundation of His love is the Son given to redeem! God gives His Son, and so reveals His own love, and creates ours. Is not His love seen to be the cause of ours when we remember Calvary?

But He might have given His Son to die for men, beloved, and yet you and I might not have loved Him because we might not have been aware of the great fact. It is no small grace on God's part that, “to you is the word of this salvation sent.” While the heathen have never heard it, by the arrangement of His gracious providence you have been favored with the good news! You have it in your homes in the form of the Holy Scriptures! You hear it every Sunday from the pulpit! How would you have ever come to love Him if He had not sent His gospel to you? The gift of His Son Je-

sus and the providence which leads the herald of mercy to the saved one's door are evident causes of man's love to God. But more than this, Christ died and the gospel is preached—and yet some men do not love Him! Why not? Because of the hardness of their hearts; but others *do* love Him—shall I trace this to the natural betterness of their hearts? I dare not and much less do they! There is no believer who would ask me to do so in his own case; I must trace it to the influence of the Holy Spirit going with the revelation of the love of God in Christ Jesus, affecting the heart, and creating faith, and love, and every grace in the soul! Beloved, if you love God it is with no love of yours, but with the love which He has planted in your bosom! Unrenewed human nature is a soil in which love to God will not grow; there must be a taking away of the rock, and a *supernatural* change of the barren ground into good soil, and then as a rare plant from another land, love must be planted in our hearts, and sustained by divine power or else it never will be found there! There is no love to God in this world that is of the right kind except that which was created and formed by the love of God in the soul!

Put the two truths of God together—that the love of God is *first*, and that the love of God is the *cause* of our love, and I think you will be inclined from now on to be believers in what are commonly called the doctrines of grace. To me it is very amazing that they are not received by all churches because they are practically acknowledged by all Christians when on their knees! They may preach as they like, but they all pray according to the doctrines of grace, and those doctrines are so consistent with the Christian's experience that it is notable that the older a believer becomes, and the more deeply he searches into divine truths, the more inclined he is to give the whole of the praise of his salvation to the grace of God—and to believe in those precious truths which magnify not the free will of man, but the free grace of the Ever Blessed! I need no better statement of my own doctrinal belief than this, "We love Him because He first loved us." I know it has been said that He loved us on the foresight of our faith, and love, and holiness. Of course the Lord had a clear foresight of all these, but remember that He also had the foresight of our *absence* of love, and our *lack* of faith, and our *wandering*, and our *sins*! And surely His foresight in one direction must be supposed to operate as well as His foresight in the other direction! Remember also that God Himself did not foresee that there would be any love to Him in us arising out of *ourselves*, for there never has been any, and there never will be! He only foresaw that we should believe because He *gave us faith*; He foresaw that we would repent because *His Spirit would work repentance in us*; He foresaw that we should love because *He worked that love within us*! Is there *anything* in the foresight that He means to give us such things that can account for His giving us such things? The case is self-evident—His foresight of what *He* means to do cannot be His *reason* for doing it! His eternal purpose has made the gracious difference between the saved, and those who willfully perish in sin. Let us give all the glory to His holy

name, for to Him all the glory belongs. His preventing grace must have all the honor!

**II.** Secondly, we shall use the text FOR EXPERIMENTAL INFORMATION. First, we learn that *all true believers love God*. "We love Him," and we all love Him for one reason, "because He first loved us." All the children of God love their Father; I do not say that they all feel an *equal* love, or that they all feel as much love as they should. Who among us does? I will not say that they do not sometimes give cause to doubt their love. No, I will urge that it is well for them to examine even as Christ examined Peter, and said, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" But there *is* love in the heart of every true-born child of God; it is as necessary to spiritual life as blood is to natural life. Rest assured there has never been born into the kingdom of God one solitary individual destitute of love for God. You may be deficient in some virtues, (you should not be), but yet the root of the matter may be in *you*. But if you are without love, you are as a sounding brass, and as a tinkling cymbal. Whatever your outer works, though you give your body to be burned, and all your goods to feed the poor, yet if there is no love to God in your soul, the mark of God's sheep is not upon you, and your lot is not the lot of His children. *Rest assured that whoever is born of God loves God!*

Observe carefully the *kind* of love which is essential to every Christian—"We love Him, because He first loved us." Much has been said about disinterested love to God; there may be such a thing, and it may be very admirable, but it is not mentioned here. I trust, beloved, we know what it is to love God because of His superlative excellence and goodness; surely the more we know Him the more we shall love Him for what He is; but unless we love Him *because He first loved us*, whatever other sort of love we may have or think we have, it does not prove us to be children of God. *This* is the love we must have! The other form of love, if it is true, will grow up in us afterwards; that however is not essential nor need we unduly exalt it—loving God because *He first loved us* is sufficient evidence of grace in the soul. Gratitude has been vilified as a mean virtue, but indeed it is a noble emotion, and is one of the most forcible of spiritual motives! Let a man love God admiringly because of what He is, but yet there must run side by side with it this *grateful love of God* because He first loved him, or else he lacks that which John says is to be found in all the saints. Beloved, do not vex yourselves about any supposedly higher degrees, but see to it that you love Him because He first loved you. You may not be able to rise into those heights into which others of your brethren have ascended because you are as yet only a babe in grace, but you are safe enough if your love is of this simple character—that it loves because it is loved.

Within this humble form of love, which is so essential, there dwells a gracious sense of unworthiness necessary to a true Christian. We feel that we did not deserve the love which God sheds upon us. This humility we *must* have or we lack one mark of a child of God. There is also in this

lowly form of gracious affection a clear recognition of the fact that the Lord's love is graciously bestowed—and this also is essential to a Christian, and becomes to him the main source of his obedience and affection. If a man only loves me as much as I *deserve* to be loved, I do not feel under any very strong obligations, and consequently do not feel any very intense gratitude. But because the Lord's love is all of pure grace and comes to us as utterly undeserving, therefore we love Him in return. See whether such a humble, grateful love towards God dwells in your hearts, for it is a vital point.

*Love to God wherever it is found is a sure evidence of the salvation of its possessor.* If you love the Lord in the sense described, then He loved you first, and loves you now, you need no other evidence but this to assure yourself that you abide in the love of God—that you love Him. I was told by a venerable brother some little time ago a story of our famous preacher, Robert Hall. He charmed the most learned by the majesty of his eloquence, but he was as simple as he was great, and he was never happier than when conversing with poor believers upon experimental godliness. He was accustomed to make his journeys on horseback, and having been preaching at Clipstone he was on his way home when he was stopped by a heavy snowfall at the little village of Sibbertoft. The good man who kept the "Black Swan," a little village hostelry, came to him, and besought the preacher to take refuge beneath his roof, assuring him that it would give him great joy to welcome him. Mr. Hall knew him to be one of the most sincere Christians in the neighborhood, and therefore got off his horse, and went into the little inn. The good man was delighted to provide him a bed, a stool, and a candlestick in the Prophet's Chamber, for that rustic inn contained such an apartment. After Mr. Hall had rested awhile by the fire, the landlord said. "You must stay here all night sir, and if you do not mind I will call in a few of my neighbors, and if you feel that you could give us a sermon in my taproom they will all be glad to hear you." "So let it be, sir," said Mr. Hall, and so it was! The taproom became his cathedral, and the "Black Swan," the sign of the gospel banner! The peasants came together, and the man of God poured out his soul before them wondrously. They would never forget it, for to hear Mr. Hall was an event in any man's life! After all were gone, Mr. Hall sat down, and there came over him a fit of depression out of which he strove to rise by conversation with his host. "Ah, sir," said the great preacher, "I am much burdened, and am led to question my own condition before God. Tell me now, what do you think is a sure evidence that a man is a child of God." "Well, Mr. Hall," said the plain man, "I am sorry to see you so tried. You doubt yourself, but nobody else has any doubt about you; I hope the Lord will cheer and comfort you, but I am afraid I am not qualified to do it." "Never mind, friend, never mind, tell me what you think is the best evidence of a child of God?" "Well, I would say, sir," said he, "if a man loves God, he must be one of God's children." "Say you so," said the mighty preacher, "then it is well with me!" And at that signal he began to

magnify the Lord at such a rate that his hearer afterwards said that it was wonderful to hear him, as for about an hour he went on with glowing earnestness declaring the loveliness of God! "O sir," he said who told the tale, "You should have heard him! He said, 'love God, sir? Why I cannot help loving Him! How could I do otherwise?' "And then he went on to speak about the Almighty and His love and grace, extolling the Lord's greatness, goodness and glory in redemption, and all that He did for His people, till he said, 'Thank you, thank you, my friend; if love to Him is an evidence of being God's child, I know I have it, for I cannot help loving Him! I take no credit to myself; He is such a lovely being, and has done so much for us that I should be more brutish than any man if I did not love and adore Him.'" That which cheered that good and great man's heart may perhaps cheer yours. If you love God, you must have been loved *of* God! True love could not have come into your heart in any other conceivable way! And you may rest assured that you are the object of His eternal choice!

But oh *if you do not love God, dear hearer, I invite you to think for a minute upon your state!* Hear of God, and not love Him? You must be blind! Know anything about His character, and not adore Him? Your heart must be like the heart of Nabal when it was turned into stone! See God in Christ, bleeding on the cross for His enemies, and not love Him? O hell, you cannot be guilty of a worst offense than this! Here is love, shall it have no acknowledgment? It is said that a man cannot feel that he is loved without in some measure returning the flame, but what shall I say of a mind which beholds Christ's love but feels no love in return? It is brutish! It is devilish! God have mercy upon it! Breathe the same prayer, O unloving heart, and say, "Lord, forgive me, and by Your Holy Spirit renew me, and give me from now on to be able to say, 'I, also, in my humble fashion, love God because He first loved me.'"

**III.** Thirdly, we shall use the text as a matter OF PRACTICAL DIRECTION. I earnestly trust that there are some here who although they do not love God at present, yet desire to do so. Well, dear friend, *the text tells you how to love God.* You say perhaps, "Oh, I shall love God when I have improved my character, and when I have attended to the external duties of religion." But are you going to get love to God out of *yourself*? Is it there then? "No," you say. How then will you get it from where it is not? You may go often to an empty iron safe before you will bring a thousand pound note out of it! And you may look a long time to your own heart before you will bring out of *it* a love to God which is not there! What is the way by which a heart may be made to love God? The text shows us the method of the Holy Spirit; He reveals the love of God to the heart, and then the heart loves God in return! If then you are awakened this morning to desire to love God, use the method which the text suggests—meditate upon the great love of God to man, especially upon this—"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." See clearly

that you by faith trust your soul with Christ, and perceive that it is vast love which sets before you such a way of salvation in which the only thing required of you is that you be nothing, and trust Christ to be *everything*—and even that faith He gives you as a *gift* of His Spirit, so that the plan of salvation is all of His love. If you want to repent do not so much consider your sin as the love of Jesus in suffering for your sin! If you desire to believe do not so much study the doctrine as study the person of Jesus Christ upon the cross! And if you desire to love think over perpetually till it breaks your heart, the great love of Jesus Christ in laying down His life for His worthless foes! The love of God is the birthplace of Holy love! Not there in your hearts where you are attempting an absurdly impossible feat, namely, to create love in the carnal mind which cannot be reconciled to God, but there in the heart of *Jesus* must love be born, and then it shall come down to you. You cannot force your mind into the condition of believing even a common thing, nor can you sit there and say, “I will love So-and-So,” of whom you know nothing. Faith and love are second steps arising out of former steps. “Faith comes by hearing,” and love comes by contemplation. It flows out of a sense of the love of Christ in the soul even as wine flows from the clusters in the winepress. Go to the fragrant mystery of redeeming love, and tarry with it till in those beds of spices your own garments shall be made to smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia! There is no way of sweetening yourself but by tasting the Sweetness of Jesus Christ! The honey of His love will make your whole nature to be as a honeycomb—every cell of your manhood shall drop sweetness!

Brothers and sisters, if we wish to sustain the love we have received, we must do the same thing. At the present moment you love God and desire still to love Him. Be wise, then, and feed your love on His love—it is its best food. This is the honey which will keep your sweetness sweet; this is the fire which will keep your flame flaming. Could we be separated from the love of Christ, our love would die out like a lamp in yonder streets when cut off from the main. He who quickened us into the life of love must keep us alive or we shall become loveless and lifeless.

And if perhaps your love has grown somewhat cold; if you long to revive it, do not begin by doubting God's love to you—that is not the way of reviving, but of weakening love! Believe in divine love, my brothers and sisters, over the head of the coldness of your heart! Trust in Jesus Christ as a sinner if you cannot rejoice in Him as a saint, and you will get your love back. You see the flowing fountain how it gushes with a constant stream? And here I bring a pitcher, and set it down so that the stream rushes into it, and fills it till it overflows. In this manner our souls ought to be filled with the love of Christ. But you have taken away your pitcher, and it has become empty, and now you say to yourself, “Alas, alas, there is nothing here! What shall I do? This pitcher is empty.” Do? Why do what you did at *first*—go and set it under the flowing stream, and it will soon be full again! It will never get full by your removing it into a dry

place. Doubting is the death of love! Only by the hand of faith can love be fed with the Bread of heaven; your tears will not fill it; you may groan into it, but sighs and moans will not fill it; only the flowing fountain can fill the vacuum. Believe that God still loves you, even if you are not a saint. Believe in the mighty love of Christ towards sinners, and trust yourself with Him! And then His love will come pouring in till your heart is again full to overflowing! If you want to rise to the very highest state of love to Christ; if you desire ecstatic joy, or to be perfectly consecrated; if you aim at an Apostle's self-denial, or at a martyr's heroism, or if you would be as like to Christ as the spirits are in heaven, no tool can engrave you to this image but His love! No force can fashion you to the model of Christ Jesus but the love of Jesus Christ shed abroad in your soul by the Holy Spirit. Keep to this then, as a matter of practical direction; dwell in the love of God to you that you may feel intense love to God.

Once more, as a practical direction, *if you love God show it as God showed His love to you*. You cannot do so in the same degree, but you may in the same *manner*. God loved the worthless; you love the worthless; God loved His enemies; you love your enemies. The Lord loved them practically. Love not in word only, but in deed and in truth. He loved them to self-sacrifice, so that Jesus gave Himself for us. You love to self-sacrifice also. Love God so that you could die a thousand deaths for Him. Love Him till you make no provision for the flesh, but live only for His glory. Let your heart burn with a flame that shall consume you till the zeal of God's house shall have eaten you up. "We love Him *because* He first loved us," therefore let us love Him as He loved us! Let His love be both motive and model to us—

***"Loved of my God, for Him again,  
With love intense I burn.  
Chosen of Him before time began  
I choose Him in return."***

**IV.** Our text suggests to us AN ARGUMENTATIVE DEFENSE. You will see what I mean when I observe first that our love to God seems to need an apology. We have heard of an emperor casting eyes of love upon a peasant girl. It would have been monstrous for *her* to have first looked up to *him* as likely to be her husband! Everybody would have thought her to be bereft of her senses had she done so, but when the *monarch* looked down upon *her*, and asked her to be his queen, that was another thing. She might take leave to love from his love! Often does my soul say, "O God, I cannot help loving You, but may I? Can this poor heart of mine be allowed to send up its love to You? I—polluted and defiled, nothingness and emptiness, and sinfulness—may I say, 'Yet do I love You, O my God, almighty as You are?' 'Holy, holy, holy,' is the salutation of the seraphim, but may I say, 'I love You, O my God?'" Yes I may, because *He* first loved me! *There* is love's license to soar so high—

***"Yet I may love You, too, O Lord,  
Almighty as You are,  
For you have stooped to ask of me"***

***The love of my poor heart!"***

Then again if any should inquire of us as they did of the spouse, "What is your beloved more than another beloved, O you fairest among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you do so charge us? What is this passion that you have for God, this love you bear to His incarnate Son?" We have a conclusive argument as against them, even as we had a quietus for our own fears. We reply, "We love Him, because He first loved us, and if you did but know that He loved you; if you did but know that He had done for you what He has done for us, you would love Him too! You would not need to ask us why—you would wonder why you do not love Him, too."—

***"His love, if all the nations knew,  
Surely the whole world would love Him too."***

We shall not need to all eternity any other defense for loving God than this, "Because He first loved us."

Here is also an argument for the lover of the old orthodox faith. It has been said by some that the doctrines of grace lead to licentiousness, but our text is a most excellent shield against that attack. Brothers and sisters, we believe that the Lord loved us first, and most freely—not because of our tears or prayers, nor because of our foreseen faith, nor because of anything in us—but first! Well, what comes out of that? Do we therefore say, "If He loved us when we were in sin, let us continue in sin that grace may abound," as some have wickedly said? God forbid! The inference we draw is, "We love Him because He first loved us." Some can be swayed to morality by *fear*, but the Christian is sweetly drawn to Holiness by *love*. We love Him not because we are afraid of being cast into hell if we do not—that fear is gone—we who are justified by God can never be condemned! Nor because we are afraid of missing heaven, for the inheritance is upon as many of us as are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Does this blessed security lead us to carelessness? No, but in proportion as we see the greatness, and the infinity of the love of God, we love Him in return! And that love is the basis of all Holiness and the groundwork of a godly character. The doctrines of grace, though often maligned, have proved in the hearts of those who have believed them, the grandest stimulus to heroic virtue! And he who affirms otherwise knows not what he says!

Last of all here is a noble argument to silence a gainsaying world. Do you see what a wonderful text we have here? It is a description of Christianity! Men say they are weary of the old faith, and beg us to advance with the times—how shall we reply to them? They need something better, do they? The philosophers who pander to the age are going to give it a better religion than Christianity? Are they? Let us see. We shall however wait very long before their false promises will approximate to fulfillment. Let us rather look at what we already have. Our text is a circle; here is love *descending* from heaven down to man—and here is love *ascending* from man to God—and so the circle is completed. The text treats only of love. We love the Lord, and He loves us. The text resembles Anacreon's harp which resounded love. Here is no word of strife, selfishness, anger,

or envy! All is love, and love alone. Now it comes to pass that out of this love between God and His people there grows, (see the context of my text), love to men, for “he that loves God loves his brother also.” The ethical essence of Christianity is *love*, and the great master doctrine that we preach when we preach Jesus Christ is this—“God has loved us, we love God, and now we must love one another.” O you nations, what gospel do you desire better than this? This it is that will put aside your drums, your cannons, and your swords! When men love God, and love each other, what need for all the bloodstained pageantry of war? And this will end your slavery, for who will call his brother his slave when he has learned to love the image of God in every man? Who is he that will oppress and domineer when he has learned to love his God, and love the creatures God has made? Behold! Christianity is the Magna Charta of the universe! Here is the true, “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity,” which men will seek for in vain in politics! Here is the sacred Communism which will injure no man’s rights, but will respect every man’s griefs, and succor every man’s needs! Here is indeed the birth principle of the golden age of peace and joy, when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the weaned child shall play on the cockatrice’s den! Spread it then, and let it circulate throughout the whole earth—God’s love first, our love to Him next! And then the universal love which shuts not out a man of any color, of any class, or of any name—but calls upon itself to love both God and man because God is loved!

The Lord bless this meditation to you by His Spirit, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 JOHN 4.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—19, 248, 810.**

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# LIFE'S NEED AND MAINTENANCE

## NO. 1300

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 18, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"None can keep alive his own soul"*  
*Psalm 22:29.*

WE must commence by noticing the context so that we may arrive at the first meaning of the words. There is a day coming when the true God will be acknowledged as Lord and God by all mankind, for the 27<sup>th</sup> verse tells us—"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before You." In that day the greatest of men will bow before Him. The verse from which we cull our text says, "All they that are fat upon earth shall eat and worship." The prosperous ones, those who have grown rich and great shall receive good at the hands of the Savior, and shall rejoice to adore Him as the author of their fatness! Kings shall acknowledge Him as *their* King, and lords accept him as their Lord. Then shall not only the riches of life, but the poverty of death also render Him homage, for as men shall go down to the dust of the grave, in their feebleness and weakness they shall look up to Him for strength and solace, and shall find it sweet to worship Him in death. Men shall know that the keys of death are in His hands. "All they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him," and it shall be known all the world over that the issues of life are in the hands of Jesus Christ. They shall understand that He is appointed as Mediator to rule over all mortal things, for the government shall be upon His shoulders; He shall open, and no man shall shut, and shut, and no man shall open, for it is His sovereign prerogative to kill and to make alive. "None can keep alive his own soul." I pass on from this meaning with the hopeful belief that this dispensation is not to end as some suppose, without the conquest of the world to Christ. Surely "all kings shall bow before Him, all nations shall serve Him." The shame of the Cross shall be followed by honor and glory—"Men shall be blessed in Him, all nations shall call Him blessed." The conviction grows with me every day, the more I read the Scriptures, that the disheartening views of some interpreters are not true, but that before the whole of prophecy shall be worked into history, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ.

Leaving this, we come to consider a more *spiritual* meaning which we believe to be as truly the sense of the passage as the other. You will notice if you read the Psalm carefully, when you come to its close, that our Savior seems to delight Himself in being made food for the saved ones among the sons of men. In the 26<sup>th</sup> verse He says, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied." Here He is thinking of the poor among men, to whom He has ever been the source of abounding comfort; to them His gospel has been preached, and thousands of them have found in Him food for

their souls which has satisfied them, filled their months with praise, and made their hearts live forever. The poor from the highways and hedges feast to the full at His royal table! Yes, the blind, the cripple, and the lame—the very beggars of the streets—are among His household guests! Christ is very mindful of the poor and needy; He redeems their soul from deceit and violence, and their blood is precious in His sight. Especially do the poor in spirit feed on Jesus; over them He pronounced the first benediction of the sermon on the mount, and of them He declares, “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” What a feast do poor perishing spirits enjoy in Jesus when His flesh becomes to them meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed!

Nor is this all the feeding upon Christ, for in the 29<sup>th</sup> verse we hear of it again. Not only the poor feed upon the bread of heaven, but the great, the rich, and the strong live upon Him too—“All they that are fat upon earth shall eat and worship.” There is no other way of life for them, for “None can keep alive his own soul.” The saints, too, when they have grown in grace; when they have satisfied their hunger, and are fat and flourishing in the courts of the Lord’s house; must still eat of the same heavenly food. The fat need Jesus as much as the lean, the strong as much as the feeble, for none can do without Him—“None can keep alive his own soul.” Thus the rich and the poor meet together, and Jesus is the food of them all. The empty and the full alike draw near to the Redeemer’s fullness, and receive grace for grace.

Among those who feel their need of Jesus there are some of a mournful type of character who count themselves ready to perish; they dare not number themselves among the meek who shall eat and be satisfied, much less could they think of themselves as the fat upon earth who shall eat and worship. No, they stand back from the feast as utterly unworthy to draw near; they dare not believe themselves to be spiritually alive unto God; they reckon themselves among those that go down into the pit; they bear the sentence of death in themselves, and are prisoners under bondage through fear. Their sense of sin and personal unworthiness is so conspicuous, and so painful, that they are afraid to claim the privileges of the living in Zion! They fear that their faith is expiring, their love is dying out, their hope is withered, and their joy departed; they compare themselves to the smoking flax, and think themselves to be even more offensive than the nauseous smell given forth by the smoking wick. To such comes the Word which precedes my text—“They that go down to the dust shall bow before Him.” Christ shall be worshipped even by them! Their last moments shall be cheered by His presence. When, through depression of spirit, through the assaults of Satan, and through inability to see the work of the Spirit in their souls, they shall be brought so low as to be down to the dust, they shall be lifted up from their misery, and made to rejoice in the Lord their Redeemer, who will say to them—“Shake yourself from the dust; arise and sit down; loosen yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.” When souls are thus brought down, they begin to learn for themselves that “none can keep alive his own soul.” A poor broken-hearted spirit knows this, for he fears that the inner filth within his soul is at its last gasp, and he is afraid that his faith, love, and all his graces will be as bones scattered at the grave’s

mouth. But then he learns what I trust we shall believe at this time without such a painful experience to teach it to us, namely, that none of us can keep our own soul alive, but that we must have food continually from *above*, and visitations of the Lord to preserve our spirits. Our life is not in ourselves, but in our Lord! Apart from Him we could not exist spiritually, even for a moment. We cannot keep our own soul alive as to grace. That is to be the subject of this morning's meditation, and may the Holy Spirit render it profitable to us!

**I.** The first point of consideration out of which the rest will come is this—THE INNER LIFE MUST BE SUSTAINED BY GOD.

We are absolutely dependent upon God for the preservation of our spiritual life. We all of us know that none of us can *make* his own soul live. You have destroyed yourself, but you can not make yourself live again. Spiritual life must always be the *gift* of God—it must come from without—it cannot arise from within. Between the ribs of death, life never takes its birth. How could it? Shall the ocean beget fire, or darkness create light? You shall go to the morgue as long as you please, but unless the trumpet of the resurrection shall sound there, the dry bones will remain in their corruption. The sinner is “dead in trespasses and sins,” and he will never have even so much as a right *desire* towards God, nor a pulse of spiritual life, until Jesus Christ, who is “the resurrection and the Life,” shall quicken him. Now, it is important for us to remember that we are as much dependent upon the Lord Jesus, and the power of His Spirit for being kept alive as we were for being made alive in the first place. “None can keep alive his own soul.” Do you remember when you first hung upon Christ for everything? That same dependence must be exercised every day of your life, for there is need of it; you remember your former nakedness, your poverty, your emptiness, your misery, your death apart from Christ? Remember that the case is not one whit better if you could now be separated from sin; if now you have any grace, or any holiness, or any love, you derive it entirely from Him, and from moment to moment His grace must be continued to you; for if connection between you and Christ should by any possibility be severed, you would cease to live *spiritually*. That is the truth of God we want to bring forward.

Here let us remark that this is not at all inconsistent with the undying nature of the spiritual life. When we were born-again there was imparted to us a new and higher nature called the *spirit*. This is a fruit of the Spirit of God, and it can never die; it is an “incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever.” When it is imparted to the soul it makes us partakers of the divine nature, and it keeps us so that the evil one touches us not so as utterly to destroy us. Yet this fact is quite consistent with the assertion that we cannot keep our own soul alive, for it is because the Lord keeps us alive. The newborn nature is safe because the Lord protects it—it survives the deadly influences of the world because the Lord continues to quicken it. Our new nature is united to the person of Christ, and we live because He lives. We are not kept alive by independent power, but by perpetual *renewal* from the Lord.

This is true of every man living. “None can keep alive his own soul”—no, not one! You young people think, perhaps, that old Christians get on

better than you do; you imagine that their experience preserves them, but indeed they cannot keep their own souls alive anymore than you can! You tried and tempted ones sometimes look with envy upon those who dwell at ease, as though their spirituality was self-supporting! But no, they cannot keep their own souls alive anymore than you can! You know your own difficulties, but you do not know those of others; rest assured, however, that to all men there are these difficulties, and that no man can keep his own soul alive.

This is the truth of God at all times—at no one moment can we keep ourselves alive! While you sit in this house of prayer you may dream that assuredly you can keep yourself *here*, but it is not so. You might sin the foulest of sins in your heart while sitting here, and you might grieve the Holy Spirit, and cloud your life for years while worshipping among the people of God. You are not able to keep your own soul alive in your happiest and holiest moments! From your knees you might rise to blasphemy, and from the communion table you might go to the seat of the scorner if you were left to yourself—

***“All our strength at once would fail us,  
If deserted, Lord, by Thee.  
Nothing then could help us,  
Certain our defeat would be,  
And those who hate us,  
Their desires would see.”***

I seldom find myself so much in danger as when I have been in close communion with God. After the most ecstatic devotion, one is hardly prepared for the coarse temptations of this wicked world. When we come down like Moses from the mountain, if we encounter open sin we are apt to grow indignant, and break all the commandments in the vehemence of our wrath. The sudden change from the highest and holiest contemplations to the trifles and vexations of earth subjects the soul to so severe a trial that the poet did well say—

***“We should suspect some danger near  
When we perceive too much delight.”***

Even when our delight is of a *spiritual* kind we need to be on our guard after having been filled with it—for then Satan avails himself of the opportunity. We are never safe unless the Lord keeps us! If we could take you, my brothers and sisters, and place you in the society of saints, give you to keep perpetual Sundays, make every meal a sacrament, and set you nothing to say or do but what should be directly calculated to promote the glory of God, yet even *then* you could not keep your own soul alive! Adam in perfection could not keep himself in Paradise! How can his imperfect children be so proud as to rely upon their own steadfastness? Among angels there were those who kept not their first estate; how shall man then hope to stand unless he is held up?

Why is this? How do we know that our text is true? We gather arguments from the analogies of nature. We do not find that we can keep our own bodies alive; we need divine preservation, or disease and death will deftly make us their prey. We are not self-contained as to this mortal existence, any one of us, no, not for five minutes can we live upon ourselves! Take away the atmospheric air, and who could keep himself alive? The heaving lungs need their portion of air, and if they cannot be satis-

fied, man soon becomes a corpse! Deprive us of food—leave us for a week without meat or drink—and see if we can keep our natural body alive. Take away from us the means of warmth in the time when God's cold rules the year, and death would soon ensue. Now, if the physical life is not to be sustained by itself, much less can the higher and *spiritual* life! It must have food. It must have the Spirit to sustain it. The Scriptures present to us this figure of the body which dies if severed from the vital organs, and of the branch which is dried up if cut off from the stem. Top-lady versifies the thought and sings—

***“Quickened by You, and kept alive,  
I flourish and bear fruit.  
My life, I from Your sap derive,  
My vigor from your root.  
I can do nothing without You!  
My strength is wholly Thine.  
Withered and barren would I be  
If severed from the vine.”***

Yonder lamp burns well, but its future shining is dependent upon a fresh supply of oil. The ship in rapid motion borrows force from the continuance of the wind, but the sails hang idle if the gale ceases. The river is full to the bank, but if the clouds should never again pour out their floods it would become a dry trail. All things depend on others and the whole upon the Great Supreme! Nothing is self-sustained! Unless God Himself sustains it, no being exists. Even immortal souls are only so because He has set His seal upon them, and declared that they shall inherit eternal life, or in consequence of sin shall sink into everlasting punishment. Hence we are sure that “none can keep alive his own soul.”

But we need not rely upon analogy, we can put the matter to the test. Could any believer among us keep any one of His graces alive? You, perhaps, are a sufferer, and up to now you have been enabled to be patient. But suppose the Lord Jesus should withdraw His presence from you, and your pains should return again? Ah, where will your patience be? Or, I will suppose you are a worker, and you have done great things for the Lord. Like Samson you have been exceedingly strong, but let the Lord be once withdrawn, and leave you to attempt His work alone, and you will soon discover that you are as weak as other men, and will utterly fail! Holy joy, for instance, take that as a specimen; did you rejoice in the Lord this morning when you awoke? It is very sweet to wake up and hear the birds singing within your heart. But you cannot maintain that joy, no, not even for an hour, do what you will. “All my fresh springs are in You,” my God, and if I am to joy and rejoice, You must anoint me continually with the oil of gladness! Have you not sometimes thought in the morning, “I feel so peaceful and calm, so resigned to the divine will. I think I shall be able to keep up this placid spirit all day long.” Perhaps you have done so, and if so I know you have praised God for it, but if you have become perturbed, you have learned again that to will is present with you, but how to perform that which you would, you find not! Well, if for any one fruit of the Spirit we are dependent upon the Lord, how much more will this be true as to the essential *life* from which each of these graces spring?

This truth of God is equally illustrated by our need of help in every *act* of the divine Life. Dear friends, have you ever tried what it is to perform any spiritual act apart from the divine power? What a dull, dead affair it becomes! What a mechanical thing prayer is without the Spirit of God! It is a parrot's noise, and nothing more; it is weariness, slavish drudgery. How sweet it is to pray when the Spirit gives us feeling, unction, access with boldness, pleading power, faith, expectancy, and full fellowship! But if the Spirit of God is absent from us in prayer, our infirmities prevail against us, and our supplication loses all prevalence. Did you ever resolve to praise God, and come into the congregation where the sweetest psalms were being sent to heaven? Could you praise God till the Holy Spirit came like a divine wind, and loosened the fragrance of the flowers of your soul? You know you could not! You used the sacred words of the sweet singers of Israel, but hosannas languished on your tongue, and your devotion died. I know that it is dreadful work to be bound to preach when one is not conscious of the aid of the Spirit of God! It is like pouring water out of bottomless buckets, or feeding hungry souls out of empty baskets! A true sermon such as God will bless, no man can preach of himself! He might as well try to sound the archangel's trumpet! We must have You, O blessed Spirit, or we fail! O God, we must have Your power, or every action that we perform is but the movement of a robot, and not the acceptable act of a living, spiritual man!

Have you ever, dear friends, had to know that you cannot keep alive your own soul by your own blundering and failures, when you have resolved to be very wise and correct? Did you ever get into a self-sufficient state, and say, "Now, I shall never fall into *that* temptation again, for I am the burnt child that dreads the fire"? And yet into that very sin you have fallen! Have you not said, "Well, I understand *that* business; there is no need to wait upon God for direction in so simple a matter, for I am well up in every particular thing relating to it, and I can manage the affair very well"? And have you not acted as foolishly in the whole concern as the Israelites did in the affair of the Gibeonites, when they were deceived by the old shoes and clothes, and the moldy bread, and asked no counsel of the Lord? I tell you, our *strength*, whenever we have any, is our greatest *weakness*! And our fancied wisdom is our real folly! When we are *weak* we are strong! When in a sense of entire dependence upon God, we dare not trust ourselves, we are both wise and safe! Go, young man, even you who are a zealous Christian—go without your morning prayer into the house of business—and see what will befall you! Venture, my sister, down into your little family without having called upon God for guidance, and see what you will do! Go with a strong resolve that you will never be guilty of the weakness which dishonored you a few days ago—and depend upon the strength of your own will, and the firmness of your own purpose—and see if you do not before long discover to your shame how great your weakness is! No, try none of these experiments, but listen to the word which tells you, "none can keep alive his own soul."

And now, should any think that he can keep his own soul alive, let me ask him to look at the enemies which surround him. A sheep in the midst of wolves is *safe* compared with the Christian in the midst of ungodly men! The world waylays us, the devil assaults us, behind every

bush there lurks a foe! If the sight of foes without are not enough to make us confess our danger, look at the foes within! There is enough within your soul, O Christian, though you are one of the best of saints, to destroy you in an hour unless the grace of God guards you, and keeps your passions in check—and prevents your stubborn will from asserting its own rebellious determinations. Oh, what a powder keg the human heart is, even at its best! If some of us have not been blown up, it has been because providence has kept away the sparks, rather than because of there being any lack of powder within. Oh, may God keep us, for if He leaves us, we need no devil to destroy us—we shall prove devils to ourselves—we shall need no tempters except the lusting after evil which now conceals itself so craftily within our own bosom!

Certainly, dear brothers and sisters, we may be quite sure that “none can keep alive his own soul” when we remember that in the gospel, provision is made for keeping our soul alive! The Holy Spirit is given that He may continually quicken and preserve us—and Jesus Christ Himself lives that we may live also. To what purpose would be all the splendid provisions, and the special safeguards of the covenant of grace for the preservation of the spiritual life if that spiritual life could preserve itself? Why does the Lord declare, “I, the Lord, do keep it,” if it can keep itself? The granaries of Egypt, so full of corn, remind us that there is a famine in the land of Canaan! The treasures laid up in Christ Jesus assure us that we are in need of them! God’s supplies are never superfluous, but are meant to meet *real* needs. Let us, then, all acknowledge that no man or woman among us can keep alive their own soul!

**II.** This brings me, secondly and briefly, to notice that THIS TRUTH BRINGS GLORY TO CHRIST. “None can keep alive his own soul.” Weak-minded professors are prone to trust in man, but they have here an evident warning against such folly! How can they trust in a man who cannot keep alive his own soul? Shall I crouch at the feet of my fellow man, and ask him to hear my confession, and absolve me when I know that he cannot keep alive his own soul? Shall I look up to him, and call him, “father in God,” and expect to receive divine grace from the laying on of *his* hands, when I learn that he is a weak, sinful being like myself? *He cannot keep alive his own soul!* What can he do for me? If he lives before God, he has to live upon the daily charity of the Most High—*what can he have to give me?* Oh, look not to your fellow virgins for the oil of grace, for they have not enough for themselves; and whatever name a man may dare to take, whether it is priest, father, or Pope—look not to *him*—but look to JESUS in whom all fullness dwells!

The glory which accrues to Christ from our daily dependence is seen in His becoming to us our daily bread. His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed! And we must feed upon these continually, or die! Eating is not an operation to be performed only once, but throughout life, and so we have to go to Jesus again and again, and find sustenance in Him as long as life lasts. Beloved, we honored our Master when He first saved us, and through being daily dependent upon Him we are led to honor Him every day. If our hearts are right, we shall honor Him more and more every day, as we more and more perceive our indebtedness to Him. He is our daily bread upon which we feed continually, and the liv-

ing water of which we continually drink. He is the light which everlastingly shines upon us. He is in fact daily to us our all-in-all; and all this prevents our forgetting Him. As at the first He saved us, so He still saves us! And as at the first we prized Him, we still prize Him.

More than that, as our *life* is maintained, not only by Him, but by our abiding in union with Him, this leads us to abide in *love* towards Him. Union is the source of communion and love. The wife remains a happy wife by loving fellowship with her husband. When the betrothed one is married to her beloved, the wedding day is not the end of it all; the putting on of the ring is the beginning, not the end. And so, when we believe in Jesus, we are saved, but we must not idly feel, "it is all done now." No, it is only just begun! Now is the life of dependence, the life of faith, the life of obedience, the life of love, the life of union commenced, and it is to be continued forever! This makes us love, honor, and adore our Lord Jesus, since we only live by being one with Him.

We have also to remember that our life is daily supported by virtue of what the living Redeemer is still doing for us, as well as by receiving the fruit of His death, and of our spiritual union with Him. He ever lives to make intercession for us, and therefore He is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." The life of the ascended Redeemer is intimately bound up with our life—"Because I live, you shall live, also." How this honors Christ, for we are thus led to realize a *living* Savior, and to love Him as a living, breathing, acting person. It is a pity when men only think of a *dead* Savior, or of a *baby* Savior carried in the Virgin's arms, as the Church of Rome does. It is *our* joy to have a LIVING Christ, for while He lives, we cannot die, and while He pleads, we cannot be condemned! Thus we are led to remember Him as a living Savior, and to give Him the honor He is due.

But oh, my brothers and sisters, what must be the fullness of Christ when all the grace which the saints have must come out of Him, and not merely all they *have* had, but all they obtain every day comes from Him? If there is any virtue, if there is any praise, if there is anything heavenly, if there is anything divine—all this of His fullness have we received, and grace for grace! What must be that power which protects and preserves *millions* of saints from temptation, and keeps them amid perils as many as the sands of the sea? What must be that patience which watches over the frail children of God in all their weaknesses and wanderings, in all their sufferings, in all their infirmities? What must be His grace which covers all their sins, and what His strength which supports them under all their trials? What must the fountainhead be, when the streams which flow to any one of us are so deep that we cannot fathom them, so broad that we cannot measure them? Yet millions of happy spirits are each one receiving as much as any one of us may be, and still there is a fullness abiding in Christ the same as before, for it has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell! Not a saint lives a moment apart from Him, for "none can keep alive his own soul." The cries of babes in grace, and the shouts of strong men who divide the spoil, all come from the life which He lends, and the strength which He gives! Between the gates of hell and the gates of heaven in all those pilgrims whose faces are towards the royal city, all the life is Christ's life, and all the strength is Christ's

strength—and He is in them, working in them to will and to do of His own good pleasure! Blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus who thus supplies all His people! Does not this display the exceeding riches of His grace?

**III.** Thirdly and practically, THIS SUBJECT SUGGESTS THE PATH OF WISDOM FOR OURSELVES. “None can keep alive his own soul.” Then, my dear brothers and sisters, what manner of persons ought we to be?

Let me have your earnest thoughts on this point for a minute. Do not let anyone among us look back to a certain day, and say, “On that occasion I was regenerated and converted, and that is enough.” I fear that some of you get into a very bad condition by saying, “If I can prove that I was converted on such-and-such a day, that will do.” This is altogether unjustifiable talk! Conversion is a turning onto the right road—the next thing is to *walk* in it! The daily going on in that road is as essential as the beginning if you would reach the desired end! To strike the first blow is not all the battle—to him that overcomes the crown is promised! To start in the race is nothing; many have done that who have failed! But to hold out till you reach the winning post is the great point of the matter. Perseverance is as necessary to a man's salvation as conversion. Remember this; you not only need grace to begin with, but grace with which to *live* in Christ Jesus.

Learn, also, that we should diligently use all those means whereby the Lord communicates fresh support to our life. A man does not say, “Well, I was born on such-and-such a day, that is enough for me.” No, the good man needs his daily meals to maintain his existence. Being alive, his next consideration is to *stay* alive, and therefore he does not neglect eating nor any operation which is essential to life. So you, dear friends, must labor for the meat which endures to eternal life—you must feed on the bread of heaven. Study the Scriptures daily—I hope you do not neglect that. Be much in private prayer—your life cannot be healthy if the mercy seat is neglected. Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as is the manner of some. Be eager to hear the word of God, and endeavor both to understand and practice it. Gather with God's people in their many spiritual meetings, when they join in prayer and praise, for these are healthful means of sustaining the inner life. If you neglect these, you cannot expect that grace will be strong within you—you may even question if there is any life at all! Still, remember that even if a man should eat and drink, that would not keep him alive without the power of God! Many die with whom there is no lack either of air or food. You must, therefore, look beyond the outward means, to God Himself, to preserve your soul. Let it be your daily prayer, “Oh Savior, by whom I began to live, daily enable me to look to You that I may draw continuous life from Your wounds, and live because You live.” Take these things home and practice them.

Keep, dear friends, also clear of everything which has a tendency to destroy life. A sane man does not willingly take poison. If he knew it, he would not touch the cup in which it had been contained. We are careful to avoid any adulteration in our food which might be injurious to life and health. We have our chemists busily at work to analyze liquids, lest inadvertently we should imbibe death in the water which we drink. Brethren,

let us be equally careful as to our souls! Keep your chemist at work analyzing the things of this life. Let conscience and understanding fit up their laboratory, and *prove* all things. Analyze the sermon of the eloquent preacher lest you drink in novelties of doctrine and falsehoods because he happens to put them prettily before you. Analyze each book you read lest you should become tainted with error while you are interested with the style and manner, smartness and elegance of your author. Analyze the company you keep. Test and try everything lest you should be committing spiritual suicide, or carelessly squandering life away. Ask the Lord, the preserver of men, above all things, to keep you beneath the shadow of His wings that you may not be afraid of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction which wastes at noonday. Because His truth has become your shield and buckler, you are safe.

Watch your life carefully, but look to Jesus Christ from day to day for everything. Do not become self-satisfied so as to say, "Now I am rich, and increased in goods." If ever a child of God imitates the rich man in the parable, and says, "Soul, take your ease, you have much goods laid up for many years," he is a fool as much as the rich man was! I have known some become very exalted in spiritual things. The conflict is almost over with them—temptation has no power, they are masters of the situation—and their condition is of the most elevated kind. Well, ballooning is very pleasant to those who like it, but I think he is safest who keeps on the ground! I fear that spiritual ballooning has been very mischievous to a great many, and has altogether turned their heads. Their high conceit is falsehood! After all, my friend, to tell you the truth very plainly—you are no better than other people, though you think you are, and in one point I am sure you miserably fail—*humility!* When we hear you declare what a fine fellow you are, we suspect that you wear borrowed plumes, and are not what you seem. A peacock is a beautiful bird, what can be more brilliant? But I am not enraptured with his voice, nor are you! And so there may be fine feathers about certain people, perhaps a little too fine, but while they are showing themselves off, we know that there is a weak point about them, and we pray that it may not cause dishonor to the cause of Christ. It is not our part to be hunting about for the failings of our fellow Christians, yet *boasting* has a tendency to make us examine the boaster! The practical thing is to believe that when we are proud ourselves there is something wrong with us. Whenever we stand before the mirror, and think what fine fellows we are, we had better go at once to the great Physician, and beseech Him to give us medicine for our vanity! Mr. Peacock, you are certainly very handsome, but you should hear yourself croak! Professor, there are fine points about you, but there are sorry ones too! Be humble and so be wise. Brother, if you get an inch above the ground, you are just that inch too high! If you have anything apart from Christ—if you can live five minutes on past experience—if you think that you can live on yesterday's grace you are mistaken! You put the manna away so very carefully; you stored it up in the cupboard with such self-content. Go to it tomorrow morning, instead of joining the rest of your brethren in gathering the fresh manna which will fall all around the camp; go to the cupboard where you stored up yesterday's manna! Ah, as soon as you open the door you close it again! Why did you shut

that door so quickly? Well, we need not look inside the cupboard—the smell is enough! It has happened as Moses foretold it—it has bred worms and it stinks as he said it would. Cover it up as quickly as you can! Dig a deep hole, and throw it all in, and bury it! That is the only thing to do with such rottenness. Day by day go to Christ, and you will get your sweet manna. But begin to live on past or present attainments, and they will breed worms and stink as sure as you are a man. Do not try it, for, “none can keep alive his own soul.”

**IV.** Last of all, THIS SUBJECT INDICATES A WAY OF USEFULNESS for everyone here present who is a child of God. I think the great business of the Christian's life is to serve God, and he can do that mainly by aiming at the conversion of sinners! It is a grand thing to be blessed of God to turn sinners from the error of their ways. But listen, brothers and sisters, there is equally good work to be done by helping struggling saints! The old Roman said he thought it as much an honor to preserve a Roman citizen as to slay an enemy of his country, and he was right. There is as much acceptance before God in the work of instrumentally *preserving* souls alive as in being made the means of making souls to live in the first place. The upholding of believers is as necessary an exercise for Christian workers as the ingathering of unbelievers. I want you to think about this. If there is a person nearly drowned, a man will leap into the water to bring him out. And he gets great credit for it, and deserves it. And so when a man saves a soul from death by earnest ministry, let him be glad and thank God! But if a man is starving and ready to die, and you give him bread, or if he is not reduced to that point, but would have been so had you not interfered, you have done as good an action in preserving life as the other friend who snatched life from between the jaws of death! You must never think little of the work which instructs the ignorant Christian, which clears the stumbling blocks out of the way of the perplexed believer, which comforts the feeble-minded, and supports the weak. These necessary works must be done, while soul-saving must not be left undone! Perhaps some of you never will be the means of the conversion of many; then try to be the means of comfort to as many as you can! To be the means, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, of nurturing the life which God has given is a worthy service, and very acceptable with God. I would urge the members of this church to watch over one another. Be pastors to each other! Be very careful over the many young people that have come among us, and if you see any backslide—in a gentle and affectionate manner endeavor to bring them back! Do you know any despondent ones? Lay yourselves out to comfort them! Do you see faults in any? Do not tell them of them hastily, but labor as God shall help you to teach them a better way. As the Lord often preserves *you* by the help of others, so in return seek to be in God's hands the means by which He shall keep your brethren from going astray, from sinking in despair, or from falling into error. I hold it out to you as a good and blessed work to do—will you try to accomplish it?

Now, if you say “Yes,” and I think every Christian here says, “Yes,” then I am going to speak to you concerning the collection, brothers and sisters. This is Hospital Sunday, and we must contribute our full share! Do you see any connection between this subject and the collection? I

think I do. Here are these poor sick folks who will die unless they are carefully looked to, unless medicine and a physician's skill are provided for them. I know you are ready enough to look after sick *souls*—the point to which I have brought you is one which involves such readiness. Well, now, he who would look after a sick soul will be sure to care for a sick body! I hope you are not of the same class as the priest in the fable who was entreated by a beggar to give him a crown. "By no means," said the reverend father, "why should I give you a crown?" "Will you give me a shilling, holy father?" No, he would not give him a shilling, nor even a penny. "Then," said he, "holy father, will you of your charity give me a farthing?" No, he would not do anything of the sort! At last the beggar said, "Would not, your reverence, be kind enough to give me your blessing?" "Oh yes, my son, you shall have it at once! Kneel down and receive it." But the man did *not* kneel down to receive it, for he reasoned that if it had been worth a farthing the "holy father" would not have given it to him. And so he went his way! Men have enough practical sense to always judge that if professed Christians do not care for their *bodily* needs, there cannot be much sincerity in their zeal for men's *souls*. If a man will give me spiritual bread in the form of a tract, but would not give me a piece of bread for my body, how can I think much of him? Let practical help to the poor go with the spiritual help which you render to them! If you would help to keep a brother's soul alive in the higher sense, be not backward to do it in the more ordinary way. You have an opportunity of proving your sincerity, and gratifying your charity, for the boxes will go round at once!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 22.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103, 407, 668.**

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# A PRINCE AND A SAVIOR

## NO. 1301

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 25, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior,  
for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”  
Acts 5:31.***

THE same fact appears very differently to different people. Our Lord Jesus, having risen from the dead, was exalted with the right hand of God. To the Jewish priests and rulers this was a *dreadful* announcement. They could not endure to hear that Jesus, whom they slew and hanged on a tree, was yet alive. As the murderer is startled at the apparition of the ghost of the man he has slain, so were these rulers altogether dismayed at the idea that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had nailed to the cross, was risen from the grave. And they were astounded at the very thought that He, whom they had put to death with all the shame that they could devise, was with the full might and majesty of God exalted to the highest heavens. They were cut to the heart by the announcement as though a sword had cut them in two, dividing their very bones. Full of indignation, they consulted how they could compass the death of those who had brought such evil tidings to their ears.

The fact had a very different effect upon the apostles. They were the friends of Jesus, and witnesses to His majesty. And when they were certain that, though they had seen Him laid in the grave, He had risen and had ascended, and was now sitting at the right hand of God, even the Father, it filled them with the greatest boldness and consolation! They might well speak in such a name, for it was assuredly divine! He who had conquered death, and opened the gates of heaven must be able to take care of His own followers, and therefore, with delight and courage, they bearded His enemies in their dens! There was no need for trembling—who could harm them? They blushed not—there was nothing to blush at, for it was a triumphant cause! They feared not—there was nothing to fear, for the name high over all in heaven, earth, and hell would surely protect them from all peril! What was to the rulers a source of dismay was to the apostles a cause of courage!

Let me now inquire of you all how this fact of the exaltation of Christ impresses you? What do you think of Christ? As time would fail me to press this enquiry upon all classes in this assembly, I shall confine myself to those who have not yet found peace with God—and shall set the Ascended One before them that in *Him* they may find salvation! That is to be my subject—I want, this morning, to discover seekers! And by the help of God's Holy Spirit I want to encourage them, to direct them, and if possible, may this be the last morning in which they shall be called *seekers*, and the first day in which they shall be *finders*! And may they,

this day, know how sweet Christ is to those who find Him, and how inestimably precious His salvation is to those who receive it by faith in Him!

I should be very glad, this morning, if we could get down to business, for a great deal of hearing is not earnest hearing, but mere playing at hearing. Too many of you have ears to hear, and yet do not truly hear. The word of God reaches the outward ear and goes no further because you do not listen heartily and with earnestness. Thousands of hearers are like spectators at a banquet who come into the gallery, and look down upon the guests who are feasting below—but they never taste a morsel themselves. For them there are no dainties for actual tasting! They look at the oxen and the fatlings. They see the enjoyment of the feasters. Sometimes they even feel their own mouths watering for the good things, and they almost envy those who are banqueting. But they do not seek a place at the loaded tables for themselves—they remain lookers-on. I pray this morning, and may God hear the desire of my soul, that you may *all* become partakers of the exceeding grace of God in Christ Jesus at this moment! May you who have fed, feed again as you see the feast prepared in Christ! And may you who have never ventured to “taste and see that the Lord is good,” approach the provisions of love this morning and be fed with bread to the fullest! I want to see an end of mere wishes and desires! I want to rejoice over the commencement of actual faith and realized salvation! Let’s get down to business, and let us have no more talk or delay! I long to see you saved, and saved at once, or perhaps you may never be saved at all!

Seeker, you know right well that if you are ever to be saved your salvation lies in Jesus Christ. “There is none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved.” And you know that it is so! The point is to obtain the salvation which is in that name, and so to lay hold of Christ, that what is stored in Him may become your own! May the Spirit of God bless you, now, so that while we speak to our text you may be led by it to actual salvation in Christ Jesus!

**I.** First, then, let me invite you to NOTE HIS TITLES, and learn their meaning. He is called, “*a Prince and a Savior.*” You must know the Savior or you cannot be saved. It is important to you to understand the nature and character of Him whom the Lord has set forth to be the only salvation of guilty men. The Lord Jesus is here described to you under two instructive names which comprehend within themselves the moat of His offices and relationships. Consider him now with deep attention.

He is called a *Prince* first. This tells you that He is receiving *honor* at this time as the reward of His sufferings on earth. While He was here below, He was treated by His rebellious subjects as if He had been a felon. What a mass of presents the Prince of Wales has brought home from his foreign travels! But when the Prince of glory visited His dominions here below what did He take home with Him except His wounds? “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” The shame and the rejection are now ended, and in glory, yonder, our Lord Jesus is manifestly a Prince—reverenced, obeyed, and honored! Every angel in heaven delights to sing, “You are the King of glory, O Christ!” The highest powers and po-

tentates of the spiritual kingdom bow before Him, and hail Him—joyfully hail Him—as Lord over all, blessed forever! His dominion extends over all creation. All things are put under His feet. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth, yes, He is Lord of all! Think of Him, then, O seeking sinner, in this honorable estate! Let your mind conceive of Christ as worthy of all the homage and reverence that you can ever pay to Him! Do not approach Him without serious thought and careful reverence, for though He is condescending and gentle, yet is He a Prince to whom honor and obeisance must be paid!

The title of “Prince” in our Lord’s case signifies not only honor, but actual *power*. His is no nominal principedom—He has both glory and strength! Unto Him is given the mediatorial kingdom which includes all power in heaven, and in earth, so that He is well styled, “the blessed and only Potentate.”—

***“His hands the wheels of nature guide  
With an unerring skill,  
And countless worlds, extended wide,  
Obey His sovereign will.”***

Was it not said of old, “The government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace”? He is the Prince of the house of David! He opens, and no man shuts. He shuts, and no man opens. There is no boundary to the power of Christ! If you seek His salvation, think of Him as Almighty, and remember that His power is now employed for the salvation of those who trust in Him. He is exalted on high to be a Prince that He may give repentance and forgiveness of sins—so that the power which you see in Him is available for your salvation! Is not this encouraging? Does not this remove those fears which are suggested by your own feebleness? I desire that you may be led by the power of the Holy Spirit to conceive of our glorified Lord with the reverence which His honor deserves, and with the confidence which His power should command.

Remember, too, that a Prince signifies one who has dominion. And if Christ is to be yours, today, you must let Him have dominion over you. “He must reign.” He claims to be Master and Lord to those who ask salvation at His hands—and is not the claim a just one? Whom should we serve but the Lord who became a servant for our sakes? It must be so, or salvation is impossible! Those who serve sin are not saved, nor can they be unless by being brought to serve the Christ of God—

***“This know, nor of the terms complain.  
Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign.  
To reign, and with no partial stray.  
Lusts must be slain that disobey.”***

You must accept Jesus to be leader and commander to you or you cannot win the battle of life! You must yield Him loving obedience, or He will not be married to your souls. His dominion is sweetly tempered by love, so that, as the prophet writes, “You shall call Me no more Baali,” that is, “My Lord,” with a hardness of rulership, but *Ishi*, “My Lord,” because you are My man, My husband. Even so Jesus is our head and Lord, but His rule is that of supreme affection. There must be obedience to Jesus if there is faith in Him, for true faith works by love. Will you render it?

Thus, Christ Jesus our Prince is crowned with honor, and clothed with power—and He rightly claims and exercises dominion. I pray, dear hearer, that you may pay homage before Him at once as your Prince.

The other title of the text is “A *Savior*,” and this name, it seems to me, should be very delightful to every seeking soul. Struggling into light and prizing every ray of hope, it must be sweet to you to know that the Son of God is still a Savior, though manifestly a Prince! Observe here *the perseverance of the Lord’s love*. He was a Savior here below. He is a Savior now that He has reached His throne. We read of Him while on earth, “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” And now that He has gone, we still hear concerning Him, “He is able; therefore, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” He has not paused in His blessed work of love! “He is the Savior of the body.” Savior He was when He wore the garment without seam, and traversed the weary leagues of Palestine. Savior He is *now* that He is girt about with a golden belt, and sits upon the throne! And Savior He shall be in His second advent, for which we look, even the glorious appearing of our God and Savior! Savior He was when He wept over Jerusalem. Savior He is, still, though His eyes are like a flame of fire. And Savior shall He be to His own redeemed when, before His glance, this earth shall flee away. Look up to Him under that aspect.

O you who seek Him! Remember that our exalted Lord is a Savior in virtue of *the prevalence of the work which He achieved while here below*. When He dwelt here among men, He was able to save, but His salvation was not complete, for He had not yet said, “It is finished.” Now His redeeming work is done, and saving is a simple matter to Him. Never did He so well deserve the name of Savior as when He climbed to His throne. The ransom price has all been paid and now, O Jesus, You are Savior, indeed! The head of the serpent has been broken beneath Your heel—You are Savior, indeed! The gates of the grave have been burst, the sepulcher is bereaved of its prey, and the resurrection is brought to light—You are, from now on, a Savior to the uttermost, O Jesus! “By Your agony and bloody sweat, by Your cross and passion, by Your precious death and burial,” you have finished salvation, and now our spirits stall rejoice in God our Savior! I pray that you who seek Him may have grace, this morning, to see Him in the light of a Savior, as still pursuing the work of saving souls, but yet pursuing it only to apply the atonement which His death completed. Look at him, O you ends of the earth, as the Savior, for such He is, and there is none else!

If He is a Savior too, remember, this shows to trembling hearts *how approachable He is*. You might be abashed at coming to a Prince, but you may be encouraged in coming to a Savior! O you that would be rid of your sin, do you fear the Prince? Well may you, for He can punish you! But fear not, for the Savior will forgive you! Diseased with sin, do you think yourself unworthy of His princely presence? Yet He is Physician as well as Prince—therefore come where the glance of His eye or the touch of His hand will make you perfectly whole! I wish I knew how to put my Lord before you in the best of words, and describe Him so sweetly that

you would all fall in love with Him, but, indeed, I believe Him to be so beautiful that if I can only convey to you the *faintest* idea of Him, you must be enamored of Him, if you love that which is good and fair! While I am describing Him, I feel I do but put a mist about Him. But, He is the sun, and He can break through my cloudy language, and cause your hearts to see Him in all His glory.

“A Prince and a Savior.” Suppose I put the words together and say, a Prince-Savior—one who is lordly and kingly in the salvation which He brings? He deals out no stinted grace, but makes us to receive of His fullness, grace for grace. Turn the titles the other way, and reverse the order, and truly He is a Savior-Prince whose glory it is to save, whose kingdom and power and dominion are all turned in full force to achieve the work of rescuing His people from destruction. “A Prince and a Savior.” This is the Christ to whom you must come, O you who would be delivered from your sins. Look to Him and live!

**II. APPROACH HIM, THEN, UNDER THESE TWO CHARACTERS.** I would come to very close quarters with you who are seeking the Lord, while I urge you to approach Jesus Christ as a *Prince*. “And how shall we do that?” you ask. I answer, come to Him at once with the *sorrowful confession* of your past rebellion. You have lived, I do not know how many years, you unconverted ones, without paying due homage to Jesus! You have known about Him, but you have not obeyed Him. Up to this moment you have resisted His love and said, “Let us break His bands asunder, and cast His cords from us.” Confess this and be ashamed, for it is a great disgrace not to be swayed by such love as that of Christ! It is a great sin not to be in love with such an one as that which shines in the person of the Son of God! It shows moral hardness of heart, and bluntness of perception. It shows prejudice of soul and ignorance of mind not to be, at once, the willing subject of Christ. These many years you have said, “I will not have this man to reign over me.” Oh, may the gentle Spirit cause you, now, to see the folly and the sin of this conduct! And may you confess it with tearful eyes while you obey the bidding of the old Psalm, and “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry.”

When you have confessed the past before this Prince, then I charge you *accept His great purpose and submit to His rule*. He is a Prince, therefore yield yourself to be His subject. Do you know what the objective of His rule is? It is to make you love God and to be like God! You are created, and therefore, launched upon the sea of existence! You cannot help this fact or alter it—your existence has been *given* you, and you cannot lose it! How can this creation of yours be an eternal blessing, and the danger be removed of its becoming a never-ending curse? The answer is simple—if you are right with your Creator, you are right with everything! If you are reconciled to Him, you will be happy in time and in eternity! But you cannot be right with your Creator until past guilt is forgiven, and sin is given up—and the love of wrongdoing, the love of everything that is contrary to His pure and Holy mind—is destroyed in you. Now, Jesus comes in order that He may kill in you everything that is contrary to the mind of God. He comes to make you holy, yes, to make you per-

fect! Will you yield yourself to His gentle purpose? Are you ready to obey His precepts by means of which His Spirit will sanctify you wholly—spirit, soul, and body? He is able to save from sin! His name is Jesus, “for He shall save His people from their sins.” Do you really wish to be saved from sin? Jesus once asked a sick man, “Will you be made whole?” It is the question which He asks of you today, dear friend. You would be glad to be saved from going to hell. Yes, but that is not it. Do you desire to be saved from that which created hell, from that which is the fuel of the unquenchable fire and the tooth of the undying worm—namely, the love of iniquity, the love of sin? Christ can save from sin, as a Savior, and lead you into the kingdom of righteousness of which He is the Prince. Are you willing that He should do so?

If it is taken for granted that you have approached the Lord Jesus in this way, I would next say, as He is a Prince, surrender everything to Him. Christ claims of you that if you are saved, since it is through His redemption, you should, from now on, be His. If He has redeemed you, then you belong to Him—from now on you are not your own—you are bought with a price. It is an inevitable consequence of being redeemed from death and hell by Jesus’ blood that you should be Christ’s forever. Oh, can you lift your eyes to heaven, and say, “If He will have me, I will cheerfully be His”? Can you make over now, this morning, by the help of God’s Spirit, your body and your soul as a living sacrifice? Can you give to Him, now, all that you owe and all that you have? Could you stand at the foot of the cross and say—

**“And if I might make some reverse,  
And duty did not call,  
I love my God with zeal so great,  
That I would give Him all”?**

He asks it of you. Will you do it, O seeking soul, will you do it? For if that is done, surely, then, Christ *is* to you a Prince and a Savior!

And if this is accomplished, and He is Lord, then *pay your loving, loyal homage to your Prince*. Behold Him in His glory, where all the angels cast their crowns before Him while the elders adore Him with vials full of sweet odors! If Christ is to be your Savior, He must be your Prince, and you must have a loyal attachment to Him, deep and true. Is this a hard thing to ask of you? I think it is the joy of my life to be the subject and the servant of King Jesus! The name of the Queen stirs the British soldier’s heart, and oftentimes, in the hour of battle, he has thought of his sovereign, and his country, and has been willing to lay down his life. But the love of Jesus is a more intense passion, by far, and the loyalty of a good soldier to Jesus Christ is a stronger force than any loyalty to earthly princes! You must have this! Do you see how right it is that you should have it? Towards such a one as Jesus we are proud to cherish a love which many waters cannot quench! A love stronger than death! Approach Him, then, with loving hearts, or at least bring your hearts, and ask to have them *made* loving.

You must also approach the Lord Jesus as Savior. Do not proudly murmur at this. I have known some who have been willing to take Christ for their *example* and as their *teacher*—and so far they have acknowl-

edged Him as a Prince—but they cannot stand it that they should confess their need of a Savior! But you must have Jesus as a Savior, as well as a Prince, or you will be lost forever! I do now affectionately urge the sinner who is seeking mercy to come to Christ Jesus, confessing that he needs a Savior. Look at your sin, and consider your past life with all its transgressions. Are you not ashamed of it? Are you not afraid to stand before that judgment seat where you must give an account for every idle word that you have spoken? Does not conscience fill you with trembling? Well, come and tell the Savior! Tell Him all! Pour out your heart before Him! Acknowledge that you are undone and condemned unless He can, in His pity, obtain a pardon for you. Are you actually doing so, now? Let us get down to business, as I have said before! Make the confession, now, from your heart while we are yet speaking.

That done, since Christ is a Savior, *believe that He is able to save you*. Seeing He died the bitter death of the cross, suffering from divine justice in a most terrible manner upon Calvary, there must be, in those five wounds, power enough to be the death of every sin! O crimson blood, you must have merit enough in you to wash out crimson sin! It must be so! He who died upon the cross is God as well as perfect man, and a sacrifice offered by Him must have infinite power and efficacy to remove sin. Believe this, also, and when you have believed it, then understand that you must *submit yourself entirely to His processes of salvation*. He is able to save you, but He has a way of His own, and He will *not* save you in *your* way, but only in His way! And His way of saving you is to make you feel the smart and bitterness of sin, to make you hate that sin, loathe it, and to turn you from it forever! Thus He saves you—are you willing to have it so? Can you say, “Farewell,” this morning, to the sins you have loved so long? Is there any attraction to you, yet, in the harlots and the riotous with whom you have spent your Father’s substance? Have you still a lingering love to the far country, or can you bid its citizens a long farewell? Do the swine attract you? Have you a hankering after the husks which they eat, so that you can refuse to go to Christ when He would take you away from these filthy pleasures and degrading delights? Can you say, “I cannot linger longer here. It is Sodom, and the fire will soon descend from heaven! I must flee for my life and look not behind me. I must and will do so, for Jesus takes me by the hand and leads me on”? If you have sincerely done this, and you are willing to have a divorce from your sins—all and thoroughly—from table, bed, hearth, and in all ways so that sin and you shall no more be on loving terms, then, I say, if you are willing for this, all you have now to do is to *trust your Savior*! Lean all your weight on Him! Repose your whole self on Him! You see your need of Him. You see His power to save you, and you know what is meant by being saved, namely, delivered from the power of sin—will you now trust Him to make you pure? If you do, you have come to Him as a Prince and a Savior, and He has said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,” and He will not, *cannot* cast you out! This approach to the Lord Jesus should be made at this moment, where you now are! There is no need to go elsewhere, or tarry for an hour. While yet you are here, God’s

Holy Spirit can enable you to come to Christ as your Prince and your Savior.

I am putting the truth of God very plainly. I have scarcely used one figure of speech or a single ornament of language. I have tried to tell you the way of salvation very plainly. And having told you, I can do no more but earnestly ask you—will you have this Prince and Savior, or not? May the Spirit of God persuade you to give the right reply!

**III.** In the third place, NOTE THE GIFTS OF THE LORD JESUS. He is “exalted with God’s right hand to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.” Now if, dear hearer, you are distressed, this morning, beneath the burden of sin, I pray you to catch at this blessed sentence, for there is honey here which shall take away the bitterness of your soul! I think I heard you say, “Gladly would I have Christ as Prince and Savior! I am willing enough, but this hard heart, this rebellious will—what can I do with them?” Listen—“He is exalted to give *repentance*.” This does not mean, as some have said, to give *space* for repentance. We must not add words to Scripture! Nor does it mean to make repentance acceptable. Look at the text, and no trace of such a meaning is there. But, “to give repentance,” and repentance, itself, is intended, which is as much the *gift* of the ascended Savior as the forgiveness which follows upon it! What is repentance? If we keep to its *literal* meaning it is a *change of mind*, but then it is a very wonderful change of mind! He can give you to change your mind about all the past so that the things which pleased you shall grieve you! That which charmed you shall disgust you! That which you do love you shall hate, and that which you do desire you shall abhor. This is His gift to His *chosen*—“I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh; a new heart, also, will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them.” What a marvelous thing this change of mind as to the past is! He can also change your mind as to the *present* and the *future*, so that, instead of looking for present pleasure, you will find your delight in future glory realized by faith! Do you understand me? It shall be pleasure enough to you to think of the pleasures at God’s right hand forevermore! Jesus can save you from living like the beast which looks not an hour ahead, but is content with the pasture around it—and will even walk into the slaughterhouse to be slain—so little does it know what is reserved for it! Jesus can save you from being so brutish, and make you look into the eternal future with the eyes of a wise man! He can give you a good hope, and inspire you with a good objective worthy of the eternity which lies before you. Christ can give such a change of mind as shall make the whole world seem new—and yourself most changed of all!

Repentance includes a most necessary sense of sin, and the Savior can give you this by His Spirit. He can fill your soul with the barbed arrows of conviction till your heart bleeds with inward grief on account of sin, or He can work more gently, and make you repent by melting you beneath the smiles of His love. He can make you sing—

***“Your mercy is more than a match for my heart,  
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart.  
Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground***

***And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."***

He can work in you desires after holiness, and hatred of every false way. He can take the guile out of your soul as well as the guilt out of your life. He can give you to be true and upright before Him, and cleansed in the inward parts.

Everything that is included in "repentance" Jesus Christ is exalted to *give*. Now, if no one obtains repentance, then Christ is exalted in vain—but somebody must have it, for Christ is not exalted in vain! Why, then, should YOU not have it? You need it! Your heart seems hard as granite and cold as a block of ice. Well, if you need it, why should you not have it? To whom does a man give his alms but to the needy? Do not the wise distribute their gifts to those who need them? If you need them, come and freely take them! Repentance will not spring out of your unrenewed heart, but the Prince and Savior can create it in you! Come to Him for it—

***"True belief and true repentance,  
Every grace that brings You nigh,  
Without money,  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy."***

Here I preach Christ not merely to penitent sinners, but to impenitent sinners! O rock, be smashed with this rod! The cross can fetch the waters of repentance out of stony hearts! O hard heart, be melted with this sacred fire! The fire of Jesus' love can dissolve the northern iron and steel of obdurate impenitence! He is exalted on high to *give* repentance! Therefore, O sinners, look to Him for repentance!

It is added as His second gift, "to give *forgiveness*." And the forgiveness which Jesus gives is very blessed. I pray you, seeking soul, pay attention to each word I now say on this point. He can pass an act of amnesty and oblivion for all your sins. If He forgives you, all your transgressions shall be as though they had never been! He will make clean work of it, blotting out every record of your sin so that in God's book there shall be no grieving memory of your having been a sinner at all! So powerful is the atoning blood that all manner of sin and transgression shall be forgiven unto men for its sake. Sins against a holy God, sins against Christ's love and blood, sins against conscience, sins against the law, sins against the gospel, sins which have lain in your bones from your youth up, sins of your middle age, sins of your old age, aggravated sins, black sins, damnable sins—all are gone when He says, "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and as a thick cloud your transgressions." Jesus has gone to heaven on purpose to give this complete forgiveness!

Now mark, when full forgiveness comes it brings with it the eternal removal of the penalty! The forgiven man cannot be punished! For him there is no hell, no worm that dies not, nor fire that never can be quenched. God cannot forgive and then punish! If He removes your transgressions from you as far as the east is from the west, then who is he that shall lay anything to your charge? Who is he that can condemn? And who is he that can punish you?

With the pardon of sin there shall come also a restoration of every privilege. All that Adam had in the garden you shall have to be yours—

not all of it to enjoy just now—but all and *more* than all shall be restored to you, for the man who wears the righteousness of Christ, and is accepted in the Beloved may not have a paradise on earth, but he has a paradise above! For him there may be no golden apples of Eden, but there shall be the fruit of the tree of life, of which he shall eat forever and ever—

***“What Adam had, and forfeited for us all,  
Christ has who cannot fail nor fall.”***

He that believes on Christ Jesus shall dwell in bliss, and be satisfied with the goodness of the Lord!

And mark you once again you shall, when forgiven, *have quiet in your soul*, for when you are pardoned, all the hurly-burly of your spirit shall turn into a deep calm. You shall have the “peace of God which passes all understanding” to “keep your heart and mind by Christ Jesus.” “Oh,” says one, “I would give my eyes for it!” You shall have it without giving your eyes! Give your *heart*—no, and not even give your heart as a price for it—take the blessing *freely*, for freely it is given! Jesus is exalted on high that He may grant free pardons to great offenders! I come back to that statement—if Jesus is exalted on purpose to give pardon, then if He does *not* give forgiveness to someone, He is exalted in vain! He **MUST**, therefore, give it to some—why should He not bestow it upon *you*?

The text says, “to give repentance to Israel.” Who and what was Israel? The people of Israel, in our Lord’s time, were surely the very worst of sinners, for it was by them that the Lord was nailed to the cross! It was the Jews who cried, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” It means, then, that Jesus is exalted to give repentance and pardon to the chief of sinners, and if I am one, if, instead of blaming Jews or the Romans, I blame myself! If I take the death of Christ on my own shoulders, and say—

***“Twas you my sins, my cruel sins,  
His chief tormentors were!  
Each of my crimes became a nail,  
And unbelief the spear,”***

then He is exalted to give me repentance and remission for my great sins!

Do I need to ask you, will you have these two gifts? Ah, friends, it shows how deep is the depravity of the human heart that we should have need to press our Master’s mercies on you. If sin were not a madness, it would only need the preacher to come and tell about this blessed gospel, and you would begin to sing, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings, that publishes salvation, that said unto Zion, Your God reigns as a Prince and a Savior in heaven.” Instead, however, of offering my Lord a joyful reception, some of you will count it a weariness to be entreated and pleaded with. I feel in my own soul that though my Master enables me to put these things before you, you will not receive them unless His love forces you. We can bring the horse to the water, but we cannot make it drink. And we can bring Christ before you, but we cannot make you accept Him. I pray that there may be some soft relenting, some gentle melting of your spirit this very morning, for, “unto you is the word of this salvation sent.”

My dear hearer, I may never have addressed you before. Happy shall I be if at the very first assault I win your soul for my Master! Or perhaps I have spoken with you many, many times, and my voice is getting rather stale and flat to you. Well, I am sorry if I mar the message, but still it is so good that, though I stammered it, you ought, still, to catch at it and say, "Yes, if He is exalted to give repentance and pardon, here is my bosom, Lord! Pour them both into my soul at this good hour."

**IV.** As I said to you about the titles, approach the Lord Jesus as such, so now I say about His gifts—ASK HIM FOR THEM. Ask now, at this moment! Again, I say I want you to get down to business, and be *doing* as well as listening. While I am speaking, may the Holy Spirit incline your hearts to practical obedience! At this moment ask the Lord Jesus *humbly* for repentance and pardon. You do not deserve these gifts—if He leaves you to perish He will be just. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. You have no claim to His love and must not set up any! Your heart is hard, and He can leave you in your unbelief. You are guilty, and He can justly leave you to bear your punishment. Ask humbly, therefore, not daring to claim anything, but appealing to His sovereign grace. Say—

***"O save a guilty sinner, Lord,  
Whose hope still hovering round Your word  
Would light on some sweet promise there,  
Some sure support against despair."***

Ask *importunately*. Do not come to mercy's gate, this morning, with a cold heart, and unwilling spirit. Come with this resolve, "I will not leave the cross till my sins have left me. I will plead for the grace of God until I obtain it. With importunity will I wrestle saying—

***'Lord, I cannot let You go  
Till a blessing You bestow.'***

The angel is near this morning! Seize Him! Grasp Him! And if He seems to fling you off, hold to Him, still, and say, "I will not let You go except you bless me, and bless me now!" You will get the blessing if you can pray like that! Pray with deep humility, because you are unworthy, but with violent importunity because you are in such fearful peril and you cannot endure to be lost!

But I ask you to pray *believingly*, and this is indeed the heart of the matter. Ask for remission and repentance, this morning, believing that Christ can give it, and believing that He is as willing as He is able. If you can look up and see those dear eyes which wept over sinners. If you can see those wounds, still open for sinners like so many gates of heaven, you will perceive that Jesus still calls to you and bids you trust Him! Do not think Him unwilling to forgive. That would be too cruel a suspicion after He has died! Trust Him wholly, only, sincerely, solely! Have done with those works and prayers, and tears which you have been known to rely upon! All that you ever did to save yourself must be undone! Nature's spinning must all be unraveled—her fig leaves will wither—sin's nakedness requires a better covering. Your only hope lies in Him who is Prince and Savior. Cry at once to Him—

***"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Your kind arms I fall;***

***You are my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my all.***

And—and this is the last word—*ask now!* Do not put me off this morning! I am in earnest, even if you are not! But oh, it is *your* soul, not mine, that is now at stake! I pray you be in earnest, O man, and be so now! Perhaps you will never hear another plea! It may be this is the last Sabbath you will spend on earth! Where will you be if you reject the Savior? Where the Sabbath bell shall never ring out its happy summons! Where the silver voice of mercy shall never again salute you! There is another world—you will not die like a dog! There is a *judgment* to come and you will have to stand before your Maker to give an account of all your life! There is an everlasting punishment as surely as there is an eternal reward. Now I ask you, and I charge you, to go no further till you have answered this question—is it worthwhile to lose your soul for whatever you can gain by it? The Romans, when they meant to bring things to an issue with an Oriental tyrant, sent their ambassador. And the ambassador was to bring his answer back—yes or no, war or peace. What do you think the ambassador did? When he saw the king, he stooped down, and with his wand he drew a ring upon the ground round the monarch. And then he said, “Step outside that ring, and it means war with Rome. Before you leave that circle you must accept our terms of peace, or know that Rome will use her utmost force to fight with you.” I draw a ring round you while you are sitting in that pew, or standing in that aisle, and I demand an answer! Sinner, will you now be saved or not? Today is the accepted time! Today is the day of salvation! O Holy Spirit, lead the sinner to now ask, and he shall receive! To believe, and he shall be saved. Amen and Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 5:17-42.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—304, 569, 332.**

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# GOOD CHEER FOR OUTCASTS NO. 1302

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 15, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.”  
Psalm 147:2.*

DOES not this show us the great gentleness and infinite mercy of God? And as we know most of God in the person of our Lord, Jesus Christ, should it not charm us to remember that when He came on earth He did not visit kings and princes, but He came unto the humble and simple folk? He did not seek out Pharisees, wrapped up in their own supposed righteousness, but He sought out the guilty, for He said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.” The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost! It would have seemed natural that our Lord Jesus, when He came here, should, first of all, have addressed Himself to the most respectable people He could find and should have sent His message to the rabbis of Jerusalem, to the senators at Rome, to the philosophers of Greece. But instead, the common people heard Him gladly and He rejoiced in spirit while He said, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”

I think you may judge of a man’s character by the persons whose affection he seeks. If you find a man seeking only the affection of those who are great, depend upon it, he is ambitious and self-seeking. But when you observe that a man seeks the affection of those who can do nothing for him, but for whom *he* must do everything, you know that he, himself, is not seeking, but that pure benevolence sways his heart. When I read in the text that the Lord gathers together the outcasts of Israel—and when I see that the text is truly applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ, because this is just what He did—I see another illustration of the gentleness of His heart, who said, “Take My yoke upon you, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls.” Be glad tonight, dear friends that we gather around such a Savior as this. From Him all pride and self-seeking are absent, and He comes down among us in gentleness and meekness; He comes to gather those whom no man cares for—those who are judged to be worthless and irreclaimable! He comes to gather together the outcasts of Israel!

Applying this text to our Lord Jesus Christ, we not only see His gentleness, but we also clearly see an illustration of His love to men, as men. If you seek only after rich men, suspicion arises—and it is more than suspicion—that you seek their wealth rather than they. If you aim only at the benefit of wise men, it is probably true that it is their *wisdom* which attracts you, and not their manhood. But the Lord Jesus Christ did not love men because of any advantageous circumstances, or any commend-

able incidents of their condition. His love was to manhood. He loved His own chosen people as *men*, not as this or that *among* men. He has no respect for rank, nor care for wealth. A man is a man with Christ whether the “guinea-stamp” is there or not. He died not for titles and dignities, but for men. “Not yours, but you,” our Lord Jesus could truly say. Where Jesus Christ sees a man, though he is an outcast, an outlaw or one condemned by the law of his own country—He sees a human being—a creature capable of awful sin and terrible misery, but yet, renewed by grace, capable of bringing wondrous glory to the Most High. Our Lord Jesus Christ, by gathering together the outcasts, proves that it is not the *things* which surround men, but the men, themselves, that He cares for. He considers not so much *where* a man is, but *what* he is—not what he has learned, or what he is thought of, or what he has done—just what he is. The man is the jewel. The immortal soul is the pearl of great price which Jesus seeks as a merchantman seeks goodly pearls.

Another thing is also clear. If Jesus gathers together the outcasts of Israel, it proves His power over the hearts of men. There is a certain class of men who follow that which is morally good because the Lord has given them a noble disposition. Thank God, He has, in mercy, been pleased to give some men a desire after that which is beautiful and true. They, too, are merchantmen seeking goodly pearls, and it is not difficult, when the heart is brought into such a desirable state, for the excellence and beauty of Jesus Christ to attract it! But here is a tug of war—there are men still left in the guilt and filthiness of human nature who have no desire after that which is good—but whose entire longings are after evil, only evil and that continually. These have no more eyes to anything that is high and noble than the swine has for the stars. The minister of Christ may appeal to them, but he will appeal in vain. And providence may warn them, by the deaths of others and by personal sickness, but they are not to be separated from the earth to which they are glued. Yet our Lord Jesus can gather together even these, the outcasts of Israel! Such is His power that He does not stop till He sees good desires in men—He *imparts* those desires to those who have them not! Such are the charms of His cross that blind eyes are made to see by its beauty! Such is the music of His voice, that deaf ears are opened by it! Such is the majesty of His life that the dead hear His voice and they that hear are made to live! No groundwork of goodness is asked or expected from any man that Christ may come and act upon it—He takes man in his ruin and in the extremity of his depravity—and begins with him then and there. When the good Samaritan came to the wounded man, he did not wait for him to make the first advance, or come a little towards him. He went to him, where he was, and poured into his wounds the oil and the wine. So the Lord comes where hurtful nature is and, bad as its condition is, He stoops to it and He gathers together the outcasts of Israel! Oh, it is a wonderful thing, this, that there should be attractions about the Lord Jesus Christ which can draw to Him those whom nothing else that is good can possibly stir! You may preach virtue to the sinner, but he does not practically yield to its charms. You may preach to the drunk, to the unchaste, to the immoral, the beauties and excellences of honesty and of all

the virtues and the graces, but little good will come of it—the result is infinitesimal. You may charm very wisely upon those subjects, but these deaf adders do not care for charming. We have heard of a divine who said that he had preached honesty till he had not an honest person left in the parish! And he preached of virtue till he did not know where Diogenes, with his lantern, could find it! Nothing worth having comes of preaching when *Christ* is not the theme! You may preach the law and men will be frightened by it, but they will forget their fears. Yet if Jesus Christ is preached, He draws all men unto Him. The wicked will listen to the news of Him who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. The most stubborn have been known to weep when they have heard the story of His grief and of His love! The most proud have found themselves suddenly humbled at His feet, of which some of us are witnesses, for we marveled to find the hardness and loftiness of our hearts suddenly removed by a sense of His goodness! I do not believe that we preachers have half enough or a tenth enough faith in Jesus Christ. If we could preach Jesus Christ to a company of convicted felons, should we be wrong in hoping to see the larger part of them converted on the spot? If we had but faith enough to preach to them as we should, aiming directly, distinctly and believingly at their souls, might we not look for great results? We go so timidly, so doubtingly to work. We pray that God would save *some* out of our congregations and that He would be pleased to bless the word here and there! But, such a splendid gospel as we have to preach should not be preached so, nor should we so pray about it! When Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness, it was not with this prayer—“Lord, grant that one or two of those who are bitten by the serpent may look and live.” No, Moses came out boldly with his serpent high upon the pole! He believed that *thousands* would look—they *did* look—and they lived! May we, after the same manner, proclaim Jesus who “gathers together the outcasts of Israel.”

Now, with this introduction, I would speak upon the text a little more particularly, and we shall observe with brevity, first, *to whom the text applies*—“He gathers together *the outcasts* of Israel.” Secondly, we shall consider *in what sense He may be said to gather them*. And then, thirdly, *what lesson this teaches us*.

**I.** First, then, TO WHOM MAY THIS TEXT APPLY—“He gathers together *the outcasts of Israel*”? It refers to several classes in different ways.

First, it is a fact that our Lord Jesus gathered together some of the very *poorest and most despised among men*—those who might, under some respects, be regarded as outcasts. And it is certain that, to this day, the gospel comes in the largest measure of power to the poor of this world. Often, too, it comes with amazing power to those who are despised by others, or are regarded as being of inferior degree. You know that at this time it is boastfully said by the enemies of the gospel that the culture, the brain, the intellect, the education of England is all on the side of skepticism. I am not so sure. When people say that they possess a great deal of brains, I am not certain that their claim is correct, unless it is that as sheep have a good deal of brains and yet are not the wisest animals in the world, so these gentlemen, also, are no wiser than they

should be. As to those gentlemen who so evidently claim to be the cultured people, who monopolize all the sweetness and the light, I am not clear that they have all the *modesty*. It does seem to me that if they talked in a lower key, it would be as well. And if they thought a little less of their own culture and allowed a little more to other people, we might have more faith in this wonderful “culture” of theirs. Some of us have failed to see the deep thought and the profound learning we were told to look for in the books of the skeptical cultured mind and, therefore, we are less patient when we hear the perpetual bragging of our foes. Still, let it stand so. We will not quarrel with it. Suppose it to be so—that none but foolish people embrace the old-fashioned faith—Puritanism which, they say, is nearly dead—the old evangelism which they ridicule as being exploded. Let it be so, that we are an inferior order of people with very little brains and all that. Well, we are not out of heart on that account, because we find that it so happened in our Savior’s day and has happened all days since—that the wisdom of the world has been at enmity with God. And it has also flamed out that the foolishness of God has been wiser than men and God has mastered human wisdom by the foolishness of preaching! By that gospel which wise men laughed at as being folly, God has brought carnal wisdom to nothing! The Lord Jesus Christ looks with love on those whom others look down upon with scorn—

**“He takes the fool, and makes him know.  
The wonders of His dying love,  
To lay aspiring wisdom low,  
And all our pride reprove.”**

I am thankful when I meet with poor saints and see what a grip humble men and women get of the promises of God. Laboring men, humble shepherds and the like have often been more distinguished for deep insight into the mysteries of grace than learned doctors of divinity! Where there has been little in the cupboard and the provision on the table has been but slender, there has been more enjoyment of the favor of God than among the great ones of the earth! They may regard those who still stand by the old-fashioned truth of God as being outcasts from the commonwealth of letters and not worthy to be named among the cultured intellects of the age, but if the Lord will but gather us continually to His bosom and refresh us with Himself, we shall be content! The text should be a source of joy to us if any of us happen to be extremely poor—so poor that even Christian men are so ungenerous as to give us the cold shoulder, or if we happen to be the despised ones of our family. Here and there, sad to say it, there will be, in families, a better one than the rest, less thought of than the others—a Joseph whom his brothers hate because he loves his God. Well, you may become as a stranger to your mother’s children and you may have no one to give you a good word, yet may you put this verse under your tongue as a sweet morsel—“He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.” Those who are lowest in the esteem of men are still remembered by the Lord!

The text may be applied very well to those *who have made themselves outcasts by their wickedness and are deservedly cast out of society*. May God grant that none of us may be, or may have been, among that num-

ber. But if I should be addressing any such at this time, I have a word for them. If there should be some such here, tonight, who do not often attend places of worship, but have dropped in from curiosity, I may suppose your case to be that of one who has broken a mother's heart and brought a father's gray hairs to the grave with grief. You have lived such a life that your own brothers could scarcely be expected to acknowledge you. You have sinned and sinned terribly. Man or woman—for woman, also, becomes an outcast—she is too severely treated, as a general rule, and more often becomes an outcast than the man who deserves it more! If I address such, it is a great joy to me to know that our Lord Jesus Christ can save the most wicked of the wicked, the most fallen of the fallen, the most depraved of the depraved! If you have sunk so low that there is not much to choose between you and a devil—and some men and women do get as low as that—yet Jesus Christ can lift you up! If your life story is such that it would be a pity it should ever be told and most grievous that it should ever have been enacted, yet Jesus can wash all the stains of your life away and save you, even you! Only one such may be present here to-night, but I make no apology for concentrating my whole thoughts upon one single person! I leave the 99, to go after the one lost sheep that in the one lost one may be revealed the richness and freeness of the grace of God in Jesus Christ! Come, then, outcast! Come to your Redeemer and find pardon! “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as snow! Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool!” Jesus is able to wash away every transgression from those who are steeped in guilt. Countless iniquities dissolve and disappear before the presence of His mighty love, for He, even Jesus, gathers together the outcasts of Israel! Is there no helper on earth? Yet is there one in heaven! Is there no friend below? Yet is there one above! Is there nothing that can save you? Do you contemplate suicide? Stop, stop your hand, for Jesus is “able to save *to the uttermost*”—to the uttermost—“them that come unto God by Him.” Let the prayer go up, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and go your way with hope in your soul, for “He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.”

A third class of persons consists of *those who judge themselves to be outcasts*, though, as to outward actions they certainly do not deserve the label. Many who have written about John Bunyan have been surprised at the description which he gives of his own life, for it does not appear that, with the sole exception of the use of blasphemous language, John Bunyan was one of the very worst of mankind. But he thought himself to be so. Now it often happens—I do not say always, but I think it is *generally* so—that when the Spirit of God comes, with power, to the conscience and awakens it, the man judges himself to be the very chief of sinners. For it may be that you have never gone into actual vice. You have never been a blasphemer or dishonest. You have, on the contrary, from the instructions of your childhood, been led into the path of right—and yet, when you are awakened, you may feel yourself to be vilest of the vile. Everything that is lovely and of good report has been found in you—you do not know the time in which you would not have been shocked to hear a blasphemous word—and yet when the Holy Spirit awakens you, you

will plead guilty among the very worst! I know in my own case I had a horror of ungodliness. And, yet, when the Spirit of God came to me, I felt myself to be far worse than the swearer or the drunk—for this reason—that I knew that many who indulged in those open sins did so ignorantly. They did so from the imitation of those in whose society they had been brought up. But as for me, with a godly parentage, with a mother's prayers and tears, with light and knowledge, understanding the letter of the gospel, having read the Bible from my youth, up, I felt that my sins were blacker than those of others because I had sinned against light and knowledge. And you must have felt the same, I am persuaded. Perhaps you are even, now, feeling it. You remember that night when you stifled conviction, when conscience had an earnest battle with you and it seemed that you must yield to God and to His Christ—but you deliberately did violence to the inward principle and resolved to go on in sin. Do you remember that? If you do, it will sting you as does a serpent, now that you are under conviction of sin—and you will feel yourself to be the very chief of sinners on account of it, though no public sin may ever have stained your life. Well, I should not wonder, if such is your condition, that you also judge that there is no salvation for you—that God might save your mother, your brother, or your friend—but not you. You believe the blood of Jesus to be very precious, but you think it never will be applied to you. You heard, the other day, of the conversion of a friend and you felt glad, but at the same time you thought, "grace will never come to *me*." When the preacher has exhorted his hearers to believe in Jesus Christ, you have said, "Ah, but I—I cannot! I am in a condition in which that gospel is of no use to me." You think yourself an outcast. You feel that you deserve to be. You are not content to be so, but, at the same time, you could not blame the Lord if He left you to perish. You feel that your transgressions have been so great that if He should leave you out of His gracious plans and grace should come to others and not to you, you could only bow your head in bitterest sorrow and say, "You are just, O God." Now, listen, you who have condemned yourself! The Lord absolves you! You who have shut yourself out as an outcast, you shall be gathered! For whereas they call you an outcast, whom no man seeks after, you shall be called Hephzibah, for the Lord's delight is in you! Only believe in Jesus Christ and cast yourself upon Him!

Outcasts of this sort are the people who most gladly welcome Christ. People who have nowhere else to go but to Him—people so cast down, so full of sin, so everything but what they ought to be—*these* are the people to whom Christ is very precious! "Oh," says one, "but I do not feel like that. I cannot feel my guilt as I should." Very well, then, you are one of the outcasts *among the outcasts*—you do not think yourself to be as good, even, as they are! You are, in your own esteem, one of the worst outcasts of them all because you lack even the feeling of your need. You say, "I have a hard heart. I cannot see sin as others have seen it who have found Christ. I wish I could. I smite my breast and mourn that I cannot mourn, for if anything is felt, it is only pain to find that I cannot feel. I seem made of hell-hardened steel which will not melt or break." Well, I see that you are, but, "such were some of us." We, also, knew our

insensibility and lamented that we could not lament! But He gathered us! And there stands the text, “He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.” If you have not a broken heart, only Christ can give it to you! If you cannot come to Him *with* it, go to Him *for* it! If you cannot come to Him wounded, come to Him that He may wound you and make you whole! You need bring *nothing* to Jesus! I would like to whisper in your ear just this—that those people, who think themselves insensible, generally think so because they are more than usually *sensitive*. And those who think that they do not feel are usually those who feel the most! I do not think we are ever good judges of our own feeling in this matter. The day may come when, in looking back, you will say, “I did, after all, mourn over sin when I thought that I did not. I had such a sense of how black it was that I felt I was not mourning enough, even when I was deeply mourning!” brother, you never will mourn enough. Enough? Would oceans full of tears be enough to mourn the guilt of sin? No, but, blessed be God, we are not asked to repent or to mourn up to a certain standard! O outcast soul, trust in Jesus and He will save you!

I must not dwell, however, on this class, but proceed further to notice that there is another sort of people whom Jesus gathers who are even more truly the outcasts of Israel. I mean *the backsliders from the church*—the outcasts of Israel who have been put out and properly put out, for their unholy lives and inconsistent actions—those whom the church is obliged, alas, to look upon as diseased members that must be removed. They are sickly sheep that infect the flock and must be put away. They are lepers that must be set aside from the camp. O wanderer, banished from a church, there is a word in the gospel for you, also—even for the backslider! The Lord calls back His wandering children. Though His church does right to put out those who do dishonor to His holy name, yet she would do wrong if she did not follow her Lord in saying, “Return, you backsliding children.” It is not easy to persuade one who has been a backslider to come back to his first love. The return journey is uphill and flesh and blood do not assist us in it. Many new converts come, but the old wanderers remain outside and sometimes they do this because they fancy they will not be welcome. But if you are sincerely repenting of the sin which has put you away from the church, the church of Christ will be glad to receive you! And if you are, indeed, the Lord’s believing one, though you have defiled yourself, He does not forget you! He does earnestly remember you, still, and He bids you come, in all your defilement, and wash in His atoning blood! The fountain that Jesus has opened is not only for strangers, when they are first brought near—but it is opened “for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem”—those who know the Lord, that they may be daily purged from their transgressions and be cleansed from the filthiness of their backslidings. The Lord gathers together those who have been carried captive by their sins and makes them, once more, to dwell in the land of uprightness—and all His wandering sheep He brings back to Himself.

The expression of the text may certainly be applied to *those, also, who have loved the Lord for years, but who have fallen into great depression of spirit*. We happen, every now and then, to meet with some of the best of

God's people who get into the Slough of Despond and stick there by the month together—yes, by the year together! These are believers who take periodically to despondency, as birds do to molting, and when the fit is on them you cannot cheer or comfort them. They then write bitter things against themselves and call themselves all the ugly names in the dictionary—until they make us smile to hear them—because we know how mistaken they are. We are admiring their consistency and they are mourning over their foolishness. We see their generosity towards the cause of God and their devotion to everything that is good. Yet they say there is nothing good in them. We know where they are, for we have been laid in iron, ourselves, and set fast in the very same stocks. What a mercy of God it is that when you who love the Lord thus, and sit down and commune with your despondencies—I mean you, Miss Much-Afraid, you, Mr. Ready-to-Halt and you, Mr. Feeble-Mind—my Lord does not leave you nor judge you as you judge yourselves! He is pleased to gather together, in mercy, those who think themselves outcasts in Israel.

Lastly, upon this point, there are some who become outcasts through their love to Christ and of these the text is peculiarly true. I mean *those who suffer for righteousness' sake till they are regarded as the off-scouring of all things*. Are there any that serve God faithfully, who have escaped the trial of cruel mockery? The names of those who are eminently useful are generally used as footballs for an ungodly world. The world is not worthy of them and yet their enemies think they are hardly worthy to live in the world. We do not hear much about persecution nowadays, but in private life there is a world of it! The cold shoulder is given where once friendship was sought—hard, cruel, cutting things are said where once admiration was expressed—and separations take place between good friends because of Christ. It is still true, in the Christian's case, that a man's foes are they of his own household. But if you should become an outcast upon the face of the earth for Christ's sake, there is this for your comfort—"The Lord does build up Jerusalem, He gathers together the outcasts of Israel." Of the persecuted He makes pillars in His holy temple forever. Blessed are those who are outcasts for Christ! Rich are those who are so honored as to be permitted to become poor for Him! Happy are they who have had this grace given them—to be permitted to lay life, itself, down for Jesus Christ's sake!

**II.** Now a few words upon the second point—IN WHAT SENSE DOES THE LORD JESUS GATHER TOGETHER THESE OUTCASTS OF DIFFERENT CLASSES? Of course I should have to vary the explanation to suit each case, but as that would take a long time, let me say that the Lord Jesus has several ways of gathering together the outcasts.

He gathers them *to hear the gospel*. Preach Jesus Christ and they will come! Both outcast saints and outcast sinners will come to hear the charming sound of His blessed name! They cannot help it. Nothing draws like Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ next gathers them *to Himself*. The parable of the wedding feast is repeated again, "Go out into the highways and hedges and *compel* them to come in, that My house may be filled." "Bring in here the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." In this sort, the Lord Jesus Christ gathers multitudes where He is faithfully

preached. He gathers all sorts of characters and especially the odds and ends of society—the despised of men and the despised of themselves. He gathers them to Himself. And oh, what a blessed gathering place that is where there is cleansing for their filthiness, health for their disease, clothing for their nakedness and all-sufficient supplies for their abundant necessities! He gathers them to Himself—which is to gather them to *God*—to gather them to blessedness and peace through reconciliation with the Father. “To Him shall the gathering of the people be.”

When He has done that, He gathers them *into the divine family*. He takes the outcasts and makes them children of God—heirs with Himself. From the dunghill He lifts them and sets them among princes! He takes them from the swine trough and puts the ring on their fingers and the shoes on their feet—and they sit down at the Father’s table to feast and to be glad! Jesus Christ, as the good Shepherd, gathers the lost sheep, the lame, the halt, and the diseased and feeds them. He makes them to lie down and restores their souls and, finally, He leads them to the rich pastures of the glory Land.

In due time the Lord gathers together the outcasts *into His visible church*. As David enrolled a company of men that were in debt and discontented, so does Jesus Christ gather the indebted ones and the malcontents and makes them His soldiers. These are known as the church militant. Surely as David did great exploits by those Pelethites, Cherehites, Gittites, and strange men of foreign extraction whom he gathered to himself, so does Jesus of Nazareth do great things by those great sinners whom He greatly forgives—those hard-hearted ones whom He so strangely changes and makes to be the Old Guard of His army. Yes, He gathers them into His church and He gathers them *into His work*. The outcasts of Israel He uses for His own glory.

And when He has done that, He gathers them *into heaven*. What a surprise it must be for any man to find himself in heaven when he remembers where he *once* was! The outcast remembers the ale-bench on which he sat and soaked himself in liquor till he degraded himself below the brute beast. And now to be cleansed in the Redeemer’s blood and to sit among the angels—this will be surprising grace, indeed! “Oh, to think,” one might well say, “that I, who was once in lewd company, polluted and defiled, am now made to wear a crown and sit at the Redeemer’s feet!” When we reach heaven, brothers and sisters, I do not suppose that we shall forget all the past. And sometimes it must burst in upon us as a strangely divine instance of love that Christ should have brought *us* there and set *us* among the peers of His realm! And yet He will do it! And you, Mrs. Much-Afraid—*you* will be there! And you who think, “surely *Satan* will have me!” *you* will be there! You who are stumbling over every straw! You who seem stopped by every little gully in the road and who fancy, “Surely, there is no grace in *my* heart.” And yet you are still holding on, “faint, yet pursuing.” You who touch the hem of Christ’s garment, but have so little faith that you are afraid that you have none at all—*you* shall get up from that mourning and moaning, you shall rise from that despondency and distress—and among the sweetest music of heaven

shall be your songs of gratitude and joy! “He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.”

**III.** Well, now, WHAT IS THE LESSON OF THIS? I think there are three lessons and I will just hint at them.

One is this—*encouragement to those who are unworthy, or think themselves so, to go to Jesus Christ tonight.* I have been trying to think of all I know and I have lifted up my heart to the Holy Spirit to guide me that I may cheer some discouraged one. It was my objective, last Sunday night, to comfort the broken-hearted, and I do not seem to have gotten out of that vein, yet. I believe there are some here, whom God has sent me to, who really believe themselves to be out of the region of hope. My dear friends, if God gathers together the outcasts, why should He not gather *you*? And if it is true that Jesus Christ does not look for goodness, but that He only considers our sin and misery, why should He not look upon *you*? May I urge you to try my Master? If you go to Him confessing your unworthiness and trusting yourself with Him, if He does not save you, I would like to know about it, because you will be the first person I have ever heard of that trusted himself with Jesus and was rejected! It will *not* be the case, whatever your condition may be, however desperate your state! You think your condition to be worse than I have pictured it to be and you fancy that I cannot know anything about how bad you are. Well, I do not know your special form of rebellion, but you are the very person I mean, for all that. I say, if you are as black as hell. If you are as foul as the Stygian bog; if you have sinned till your sins cannot be counted and if your actions are so heinous that infinite wrath is their just desert—yet come and look to those five wounds and to that sacred head once wounded, and to that heart pierced with the spear! There is life in a *look* at Jesus crucified! Will you try it? As surely as God’s word is true, if you do but glance your eyes at Him who “died the just for the unjust,” you shall be brought to God and reconciled! And that *now*—note—while sitting in that seat, before the last word of this sermon shall be uttered, for whoever believes in Him shall be saved! “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” O that you would believe on Jesus now! We sometimes sing—

**“Venture on Him: venture wholly.  
Let no other trust intrude.  
None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good.”**

But, sinner, it is not a venture! As surely as you cast yourself upon Him, He will be sure to save you! I will not multiply words, but I would, if I thought *words* would draw you. I pray the blessed and eternal Spirit to sweetly influence your minds, young people, tonight—and old people, too, and middle-aged people, too—that you may have done with trying to *do* anything, or to *be* anything in order to your own salvation, and know that it was all done when Jesus bled and died, all finished when He cried, “It is finished!” You have only to take believingly what He presents to you and accept Him as your all-in-all. God help you to do it!

The second reflection is this. *If Jesus Christ received some of us when we felt ourselves to be outcasts, how we ought to love Him!* It does us good to look back to the hole of the pit from where we were dug. We get to be very top-lofty at times, my brothers and sisters. We are wonderfully big, are we not? Are we not experienced Christians, now? Why, we have known the Lord these 25 years! Dear me, how important we are! And perhaps we are deacons of churches, or, at any rate, we have a class in the Sunday school and we pray in the prayer meetings—considerable importance attaches to us and we are high and mighty on that account. Ah, I have heard say of a man worth his thousands that once he had not a shirt on his back—and if he remembered what he sprang from he would not carry his head so high! I do not see much in that, but I do see something in this—that if we remembered the time when we were dead in trespasses and sins; when we had not a rag to cover us; when we were under God’s frown, and were heirs of wrath even as others—if we remembered our lost and ruined state by nature—I am sure that we should not lift our heads so very loftily and want to have respect paid to us in the church, or think that God ought not to deal so very harshly with us, as if we had cause for complaint! Dear friends, let us remember what we used to be, and that will keep us low in our own esteem. But, oh, how it will fire us with zeal to remember from what a depth He has lifted us up! Did Jesus save such a wretch as I was? Then for Him would I live and for Him would I die! This ought to be the utterance of us all. We ought to live in that spirit. God grant we may!

Then, again, let us always feel that *if the Lord Jesus Christ took us up when we were not worth having, we will never be ashamed to try and pick up others who are in the same condition.* We will not count it any lowering of our dignity to go after the most fallen of all. We will reckon that they are no worse than we were, if we were viewed from a certain point, and we will, therefore, aim at their conversion, hope for it and expect it! This lesson is peculiarly applicable to some Christians here present. Dear brothers and sisters, if you really feel yourselves to have been outcasts and yet have been received into the divine family—and are now on the road to heaven—I ask you to pay every attention to any whom you meet with who are, now, what *you* once were! If you meet with any in great despair of soul, say, “Ah, I must be a comforter here, for I have gone through this. I will never let this poor soul go till, by God’s help, I have cheered him.” If you meet with one who is an open sinner, perhaps you will have to say to yourself, “I was an open sinner, too.” But if not, say, “My sins were more secret, but still they were as bad as his, and therefore, I have hope of this poor soul and will try whether he cannot be loved to Christ by me.” Mark my expression—“*loved to Christ,*” for *that* is the power we must use—sinners are to be *loved* to Christ! The Holy Spirit uses the love of saints to bring poor sinners to know the love of Christ! Search after them and do not let them perish. May God put this resolve into your soul—“If there is anything that I can do, in the name of Jesus, and with the power of the Holy Spirit upon me, that might save that soul, it shall be done and, if that soul dies lost, when I hear the passing bell I

will, God helping me, be able to say, ‘I did set Christ before that soul; I did plead with that conscience; I did seek to bring that sinner to Jesus.’”

The outcast, when converted, should seek after his brother outcasts. Young man, did you ever swear? Seek the conversion of swearers! Young man, have you been fond of the card table? Have you been a frequenter of low resorts of pleasure? Then addict yourself to looking after persons of the same sort! George Whitefield says that after his own conversion his first concern was the conversion of those with whom he had taken pleasure in sin. And he had the privilege of seeing many of them brought to Christ! Have you been a man of business and have you been associated in wrongdoing with others? Seek the salvation of those who were associated with you! It is a natural obligation which Christ imposes upon all of any special sort, that they should seek those of their own sort, and labor to bring them to repentance.

May God bless you, beloved. We shall soon be in heaven. I can see some here tonight who, owing to their age, cannot be long before they enter the glory of Christ. I see others of us who are younger, who do not know, from feebleness of health, how long it may be before we see the face of the Beloved. But we would say of Him tonight, what a blessed Savior He is, and what an infinity of love there must be in Him to have ever revealed Himself to such as we are!

Oh, when shall we be near Him and worship Him forever and ever? Make no tarrying, O our Beloved!

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 147.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—587; 147; 784.**

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# THE BELIEVER IN THE BODY AND OUT OF THE BODY NO. 1303

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 2, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Now He that has prepared us for the same thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, (for we walk by faith, not by sight). We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it is good or bad.”*  
**2 Corinthians 5:5-10.**

IT is quite clear that the apostle did not consider his body to be himself. He speaks of it as being the frail tent or tabernacle in which he dwelt, and again, as the garment with which, for a while, he was clothed. That tent or tabernacle he expected to see dissolved. And that garment he expected to put off. He distinguished between the outward man which would perish and the inward man, which was his true self, which he speaks of as, “renewed day by day.” The apostle reckoned upon rising here in the body, according to the divine will, till he had finished the work which was given him to do. And then he expected to put off his mortal flesh and to be an unclothed and disembodied spirit. Such is the condition, at the present time, of all the saints who have departed. They are well described as “the spirits of just men made perfect.” With the exception of Enoch and Elijah, who carried their bodies with them into the celestial world, all departed believers are now spirits unclothed of their bodies and wearing only such array as befits spiritual existences. Is it difficult to conceive of them in that condition? I do not think it should be. Spirits *without* bodies are not such marvelous things as spirits *in* bodies! You meet, every day, as you walk the streets, spirits in bodies, spirits that quicken flesh and bone, and muscle, and move a mass of material from place to place. If we had never seen such a thing as a body kept in life and filled with power by an immaterial, invisible and spiritual substance, it would be a very hard thing to realize. No man among us knows how it is that this inner spirit of ours is connected with the body. Where is the point of union? What is the link between soul and sinew? Where does spirit begin and where does matter end? We know that if we will to move our arm it is moved, but how does the mind that wills, manage to grasp the materialism which obeys its bidding? How is spirit capable of acting upon matter at all? How is it that a spirit can dwell within an abode of flesh, look out of these eyes, listen through these ears, speak by these lips and perform its will by these hands? Eyes and ears and hands are but earth—they are made of such matter as we meet with in other

parts of the solid world, mere dust of the earth, materialism wisely molded—but yet corruptible materialism. And yet the soul somehow manages to indwell and inhabit its house of clay—a far more wonderful thing, it seems to me, than for a spirit to exist without a body! We shall find it easy to conceive of a spirit disentangled of materialism in proportion as we have learned to meditate upon *spiritual* things, and to feel the powers of the world to come. Multitudes around us know nothing of anything which does not appeal to their senses. But the man who has been renewed by the Spirit of God is, himself, made spiritually minded, and therefore, the idea of disembodied spirits is not strange to him. Let us, according to Scripture, look forward to a condition in which our perfected spirits shall abide with Christ, “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23).

Yet Paul did not expect that the disembodied state would last forever, for he was assured of the resurrection of the body. He did not despise the body so as to hope never to see it again, but he reckoned that after it had been put off, it would undergo a change and thus would be so renovated that at the coming of the Lord he would put it on afresh—and so his spirit would again be clothed! He expected that mortality would be swallowed up by life. And we, also, confidently indulge the same hope. The fabric which was put into the ground when the believer was buried was sown in corruption. We expect to see it raised in perfection. That which we laid in the tomb the other day was a poor dishonored corpse on which decay was working its fierce will. But we shall see it raised in glory, radiant with the light which made Moses’ face shine! That which we committed to mother earth, we lowered into the grave in weakness, but it shall as surely rise in power! That which was buried was a soulish body, only fit for the natural soul. It was not adapted for the movements and aspirations of the regenerated spirit. But we know that when it shall rise, it will be a spiritual body adapted to our highest nature, fitted to be the palace of that gracious life which makes us sons of God! The apostle’s great expectation was the perfection of his entire manhood—spirit, soul and body in Christ Jesus! He was confident in the expectation that though his body would be houseless for awhile, by the dissolving of his earthly tabernacle, he would soon enter into a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens, and stand before the presence of God both as to his body and his soul made perfect in Christ Jesus! This was confident expectation.

From the text it is clear that this belief had a powerful influence over the apostle. It had especially two effects upon him—one was to make him “always confident” and the other was to create in him a high ambition. “Therefore,” he says, “we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.” He felt that wherever he might be and in whatever condition he might exist, the only thing he had to care for was that he might be pleasing to Him who had redeemed him with His precious blood. And so, whether in the body or out of the body, it mattered little to him so long as he could be accepted of the Lord in Jesus Christ.

Of the apostle’s *confidence* and *ambition* we are going to speak this morning, as the Spirit of God may graciously help us.

I. And first, dear friends, THE BELIEVER HAS REASON FOR CONSTANT CONFIDENCE. The apostle tells us, "Therefore we are always confident." And then, again, lest we should lose the sense by the interjected sentence in the seventh verse, he says, again, "We are confident, I say." The condition, then, of the Christian, when he is living in faith of resurrection and eternal life, is a condition of continual confidence. It is a confidence which regards both the life which now is and the state in which we expect to live before we reach the fullness of the promised glory. It is a confidence which concerns the present state—for while we are at home in the body, we are always confident—a confidence which equally concerns, and rather more so, the state which is to come. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

First, let me speak with you upon *the confidence which the believer has in reference to his present condition while he is at home in the body*. Our translators have been somewhat unfortunate in their choice of terms in this instance, for they have lost part of the interest of the passage. We should have seen more beauty in these words if they had given us their literal meaning a little more closely. Let me read them to you as they may be read—"We are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are from home as to the Lord. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be from home as to the body and to be at home with the Lord. Why we labor, that, whether from home, or at home, we may be accepted of Him." You see the point lies in *at home* and *from home*. These words are as near an approach to the original as could readily be found, though they do not exhaust the sense of the Greek terms. Here, then, in the present state, we are said to be *at home* in the body. But we are at home in a very modified sense, for it is a home which is not a home, but only a frail lodging, a temporary tenement to accommodate us till we reach our true and *real* home in the New Jerusalem. It is such a home as a soldier has in the camp at a bivouac, or as a passenger has when he is crossing from continent to continent. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had each a home, but it was in a strange country and they were daily looking for a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God. While we are in this present state we are at a disadvantage, for we are dwelling in a house which is not, as yet, in our home country, and by it we are kept from our real home in the fatherland above. In a sense, however, this body *is* a home, for here dwells the living, thinking, active mind—somewhere in the brain—from where it spreads itself and rules all the members of the body. We know that within the walls of this earthly fabric, our spirit is ordained to live for awhile, a lamp burning within a pitcher, a precious jewel set in a ring of clay. It is a house for which we have no little affection, and we are loath to quit it—

***"For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey,  
This pleasing, anxious being ever resigned,  
Left the warm precincts of this house of clay,  
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?"***

We complain of the infirmities of our bodies, but we are in no hurry to leave them! They threaten to fall upon us in their decay, but we linger in them, still, till death serves a writ of ejection, and at the same time, pulls down the tenement. We have, some of us, lived in our body for 40 years.

Some of you for 60 or 70 years and it is natural that we should have made a home of it, such as it is. And it is small marvel that we are in no haste to emigrate—even the temptation of that brighter home and the “many mansions”—is not always enough to make us wish to be gone!

But yet this body is not a fitting home for us and we often discover, by experience, how inconvenient it is. It is a poor old tent, easily overturned, constantly getting torn. And the older it gets, the more trouble it takes to patch it up and to keep it in habitable repair. In the course of years it has become soiled, creased and worn-out, like the tents of Kedar. With the wear and tear of many years, it becomes more and more evident that it is not a worthy dwelling place for the child of a King, nor a fit abode for an immortal Spirit born from on high! We have suffered many inconveniences from this crumbling tabernacle in many ways, but especially in *spiritual* things. We have been willing to watch, but the body has been inclined to sleep. The spirit has been willing, but the flesh has been very weak. We have been numbered with weariness, pain, care and bodily appetite when we have desired to be altogether engrossed with heavenly things. Sometimes, when we would sing, a throbbing headache makes us sigh. When we would rejoice with unspeakable joy, a palpitating heart depresses us. And when we would go about our Master’s business, a lame foot or a decaying constitution hinders us so that we dwell in a house which is beneath the quality of so noble a creature as a spirit. We have to put up with flesh and blood, but we are outgrowing them—we feel we are—there is a something within us which warns us that, like certain of the sea creatures which have to break their shells up as they grow, so we are growingly in need of another and better abode. We are like the young chick within the eggshell—it has been a home for us until now, but it is becoming too tight for us—we begin to chip it and we sometimes wish it would break altogether, that we might enjoy fuller liberty. “We that are in this body do groan, being burdened,” and groan, we shall, till the day of our full redemption and the deliverance of the body from the bondage of corruption!—

***“Welcome, sweet hour of full discharge,  
That sets my longing soul at large,  
Unbinds my chains, breaks up my cell,  
And lets me with my God to dwell.”***

According to the expression of the Greek, ours is a home in a foreign country. We are not dwelling among our own people at present, but we are exiles in a far-off land. We are not alone, for a large band of our brothers and sisters are with us, even as the Jews found company of their own race in Babylon, in whose songs and sighs they could unite. But this is exile to us, we have no inheritance here. “A possession of a burying place” is all that we need ask for and all that we shall soon have, for this world is not our rest. The Lord has not been pleased to give us our portion in this life—our inheritance lies on the other side of the Jordan. We are at home in the body, but, as I have already said, it is but a lodging place in the midst of a strange country in which we are pilgrims and sojourners as all our fathers were. We are wayfaring men hastening away and passing through a foreign land among people who speak not our tongue, know not our customs, understand nothing of the place to which we are going, and therefore, cannot understand us. They even

think us mad when we talk about another country, of which they have no idea, and for which they have no longing. We are at home only in a narrow sense, as a man may be said to be at home when, being in banishment, he takes up his abode, for a while, in a foreign town. It can never be more than this.

It is a home, too, which keeps us from our true home. We are not yet where we can see our Lord and hear His voice. We are not yet in the “rest which remains for the people of God.” Today we are at school, like children whose great holiday joy is to go home. We are laborers and this is the work field. When we have done our day’s work we shall go home, but this is the workshop, not the home. It is a very sweet thing, after a week of hard work, to reach home at last, to take off one’s dusty clothes and throw them aside and feel that toil is over for the present and rest has come. In this world we cannot find a total rest so as to be completely at ease and at home. We shall only reach that happy condition when we are out of this foreign world. No sense of perfect home rest ever comes over the soul while we are here, except as faith anticipates the joys prepared above. There remains a rest for the people of God, but in this body and in this world it is not to be had.

Home is the place where one feels secure—our house is our castle. Outside, in the world, men watch your words, and if they can, they misrepresent or misinterpret them. You have to fight a battle of life, outside, but it is a very blessed thing if the battle is over when you cross your own threshold. Then you are no longer misunderstood, but are appreciated and loved around your own fireside. Beneath our own dear roof-tree there is nobody to catch us up, nobody to quibble at us, but only wife and children and friends who love us and delight in us. Well, brothers and sisters, we find no such home *spiritually* in this world, for this is the place of conflict and watchfulness. Here we dwell among enemies and we have to sorrowfully cry—“My soul is among lions, among those that are set on fire of hell.” We sing—

**“Woe’s me that I in Mesech am  
A sojourner so long!  
That I in tabernacles dwell  
To Kedar that belong.  
My soul with him that hates peace  
Has long a dweller been:  
I am for peace; but when I speak,  
For battle they are keen.  
My heart mourns and pines  
To reach that peaceful shore,  
Where all the weary are at rest,  
And troublers vex no more.”**

In heaven there will be no foes to watch against, nor men of our own household to be our worst enemies. Home, sweet home is to be found *above*—and from that home our present home in the body is keeping us.

Home, too, is the place of the closest and sweetest familiarities. There all unbend. The judge takes off his gown and the soldier his sword—and both play with their children. He who wears his belt out of doors, finds himself stripped of it when he comes among his own kin. There is the kiss of affection, there are the blandishments of love. Here, alas, our spirits cannot take their fill of heavenly familiarities, for distance comes

between. We long for the vision of love, but it comes not as yet. But up *there* what indulgence shall be accorded to us! What discoveries of the love of God in Christ Jesus! Then shall the cry of the spouse in the song be fulfilled forever and ever—"Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine." Then shall the inmost heart of Christ be known to us and we shall dwell in Him forever and ever in closest communion! This home of ours in the body keeps us away from such communion with God as the glorified ones above enjoy without ceasing! Said I not, truly, that our present state has its drawbacks—such as make a man sigh and cry to be gone?

But, dear friends, the main point in which the present state is at a disadvantage compared with the future one is that here we have to live entirely by faith. We walk here by faith, not by sight. You believe in God, but you have not beheld His glory as the blessed dead have done. You believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, but it is in one "whom having not seen, you love." You believe in the Holy Spirit and you have been conscious of His presence, by faith, but there is a something better yet—a clearer sight is yet to be had which we cannot enjoy while we tarry here. At present we take everything on the testimony of God's word and the witness of His Spirit, but we have not yet seen the celestial city, nor heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps, nor eaten at the banquets of the glorified!

We enjoy a foretaste of all these and anticipate them by faith, but actual enjoyments are not for this world. What a man *sees*, why does he yet hope for? This place is the realm of hope we cannot expect to see. But we are *going* to the place where we shall not so much believe as *behold*, where we shall not so much expect as enjoy! We are nearing the country where we shall—

**"See and hear, and know,  
All we desired or wished below."**

And faith shall be exchanged for the clearest sight. Here we gaze through the telescope at heavenly things, but we cannot get into contact with them as we wish to do. But when we have shaken you off, O flesh, then shall we actually come into sight and fruition—and shall behold the Savior, as He is—face to face!

These are the inconveniences, then, of this present state, but Paul, despite all these disadvantages was confident. "We are always confident," says he. He was contented, he was happy, he was courageous, he was steadfast! And why? Why, brothers and sisters, because he had a hope of the immortality to be revealed! He knew that as soon as ever he shook off this body, his soul would be with Christ! He knew that in some future day, when Christ should come, his body and his soul, remarried, should be forever beatified with the Lord, and therefore, he counted all the disadvantages of this life to be as nothing—"these light afflictions which are but for a moment." He laughed to scorn anything that he had to suffer here below, because of the "exceeding weight of glory" which his faith realized, as soon, to be revealed!

Observe, also, that his confidence came from God's work in his soul. "He that has prepared us to the same thing is God." He was sure he should one day be perfect and immortal because God had begun to work

in him to that very end! When the statuary takes the block of stone and begins to carve it into a statue, we get the promise of that which is to be. I no sooner see the master workman take the first stroke, than I feel sure of a work of art, because I see that he has begun to work towards that end. From that work the mason may turn aside, or he may die, and therefore, I cannot be sure that from the chosen stone there will leap out, by-and-by, the statue. But God never undertakes what He does not finish! He never fails for lack of power, or because of a change of mind. And so, if today I am the quarried block of marble—if He has begun to make the first chippings in me of genuine repentance and simple faith towards Himself—I have the sure prophecy that He intends to work upon me till He has worked me up into the perfect image of Christ, to be immortal and immaculate like my Lord! Paul, by faith, knew that by a divine decree, before all worlds were created, he was predestinated to be made a perfect and immortal being! He saw that God had created him for that very purpose and newly created him to that end. He felt the working of God preparing him—he could feel the Spirit of God operating in him, giving him newness of life, causing him to hate sin and to receive, more and more fully, the likeness of Christ, his Master. “He has prepared me for the same thing,” said the apostle, and therefore, he felt confident that to this end he should be brought.

Again, there was another ground of confidence—“who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” You know what an “earnest” is. It is not a mere pledge, for a pledge is *returned* when that which it certifies is given. An earnest is a *part* of the promise itself. A man is to receive a wage at the end of the week. In the middle of the week he obtains a part of the money. This is more than a pledge of the rest—it is an earnest of the whole—a most sure and positive pledge of that which remains unpaid. The man who has received the Spirit of God in his soul has obtained the immortal seed which will expand into perfection! He is forgiven and accepted! And the Spirit helps his infirmities in prayer, fills him with faith, perfumes him with love, adorns him with holiness and makes him commune with God—all this is the earnest of his perfected condition—and the beginning of the joys to come! The beginning of the infallible assurance of all those joys which the Lord has prepared for them that love Him! No man ever had the Spirit of God dwelling in him, molding him to the divine will, but what he ultimately obtained the heavenly state, for the Spirit of God does not leave His work undone. Neither does He bestow divine gifts to take them away again. “Therefore,” says Paul, “we are always confident.” We have a hope which enters into that which is within the veil. We know what image the Lord is working in us and we have received the Holy Spirit as the earnest of eternal blessedness! Therefore, come what may, we are filled with a sacred courage and a sublime peace which make us await the future with calmest confidence.

Now we shall pass on to the next point, which is that *Paul was equally confident about the next state into which he expected, soon, to pass*, namely, the condition of a disembodied spirit. Nature, when it acts apart from grace, shrinks from the thought of dying. But death can have no terrors for the man whom it lands in a condition which he prefers. By turning to the text, we see that Paul *preferred* the state into which death

would cast him. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." That is, we have a preference for being away from this home in the body, that we may be at home with the Lord! He looked at the state into which he would soon come by the dissolution of his body as a more desirable one than even his life of confidence here below! Yet let us observe that it was not because Paul thought it would be better to be without a body than with one that he thus spoke. He has told us already, "not for that we would be unclothed." He did not desire to be a disembodied spirit for its own sake. There are certain mystics who look upon the body as a wretched encumbrance. The thought of resurrection has no pleasure to them, and therefore, they spiritualize the doctrine and make it to be no resurrection at all. The apostle was not of their mind. He called the body the temple of God and desired its perfection, not its destruction. The Lord has constituted man to be a wonderful continuation of many forms of existence—a link between the angel and the animal, a mixture of the divine and the material—a comprehensive being taking up into himself the heaven which is above him and the earth on which he treads. Our great Creator does not mean us to be maimed creatures forever. He intends us to dwell with Him eternally in the perfection of our humanity. When our Lord Jesus died, He did not redeem one half of man, but the whole man—and He means not to leave any part of the purchased possession in the enemy's hands. We ought not to think that to be half a man would be more desirable than to be a whole man, for our Lord Jesus does not think so. We should be waiting, expectantly, for the second advent of our Lord, who will call His saints from their tombs and redeem them altogether from the power of the grave. We should, even now, rejoice that this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality.

It will be evident to you all, dear friends, that if Paul preferred the disembodied state to this, as the text tells us he did, then the spirits of those saints who have left their bodies in the grave are not annihilated—they live on! Paul could not have counted it better to be annihilated than to lead a life of holy confidence. The saints are not dead! Our Lord gave a conclusive answer to that error when He said, "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calls the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him." Those who have departed this life are still alive! We are sure of that, or else Paul would not have preferred that state. Neither are they unconscious, as some say, for who would prefer torpor to active confidence? Whatever trials there may be in the Christian life here below, the man of faith really does enjoy life and could not prefer unconsciousness. Neither are the saints in purgatorial fires, as the Babylonian harlot says! Nobody would desire to be tormented and we may be sure that the apostle Paul would not have been willing to be in purgatory more than to live here and serve his Lord! Brothers and sisters, the saints live! They live in consciousness and in happiness! Moses came and talked with Christ on the mount of Transfiguration, though he had no body, just as readily as Elijah did, though that mighty prophet carried his body with him when he ascended in a chariot of fire. The *body* is not necessary to consciousness or to happi-

ness. The best of all is that the spirits of the departed are with Christ. "To be with Christ, which is far better," said the apostle. "Forever with the Lord," their portion is allotted them. It is the Lord's own prayer—"I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." And the prayer is fulfilled in them! "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from now on, yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

This made the apostle something more than confident and courageous in the prospect of death. He was willing to depart into the disembodied state because he knew he would be at home with the Lord in it! I wish you to dwell a minute on that thought of being at home with the Lord. We rejoice that we have Christ with us here, spiritually, for His presence brings us spiritual blessings of a very high order, and joys prophetic of the joys of heaven, but still we have not His *bodily* presence. We have, now, a sight of our Lord through a telescope, as it were. But we do not see Him near at hand. We speak to Him as through a trumpet across the sea—we do not talk to Him face to face. Ah, what will it be to be at home with Christ! When we reach His own palace gate and sit at His own table, we shall know Him far better than we do now! And He will look lovelier to our eyes than ever, because we shall see Him more clearly. The sound of His voice will be much sweeter than anything we have heard in the gospel here below, for we shall actually hear Him speak! Will we not take our fill of Him when we once behold Him? I think I shall never want to take my eyes off Him, but find a heaven, an eternity, an infinity of bliss in drinking Him in with all my eyes and all my heart! To be at home with Him will be to understand infinitely more of Him than we have ever dreamed of as yet. Ah, you do not know His glory! You could not bear to behold it as yet. You would fall at His feet as dead, in a swoon of delight, if you could but gaze upon Him while you are yet in this frail body! When disembodied you shall not have the flesh to throw a mist over your eyes, but you shall behold the King in His beauty and be able to bear the joy.

In that condition to which we are speeding, we shall also be beyond all doubt as to the truth of our holy faith. There will be no more mistrust of our Lord or of His promises. And we shall no more doubt the power of His blood or our share in His atoning Sacrifice. Sometimes the dark atheistic thought will come, "Is it not all a dream?" You shall never have such a thought, there, for you will be at home with Jesus! Now there arises the troublesome question, Are you a real believer? Has Jesus really washed you in His blood? You will be beyond all such enquiries when you are absent from the body and present with the Lord! Now you have to walk by faith and you must not try to get beyond faith, for that is the mode of spiritual life for this present state. But after death you will no more walk by faith—you will have sight and fruition—and these will banish all the doubts which try your faith while in the body. How pleasant and desirable does the prospect of actual fruition cause heaven to become, even though we know that, for awhile, we shall be away from the body.

In the future state we shall communicate with Christ more sensibly than we do now. Here we speak with Him, but it is by faith through the Spirit of God. In heaven we shall actually speak to Him in His immediate

presence and hear His voice while He personally speaks to us. Ah, what we shall have to tell Him! What will He have to tell us! Truly, I dare not venture into these great deeps of expectation lest I drown myself in the delights of hope! Oh, the joy which awaits us! It is almost too much for me to think of!

When we are at home with Him, without the body, and also, I suppose, even more when we are at home in the resurrection body, we shall have greater capacity for taking in the glory of our Lord than we have now. Sometimes He fills us with His love which passes knowledge and then we think we know very much of Him. But oh, my brothers and sisters, our knowledge is but that of little babes as yet! We are such small and shallow vessels that a few drops of Christ's love soon fill us up and we begin running over! But He will enlarge us till we hold great measures of Him, and then He will fill us with all the fullness of God! You have, sometimes, tried to imagine what heaven must be like. Well, you shall have many such heavens! No, ten thousand times as much delight in God as you have ever dreamed of! If even here He does for us exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or think, what will He do for us *there*? As for His person and His sweetness—and His excellence and His glory—you have only touched the hem of His garment! You have only, like Jonathan, dipped the end of your rod in that flood of honey and it has enlightened your eyes! But oh, when you shall be at home with Him, you shall feast to your heart's content! Here we sip, but there we shall drink full bowls! Here we eat our daily morsel, but there the heavenly feast will never break up!

Now, putting these two things together, the present state and the next, we have great reason, like the apostle, to go on, from day to day, with holy courage and confidence. If the way is rough, it leads to an unspeakably joyful end—so let us trip over it cheerfully! And if the way should grow rougher, still, let us show still greater confidence, for one hour with our God will make up for it all and infinitely more!

**II.** The last point I can only spend a few minutes upon. It is this—THE BELIEVER HAS REASONS FOR AN ABSORBING AMBITION. According to the text, we are to live alone for Jesus—"Why we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him." From now on, my brothers and sisters, the one great thing we have to care about is to please our Lord. You are saved and heaven is your portion. Now, from this time on, concentrate all your thoughts, your faculties and your energies upon this one design—to be acceptable with Jesus Christ. Live for Him as He has died for you. Live for Him alone. Believer, it ought to be your ambition to please Christ in every act you do. Do not say, "How will this please myself or please my neighbor?" But ask, "How will this please my Lord?" And, remember, it is not by the action, alone, that He will be pleased, but the *motive* must be right or you will fail. Oh, cry to Him to keep your motives clean, pure, elevated, heavenly—for groveling aims will be a sour leaven and will render the whole loaf unfit to offer. Nor is it merely the motive—it is the spirit in which the whole thing is done; labor, brothers and sisters, with a divine ambition to please Jesus Christ in your thoughts, in your wishes, in your desires, in everything that is about you. I know you will have to lament many shortcomings and errors.

There will be much about you that will be displeasing to Him. Take care that it is also displeasing to you and never be pleased with that which does not please Him. Never accept anything in yourself which He would not accept. With all your ardent spirit watch every movement of your soul that no power or passion so moves as to vex His Holy Spirit. Seek to please Him every moment while you are upon the earth. You know what sort of things Jesus did and what He would like you to do—follow His every step—obey His every word. He has bid you walk in holiness as He did, O sin not against Him! He bids you clothe the naked, feed the hungry, teach the ignorant, visit the sick, look after the fatherless and widows—all these things He speaks of as peculiarly pleasing to Himself, and as mentionable to the honor of His saints in the day of His appearing. Let these things be in you and abound in you! Be fruitful in those graces which were most conspicuous in Him. Do not let a day pass without doing something with the one objective of pleasing Christ. We do a great deal because it is customary, or because church opinion expects it. But to do holy acts directly for Christ, simply and alone for love of Him—this should be our constant habit. Have we not some alabaster box to break to anoint His head? Have we not some tears with which to wash *His* feet? Need I urge that something, however humble, should frequently be done, even at the cost of self-denial, for His dear sake? Yes, let *everything* be done as unto Him.

For then, mark this last, we shall please Him in the next state, for, “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” The child of God is *glad* of this, for the text might be translated, “we shall all be *manifested* before the judgment seat of Christ.” Today men do not understand us, but they will know us in that day! I will guarantee you this one thing—if you will live the most devoted and disinterested life possible—you will find people sneering at you and imputing your actions to selfish motives. They will put a cruel construction on all you do or say. Well, it does not matter, for we shall all be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ, before God and men and angels! Let us live to please Him, for our integrity of motive will be known at the last, and put beyond all dispute! The world said of one man that he preached from selfish motives, while all the time he had no thought but for God’s glory. The Lord will make it clear how false was the judgment of men. They said of another man that he was very earnest, but that he wanted to win popularity. Yet all the while he cared not one straw for human praise. Such a man need not trouble himself—the smoke will clear away in that great day and he will be seen in his uprightness! If you have lived only to please Christ, you need not be afraid of His coming, for in that day He shall clear away all slander and misrepresentation—and you shall stand out vindicated and justified before an assembled universe! In that day, when God shall publicly justify His saints, He will make all men, angels and devils know that they are truly just. The solemn verdict of God will be one to which the whole universe of intelligent spirits will give in their assent. They will say, “YES,” to the sentence passed by the Lord Jesus! They, themselves, would bring in a verdict in favor of believers in that last testing day if it were left to them! As for the ungodly, the condemning sentence shall be not only just, but such as the whole universe shall assent to! The pun-

ishment which God will lay upon sinners for the evil deeds done in the body, will not then be caviled at, as too severe! It will be such a sentence as every intelligent spirit shall be compelled to own to be right. But, my brothers and sisters, let us so live that while our lives shall challenge no judgment on the score of merit—for that thought we utterly abhor—yet there shall be in our lives evidences of our having received grace from God and evidences of our being acceptable with Christ. For if we do not so live, we may talk what we like about faith and boast what we please about experience—without holiness no man shall see the Lord. If our life has never had in it that which pleases Christ, then the evidence will be taken against us that we were not pleasing to Him, that we had no spiritual life, that we had no grace in the heart and that we were not saved. Then there will remain nothing for us but to be condemned with the ungodly. Come, then, brothers and sisters, do not let us care whether we live or die! Let us not allow ourselves to be alarmed about the passage out of this world into the next state, but let us be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”

I have been twice to the grave this week, with two of our aged friends—a sister and a brother—who have passed into glory. And the lesson which they have left behind for our edification is—let us not be concerned whether we are at home in the body or whether we are at home with Christ, but, living or dying, let us be careful to please Jesus! I wish I knew how to enforce this lesson and send it home to every believer’s heart, but I must rather pray the Holy Spirit to do so. May He write it on my soul and on yours! And may we all be found practicing it from this time forth, even forever. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
2 CORINTHIANS 4:14-18; 5.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—865, 858, 850.**

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# INQUIRE OF THE LORD

## NO. 1304

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 9, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Thus says the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the Holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the Lord.”  
Ezekiel 36:37, 38.***

MULTIPLICATION is a very ancient form of blessing. The first benediction pronounced upon man was of this sort, for we read in the first chapter of Genesis, “And God blessed them, and God said unto them: Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.” That same blessing was pronounced, again, when God accepted His servant Noah, and entered into covenant with him. We read in Genesis 9:1 that “God blessed Noah and his sons and said unto them, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.” This also constituted a main part of the blessing promised to faithful Abraham. In Genesis 22:17, and many other places, we read to this effect, “In blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore, and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.” This was the blessing of God’s chosen people, a blessing which all the malice of Pharaoh could not turn aside, for the more the Israelites were oppressed, the more they multiplied. David, in the 107<sup>th</sup> Psalm uses the expression, “He blesses them, also, so that they are multiplied greatly” (v 38), so that, clearly, increase of numbers in families and nations was anciently regarded as a token of divine favor.

In a spiritual sense this is the blessing of the church of God. When the church is visited by the power of the Holy Spirit, she is increased on every side. When a church, in the midst of a vast population, remains stationary in numbers, or even becomes smaller, no man can see in such a condition the marks of God’s blessing. Certainly it would be a novel sort of benediction, for the first blessing, the blessing of Pentecost, resulted in 3,000 being added to the church in one day! And we find afterwards that, “The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” We read in the Acts of the Apostles that the churches, “walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied.” Ever since those early days, when the Lord has been with His people, they have increased in numbers. Their children have sprung up as among the grass and as willows by the water courses. When they have been “diminished and brought low,” it has been because they have departed from the truth of God or lost their first love. The result is the clearness of gospel testi-

mony has been dimmed, spirituality has been at a low ebb, the Holy Spirit has been despised and He has suspended His operations—and the church has dwindled down till she has had little more than a name to live. But as soon as the Lord has returned to her, she has become a fruitful mother and her children have cried out, “the place is too strait for us, give place to us that we may dwell.” When the Lord has sent forth His power with the preaching of the gospel, converts have been as innumerable as the drops of the dew and as the sands upon the seashore! It is plain that one of the blessings which we, as a church, should seek with all our hearts is that of continual increase. The entire church of God should look for the daily multiplication of the spiritual seed. We have the promise of it in the text, but there is appended to it this condition, “I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them: I will increase them with men like a flock.” Every true Christian desires to see the church increase. At any rate, I should pity the man who thinks himself a Christian and yet has no such wish. “Let the whole earth be filled with His glory,” is the natural aspiration of every child of God! And if any man has persuaded himself that he is a child of God and yet does not desire to see the glory of the Lord made manifest by the conversion of multitudes, I pity the condition of his heart and of his understanding. I trust we all feel the missionary spirit. I trust we all long to see the kingdom of the Lord come and to see the converts in Zion multiplied. But God has appended to the granting of our desire that we should *pray* for it—we must plead and inquire—or else the increase will be withheld.

Why has the Lord thus made prayer the necessary prelude to blessing? He has done so in great *mercy* to our souls. The Lord knows how beneficial it is to us to be much in prayer, and therefore, He makes it easy for us to draw near to Him. He affords us a multitude of reasons for approaching the mercy seat and gives us errands which may be used as arguments for frequent petitioning. When one knocks at a man’s door it is a good thing to have some business to do, for then one knocks boldly. If the porter opens and inquires, “Why did you come here?” we can reply, “Good sir, I came on an important errand,” and so we are bold to remain at the door. Now, as the Lord loves to commune with His people, He takes care to give them errands upon which they must come to Him. We need never be afraid that we shall be interrogated at the gate of mercy and this stern question put, “What are you doing here?” for we have always some reason for praying! Indeed, every promise is turned into a reason for prayer, because the promise is not to be granted to us till we have pleaded it at the mercy seat!

Moreover, if I may say so, God has, in mercy, *compelled* us to prayer by making the pleading necessary for the blessing. We must pray! We are unblest unless we pray, and therefore, our necessities drive us to the mercy seat. Though we may be so low in grace and so unspiritual that we may feel little positive enjoyment, for the moment, in prayer, yet pray we must. A sacred compulsion lies upon us arising from our vast necessities. We thank God, then, that He gives us reasons for coming, yes, lays

a stress upon us so that we are compelled to draw near unto Him. Now, let the desire that the church should be increased, which, as I have already said, dwells in the bosom of every child of God, act as a mighty impulse to drive us to earnest, prevailing prayer, for if we are driven to this, the church shall be multiplied exceedingly.

This is the object of the discourse of this morning. O Spirit of grace and supplications, be now upon us that we may be saturated with the spirit of prayer! I shall thus speak upon the text—*why should we awaken ourselves to the inquiry of which the text speaks?* “For this will I be inquired of.” Next, *how should such a duty as this be performed?* The text will afford us a guide. And, thirdly, *on what ground can any Christian be excused from the duty of uniting with his brothers and sisters in inquiring at the hand of the Lord for a blessing?*

**I. WHY SHOULD WE AWAKEN OURSELVES TO THIS INQUIRY AT THE HANDS OF THE LORD?** I do not put this question to you because I think that many of you need instruction as to the necessity for prayer, but because it is good to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance upon this point. The first reason I shall give is this, because *it is a great privilege to be allowed to inquire at the hands of the Lord.* You will see this very vividly if you turn to the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of this prophecy, and read the third verse, “Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus says the Lord God, Are you come to inquire of Me? As I live, says the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you.” Look again at the 31<sup>st</sup> verse of the same chapter, “For when you offer your gifts, when you make your sons to pass through the fire, you pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, says the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you.” What a solemn curse, to be denied an audience with God! How terrible a punishment it is when God shuts the gates of prayer and declares, “I will not be inquired of by you: when you spread forth your hands I will hide My face from you; yes, when you make many prayers I will not hear.” A people may get into such a condition of sin, such a willful state of alienation from God, and disobedience to His commands, that He may say, “I will not be inquired of by you.” Now, suppose for a moment that it were my painful duty to stand here and say, “Brothers and sisters, it is of no use our praying. The mercy seat has been abolished! God, in His anger, has bid the Mediator lay aside His office, and supplication is no longer to be heard.” What wringing of hands, what weeping of hearts as well as eyes if it were, indeed, true that prayer was denied to the people of God! It was a fair token for good when Ezekiel was bid to say that God had now taken away the curse from His people. And though He had said earlier, “I will not be inquired of by you,” yet now, under the covenant of grace, having forgiven their sins, He mercifully proclaimed, “Thus says the Lord, For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” As you would be struck with horror if you were forbidden to pray, so I beseech you use the privilege of prayer while you may. If only some half dozen men had permission to speak into the ear of God, how you

would venerate them! How you would wish to be one of their number! If a small chosen band were set apart who, alone, might ask in faith—and to whom, alone, the promise would be fulfilled, “Ask what you will and it shall be done unto you”—how would you envy them their high privilege! Since, then, at this time you are *all*, if you are the people of God, made to be a royal priesthood and the mercy seat is open to every believer, take care that you do not despise your birthright. To each one of you the promise is given, “He that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” Is not this sufficient reason why we should awake ourselves to use the privilege which the Lord accords us?

Secondly, *prayer is also to be looked upon as a precious gift of the Spirit of God as well as a great privilege.* Wherever the spirit of prayer exists, it is worked in the heart by the Holy Spirit Himself. And when the text says, “For this will I be inquired of,” it is a promise that men *shall* inquire! It is by virtue of covenant promises and covenant grace that men are made to pray, for the Lord has said, “I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications.” Every child of God who understands anything knows that real prayer is “the breath of God in man returning from where it came.” It first comes *from* God, and then it goes back to God. The Spirit knows what the mind of God is and He writes the mind of God upon our mind. And thus the desire of the believer is the transcript of the decree of God, and therefore the success of prayer. Well, now, brothers and sisters, if united, earnest, hearty inquiry of the Lord is a covenant *gift* and a work of the Spirit, we dare not despise it, but we should earnestly seek after it! When we obtain a measure of prayerfulness, we ought to cultivate it and seek to make it grow abundantly. Covenant gifts are always to be earnestly coveted, for they are “the best gifts.” Remember what blood it was which sealed that covenant and made it sure to all the elect! You cannot look upon one item of the inheritance which the covenant entails upon the saints without feeling that it cost the Redeemer His heart’s blood. Forsake not, then, the assembling of yourselves together in prayer as the manner of some is! Neither neglect the mercy seat in private, nor fail to inquire at the Lord’s hand, for supplication is a covenant gift, and must not be despised by any heir of heaven.

These are two forcible arguments, but here is another. In the third place we must pray because *it is a necessary work in order to obtain the blessing.* The church of God is to be multiplied, but, “Thus says the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of.” Remember that this is virtually written at the bottom of every promise. God said, “I will do this or that,” but it is understood that *for* this He will be *inquired of*. Doubtless we receive many unasked for favors, but the rule of the kingdom is, “He that asks, receives.” This rule applies even to the King of the kingdom, Himself—“Ask of Me,” said God to His own Son, “and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.” I must, then, brothers and sisters, exhort you to be much in inquiring at the Lord’s hands, because countless blessings are suspend-

ed upon the exercise of prayer. Imagine, for a moment, that these blessings should not come. Suppose that month after month the particular blessing of the text should be withheld. Into what a state of mind would every earnest Christian be brought! No increase—we come to the Communion Table but report no additions. No need to hold church meetings, for there are no confessions of faith to be heard and no converts are coming forward to tell of the power of divine Love! Suppose that such a state of stagnation should continue month after month with us! *And why shouldn't it?* It has done so with many others. Then as one after another of the ripe children of God went to heaven, there would be gaps in the church roll and none to replace them. There would be none to be baptized for the dead—none to stand in those places in the ranks from which the pious dead have been removed. May these eyes never look on such a calamity! May this tongue be spending its strength among the choirs above long before such a night shall settle down! You may well write, “Ichabod,” across the forefront of this house of prayer whenever that shall be, for the glory will have departed! Up to this moment we have never had to sigh and cry because the Lord has left us without an increase. But only suppose that the benediction should be withdrawn. *You can cause it to be withdrawn, if you will, by ceasing prayer.* Only let the cry which goes up to God continually from thousands of earnest hearts cease for a while and it will be a token that the *blessing* has also ceased! Only as long as there shall be this inquiring at the hand of the Lord can we expect that He will do as He has done, namely, multiply us with men as with a flock. Inquire, therefore, eagerly, because the blessing is suspended on it.

Next, we ought to have much of this inquiry because *it is a business which is, above all others, remunerative.* Look at the text—“I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.” That is a beautiful idea of a multitude. You have, perhaps, seen an immense flock, a teeming concourse of congregated life. Such shall the increase of the church be! But then it is added, to enhance the blessing, “As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts.” This, to the Jewish mind, conveyed a great idea of numbers! At the three great feasts of Pentecost, the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, the Israelites were accustomed to offer sacrifices in vast numbers, and therefore, lambs and sheep were brought into Jerusalem in such enormous numbers that without a book before me, I should not like to mention the figures which have been put down by Josephus and others. We read of Solomon’s offering, “an hundred and twenty thousand sheep.” And of 17,000 sheep offered in a single day in Hezekiah’s time! We may, therefore, imagine what the need was in our Savior’s day that there should be a sheep market by the Pool of Bethesda, for there would be need of immense pens for such numerous flocks. Then might the city be described in the language of Isaiah when he said, “All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto you; they shall come up with acceptance upon

My altar.” Now, said the Lord, I will not only multiply you as the sheep are multiplied upon Sharon and Carmel, but as the flocks in Jerusalem when they come together from every quarter on solemn feast days, by hundreds and by thousands! You shall ask, “Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?” The Lord will multiply the people beyond all count! There is this additional beauty about the promise, that the sheep which were brought to Jerusalem on the solemn feasts were not only numerous, but they were the best sheep in the land because no animal could be offered to God which had any blemish. The priests were peculiarly careful to select the lambs for the Passover and the sheep for the sacrifice. And they were always the pick of the flock, the choice sheep of all the flocks of Palestine. What a mercy when the Lord multiplies the church with a holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem on her solemn feast days! Then, not only were they the choice of the flock, but they were all consecrated to God, for they were brought to Jerusalem, on purpose, to be sacrificed. O happy church which receives a host of self-sacrificing members who do not come to the church in name, only, but to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God—to place body, soul and spirit at the feet of Jesus, and say, “Yours are we, Son of David, and all that we have.”

See, then, what can be had by inquiring for it! “For *this* will I be inquired of.” And what is the, “this,” which is spoken of? Why that God will give us a numerous people, a choice people, His own elect and they shall all be consecrated unto Himself! They shall give themselves, first, to the Lord, and afterwards to us by the Word of God. This is to be had by praying for it! Ah, my Lord, how foolish are we not to pray more! Your church has her societies, her agencies and so on, and she has, perhaps, looked to these more than to You. But You are our battle-ax and weapons of war! You can multiply the people and increase the joy! You can fill the quiver of the church with spiritual children and thus make her blessed! To You, only, can we look for this favor! My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him. The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is His name! His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory. Therefore, O house of Israel, inquire at the hands of the Lord and a boundless blessing shall come!

I don't think I need to say that it is necessary for us to pray, because *the results of prayer, as I have already described them, are such as greatly glorify God*. Kindly read the last sentence of the text. It is important—“And they shall know that I am the Lord.” When a church is largely increased with choice persons thoroughly consecrated, then the church knows, anew, that there is a God in Israel! The world, also, opens its eyes with wonder and admits that there is something in prayer, after all! When the kingdom of God is largely increased in answer to prayer, there is a wonderful power abroad to answer the arguments of skeptics and to silence the ribaldry of ungodly tongues. “This is the finger of God,” they say. How bitterly they ridiculed Whitefield and Wesley when they first begun to preach the blessed gospel! They were fanatics and enthusiasts,

disturbing the peace of the land! They were Jesuits, Jacobites and I do not know what they were *not*—but everything conceivable that is bad! But when the Lord put power into these men, and multiplied their adherents by tens of thousands, then presently the world changed its tune and dreaded and feared those whom they had formerly despised. So it is now! If we do not pray, if we grow cold in heart and the blessing is withdrawn, then the worldly wise begin to say, “It is an old, effete doctrine, proclaimed by the last of the Puritans—it is dying out.” But as soon as ever they see God blessing us, the multitudes coming together and the church growing to be a power in the land, they like it none the better, but they are obliged to respect it! Oh, that the Lord would stir you up as a church to pray and do the same with all the churches of the land! This would smite His enemies upon the cheekbone and silence His adversaries! This would baffle the scorner, infidel, the harlot, ritualism, and make both skepticism and superstition acknowledge that in the grand old gospel of Jesus there still resides the omnipotence of the Lord God.

**II.** Secondly, let us answer the question—HOW SHOULD THIS DUTY BE PERFORMED? First, it should be *by the entire body of the church*. Let us turn to our Bibles and read the text again—“For this will I be inquired of by”—By the ministers? By the elders? By the little number of good people who always come together to pray? Look! Look carefully! “*By the house of Israel.*” That is by the *whole company* of the Lord’s people! To obtain a great increase there must be *unanimous* prayer—prayer from the whole house of Israel! Everyone must join without exception. Where two or three are met together there will be an answer of peace. The prayer of one prevails. But if ever the house of Israel, the whole company of the faithful, shall get together in prayer, ah, then we shall see the multiplication of saints as the flock of Jerusalem on her solemn feasts! But it will not be till then. When Israel was defeated at Ai, one of the reasons of their failure was that there was an abominable thing in the tent of Achan. But another cause of defeat was this that they said, “Let not all the people labor there.” A part of the people were to go and take Ai, and the rest were to lie at ease. The church of God will always have ill times so long as a few people are left to do what should be done by all the redeemed. The whole house of Israel must besiege Ai, if Ai is to be taken! The whole army of the living God must bend the knees together and plead with God if any great victory is to be achieved.

Next, the successful way to inquire of the Lord is for the church to *take personal interest in the matter*. “Thus said the Lord God; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it *for them.*” When the people feel that the conversion of souls is their own personal affair. When the Sunday school teachers feel that the multiplication of the church should be something done by them. And when each Christian laborer feels that he has a personal interest in the saving of souls, then will the Lord’s work be done on a great scale! Brothers and sisters, when the case of poor sinners becomes *our* case and our heart cries, “I will break unless those souls are saved,” then we are sure to succeed! If the sinner will not

repent, let us break *our* hearts about him. Let us go and tell the Lord his sins and mourn over them as if they were our own! If men will not believe, let us, by faith, bring them before God and plead His promise for *them*. If we cannot get them to pray, let us pray *for* them, and intercede on their behalf—and in answer to *our* repentance they shall be made to repent! In answer to *our* faith they shall be led to believe! And in reply to *our* prayers they shall be moved to pray! The Lord says He will do it, but He will have us seek it as a *personal* favor, that thus our souls may be made earnest in His cause.

The blessing will come, in the third place, to *the prayer of a dependent church*. See how it is put—"I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." That is to say, they will not dream of being able to do it for themselves, but will apply to God for it. Christian men should never speak of getting up a revival. Where are you going to get it up from? I do not know any place from which you can get it up except a place which it is better to have no connection with. We must bring a revival *down* if it is to be worth having! We must inquire of the Lord to do it for us. Too often the temptation is to inquire for an eminent revivalist, or ask whether a great preacher could not be induced to come. Now, I do not object to inviting soul-winning preachers, or to any other plans of usefulness. But our main business is to inquire of the Lord, for, after all, He, alone, can give the increase! Suppose we collect a crowd of people, what of that? It is a fine thing to put in the papers, but what is the good of it, if it ends there? Suppose we have large services and fierce excitement—and the whole thing ends in a pack of moonshine—where is the glory to God? On the contrary, His name is dishonored and His church is discouraged from making special attempts. But when the holy work *begins in prayer, continues in prayer and everything* is confessedly dependent upon the *power of God*, then the blessing is, indeed, worth having! Inquire of the Lord to multiply you and you will be multiplied! We must wait upon God, conscious that we can do nothing of ourselves—and we must look to the Holy Spirit as the only power for the conversion of souls. If we pray in this dependent way we shall obtain an overflowing answer.

Again, the way to obtain the promised blessing is that the prayer must be offered *by an anxious, observant, enterprising church*. The expression used, "I will be inquired of," implies that the people must think and ask questions, must argue and plead with God. It is well to ask Him why He has not given the blessing and to urge strong reasons why He should now do so. We should quote His promises to Him, tell Him of our great need—and then come back, again, to asking, inquiring and pleading our cause. Such a pleading church will win a blessing beyond all doubt! It must be a church which remembers the waste places. The text puts it in the promise and it must not be forgotten in the prayer—"The waste cities shall be filled with flocks of men." A church which anxiously remembers the departments of service which are not succeeding; a church which casts a friendly eye over other churches which may be failing, and takes careful notice of those places where the Spirit of God does not seem to be

at work—and mentions all those in prayer—is the church to which the promise is made! I pray the Lord to give you, dear brothers and sisters, heartbreak over sinners whose hearts do not break. I pray He will give you painful anxiety for those who are not anxious. In fact, may God make all the members of this church into anxious inquirers. When the saved ones are anxious inquirers, themselves, there will be plenty of anxious inquirers brought from the world! The way to have inquiring sinners is for us to become inquiring saints! When the saints inquire of the Lord, the sinners will ask their way to Zion with their faces turned there! Every prayer meeting ought, as a matter of fact, to be an inquirers' meeting, where true hearts behold the beauty of the Lord and inquire in His temple.

If we are to obtain the blessing in answer to prayer, *that prayer must be offered by a believing church*. Oh that we did believe God's promise! The Lord says, "I will be inquired of, to do it for them." But unbelieving inquiries are only a mockery of God! How few really believe in prayer! I was reading, the other day, that the Chinese converts of the Inland Mission have shown a feature of piety which is not very common. When they learned that God would hear prayer, they wanted to be always praying, because, they said, "If it is so, that the great God hears prayer, let us ask for a great deal." We do not wonder, therefore, that they have received answers so remarkable to their believing prayers that the missionary scarcely cares to narrate them, lest to unbelievers they should seem to be as idle tales! Indeed, his fears are not at all unreasonable, for in other cases the written lives of praying men have been wretchedly mistrusted. Huntingdon's "Bank of Faith" has been called a bank of nonsense, yet I believe him to have been a thoroughly honest recorder of facts and quite incapable of a lie. When they read the story of Sammy Hick and his turning the wind by prayer, most persons are dubious, but why? Bread was needed for a religious meeting, and no flour could be found, for the mill could not go without wind. Hick took his bag of corn to the miller and bade him grind it. "But there is no wind, Sammy," said the miller. "Never mind, there will be if you only put the corn into the hopper." It was put in, the wind ground the wheat and then it ceased. "Ah," people say, "that is a Methodist story." Yes, it is, and there are many others of the same kind! And some of us have had them happen to ourselves. Answers to prayer do not, now, appear to us to be contrary to the laws of nature—it seems to us to be the greatest of all the laws of nature that the Lord must keep His promises and hear His people's prayers! Gravitation and other laws may be suspended, but this cannot be! "Oh," says one, "I cannot believe that." No, and so your prayers are not heard! You must have faith, for if faith is absent, you lack the very backbone and soul of prayer. Oh, for mighty faith! If we once behold a church filled with real active faith, exercised in believing prayer to the living God, the God of Israel, we shall see the churches multiplied with men as with a flock!

**III.** We are now to seek comfort for you who do not come to Prayer Meetings, or otherwise wrestle in prayer. ON WHAT GROUND CAN ANY-

BODY BE EXCUSED FROM THE DUTY OF PRAYER? Answer—on no ground whatever! You cannot be excused on the ground of *common humanity* for if it is so that God will save sinners in answer to prayer, and I do not pray, what am I? Souls dying, perishing, sinking to hell while the ordained machinery for salvation is prayer and the preaching of the Word—and if I don't pray, what am I? Surely the milk of human kindness has been drained from my breast and I have ceased to be human! And if so, it is idle to talk of communion with the divine. He who has no pity on a wounded man, and would not seek to relieve the hunger of one expiring of need is a monster! He who has no pity on souls who are sinking into everlasting fire, what is he? Let him answer for himself.

Next, can any excuse be found in *Christianity* for neglect of prayer? I answer, there is none to be found in Christianity anymore than in humanity, for if Christ has saved us, He has given us His Spirit—"If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." And who has the Spirit of Christ? Is it he who looked upon Jerusalem, and said, "I believe that the city is given up, predestinated to be destroyed," and then coolly went on his way? No, not he! He believed in predestination, but that truth of God never chilled his heart. He wept over Jerusalem, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not."—

***"Did Christ over sinners weep,  
And shall our cheeks be dry?"***

Shall there be no prayer in our hearts when God has appointed prayer to be the channel of blessing to sinners as well as to ourselves? Then how can we say that we are Christians? In God's name, how can we make a profession of Christianity if our hearts do not ascend in mighty prayer to God for a blessing on the sons of men?

But perhaps an excuse is found in the fact that the Christian does not feel that his prayer is of very much consequence, for his *heart is in a barren state*. Ah, well, this is no excuse, but an aggravation of the sin! My dear brothers and sisters, if you feel you cannot pray, you ought to pray twice as much as anybody else! Whenever your mind falls into a condition in which it is indisposed for prayer, that condition should serve as a danger signal—something is very much amiss! At such a time there should be a double calling upon God that the Spirit of prayer may be vouchsafed.

I do charge you, professing Christians, not to restrain prayer to God for a blessing, for, if you do, you hurt all the rest of the brethren! Get a bit of dead bone into your body and it harms, first, the member in which it is placed and subsequently the whole body. From head to foot the whole system is worse off because of the fragment of dead matter which is present in the body. So if there is a prayerless professor among us, he is an injury to the entire company! Some of you are the baggage of the army and hinder its marches and its fighting! We have a great army here and if you were all able-bodied men and would march on to the fight, we

would see great victories! But we have to carry our diseased ones in ambulances and half the time of the pastor and church officers has to be taken up in looking after the inefficient soldiers who are fit only for the hospital “Who do you mean?” asks one. You, my friend—very likely you! Your own conscience shall decide to whom it refers!

Now, surely we ought to be much in prayer, because, after all, we owe a great deal to prayer. Those who were in Christ before me, prayed for me; should I not pray for others? By a mother’s prayers, some of you, when you were girls, were brought to Christ. Will you not pay back the debt to your mother by praying for your own children? By a father’s prayers, young man, you were brought to the Savior’s feet—now pray for those who are younger than yourself—that they may be brought to Jesus, too. The treasury of the church’s prayers has been expended upon us in bringing us to Christ’s feet. Let us now contribute to the common stock, casting in our prayers for the conversion of others! Common gratitude demands that we attend to this.

I am afraid I shall also have to plead that I must suspect your soundness in the faith, brothers and sisters, if you do not join in prayer. I know some, who, if they are anything at all, they are sound in the faith. This is their beginning and their ending. I used to know, years ago, a few people who were sound all over and never cared whether souls were saved or not because they were so sound! That kind of soundness is empty, from which may the Lord deliver us! Correct opinions are a poor apology for heartlessness towards our fellow men. If we are orthodox, we believe that regeneration is the work of the Spirit of God. Then, dear friends, the natural inference is that those of us who are regenerated should pray the Holy Spirit to regenerate others! If it is entirely His work and we cannot depend upon the preacher at all, we must invoke the divine power! If you do not thus call in divine energy, where is your soundness? I am sure that you desire to see souls saved, but if it is the Spirit’s work, and you do not pray the Spirit to do that work, surely you do not believe your own doctrine! By your soundness in the faith, therefore, I would plead with you that you increase your earnestness in prayer.

You may say, “Well, I think I may be excused,” but I must reply you cannot! “*I am very sick,*” says one. Ah, then you can lie in bed and pray! None of us can fully estimate the blessings which have come down on this Tabernacle in answer to the pleas of our friends who are constant invalids. I believe the Lord sets apart a certain section of the church to keep up prayer through the night watches—and when you and I who are healthy are sound asleep, the watchers do not slumber, or keep silent—but either in praise or prayer they make the hours holy with their devout exercises. I consider that I sustain great losses when dear Christian men and women, who have for years sustained me by their prayers are taken home to glory. Who will fill the gaps?

“*I am so poor,*” says one. Well, you are not called upon to pay a shilling every time you pray to God! It does not matter how poor you are—your prayers are just as acceptable! Only remember, if you are so poor, you

ought to pray all the more, because you cannot give your offering in the shape of gold. I should like you to say with the apostle, “Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, I give you. My Master, I will be much in prayer.” “Ah,” says another, “but *I have no talent.*” That is another reason why you should pray *more* and not why you should be prayerless, because if you cannot contribute to the church’s public service from lack of talent, you should the more zealously contribute to her strength by the private exercise of prayer and intercession—and thus make those strong who are better fit to go to the front.

“Ah,” says one, “but *I am just converted.* I have hardly obtained peace, myself; how can I pray?” If you need an answer to *that* question, read the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm. David begins, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to the multitude of Your tender mercies,” and so on. And he does not continue long before he cries, “Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem!” He has hardly been washed, himself, from sin, before he begins to pray to be useful—“Then will I teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted unto You.” You new converts are the very people to pray with power!

So from my inmost soul, as if I were pleading for my life (and it lies nearer my health and continued life than some may imagine) I beg you to inquire of the Lord! In thus doing I am pleading for this church’s long prosperity! I am pleading for the good of London! I am pleading for the benefit of the whole world! If you love the Lord Jesus, brothers and sisters, do inquire at the hands of the Lord concerning this great promise of an increase in the church! Prove Him, now, and see if He does not pour out a blessing for you, yes, if He does not increase you with men as with a flock, as the Holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem on her solemn feast days! God grant His blessing for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
EZEKIEL 36:1-14; 24-38.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—145, 985, 968.**

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# THE SECRET OF A HAPPY LIFE

## NO. 1305

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 16, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"I have set the Lord always before Me: because He is at My  
right hand, I shall not be moved."  
Psalm 16:8.***

IN the preceding verses we read, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage." The speaker, therefore, is a very contented and happy man. It is not the most usual thing in the world to find persons extolling their lot and manifesting a conspicuous emphasis of satisfaction. Far more common is it to hear men surrounded with favors lamenting the hardness of their case! Contented minds are almost as scarce as snowflakes in harvest. The man who rejoices in his goodly heritage deserves attention and we shall do well to learn his secret. How is it that he is able to feel so happy? Let us seek out the way by which he arrived at this peace and discover the silken clue which led him into such a bower of delight. Perhaps his road may fit our feet, and by following it, we may become as perfectly content as he was. O Lord and giver of peace, help us in the search!

But, first, who is this person who is thus singularly content? To our astonishment we find that the Spirit speaks here by prophecy in the name and person of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is He, who, by the Spirit, here said, "The lines have fallen unto Me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage!" He was the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He was "despised and rejected of men." He had not where to lay His head. He was often subject to hunger and thirst. He had few friends and those proved faithless in the time of His extremity. So how could He speak thus? All this is so much the more encouraging for us, because if this most sorrowful of men, was, nevertheless, able to feel an inward calm, a sweet contentment, then it must be possible for us to do so whose lot is not so bitter! We are not sent to make atonement for sin, and therefore, our sorrows are few compared with our Lord's. There was a special reason for His being distressed, for He took our griefs and carried our sorrows. But no atoning griefs are demanded of *us*, nor have we afflictions to bear from the hand of God as punishments for sin, for the Lord has laid all these upon Him and we are clear. If the Lord Jesus, the man of grief, a mourner all His days, yet said the lines had fallen unto Him in pleasant places and He had a goodly heritage, it must be the more possible for us to rise to the same contentment if we follow His rules and live according to His example. What, then, is the secret of perfect peace and happiness here below? The price is above rubies—where shall this be learned? The magic lamps and wonderful rings of which children read in fairy stories are as nothing in value compared with this

true philosopher's stone, this mystic secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him—by which His saints are enabled to enjoy the peace of God which passes all understanding—which keeps their hearts and minds by Jesus Christ. O Prince of Peace, grant us this rest!

Our text clearly imparts to us the secret of the greatest happiness to be found below the skies, and indeed it reveals the hidden source of those pleasures above which are at God's right hand forevermore. The first part of the excellent method lies in *always living in the Lord's presence*—"I have set the Lord always before Me." The second is found in *always trusting in the Lord's presence*—"Because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved."

**I.** The secret, then, of peace, is, first, ALWAYS LIVING IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE—"I have set the Lord always before Me." We shall try, in order to understand what this means, to keep our eyes upon the life of Jesus, and at the same time, apply the text to the saints. Though this passage is pre-eminently fulfilled in Jesus, yet since the members partake of the nature of the head, each one, in his own degree, who does that which Jesus did, and thereby obtains a Holy joy and rest, may enter into the joy of our Lord. Does not our Lord Jesus bid us take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, that we may find rest unto our souls?

I take it that our text means first, that *we should make the Lord's presence the greatest of all facts to us*. Of all things that are, God chiefly IS, and we should regard Him in that light. It was so with our Lord Jesus Christ. He, as a man, was cognizant of the existence of all the things that are seen, but even more did He recognize the existence of God, who cannot be seen—that great Spirit who is alike invisible and incomprehensible. How vividly the presence of God must have been realized by Christ at all times, for He was *in the Father and the Father in Him!* You and I have never seen and understood the Father in the same degree as He did, though the Son has revealed Him to us. He entered into a fuller and more constant recognition of God's presence in all places and things, than we, as yet, have done. Yet truly we have seen the Father, for we have seen Jesus by *faith*. We have mounted up on wings as eagles and with the eagle's eyes have looked the sun in the face and have not been blinded! Is it not written, "The pure in heart shall see God"? We have been taught to see God around us in all things that exist and in all events that happen. And we bless the Lord that we live not as those who are "without God in the world," that we are taught by the Spirit to recognize our Father's loving, all-pervading presence! Yet I know we do not discern it so constantly, clearly and impressively as our Lord Jesus did. He looked upon the mountains and the sunlight on their brows was the smile of His Father. He saw the plains and their harvests were His Father's bounty. To Him the waves of the sea were tossed in tempest by His Father's breath, or calmed by His Father's whisper. He fed the multitude, but it was with His Father's bread. He healed the sick, but His Father did the works. In all things about Him, He continually and distinctly recognized the active presence of the Most High. Other men remarked that the ravens were fed, but He said, "Your heavenly Father feeds them." Other

men noticed that the lilies were fair to look upon, but He discerned that, "God so clothes the grass of the field." The heavenly Father was in every place and in every thing to Jesus.

Now, I pray our Lord to grant that by the blessed Spirit we may always be sensitive of the presence of God wherever we are. Is it not a sad proof of the alienation of our nature that though God is everywhere, we have to school ourselves to perceive Him anywhere? His are the beauties of nature; His the sunshine which is bringing on the harvest; His the waving grain which cheers the farmer; His the perfume which loads the air from multitudes of flowers; His the insects which glitter around us like living gems! And yet the Creator and Sustainer of all these is far too little perceived! Everything in the temple of nature speaks of His glory, but our ears are dull of hearing. Everything, from the dewdrop to the ocean, reflects the Deity, and yet we largely fail to see the eternal brightness. I beseech you, my brothers and sisters, to pray that you may have this text worked into your very souls—"I have set the Lord always before Me." Refuse to see anything without seeing God in it. Regard the creatures as the mirror of the great Creator. Do not imagine that you have understood His works till you have felt the presence of the great worker, Himself. Do not reckon that you know anything till you know that of God which lies within it, for that is the kernel which it contains. Wake in the morning and recognize God in your chamber, for His goodness has drawn back the curtain of the night and taken from your eyelids the seal of sleep. Put on your garments and perceive the divine care which provides you with raiment from the herbs of the field and the sheep of the fold. Go to the breakfast room and bless the God whose bounty has, again, provided for you a table in the wilderness. Go out to business and feel God with you in all the engagements of the day. Always remember that you are dwelling in His house when you are toiling for your bread or engaged in merchandise. At length, after a well-spent day, go back to your family and see the Lord in each one of the members of it! Acknowledge His goodness in preserving life and health. Look for His presence at the family altar, making the house to be a palace wherein king's children dwell. At last, fall asleep at night as in the embraces of your God or on your Savior's breast. This is happy living! The worldling forgets God, the sinner dishonors Him, the atheist denies Him, but the Christian lives in Him! "In Him we live and move and have our being; we are also His offspring." Visible things we look upon as shadows. The things which we touch and taste and handle, perish in the using. The elements of this solid earth shall dissolve with fervent heat, but the ever-present God, whom we cannot see, is the same, and of His years there is no end, and His existence is the only real and true and eternal one to us. He has been our dwelling place in all generations and it were evil, indeed, not to know our own eternal home. This is a main ingredient in the oil of joy—to always realize that the Lord is round about us "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, from now on even for evermore."

Secondly, the words of the text signify *the making of God's glory the one object of our lives*. As a prize is set before the runners in a race, so

the believer's heart sets God's glory before it as the prize for which the race of life is run. It was even so with our dear Redeemer—from the first to the last He set the Lord always before Him as the object of His life on earth. Do you ever find in Him a selfish motive? Is He ever moved by any groveling ambition? Is He not always seeking the good of men, and by that means, the glory of God? While yet a youth He goes up to the temple, not to display His precocity, nor, like other children, to gratify Himself with the admiration heaped upon Him for His early wisdom, but He says, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" In later days, when He has been anointed to His work, He sits by a well and takes His rest. A woman comes and converses with Him, but He speaks upon no idle theme—He talks to her of the living water, seeks her soul to save it and then tells His disciples that He has meat to eat that they know not of—for it was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him.

He presses forward with changeless intensity of purpose towards the completion of the work which the Father had committed to Him. You see Him present at a wedding, or meeting a funeral procession, but He is found, in both cases, aiming at God's glory. If you find Him battling with the crowd, or in the chamber, shut in with two or three raising the dead. If you read of His prayers upon the lone mountainside, or listen to His groans in the garden of Gethsemane, still, evermore—this one thing He does—He glorifies His Father on the earth. Despising shame and trampling under foot the world's honor, He lives to God and to God, alone. Not sometimes and now and then, or as the general aggregate of His life is He found setting God before Himself, but *always* and without exception! In every thought, in every word, in every deed, God was before Him and He lived for God. Oh, that we could reach to this—whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we would do all to the glory of God! Oh, that we never dared to do what would dishonor the name of God! Oh, that we walked in all things so as to please Him who loved us and gave Himself for us! I am sure, dear brothers and sisters, if you have aimed at this, though you may have fallen far short of your desire, yet in such a path you have found peace unto your souls. This is the king's highway, the way of holiness where no lion shall be found! To know that God is present and to live, by His grace, wholly to please Him—this is the way of great pleasantness—take care that you keep therein! Never do anything which would dishonor the holy name with which you are called! Leave nothing undone, however hard to the flesh, which would serve the cause of God and so you shall be like your Lord and become partakers of His peace. This is the mode of life by which a man shall have foretastes of the feasts of heaven while yet in this wilderness world—may the Holy Spirit lead us into it!

A further meaning of setting the Lord always before us is *to live so that the presence of God shall be the rule and support of our obedience*. So Jesus did. You know right well that to many servants the master's eye is most important in order to make them careful and industrious. How many are eye-servers and men pleasers? Take away the master's eye and

how slowly the labor drags along—how often is it slurred over in a slovenly manner—or left undone altogether? The old proverb declares that the master's eyes do more than both his hands and it is too sadly true! Yet it is not wrong to say that our Master's eyes ought to have a great influence over the servants of God. "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God." beloved, how would you live if God were seen looking on? He *is* looking on! So live. Suppose that in some action of tomorrow you were specially warned—"The Lord will carefully observe you. The omniscient will fix all His thoughts upon you and detect your motives and scan your spirit, as well as weigh the deed, itself." If you had such a revelation, how would you act? So should you act at all times, for it is always true. "You, God, see me" is an exclamation for every moment of day and night! Can you put your finger upon any part of Christ's life and say, "He forgot that the Father beheld Him in this act"? Is not the whole of Christ's life such a picture that God Himself looked at every line and tint of it with infinite admiration? Have you not, yourself, traversed the gallery of the Savior's life, and pausing at each picture and scene, been filled with amazement and led to exclaim, "He has done all things well!"? When your mind has been most devout and most holy, have you not more than ever admired every little trait in your Savior's character, every separate feature of every action of His life, whether public or private? The Father was always with Him and He always did those things which pleased Him. Oh, beloved, would to God that your obedience were in like manner measured out under the profound consciousness that the great God is watching you in all that you do! He has beset you behind and before, and laid His hands upon you. If you take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, He is there! Even darkness hides not from Him. Everything that you have done has been enacted in the presence of your heavenly Father! Have you felt this? Ah, when you dishonored the Lord Jesus He was, Himself, looking on. He to whom belong those pierced hands heard your cowardly words and saw your traitorous acts. He gazed in wondering sorrow at you, His friend, betraying Him. When you mingled with the ungodly world and was as one of them, He, too, was there, and now He shows you His wounds and sorrowfully exclaims, "These are the wounds which I received in Your place, the place of My friend." The blows of friends smite in a tender place! Their wounds are the cruelest that can be received, for enemies pierce sharply, but friends stab with poisoned daggers! When we bring dishonor upon Him whom we profess to love, it is dishonor, indeed! Oh, how much would be left undone, and on the other hand, how much more of another kind would be diligently executed, if in very deed we set the Lord always before us!

Not yet, however, have we completely expounded our text. The words must also mean that we are to set the Lord before us *as the source from which we are to derive solace and comfort under every trial*. Jesus could say, "I have set the Lord always before Me," for this, it was, that made Him suffer poverty and never complain. This, it was, that made Him en-

counter shame and spitting and yet remain dumb with wondrous patience, like a sheep before her shearers. You never hear our Lord cry out until His Father's face is hidden from Him. Then, indeed, He cries, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" When, because of His standing as our surety, God Himself withdrew the manifestation of His favor, then His pangs were bitter and His grief was overflowing—but you and I will never have to bear the same. God forsook Him that He might never forsake us. You shall always find the Lord near in the day of trouble, and therefore, if ever you have a Gethsemane, and the bitter cup cannot be passed from you except you drink it, you shall set the Lord before you and in that cheering presence you shall be able to say, "Not as I will, but as You will," and patiently drink your appointed cup even to the dregs. Are you saying today, "How much I wish that I had more of the comforts of life, but my means are sadly scant and I am very sick and very heavy in spirit"? Your Savior was tempted in all points just as you are, but He set the Lord always before Him, and therefore, He was content and said, "The Lord is My portion, said My soul, therefore will I hope in Him. The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage." Let all else go, my brothers and sisters, for if God is with you, you will still be upheld. Let friends die, one after another, and let earthly comforts fade like autumn leaves, but if you set the Lord always before you—there is such a fullness of joy in every attribute of God, there is such a heaven in every glimpse of Jesus' face, there is such overwhelming bliss in every drop of Jehovah's everlasting love—you shall not fail nor be discouraged, but you shall sing His praises even in the fiercest fire! To you He will say, "Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, I am your God. When you pass through the rivers I will be with you, the floods shall not overflow you. When you go through the fires you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you." The presence of God makes even *death* delightful! "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me." Thus you see that setting the Lord always before us ensures us never ceasing consolation.

Yet, further, these words mean that *we are to hold perpetual communion with God*. When Jesus said, "I have set the Lord always before Me," He meant that He was always in fellowship with the Father. Very frequently the fellowship was exercised in prayer, for our Lord, though He is described as praying very much, no doubt prayed infinitely more than any evangelist has recorded, for He was praying when no one knew it but Himself and His God, when even His lips did not move. His public prayer, or the prayer which could be observed by others, was made manifest for our sakes and their sakes who stood with Him, but it was only a cropping up upon the surface of the great rock of prayer which laid the foundation of His holy living. Right well did He say, when at the grave of Lazarus, "And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people which stand by, I said it." He was always talking with the Father, who was, indeed, the only one upon whom He could cast Himself. What consolation could He gather from Peter and James and John? He was like a father with a number of little children around Him who could not so

much as understand their father's troubles, much less support Him under them! As our Lord was always in sacred fellowship with God, He had great sorrow from beholding the sin of mankind, knowing, as He did, how grievous it was to God! He would mourn before His Father, the people's sin, but continue, still, to intercede, praying all His life as He prayed at last, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Thus was He at all times in deepest sympathy with the God of love.

I doubt not that our Lord often spoke with the Father in the form of praise, for while, on one occasion, it is only recorded that He rejoiced, yet doubtless He rejoiced evermore in God. How could His pure nature do otherwise than joy in the Lord? His whole heart and soul and mind ran in one line with the mind of God! I am, of course, now speaking of Him as man and as man His heart was in perfect harmony with the heart of God—there was nothing in Him contrary to the will and design of the Father—His whole human nature was carried along in a parallel course with the mind of the Most High, and therefore, that is why He was always at peace.

Oh, brothers and sisters, may God grant us grace to commune constantly with Himself! Prayer should not be a matter of mornings and evenings, alone, but all day our spirit should commune with God! Father, You are so near us and yet how slow we are to speak to You! Teach us, Your children, to be always talking with You so that while we walk on earth our conversation may be in heaven! The Lord grant us to hold holy commerce with heaven, hearing what God, the Lord, will speak, and speaking to Him in return. Be it ours to hear the words of the inspired book, and to regard the advice of the gracious Spirit! And then may our spirit, in its turn, speak with God and make known its requests unto Him. I hope you will be reaching out towards this by the divine anointing of the Holy Spirit. For this is the grand secret, the sure foundation of a happy life. Perpetual communion with God is the highest state of joy which can be known on earth! Learn to say truthfully, "I have set the Lord always before me," and you have the Lord's secret!

Once again upon this point, dear friends: if we are to be happy, *we must follow this life of nearness to God because of our delight in it and from the joy which we feel in it.* Indeed, such a life cannot be lived in any other manner. Mere duty and law cannot operate here. If any man shall say, "What a dreary affair this communion with God must be! How dull must be this walking continually with God!" then I reply, your speech betrays you—you have not the first essentials of such a life—neither can you so much as *guess* what it means. Indeed, I am not talking to you at all, it would be useless to press such a theme upon you! Excuse me, you know nothing of the spiritual life, nothing of what it is to be a child of God, or else communion would not be despised by you! You must be born-again, and till you *are* born-again, such exhortations as these which I am now giving will not apply to you at all. Does some mere professor sneeringly inquire, "What? Are we always to live to God's glory and are we to do nothing but what would glorify Him? This is laying down very straight rules and making the road to heaven very narrow, indeed."

Do you think so, friend? Then I will tell you plainly my solemn suspicion about you—I am persuaded that you do not know the Lord, for if you did, the way of holiness would be your *delight* and you would not ask for license to sin. I can understand your sinning, but I cannot understand your finding pleasure in it if you are a real Christian! The pleasures of the world are, to a true believer, as the husks which the swine eat. And if you find them to be good bread for your soul, then assuredly you are none of His! The hogs may be satisfied with hogs' food, for providence meant it for them, but the child of God, even when he is a prodigal, cannot be satisfied so! He would gladly fill his belly with the husks, but it is impossible that he should thus be satisfied. I am sure if you are the Lord's, you will look upon living near to God and delighting in Him, not as being a severe task, or a weariness, but as a *luxury* and a delightful *privilege* after which your soul hungers and thirsts. You will say with David, "My soul pants for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" To you the choicest place is that which is nearest to your Lord, though it may be in the dust of contempt, or in the furnace of affliction. It is your ambition to be subdued by the Lord Jesus unto Himself, most completely, and then to be, from now on, the place of His abode, the instrument for His use, and best of all, the object of His love! I would dwell in the house of the Lord forever, as a child at home, considering the present world to be a lower room of that house and heaven above as the upper story of the same abode. The presence of God is our bliss!

Now, is there anything about our Lord's life which looks like being under restraint, or being compelled to act otherwise than He would have wished? Can you suspect in His whole career that He was, at any time, acting against His inclination? Was His life constrained and unnatural? Did He walk like a man in irons? Did He live as one pressed into the army of the righteous, denied pleasures which would have been His choice and forced to forms of piety which were distasteful to Him? Not at all! Christ is a free man, living out His inmost, following His heart's best desires. You can see that wherever He is, He acts according to His nature and is as free in what He does as the fish are free in the sea, or the birds in the air! Now, such is the Christian in this matter of setting the Lord always before him. He acts not of constraint but willingly, for the Lord has given him a nature which delights in that which God delights in. He does not say, "Woe is me, I am caged like a bird! My life is so precise and Puritanical that I am weary of it." No, he says, "If I had these worldly joys, and might indulge in them, there is nothing in them to please me. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Others are saying, 'Who will show us any good?' But my one petition is, 'Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon me.'" He says, "Let others do as they will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The Christian is never so free as when he is most under law to Christ! He is never so much himself as when he denies himself, and never so delighted as when he delights himself in the Lord and lives only for the glory of God! Now, if such is the case with you, dear brothers and sisters, you have learned the secret of joy.

The text may be read in the Hebrew, "I have set the Lord *equally* before Me," that is equally *at all times*. He speaks of the solitary night watches and then His reins instructed Him, for He was with God. In the morning He exclaims, "When I awake I am still with You." We are to have the Lord equally before us under all circumstances—in our business pursuits as well as in prayer meetings and hearings of sermons—in seasons of recreation as well as in hours of devotion—in the day of health as well as in the hour of death. If you break the chain of communion by going where you cannot expect to have the Lord's presence, or doing what the Lord cannot sanction, the broken link can be restored, but it will always show the rivets. You may lose your roll like Christian in the arbor and you may go back and find it, again, but it is very hard going back over the same ground. And after going back, it is difficult to take to the onward path again. The hardest part of the road to heaven is that which has to be traversed three times—once when you go over it at first, a second time when you have to return with weeping to find your lost evidences—and then again when you have to make up for lost time. Backsliding causes unhappiness, but abiding with God creates peace like a river, flowing on and on in one long-continued stream. Dear friends, here is the method of a blissful life! Try it, and the result is certain!

**II.** I will speak very briefly upon the second head. The second part of the secret follows upon the first—that is TRUSTING ALWAYS IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE. Here is confidence in God—"Because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved." Here is confidence that God is near us; confidence that God loves us, for He is not only near us, but in the place of friendly fellowship. And here is confidence that God will practically help us, for the right hand is the dexterous hand, the hand which does the work, and thus God is near unto His people with practical assistance to sustain and to deliver them. How blessed it must be to feel that we have nothing to be afraid of in all the world, for God stands at our right hand to take care of us whatever may happen.

David says, and Christ says through David, "I shall not be moved," that is, first, I shall *not be moved with any regret or remorse as to the past*. Ah, brothers and sisters if we have set the Lord always before us, we can sit down and meditate upon our course of action and it will bear reflection! The man who knows that he has lived as in the sight of God will not have to wish that he had never been born. On the contrary, he will bless the Lord at all times for all that happens to him. Christ had many sorrows, but no regrets. What a life was His! He never had to look back upon a single act and repent of it. All was done with the Lord before Him and He was not moved. A lady once told a minister that she was attending the theater, and she remarked, "There are so many pleasures connected with seeing a play. There is the pleasure of anticipation before you go. There is the pleasure of enjoying it when you are there. And there is the third pleasure of reflecting upon it afterwards." The good man replied, "Ah, madam, there is another pleasure which you have not mentioned and that is the comfort it will afford you upon a dying bed." The irony was well deserved. I may mention this as being the greatest rec-

commendation of setting the Lord always before you—that it will bear reflection and yield comfort amid sickness and death! If, by divine grace, you are able to live a life of unbroken communion with God, constantly having an eye to His presence, you will not have to mourn over a mis-spent life. Your retrospect will be full of pleasure; as for sin, that is already covered by the blood of Christ, and besides that, you will have been kept from a thousand snares by having the fear of God always before your eyes. And so, in reviewing the past, you shall not be moved with bitter remorse. Many things which we now do, we may have to lament in the future, though now we think we are acting very wisely and well. But if the Lord is always before us, our steps will be established because they are ordered by the Lord. Even if you make a mistake as to policy, you will be comforted by the knowledge that it was a fault of your judgment and not of your heart, if, indeed, you desired to serve the Lord.

Beloved, it is well for us to live near God that we may not *be moved from our consistency in the way of true religion*. There are many professors whose lives are jerky—they are walking with God, after a fashion, today, but soon they wander into crooked paths. Then they begin again, but before long they start aside as a deceitful bow. Like Reuben, they are unstable as water and do not excel. In our Lord's life there is no break, it is one continuous harmony. The unities are observed in His grand career, it is like His garment—without seam and woven from the top throughout. Now, brothers and sisters, if you set the Lord always before you, you will not be moved, but your path will be like that of the sun in the heavens, rising from dawn till noon!

Setting the Lord before us prevents our being *moved with terror*. It is said of the believer, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." The believer is not moved with staggering fear. A great trouble is coming upon him, but he has set the Lord before him, and he is not cast down. If like Jesus, Himself, he is for the moment swayed with exceedingly great sorrow, yet does he say, "What time I am afraid I will trust in You," and when he prays he is heard in that he feared.

Such a man or woman is not *moved by temptation so as to be swept into surprising sin*. If I set the Lord always before me, I shall not be carried away by a sudden temptation. It is when you are off your guard that sin comes and you fall. You speak unadvisedly, you get into a hot temper, and you make sad havoc of your Christian life—and all because your eyes were off your Lord. If you could but have known that the trial was coming, you would have been protected against it. And if you had set the Lord always before you, you would have been prepared for the world, the flesh and the devil—and shielded from every fiery dart of the evil one. Let us dwell in God and He will be a wall of fire round about us. He will keep us every moment, lest any hurt us. He will keep us night and day.

Thus you will not be *moved so as to fall into failure at the last*. You must all have felt the dread lest, after all, at the end of life it should turn out that you are not saved. Have you not feared that you have deceived yourselves and were not converted when you thought you were? What if

it should turn out to be so? What will you do when the bubble of false hope shall burst? Ah, but if you set the Lord always before you, you shall not be moved by that fear, for you will know that your Redeemer lives! You will have such a consciousness of the divine presence that you will commit your departing spirit unto God as to a faithful Creator! You will not be afraid to die, for as Jesus said, "My flesh, also, shall rest in hope. For You will not leave My soul in hell; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption." So will *you* say, "My flesh, also, shall rest in hope, for You will not leave my soul in hell, and though I see corruption as to my body, yet shall I be raised in incorruption in the likeness of my Lord, for I know that my next of kin lives and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall behold for myself, and not another." Oh, the joy of thus abiding in God and trusting in His present power—having the Lord at your right hand—and then abiding in calm assurance that you cannot be moved!

Just four things and I have done. First, to any of you who are unhappy. Some of you are not Christian people, but altogether of the world. You are not happy and yet I dare say you have a great many things to make you so. You are placed in easy circumstances where you can enjoy *yourselves* as much as you like. The sorriest thing in the world to enjoy is yourself! I can enjoy other people better than I can myself. To enjoy yourself needs a very depraved appetite, for selfishness is sordid, and like the serpent, has dust appointed to be its meat. If you think that you will find pleasure in worldliness, I should like you to remember one who tried that method very thoroughly. I mean Solomon of old, who had all the wealth a heart could wish and all the wisdom a brain could hold—and yet was both poor and foolish! He ransacked the world for joy, but found it not. At one time he gave all his thoughts to architecture and built splendid palaces. And after he had built them all, he said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." He took to his books and studied very hard, but after he had poured over them a long time, he said, "Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh." He tried singing men and singing women, and the peculiar delights of kings, but when he had enjoyed himself in this manner to the utmost possibilities of human nature, he said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." He planted gardens and laid out water courses and practiced engineering. He inclined, at one time, to the pleasures of a fool, and soon he was eager in the nobler pursuits of a wise man! Sometimes he was sober with science and at other seasons he was excited with laughter—he tried everything and found all earthly joy to be as deceitful as the apples of Sodom which are fair to look upon but turn to ashes in the hand. Nothing beneath the skies and nothing above the skies can make any man happy apart from God, search as you will! Apart from God you may make a hell, but you cannot make a heaven, do what you please! Oh, I beseech you, unhappy man, woman, if you have grown weary of the world and are sick of everything—if you are as the dry and yellow leaf though not 40 years of age—remember that there is a place where your leaf can be made green! If you will set the Lord always before you, you shall find peace in Him.

And, next, I may be addressing some who think themselves perfectly happy in the world. I confess I do not envy you, but still, I like to hear you sing your song and tell the tale of what bliss the world affords. Yet note on what frail pillars this fairy palace of yours is erected! You are healthy, that is at the bottom of it—your bodily frame is in good order and you are merry. But suppose you should fall sick? Or suppose those few gray hairs should, before long, be multiplied, where only lie your mirth? Or if your wealth should take to itself wings and fly away—what then? Or if you come before the Lord in judgement, what then? Oh, sir, let this frail foundation go! It is not meet to rest your eternal hopes upon! You are like a little child building his little sand house by the seaside! The tide is coming up, O child, leave your sand and flee from the waves! There is a rock on which you may build a house eternal with massive stones, a palace of happiness that never shall be dissolved! Go there!

Now, you Christian people, if any of you are unhappy, I wish I could preach you out of it by reminding you of this test, but, as I cannot, I leave you in the hands of the Holy Spirit. If you draw near to God, you will be as happy as the days are long in midsummer! Your doubts and fears will flee and you will be as merry as birds of the air! And you happy Christians, you of the bright eyes and the elastic footsteps, you can be happier, still, by coming yet nearer to God and abide in fuller communion with Him. And though you are already singing—

***“How happy is the pilgrim’s lot,”***

you shall be yet more blessed if you become more obedient, more submissive to the divine will, more in sympathy with Jesus, and more abidingly in communion with the Father. This is heaven below! God grant it to you for Christ’s sake. Amen.

## **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 16.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—16, 708.**

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# FAT THINGS, FULL OF MARROW

## NO. 1306

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 23, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you.”*  
Isaiah 54:7-10.

THIS precious passage is the property of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We might not have ventured to say this if it were not for the last verse of the chapter, which assures us that it is so. “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord.” The matchless promises and assurances of this chapter do not belong to the Jews, alone, nor only to the Gentile church, nor even exclusively to the whole church considered as a community—they are the property of all who are sons and servants of the living God. Isaiah speaks of both sonship and service. “This is the heritage,” or portion obtained by heirship, which implies sonship. The promise, then, is ours, if we have been born into the family of grace. But then, all God’s sons are also servants, even as the firstborn among many brethren became a servant of servants for our sakes. Judge yourselves, dear friends, as to whether you are sons of God by birth, and servants of God by choice, for if you are, then you may take these promises to yourselves. In the last clause it is written, “Their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord.” In this we can claim our part, for we have no righteousness of our own! But it has pleased the Lord to work righteousness *for* us, and righteousness *in* us, since we stood in great need of both of these. Neither could we, by any means, have procured them for ourselves. If the Lord Jesus had not been made unto us both our justification and our sanctification, we could have had no hope of seeing the face of God with acceptance. If we are sons by regeneration, and servants by the renewal of our nature, and if our righteousness, both imputed and imparted, is found in God, alone, then the text is ours most richly to enjoy! Stand not back from a table so richly spread, but eat and drink abundantly of its dainty provisions. If this is our heritage, the Lord says to us as He did to Abraham, “Lift up, now, your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which you see, to you will I give it.”

Before going further I would call your attention to the position of the wonderful chapter now before us. It may seem to be a commonplace remark, but its position is remarkable as following the 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Isaiah—that clearest of all prophecies concerning our Lord! The 53<sup>rd</sup> of Isaiah is the saying of the great minstrel prophet concerning the sufferings of the despised and rejected of men! And it is followed by this golden chapter. By the way of the atonement we come to enjoy covenant blessings. Fresh from the woes of Calvary we are able to bear our own griefs without repining—and with the great ransom in full view we are convinced of our security before the Lord. You will never have faith enough to comprehend the extent of the heritage prepared of the Lord for you, except as your eyes are strengthened by gazing upon Him whom it pleased the Father to bruise for us. When we have the fullest sense of the sufferings of Jesus and of the love which brought Him to bear the iniquities of His people, we are then in the most fit state to comprehend the wonders of covenant grace and to appreciate the priceless mercies which come to us by the way of His substitutionary sacrifice. Carrying in your hearts such words as these, “Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions and He was bruised for our iniquities,” let us draw near to the treasures which are spread before us. May the Holy Spirit assist us!

The people of God are often very severely afflicted. They are tried in providence and they are vexed by the wicked among whom they dwell. At times it seems as if their lot was far less desirable than that of the ungodly. The best of saints have been tempted to envy the worst of sinners when they have seen them in great power, spreading themselves as a green bay tree, while they, themselves, have been as withered plants. The saints are chastened and the sinners are enriched—this is no small test of faith! What is worse, at times the children of God are the subjects of great *spiritual* griefs and derive no comfort from their religion. They judge themselves to be deserted by their God and they inquire within themselves, “Is His mercy clean gone forever? Will He be favorable no more?” Then the joy of their heart ceases and their music is turned into mourning. At such times there is powerful comfort for the child of God in the fact that, whatever the Lord may do with him, He cannot be angry with him, nor rebuke him in the weightiest sense of those words. Since Jesus has made complete atonement on our behalf, there may be much that is bitter in our cup, but there cannot be in it even a single *drop* of judicial *punishment* for sin, because Christ has borne all that justice could indict! It would be inconsistent with the integrity of the Most High, first to execute vengeance upon the surety, and then to call His people to account for the sin which that surety has put away! There is not, therefore, in all the chastisements which God lays upon us so much as a single trace of punitive wrath—

***“Death and the curse were in our cup—  
O Christ, Christ, ‘twas full for You!  
But You have drained the last dark drop,  
‘Tis empty now for me:  
That bitter cup, love drank it up,***

***Now blessing's left for me."***

The punishment for sin has been executed once and for all upon Jesus Christ our Savior! And now, if ever there is wrath on God's part towards His people, it is of quite another kind from that with which He visits the unbelieving world. Towards the ungodly He is a *judge* and He summons them to judgment and executes His righteous sentences upon them. But we who are in Christ have virtually died in Him and upon us justice has executed its sentence in the person of our great substitute. Therefore the law cannot make any further demands upon us. We are, from now on, the children of God and have come under another discipline altogether—the discipline of a loving father towards his family. The Lord may be angry with us as a father is angry with his child, but never as a judge is angry with a criminal. In that respect His anger is forever turned away from the redeemed.

Our subject is to be God's little wrath and God's great wrath—the little wrath may light upon the Lord's beloved, for He says, "In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment." But there is a great wrath which burns as a consuming fire and this cannot fall upon the redeemed, for the Lord has sworn that He will not be angry with them nor rebuke them.

**I.** The first subject, then, is what the Lord calls His, "LITTLE WRATH." Let us speak of it and its modifications, and perhaps, the Holy Spirit will bless our meditation to the comfort of His afflicted.

Our first remark shall be that *our view of that wrath and God's view of it may very greatly differ*. To a child of God in a right state, even the most modified form of divine anger is very painful. A loving child dreads the smallest displeasure on his father's part. He may be right well assured that his parent will not kill him, or disown him, or deliver him over to the magistrate to be put in prison, but it is sorrow enough for him that his father's heart is grieved. The terrors of a slave are not needed to keep the children of God in order. The filial fear which trembles at a father's frown is quite sufficient. Let God but hide His face and we are troubled. We do not, therefore, despise the chastening of the Lord, or think little of His fatherly anger. On the contrary, we are weary with crying, our eyes fail while we wait for our God. Our entreaty is, "Hide not Your face from Your servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily." It breaks our hearts to think that we should grieve our God! This pain of heart is a very proper feeling, but it may be perverted by unbelief into the occasion of sin. We may conclude from the chastening rod that the Lord is about to destroy us—though He has plainly said, "Fury is not in Me." We may falsely conclude, as the text seems to hint, that God has utterly forsaken us and hidden His face forever. When we prayed, we enjoyed no liberty and felt no access to the mercy seat. When we tried to sing, our hosannas fell flat from our tongues. When we went to the assembly of the saints, we no longer beheld the Glory of the Lord as we had, before, seen Him in His sanctuary. When we opened the Bible, its choicest promises appeared to be as dry bones from which the marrow is taken, and therefore, we concluded that all was over with us, that God had forsaken us! And we, therefore, feared that nothing remained for us but eternal destruction—

***"If sometimes I strive, as I mourn,***

***My hold of Your promise to keep,  
The billows more fiercely return,  
And plunge me again in the deep.  
While harassed and cast from Your sight,  
The tempter suggests with a roar,  
“The Lord has forsaken you quite:  
Your God will be gracious no more!”***

This dark estimate of our affairs is not God’s view of them! He knows that He has not utterly or finally withdrawn, but He puts it thus—“For a small moment have I forsaken you.” It is but a partial departure under which the saint is suffering—the small moment will soon be over. The tried one is enduring only a partial and transient withdrawal of the light of His countenance, for the Lord says, “In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment.”

I suppose if we were quite new in this world and had never seen the sun descend below the horizon, we should conclude at his setting that we were about to be plunged into everlasting darkness! We have now become so accustomed to see him set and rise again, that evening causes us no alarm. Well, child of God, I trust you will not, for an instant, lose the light of your Father’s countenance, but if you should do so, it will return again—He has not forsaken you altogether nor forever! Weeping shall have its night, but joy’s bright morning will follow, for the Lord will not cast off forever. And though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. When we are under the hiding of God’s face, we cannot judge rightly. We are too agitated, too distressed, too distracted to see matters in their true light. At such times we are in fear where there is no fear and also magnify that which is legitimately a cause of anxiety. Unbelief is so natural to us and the propensity to write bitter things against ourselves is so very common, that we are not to be trusted with the scales of judgment. Let us not be too positive that our conclusions are the truth—let us, rather, take God’s estimate of His own dealings. And if we are, at this time, walking in darkness and seeing no light, let us trust in the Lord and rest ourselves upon His word, for all that God has done towards us, if we are, indeed, His servants, amounts to this—that for a small moment He has forsaken us and in a little wrath He has hidden His face from us.

I will now call your attention to two or three things which should greatly modify the view we take of the hiding of God’s face. First, *as to time*: The time during which our God withdraws Himself is very short—“for a moment,” He says. But He puts it less than that, “For a *small* moment.” Do any of you know what a *small* moment is? Yet that is the Lord’s own expression! Think of how long He has loved us, even from before the foundation of the world! The time in which He hides His face is very short compared with that. Think of how long He *will* love us—when this entire universe shall have subsided into its native nothingness He will love us forever! The time during which He chastens us is, compared with that, a very small moment! Think of how long we deserved to have been in hell, to lie forever beneath His indignation! The little moment in which His heavy hand is upon us, is, indeed, as *nothing* compared with

the eternal misery which our sins have merited. Dear brothers and sisters, when you come forth from the hiding of His face into the light, again, this gloom will seem to have been but a small moment! You shall forget the shame of your youth! You shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore! Sorrows past are slight and short when followed by boundless, endless joys. An eternity of heaven makes even a lifetime of pain to shrivel into a small moment!

When you have noticed the time, then I would call your attention to *the recompense which is promised*. “For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with *great mercies* will I gather you.” The Lord will make up to you all your losses, your afflictions, your crosses and your chastisements! God’s dealings with us never seem to be as merciful as after a time of trial. Then every blessing is a mercy, indeed, and we adore the love which grants it to us. When the taste of the wormwood and the gall is still on the palate, then the wines on the lees well-refined have a peculiar flavor, and we drink of them with a special zest. The bitterness makes the sweet the sweeter and the sorrow makes the joy the more abounding. The text does not say that God will give us mercy after He has, for a while left us, but the word is in the plural, “mercies,” multitudes of *mercies*! No, it does not merely say, “mercies,” but, “*great mercies*,” for they are all the greater because we so greatly need them, are plunged in such great distress for need of them, and filled with so many great fears as to our future estate. With great mercies will the Lord come to us, silence our fears and help us to gather up our scattered hopes and confidences! The Lord not only promises us these great favors, but He promises that He, Himself, will bring them. They are not to be sent to us by angels or by external providences, but He declares, “With great mercies *will I* gather you.” The work of restoration shall be the Lord’s own personal work! His own right hand shall be laid to it, and after down-castings and scatterings of many different sorts, the Lord Himself shall arise for the gathering of His people. “He that scattered Israel will gather him and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.” “Thus says the Lord, as one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you.” The Lord Himself will devise means to bring back His banished ones! He will turn away His wrath from them and they shall sing, “O Lord, I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comfort me.” It would be far better to walk with God in one long continuous fellowship throughout life, but if fellowship is broken, you may return, and return at once. It is a great thing to have your joy continued even under trouble, but if the trouble should be too much for you and all God’s waves and billows should roll over you, yet He will restore you, for He has said, “I will bring you, again, from Bashan, I will bring My people, again, from the depths of the sea.” You shall see how little His wrath was, for love’s binding up shall make you forget the wounds—and the heavenly oil of consolation shall effectually remove the bruises. Though the Lord may shut you up in the dark, yet afterwards He will give you light, again, and the light will be all the brighter because of the darkness! When comforts are restored, we see the reason for their withdrawal. And

like good old Jacob, when he found his long lost Joseph, we admire the love which afflicted us as much as the grace which restores our comforts! Bear, then, with patience the little wrath of God because of the shortness of its duration and the greatness of its recompense!

The text further declares that *the wrath is, in itself, little*. I should hardly have used such a term if I had not found it written here by an infallible pen. "In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment." God's wrath against His own people, as compared with that which burns against the ungodly, is but little, and it never can get beyond that point! If you read the context you will see that it *must* be little wrath, for first it is the wrath of a husband against his wife. "Your Maker is your husband." Yes, good Lord, You may be angry with me, but You are my husband still. You may forsake me for a while, but You have betrothed me unto Yourself forever in faithfulness and in mercy; and in Your word it is written, "The Lord, the God of Israel, says He hates putting away." Observe with delight that the Lord's wrath against His chosen is neither the anger of a king against rebellious subjects, nor that of an enemy against his foe, but the tender jealousy, the affectionate grief of a loving husband when his bride has treated him ill. Note an instance of this in the book of Jeremiah, where even when He banishes His people, He shows His love at the same time and sighs, "I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hands of her enemies." Observe, also, that the wrath is that of a Redeemer against those He has redeemed. We read at the end of the eighth verse, "Says the Lord, your Redeemer." It is such anger that, nevertheless, He died for us! It is such anger that, still, He puts forth His power to win what He has purchased. It is such anger that He values us far too well to lose us. Is not that a *little* anger which, nevertheless, calls to remembrance the blood with which it redeemed the offending one? O Savior, Son of God, my Lord, my life, my all, if I cannot see the smiles of Your face, I can still look to the wounds of Your hands! If I may not be ravished with Your love as it is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit, yet I know it as it was shed abroad from Your dear wounded side, when the spear cut Your heart! Here is consolation to those who are under a cloud! It is only in a little wrath that a Redeemer can hide Himself from the purchase of His agonies! It is, moreover, the anger of One who pities us, for the passage at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> verse is thus, "Says the Lord, that has mercy on you." And in the Hebrew it is, "Says the Lord your Pitier." It is the wrath of One who is tender and compassionate and pities while He smites! It is the anger of a father who takes the rod and scourges the child, but feels more of the smart than the child does, for every twig seems to lacerate his heart while he makes his child to cry and weep. It is such wrath as is consistent with love—"for a while I spoke against him. I do earnestly remember him still." Our names are engraved on the very hand which buffets us—and the rod which bruises us is steeped in mercy.

I have not time to linger where there is so much to detain us, but we will notice, next, that the expression of His little anger is not, after all, so extremely severe, for what does it say? "I hid My face." The face of the

Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. But our text does not say, "I turned My face against you," but only, "I hid My face *from* you." I grant that this is painful, but still, there is this sweet reflection—why does He hide His face? It is because the sight of it would be pleasant to us! It is a face of love, for if it were a face of anger He would not need to hide it from His erring child! If it was an angry face and He wished to chasten us, He would unveil it. And, therefore, we may be sure that He covers it because it is so bright with everlasting love that if it could be seen, no chastisement would be felt by us. See, then, that—

***"Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face."***

His hidden love is true love and it hides itself because it is so. Remember that we might have been plunged in outer darkness and have felt the crushing blows of the iron rod. But, as it is, we are only put under His frown for a time—"He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Be it ours to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, but let us not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are corrected by Him, for whom the Lord loves He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives. Let us neither despair nor distrust our God, nor think that we are the objects of His great wrath when, indeed, we are only feeling His fatherly anger, which is only a form of His wise and deep love.

Observe, too, for we must not leave out a word here, that this little wrath *is perfectly consistent with everlasting love*. "In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you." The Lord is filled with everlasting kindness at the very time when He is making the promise, for if you promise a person that you will love him, you love him already! Love, alone, could prompt a promise such as that which I have read. O you from whom God has hidden His face, when He promises that He will have mercy on you with everlasting kindness, is not love already ruling His heart? Our heavenly Father loves His children as much when He chastens as when He caresses! The Lord's own people are as dear to Him in the furnace of affliction as on the mount of communion! They are just as precious in His sight when He slays them and seems, in His fierce anger, to destroy their joys and wither their hopes, as when He lifts them to His own right hand! The Lord does not rise and fall in His love like the waves of the sea, but His firm affections stand fast like the great mountains and are as stable as the everlasting hills.

You have no right to infer from the greatness of your griefs that God is ceasing to love you, or that He loves you less! On the contrary, I am persuaded that if all the griefs which are possible to men could be heaped upon one child of God; if all God's waves and billows went over him; if he were to descend into the deeps of affliction so low that the earth, with her bars seemed to be about him forever; if not one ray of light came into his soul, but he was tormented with temptation, and afflicted by Satan, and deserted by man—and body and soul were alike in grief and pain—yet would all this only be a token of divine love to him, and part of the pro-

cess by which His love would supremely bless him! The utmost that can be truthfully said on the dark side of a *believer's* worst estate is this, "In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment." O children of God, you ought to be comforted by this! But I know you will not be unless the divine comforter shall lay these heavenly truths of God home to your souls. I can but speak them in my own feeble manner. He can speak them with power! Our duty, then, under the Lord's little wrath, is to *feel* it and *grieve* about it and to *search* ourselves and put away our sins! But we must not dishonor the Lord by unbelief, nor fancy ourselves to be under the covenant of works, or speak as if the atonement had failed and left us as much the heirs of wrath as before. We are not under the law and cannot, therefore, be under the wrath which the law works. We are not accounted as guilty before the Lord, and therefore, cannot be obnoxious to His great anger. Let us remember this and be of good courage when we are enduring the chastisements of the Lord.

**II.** We are now to consider THE GREAT WRATH OF GOD AND OUR SECURITY AGAINST IT. Our security against it is this—"This is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you." Until God drowns the whole world, again, He never can let out His great wrath against His people! Many centuries have gone by since Noah was saved in the ark and there has been no other universal flood. There have been partial floods, here and there, but the earth has never been completely destroyed with water. I should not wonder but what the first shower of rain that fell, after he came out of the ark, frightened Noah! And if it had not been that he saw the rainbow of God in the clouds, he would have trembled lest, once again, the fair world would be buried in the deeps. But his fears were all in vain—generations have followed generations in perfect safety from a deluge—and I do not suppose that there is now a man existing who is afraid of a general flood. Now, child of God, you must get rid, once and for all, of all fear that God's great wrath can ever be let loose upon you! It can never come upon the *justified*. Be sure of this, that as the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord will never be angry with you nor rebuke you, so as to destroy you, or count you His enemy! His great wrath is over. The flood of old lasted six months and more, and during that time, there was neither sowing nor reaping, but the Lord has said that never again shall a flood interrupt the operations of nature. "Seed time and harvest," said He, "summer and winter shall not cease." And they have not ceased! Go, now, into the fields and see how loaded they are with the fruits of the earth which are ripening for the sickle! Note, then, that as God has not suffered the seasons to be suspended by another flood, though thousands of years have passed away, so it is certain that He will not spend your *spiritual* life, nor take from you the blessings of His covenant by letting out His great wrath against you. He says He will not, and brothers and sisters, it were something like blasphemy to indulge a doubt about this.

My text suggests to me that we have ample security that the great wrath of God will never break out against us, *for it has broken out against us once*. The waters of Noah did go over the earth once, but never twice. Now, the great wrath of God can never break forth against His redeemed because it has already broken forth against them! Do you not remember it? It was on that dark, that doleful night, when our great covenant Head and Representative was in the garden all alone. And then the flood began to rise and rage and He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." There was a sight in the garden that night such as none of us have ever seen—

***"Immanuel, sunk with dreadful woe,  
Unfelt, unknown to all below—  
Except the Son of God—  
In agonizing pangs of soul,  
Drinks deep of wormwood's bitterest bowl,  
And sweats great drops of blood."***

The floods lifted up their voice, the cataracts of wrath descended, and the great deeps opened up from beneath to overwhelm His spirit! The waters came in, even unto His soul! You know what happened to Him in Pilate's hall and among the soldiers—how He hid not His face from shame and spitting while He bowed His back to the smiter's lash. And you remember, well, how they took Him to the cross and nailed Him there, your Lord and mine. "It pleased the Father to bruise Him: He has put Him to grief." He made His soul an offering for sin and laid on Him the iniquities of us all. The Father hid His face from Him and refused to smile on the sinner's substitute! The tempest had come to its highest! The floods were out 20 cubits above the tops of the mountains when our Lord cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" The flood was then at its height, even that flood of great wrath which was due to us for sin! In the death of the Lord Jesus we died! We were crucified in Him! In Him *we* bore the punishment for sin! The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Take it for a stable maxim which can never be denied, that two judgments can never be meted out for the same offense. Neither the laws of earth nor heaven will permit that the substitute should bleed and then that the penalty should, a second time, be demanded! Where would be the value of the atonement if such could be the case? Jesus has paid our debts, and therefore, we are out of debt! He has taken the handwriting of ordinances which were against us and nailed it to His cross—there is the receipt for all our debts, fastened up before heaven and hell upon the cross of Christ! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died." Is not that answer enough for all the charges of hell?

Let us put together two or three texts and drink in their sweetness. "Once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Get hold of that. Sin is put away forever. "He came," another prophet tells us, "to finish transgression and make an end of sin." Now, if He has made an end of sin, where is it? What reason can we have to fear its return? Think how David puts it—"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Does

anybody know how far in the broad heavens east is from the west? In the vastness of space no boundary can be imagined in either direction, and therefore, the distance is inconceivable. If the great enemy were to try and bring back our sins, it would take him an eternity to do it, and meanwhile, we shall be safe in heaven! What is said concerning the Lord in the Book of Micah? “He will subdue our iniquities; and You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” Does anybody know how deep the sea is? In some places it is said to be unfathomable! Can we find, again, that which is cast into the deeps? Our sins are cast by our Lord Jesus into deeps where no line will ever reach them. Glory be to His name for this! Another text flashes upon my memory. “In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.” Take this again—“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins.” The texts which speak to this effect are many! Time would fail us to mention them all, but their sum and substance is that Jesus Christ, our great covenant surety, was made a curse for us and has, thereby, redeemed us from the curse of the law. You see, then, my drift. The floods of great wrath have been out—they have rolled over the dear Redeemer’s sacred person and spent their fury!—

***“The tempest’s awful voice was heard!  
O Christ, it broke on Thee!  
Your open bosom was my ward,  
It braved the storm for me.  
Your form was scarred, Your visage marred;  
Now cloudless peace for me.”***

It is absolutely certain that there never shall be a second flood, either of water to drown the world, or of divine wrath to overwhelm the souls of the redeemed! What joy is this!

But this is not all. Note that *the text gives us, next, the oath of God as our security*. “As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.” It is always a solemn occasion when Jehovah lifts His hand to heaven and swears. Then is a matter confirmed, indeed, when it is secured by the oath of God! To my mind nothing is fuller of awe! I cannot grasp the thought to the fullest and yet I love to dwell upon it! He swears by Himself because He could swear by no greater and thus, adding His oath to His promise, He gives us two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie! He has pledged Himself, saying, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” The sin which was buried in Christ’s tomb shall never rise again, or be mentioned against us anymore forever! The iniquity which was borne by Christ shall never be laid to the charge of those for whom the Savior bore it. How could it be? So long as truth and Holiness remain, how can it be imagined that the atonement can be accepted and yet the sinner punished on his own account? If God can break His oath, may this thing be, but this is inconceivable and so we rest secure.

But next we have before us the fact that *the Lord has guaranteed our security by a covenant*, for in the 10<sup>th</sup> verse He says, “Neither shall the

covenant of My peace be removed.” The passage should be read, “Neither shall My covenant of peace be removed.” The eternal Father has entered into covenant with Christ that He would give to Him a seed for whom He should be the covenant Head and surety. Christ has fulfilled His side of the covenant by bearing all the penalty for His people’s sin, and fulfilling all righteousness, and now that covenant stands fast to be assuredly executed on the Father’s side. Thus runs the covenant, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” “I will make an Everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from Me.” God has said, “I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” This is the covenant from which the Lord cannot and will not draw back, for He never alters the thing which has gone forth out of His mouth! This covenant was signed and sealed and ratified by the blood of Christ—and it is, in all things, well ordered and sure—and therefore the people of God may rest in perfect security of their everlasting deliverance from the deluge of righteous wrath.

And now, to close, *what blessed illustrations of our security are added* in the further declaration of the Lord’s mind and will. The Lord looks on the mountains and the hills and declares that these and all things visible will pass away, for time’s grandest birth shall perish when eternity re-surges its sway. The mountains and the hills may represent the most stable of earthly hopes and confidences—but these all must fail us when most we need them. The Lord Himself assures us of this, and therefore, does not at all guarantee to us any security in the things which are *seen*, nor any peace that can be drawn from the creature. Our consolation lies elsewhere. “The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, said Jehovah, the Pitier.” Melt, you mountains and dissolve, you hills! Perish, O earth, and flee away you heavens, but the Lord cannot forget His oath nor forsake His chosen! Should our dearest friends die; should we traverse, many times, the sorrowful path to the sepulcher; should those who survive become unkind; should our substance be swept away, and our honorable name be unjustly questioned; should we be driven by persecution into banishment, and should weakness and sickness cast us upon the bed of languishing. Should consumption mark us for her own, or painful maladies come upon us as armed men. Should we see the mountains depart, and the hills remove—should all this happen, I say—even then we would triumph in almighty love, for thus says the Lord, “My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall My covenant of peace be removed.”

The sick chamber shall be a palace! The sickness, itself, an angelic messenger! Poverty shall make us rich! Shame shall increase our honor! Banishment shall bring us nearer home! Death, itself, shall enlarge the boundaries of life! Under no conceivable circumstances shall the covenant fail! The Lord who made it cannot change! Jesus who sealed it can-

not die! The love which dictated it cannot cease! The power which executes it cannot decay and the truth of God which guarantees it cannot be questioned! In the eternal provisions of that covenant of peace, which is sure to all the seed, we may rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory! My brothers and sisters, do you believe this? If you do, you ought to be as happy as the angels are! Our lot is supremely blessed. What a loving God we serve and what great things has He spoken concerning us! The soul is filled with wonder that the Almighty God should, in very deed, enter into covenant engagements with the insects of a day who are crushed before the moth! Whatever may be our outward sorrows, yet when we consider these choice favors and enjoy them in our own souls, we may count ourselves, of all men, the most happy! How can we be so cold, so dead as we are? Such favors are enough to melt rocks and make hills sing! O my soul, awake, and from now on and evermore pour forth loud hallelujahs unto the Lord!

As for you who have no portion in divine realities, what do you possess that is worth having? O you who are seeking the world, but are despising covenant mercies, it would be better for you that you had never been born! “What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his own soul?” Think upon this, and consider your ways. But there is this encouragement for you, that all through our text the leading note is *mercy*. Look at the seventh verse, “With great *mercies* will I gather you.” Look at the eighth verse, “Will I have *mercy* on you.” The word of God drips with mercy! Remember, also, that if any of us have obtained these covenant promises, we were no better than you by nature, and we had no more meritorious right to them than you have! But God, in infinite distinguishing grace, was pleased to bring *us* into the enjoyment of these privileges—why should He not bring *you* also? If salvation were by merit, there would be no gospel! But as it is of mercy, free mercy, rich mercy—here is good news for you! Dear heart, if you would be forgiven, Christ is ready to forgive! If you would have peace with God, that peace is made! If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved, even as they are who are, this day, rejoicing in His complete redemption! The Lord bring you this day to confess your sin humbly, to look up to Christ believingly, and to find salvation through the blood of the Lamb! Amen.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 54.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—245, 738.**

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# ENOCH

## NO. 1307

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 30, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God, after he begat Methuselah, three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”  
Genesis 5:21-24.***

***“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”  
Hebrews 11:5, 6.***

***“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”  
Jude 1:14, 15.***

THE three passages of Scripture which I have read are all the authentic information we have concerning Enoch. It would be idle to supplement it with the fictions of ancient commentators. Enoch is called the seventh from Adam, to distinguish him from the other Enoch of the line of Cain, who was the *third* from Adam. In the first patriarchs God was pleased to manifest to men portions of His truth in reference to true religion. These men of the olden times were not only, themselves, taught of God, but they were also teachers of their age and types in whom great truths of God were exhibited. Abel taught the need of approaching the Lord with sacrifice, the need of the atonement by blood—he laid the lamb upon the altar and sealed his testimony with his own blood. Atonement is so precious a truth of God that to die for its defense is a worthy deed and from the very first it is a doctrine which has secured its martyrs, who being dead yet speak.

Then Seth and Enos taught men the necessity of a distinct avowal of their faith in the Lord and the need of assembling for His worship, for we read concerning the days of Enos and Seth, “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.” Those who worshipped through the atoning sacrifice separated themselves from the rest of men, assembled a church in the name of the Lord and worshipped, calling upon the name of Jehovah. The heart must first believe in the great sacrifice with Abel and then

the mouth must confess the same with Seth. Then came Enoch whose life went beyond the reception and confession of the atonement, for he set before men the great truth of communion with God. He displayed in his life the relation of the believer to the Most High and showed how near the living God condescends to be to His own children. May our progress in knowledge be similar to the growth of the patriarchal teaching! Brothers and sisters, you know as Abel did, the sacrificial Lamb. Your confidence is in the precious blood and so by faith you bring to God the most acceptable of all offerings. Having advanced so far, the most of us have proceeded a step further, and we have called upon the name and are the avowed followers of Jesus. We have given ourselves up to the Lord in the solemn burial of baptism, when we were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, because we reckoned ourselves dead in Christ to the entire world and risen with Him into newness of life. Henceforth the divine name is named on us and we are no more our own.

And now we gather together in our church capacity. We assemble around the table of fellowship, we unite in our meetings for prayer and worship and the center for us all is the name of the Lord. We are separated from the world and set apart to be a people who declare His name. Thus far so good—we have seen the sacrifice of Jesus as the way with Abel. We have avowed the truth with Seth. Now let us take the next step and *know* the life with Enoch. Let us endeavor to walk with God as Enoch did!

Perhaps a meditation upon the holy patriarch's life may help us to imitate it. While considering what he was and under what circumstances he came to be so, we may, by the Holy Spirit, be helped to reach the point to which he attained. This is the desire of every godly man! All the saints desire communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The constant cry of our soul is to our Lord, "Abide with me." I buried, yesterday, one of the excellent of the earth who loved and feared and served his God far better than most of us. He was an eminently devout brother. One of the last wishes of his heart he had committed to writing in a letter to a friend, when he little thought of dying. It was this, "I have longed to realize the life of Enoch and to walk with God."—

***"Oh for a closer walk with God!"***

He did but write what you and I feel. If such are your desires, and such I feel sure they are, as surely as you are the Lord's people, then I hope a consideration of the life of Enoch may help you towards the realization of your wish.

First, then, *what does Enoch's walking with God imply?* It is a short description of a man's life, but there is a mint of meaning in it. Secondly, *what circumstances were connected with his remarkable life?* These are highly instructive. And thirdly, *what was the close of it?* It was as remarkable as the life itself.

**I.** First, then, WHAT IS MEANT BY ENOCH'S WALKING WITH GOD? Paul helps us with our first observation upon this by his note in Hebrews. His walk with God was a testimony that *Enoch was well-pleasing to God*. "Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased

God.” This is evidently the apostle’s interpretation of his walking with God and it is a most correct one, for the Lord will not walk with a man in whom He has no pleasure. Can two walk together, except they are agreed? If men walk contrary to God, He will not walk *with* them, but contrary to them. Walking together implies amity, friendship, intimacy, love—and these cannot exist between God and the soul unless the man is acceptable unto the Lord. Doubtless Enoch, like Elijah, was a man of like passions with ourselves. He had fallen with the rest of mankind in the sin of Adam. There was sin about him, as there is sin about us by nature, and he had gone astray in act and deed as all we, like sheep, have done. Therefore he needed pardon and cleansing, even as we do. Then to be pleasing with God it was necessary that he should be forgiven and justified, even as we are—for no man can be pleasing to God till sin is pardoned and righteousness is *imputed*. To this end there must be *faith*, for there can be no *justification* except by faith. And as we have said, already, there is no pleasing God except our persons are justified. Right well, then, does the apostle say, “Without faith it is impossible to please God,” and by faith Enoch was made pleasing to God, even as we are at this day. This is worthy of earnest notice, brothers and sisters, because this way of faith is open to *us*. If Enoch had been pleasing to God by virtue of some extraordinary gifts and talents, or by reason of marvellous achievements and miraculous works, we might have been in despair! But if he was pleasing to God through *faith*, that same faith which saved the dying thief, that same faith which has been worked in you and in me—then the wicket gate at the head of the way in which men walk with God is open to us, also! If we have faith we may enter into fellowship with the Lord! How this ought to endear faith to us! The highest grades of spiritual life depend upon the lower ones and rise out of them. If you want to walk with God as a man of God, you must begin by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, simply, as a babe in grace! The highest saintship must commence by the confession of your *sinnerness*, and your laying hold upon Christ crucified. Not otherwise does the strongest believer live than the weakest believer—and if you are to grow to be among the strongest of the Lord’s warriors—it must be by faith which lays hold upon divine strength. Beginning in the Spirit you are not to be made perfect in the *flesh*. You are not to proceed a certain distance, by faith in Christ, and then to commence living by your own works—your walk is to continue as it begun. “As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk you in Him.” Enoch was always pleasing to God, but it was because he always believed and lived in the power of his faith. This is worth knowing and remembering, for we may yet be tempted to strive for some imaginary higher style of religious life by looking to our *feelings* instead of looking alone to the Lord! We must not remove our eyes from looking, alone, to Jesus, Himself, even to admire His image within ourselves—for if we do we shall go backward rather than forward. No, beloved, by faith Enoch became pleasing to God and by faith he walked with God—let us follow in his footprints.

Next, when we read that Enoch walked with God we are to understand that *he realized the divine presence*. You cannot consciously walk with a

person whose existence is not known to you. When we walk with a man, we know that he is there. We hear his footsteps if we cannot see his face. We have some very clear perception that there is a person at our side. Now, if we look to Hebrews again, Paul tells us, "He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Enoch's faith, then, was a *realizing* faith. He did not believe things as a matter of creed and then put them up on the shelf out of the way, as too many of us do today—he was not merely orthodox in his *head*—but the truth of God had entered into his *heart*. What he believed was true to him, practically true, true as a matter of fact in his daily life. He walked with God—it was not that he merely *thought* of God, that he *speculated* about God, that he *argued* about God, that he *read* about God, that he *talked* about God—he *walked* with God, which is the practical and experimental part of true godliness! In his daily life he realized that God was with him and he regarded Him as a *living* God, in whom he confided and by whom he was loved. Oh, beloved, do you not see that if you are to reach to the highest style of Christian life, you must do it through the realization of those very things which, by faith, you have received? Grasp them! Let them be to you substance and evidence. Make them sure, look upon them, handle them, taste them in your inmost soul and so know them beyond all question. You must see Him who is invisible and possess that which cannot be as yet enjoyed. Believe not only that God is, but that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, for this, according to Paul, is the Enoch faith! God realized as existing, observing, judging and *rewarding* human deeds—a real God, really with us—this we must know, or there is no walking with God.

Then, as we read that Enoch walked with God, we have no doubt it signifies that *he had very familiar communion* with the Most High. I scarcely know a communion that is more free, pleasant and cordial than that which arises out of constant walking with a friend. If I wished to find a man's most familiar friend, it would surely be one with whom he walked daily. If you were to say, "I sometimes go into his house and sit a little while with him," it would not amount to so much as when you can say, "I have, from day to day, walked the fields and climbed the hills with him." In walking, friends become communicative—one tells his trouble and the other strives to console him under it—and then imparts to him his own secret in return. When persons are constantly in the habit of walking together from choice, you may be quite sure there are many communications between them with which no stranger may intermeddle. If I wanted to know a man through and through, I should want to walk with him for a time, for walking communion brings out parts of the man which even in domestic life may be concealed. Walking for a continuance implies and engenders close fellowship and great familiarity between friends. But will God, in very deed, thus walk with men? Yes, He did so with Enoch and He has done so with many of His people since. He tells us His secret, the secret of the Lord, which He reveals only to them that fear Him. And we tell Him, alike, our joys in praise, our sorrows in prayer and our sins in confession. The heart unloads itself of all its cares into the heart of Him that cares for us! And the Lord pours forth His floods of

goodness as He imparts to His beloved ones a sense of His own everlasting love to them. This is the very flower and sweetness of Christian experience, its lily and its rose, its calamus and myrrh. If you would taste the cream of Christian life, it is found in having a realizing faith and entering into intimate communion with the heavenly Father. So Enoch walked with God.

Next it is implied in the term, “walked,” that *his communion with God was continuous*. As an old divine has well remarked, he did not take a turn or two with God and then leave His company, but he walked with God for hundreds of years! It is implied in the text that this was the tenor of his life throughout the whole of its 365 years. Enoch walked with God after Methuselah had been born, 300 years, and doubtless he had walked with Him before. What a splendid walk! A walk of 300 years! One might desire a change of company if he walked with anybody else, but to walk with God for three centuries was so sweet that the patriarch kept on with his walk until he walked beyond time and space—and walked into paradise—where he is still marching on in the same divine society! He had heaven on earth and it was, therefore, not so amazing that he glided away from earth to heaven so easily. He did not commune with God by fits and starts, but he abode in the conscious love of God. He did not, now and then, climb to the heights of elevated piety and then descend into the marshy valley of lukewarmness, but he continued in the calm, happy, equable enjoyment of fellowship with God from day to day. Night with its sleep did not suspend it. Day with its cares did not endanger it. It was not a run, a rush, a leap, a spurt, but a steady walk. On, on, through three happy centuries and more did Enoch continue to walk with God!

It is implied, also, in this phrase that *his life was progressive*, for if a man walks either by himself or with anybody else, he makes progress, he goes forward. Enoch walked with God. At the end of 200 years he was not where he began. He was in the same company, but he had gone forward in the right way. At the end of the third hundred years Enoch enjoyed more, understood more, loved more, had received more and could give out more, for he had gone forward in all respects. A man who walks with God will necessarily grow in grace and in the knowledge of God and in likeness to Christ. You cannot suppose a perpetual walk with God, year after year, without the favored person being strengthened, sanctified, instructed and rendered more able to glorify God. So I gather that Enoch’s life was a life of spiritual progress. He went from strength to strength and made headway in the gracious pilgrimage. May God grant us to be pressing onward, ourselves.

Just a few more observations upon Enoch’s walk. In “Kitto’s Daily Bible Pleadings” there is an exceedingly pleasing piece illustrating what it must be to walk with God by the figure of a father’s taking his little son by the hand, and walking forth with him upon the breezy hills. Kitto says, “As that child walks with you, so do you walk with God. That child loves you now; the world—the cold and cruel world—has not yet come between his heart and yours; his love is the purest and most beautiful he will ever feel, or you will ever receive. Cherish it well, and as that child

walks *lovingly* with you, so do you walk *lovingly* with God.” It is a delight to such children with their fathers. The roughness of the way or of the weather is nothing to them—it is joy enough to go for a walk with father. There is a warm, tender, affectionate grip of the hand and a beaming smile of the eyes as they look up to father while he conducts them over hill and dale. Such a walk is *humble*, too, for the child looks upon its father as the greatest and wisest man that ever lived! He considers him to be the incarnation of everything that is strong and wise. All that his father says or does he admires. As he walks along, he feels the utmost affection for his father, but his *reverence* is equally strong. He is very near his father, but yet he is only a child, and looks up to his father as his king. Moreover such a walk is one of *perfect confidence*. The boy is not afraid of missing his way. He trusts implicitly his father’s guidance. His father’s arm will screen him from all danger, and therefore, he does not so much as give it a thought—why should he? If care is needed as to the road, it is his father’s business to see to it and the child, therefore, never dreams of anxiety—why should he? If any difficult place is to be passed, the father will have to lift the boy over it, or help him through it—the child, meanwhile, is merry as a bird—why should he not be? Thus should the believer walk with God, resting on eternal tenderness and rejoicing in undoubted love! A believer should be unconscious of dread either as to the present or to the future. Beloved friends in Christ, your Father may be trusted, He will supply all your needs—

**“You are as much His care as if beside  
No man or angel lived in heaven or earth.”**

What an *instructive* walk a child has with a wise, communicative parent! How many of his little puzzles are explained to him, how everything about him is illuminated by the father’s wisdom! Every step the boy takes, he becomes the wiser for such companionship. Oh, happy are the children of God who have been taught of their Father while they have walked with Him! Enoch must have been a man of profound knowledge and great wisdom as to divine things. He must have dived into the deep things of God beyond most men.

His life must also have been a *holy* life, because he walked with God, for God never walks out of the way of holiness. If we walk with God, we must walk according to truth, justice, and love. The Lord has no company with the unjust and rebellious, and therefore, we know that he who walked with God must have been an upright and holy man.

Enoch’s life must, moreover, have been a *happy* one. Who could be unhappy with such a companion! With God Himself to be with us, the way can never be dreary. “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for You are with me.” Granted that God is your companion and your road must be a way of pleasantness and a path of peace.

Did Enoch walk with God? Then his pilgrimage must have been safe. What a guard is the Great Jehovah! He is sun and shield! He gives grace and glory. He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Nothing can harm the man who is walking with the Lord God at his right hand.

And oh, what an *honor* it is to walk with the Eternal! Many a man would give thousands to walk with a king. Numbers of people are such worshippers of dignities that if a king did but smile at them they would be intoxicated with delight! What, then, is the honor of walking with the King of kings? What a patent of nobility it is to be permitted to walk with the blessed and only Potentate all one's life long? Who is he that is thus favored to be the King's companion, to walk alone with Him and to become His familiar friend? Jehovah rules earth and heaven, and hell. He is Lord of all who shall walk with Him! If it were only for the honor of it, oh Christians, how you ought to desire to walk with God! Enoch found it safe, happy, holy, honorable, and I know not how much more that is excellent! But certainly this was a golden life—where shall we find anything to equal it?

**II.** Secondly, let us consider WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES WERE CONNECTED WITH ENOCH'S WALKING WITH GOD. The first remark is that *the details of his life are very few*. We do not know much about Enoch and this is to his advantage. Happy is the nation which has no history, for a nation which *has* a history has been vexed with wars, revolutions and bloodshed. But a nation that is always happy, peaceful and prosperous has no chronicle to attract the lover of sensations. Happy is Enoch that we cannot write a long biography of him! The few words, "Enoch walked with God," suffice to depict his whole career, until, "he was not, for God took him." If you go and look at a farmer's field and you say of it when you come back, "I saw yellow flowers covering it till it seemed as a cloth of gold. And then I spied out, here and there, white flowers like silver buttons set on the golden vesture. I also saw blue corn-flowers looking up with their lovely eyes, causing the whole field to sparkle," you would think that it is a very pretty field if you are a child. But the farmer shakes his head, for he knows that it is in bad condition and overrun with weeds! But if you come back and simply say, "It is as fine a wheat field as ever grew and that is all," then your description, though brief, is very satisfactory. Many of those dazzling events and striking incidents and sensational adventures which go to make up an interesting biography may attract attention, but they do not minister to the real excellence of the life. No life can surpass that of a man who quietly continues to serve God in the place where providence has placed him. I believe that in the judgment of angels and all pure-minded beings, that a woman's life is most to be admired which consists simply of this—"She loved the Lord and did all she could for Him." And that man's life shall be the most noteworthy of whom it can be said, "He followed the Lord fully." Enoch's life has no adventures. But is it not adventure, enough, for a man to walk with God? What ambition can crave a nobler existence than abiding in fellowship with the Eternal?

But some will say, "Well, but Enoch must have been very peculiarly situated. He was, no doubt, placed in very advantageous circumstances for piety." Now, observe that this was not so, for first, *he was a public man*. He is called the "seventh from Adam." He was a *notable* man and looked up to as one of the fathers of his age. A patriarch in those days must have been a marked man, loaded with responsibility as well as with

honor. The ancient custom was that the head of the family was prophet, priest and king in his household. And abroad, if he was a man of station and substance, he was counselor, magistrate and ruler. Enoch was a great man in his day, one of the most important of the period. Therefore we may be sure he had his trials and bore the brunt of opposition from the powerful ungodly party which opposed the ways of godliness. He is mentioned among a noble list of men. Some have unwisely thought, "I could walk with God if I had a little cottage, if I lived in a quiet village, but you see I am a public man, I occupy a position of trust and I have to mix with my fellow men. I do not see how I am to walk with God." Ah, my dear friend, Enoch did! Though he was, undoubtedly, a man distinguished in his time and full of public cares, yet he lost not the thread of sacred converse with heaven, but held on in his holy course through a life of centuries.

Note again that *Enoch was a family man*. "Enoch walked with God and begat sons and daughters." Some have said, "Ah, you cannot live as you like if you have a lot of children about you. Do not tell me about keeping up your hours of prayer and quiet reading of the Scriptures if you have a large family of little ones. You will be disturbed and there will be many domestic incidents which will be sure to try your temper and upset your equanimity. Get away into the woods and find a hermit's cell—there, with your brown jug of water and your loaf of bread, you *may* be able to walk with God—but with a wife, not always amiable, and a troop of children who are never quiet, neither by day nor night, how can a man be expected to walk with God?" The wife, on the other hand, exclaims, "I believe that had I remained a single woman I might have walked with God. When I was a young woman I was full of devotion. But now with my husband, who is not always in the best of tempers, and with my children who seem to have an unlimited number of needs and never to have them satisfied, how is it possible that I can walk with God?" We turn to Enoch, again, and we are confident that it can be done! "Enoch walked with God, after he begat Methuselah, 300 years, and begat sons and daughters, and all the days of Enoch were 365 years." Thus, you see, he was a public man and he was a family man—and yet he walked with God for more than 300 years. There is no need to be a hermit, or to renounce married life in order to live near to God.

In addition to this, *Enoch lived in a very evil age*. He was prominent at a time when sin was beginning to cover the earth. It was not very long before the earth was corrupt, and God saw fit to sweep the whole population from off its surface on account of sin. Enoch lived in a day of mockers and despisers. You know that from his prophecy, as recorded by Jude. He prophesied, saying, "The Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." He lived when few loved God and when those who professed to do so were being drawn aside by the blandishments of the daughters of men. Church and State were proposing an alliance, fashion and pleasure ruled the hour and unhallowed compromise was the order

of the day. He lived towards the close of those primitive times wherein long lives had produced great sinners—and great sinners had invented great provocations of God. Do not complain, therefore, of your times and of your neighbors and other surroundings, for amid them all you may *still* walk with God.

Enoch walked with God, and in consequence thereof, *he bore his witness for God*. “Enoch, the seventh from Adam prophesied.” He could not be silent! The fire burned within his soul and could not be restrained. When he had delivered his testimony, it is clear that he encountered opposition. I am certain that he did so from the context in Jude, because the passage in Jude has to do with murmurers and “complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaks great swelling words,” and Enoch is brought in as having had to do with such persons. His sermon shows that he was a man who stood firm amidst a torrent of blasphemy and rebuke, carrying on the great controversy for the truth of God against the wicked lives and licentious tongues of the scoffers of his age. He says, “Behold, the Lord comes with myriads of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed.” It is clear that they spoke against Enoch, they rejected his testimony, they grieved his spirit and he mourned that in this they were speaking against God, for he speaks “of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” He saw their ungodly lives and bore witness against them. It is remarkable that his great subject should have been the second advent! And it is still more noteworthy that the two other men whom one would select as living nearest to God, namely, Daniel and John, were both men who spoke much concerning the coming of the Lord and the great judgment day. I need not quote the words of Daniel, who tells us of the judgment which is to be set, and of the Ancient of Days who shall come upon His throne. Nor need I repeat the constant witness of John concerning the Lord’s second coming. I will only mention his fervent exclamation, “Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!”

Thus you see that Enoch was a preacher of the word of God, and therefore, he had a care over and above that which falls to the lot of most of you. And yet, with that and all the rest put together, he could please God until his life’s end! If I may speak of an end to a life which ran into an endless state of joy—he continued as long as he was here to walk in faith, to walk in a manner in which God was pleased—and so his communion with the Lord was never broken.

**III.** This brings us to conclude with the third head—WHAT WAS THE CLOSE OF ENOCH’S WALK?

We would first remark that *he finished his work early*. Enoch walked with God and that was such a good, sure, progressive walk, that he traveled faster and reached home sooner than those of us who walk with God, sometimes, and with the world at other times! Three hundred and sixty-five years would have been a long life to us, but it was a short life for that period when several patriarchs attained to nearly a thousand years of age. Enoch’s life, as compared to the usual life of the period, was like a life of 30 or 35 years in these short-lived ages—in fact, the best

parallel to it is the life of our Lord. As with the extended ages of men of his period, Enoch's life was of about the same length as that of the Lord Jesus in comparison with such lives as ours. He passed away comparatively a young man, as our dear brother and elder Verdon, just departed, has done, and we do not wonder that he did. They say, "Whom the gods love die young," and both Enoch and Verdon were men greatly beloved. Perhaps these holy men ended their career so soon because they had done their lifework so diligently that they finished early. Some workmen, if they have a job to do in your house, are about it all day long, or rather all week long and make no end of confusion! No wonder that some people live a long while, for they need to do so much to do anything at all! But this man did his work so well and kept so close to God that his day's work was done at noon and the Lord said, "Come home, Enoch! There is no need for you to be out of heaven any longer. You have borne your testimony; you have lived your life; through all the ages men will look upon you as a model man, and therefore, you may come home." God never keeps His wheat out in the fields longer than is necessary! When it is ripe, He reaps it at once! When His people are ready to go home, He will take them home. Do not regret the death of a good man while he is young. On the contrary, bless God that there is still some early ripening wheat in the world and that some of His saints are sanctified so speedily!

But what did happen to Enoch? I am afraid I have said he died, or that I shall say so, it is so natural to speak of men as dying, but he, alone, and one other of all the human race are all that have entered the heavenly Canaan without fording the river of death! We are told concerning him that, "he was not." Those gentlemen who believe that the word, "to die," signifies to be annihilated, would have been still more confirmed in their views if the words in my text, "he was not," had been applied to *all* departed men, for if any expression might signify annihilation in *their* mode of translation—this is the one! "He was not" does not, however, mean that he was annihilated! And neither does the far feebler term of dying signify anything of the kind! "He was not," that is to say, he was not *here*—that is all. He was gone from earth, but he was *there*—there where God had translated him. He was, he *is* with God! And that without having tasted death! Do not grudge him his avoidance of death. It was a favor, but not by any means as great as some would think, for those who do not die must undergo a change and Enoch was changed. "We shall not all sleep," says the apostle, "but we shall all be changed." The flesh and blood of Enoch could not inherit the kingdom of God—in a moment he underwent a transformation which you and I will have to undergo in the day of the resurrection. And so, though he was not on earth, he was translated or transplanted from the gardens of earth to paradise above. Now, if there is any man in the world that shall never die, it is he who walks with God. If there is any man to whom death will be as nothing, it is the man who has looked to the second advent of Christ and gloried in it. If there is any man who, though he passes through the iron gates of death, shall never feel the terror of the grim foe, it is the man whose life below has been perpetual communion with God! Go not about by any other way to escape the pangs of death but walk with God, and you will

be able to say, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?"

It is said of Enoch that, "*God took him.*" A very remarkable expression! Perhaps He did it in some visible manner. I should not wonder. Perhaps the whole of the patriarchs saw him depart, even as the apostles were present when our Lord was taken up. However that may be, there was some special rapture, some distinct taking up of this choice one to the throne of the Most High. "He was not, for God took him."

Note that *he was missed*. This is one thing which I could not overlook. *He was missed*, for the apostle says he, "was not found." Now, if a man is not found, it shows that *somebody* looked for him. When Elijah went to heaven, you remember, 50 men of the sons of the prophets went and searched for him. I do not wonder that they did—they would not meet with an Elijah every day—and when he was gone away, body and all, they might well look for him! Enoch was not found, but they looked for him. A good man is missed. A true child of God in a church like this, working and serving his Master, is only one among five thousand—but if he has walked with God, his decease is lamented. The dear brother whom we have just buried, we shall miss. His brother elders will miss him. The many who have been converted to God and helped by his means will miss him. And assuredly I shall miss him. I look towards the spot where he used to sit—I trust that someone else will sit there who will be half as useful as he was. It will be almost more than I can expect. We do not want to live and die so that nobody will care whether we were on earth or not. Enoch was missed when he was gone and so will they be who walk with God.

Last of all, *Enoch's departure was a testimony*. What did he say by the fact that, "he was not, for God took him," but this—there is a future state. Men had begun to doubt it, but when they said, "Where is Enoch?" and those who had witnessed his departure said, "God took him," it was, to them, evidence that there was a God, and that there was another world. And when they asked, "But where is his body?" there was another lesson. Two men had died before him, I mean two whose deaths are recorded in Scripture—Abel was killed and his witness was that the seed of the serpent hates the woman's seed. Adam, too, had died about 50 years before Enoch's translation, whose witness was that, however late the penalty may come, yet the soul that sins, it shall die. Now comes Enoch and his testimony is that the *body* is capable of immortality! He could not bear testimony to resurrection, for he did not die—for that we have testimony in Christ who is the first fruits from among the dead. But the testimony of Enoch went a good way towards it, for it bore evidence that the *body* was capable of being immortal and of living in a heavenly condition. "He was not, for God took him."

His departure also was a testimony to mankind that there is a reward for the righteous, that God does not sit with stony eyes, regardless of the sins of the wicked, or of the virtues of His saints. It proved that He sees and is pleased with His people who walk with Him—and that He can give them, even now, present rewards by delivering them from the pangs of death—and therefore He will certainly give rewards to all His people in

some way or other. Thus you see, living and dying—no, not dying, again I am mistaken—living and *being translated*—Enoch was still a witness to his generation! And I pray that all of us, whether we live or whether we sleep, may be witnesses for God. Oh that we could live as my good brother, Verdon, whom we have lately buried, lived, whose soul was on fire with love to Christ! He had a very passion for souls! I scarcely think there is one among us who did as much as he, for though he had to earn his daily bread, his evenings were spent with us in the service of the Lord, or in preaching the gospel! And then, all night long he frequently paced the weary streets, looking after the fallen, that he might bring them in! He often went to his morning's work weary, except by the rest which he found in the service of Christ. He would sometimes meet a brother with eyes full of joy, and say, "Five souls won for Christ last night!" At other times, after a sermon, here he was a great soul hunter, and would fetch inquirers downstairs into the prayer meeting. And when he had squeezed my hand he would say in his Swiss tones, which I cannot imitate, "Jesus saved some more last night! More souls were brought to Jesus." For him to live was to win souls! He was the youngest in our eldership, but the gray-heads do him honor. As we stood weeping about his tomb, there was not one among us but what felt that we had lost a true brother and a valiant fellow soldier. May the Lord raise up others among you to do what Elder Verdon did! May the Lord quicken the older brothers and sisters to be more active than they are, and make the young ones more devoted; our ranks are broken; who shall fill up the gap? We are getting fewer and fewer as the Lord takes one and another home of the best-instructed, and of the bravest-hearted. But, by His grace, recruits are daily coming in! May others come forward—yes, Lord, bring them forward by Your Holy Spirit to be leaders in the front ranks, that as the vanguard melts into the church triumphant, the rear may continually find additions! Translated to the skies are some; may others be translated out of darkness into marvelous light, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
PSALM 119:33-56.**

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# THE RECORDERS

## NO. 1308

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 25, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"To record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel."  
1 Chronicles 16:4.***

DAVID took care of every part of divine worship. He saw to it that nothing was neglected in the service of the God in whom he delighted. Let this stand as an example to us to be careful about everything which concerns the honor of God. Do not allow any of the duties of your holy faith to be forgotten, but seek to exhibit harmonious and entire obedience to the divine will. Do not merely attend to what are called religious duties, but with equal religiousness regard your *social* duties and present to the Lord, as far as you can, a complete service. Such David desired to do. You observe that he had those about him who offered burnt offerings unto the Lord continually, morning and evening, as God had commanded—these things were not to be left undone. And then he set apart certain others to attend to the service of song. Theirs it was to sound the trumpets and to call the people together—theirs to touch the harmonious strings of harps, or to sound with cymbals of brass, or to lift their voices on high in the sweet praises of Jehovah, for God is to be served with sacrifice and praised with song. Our God accepts us when we labor for Him and when we praise Him—let both be done heartily. It would be a pity if we worked so hard that we could not sing! It were equally unhappy if we sang so much that we idled away our time! There must be a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, music and fruit, service and song. There was also a third company set apart for a somewhat extraordinary work, namely as our text tells us, *to record*. They were to take notes of what God had done, and was doing. They were to be the chronicles of the nation, and out of their chronicles, they were to compose the psalms and songs. Perhaps that is the meaning of the word "record," here, but the original bears another meaning—"to bring to remembrance." If they were not to act as historians to record, they were as minstrels to *proclaim* what had been written in old times and bring it to remembrance. I rather prefer the idea that their duty was to do both—to record the loving kindness of the Lord and to bring to the remembrance of the people what the Lord's right hand had done in former times. Now, if you think a minute, this third class of people, who are placed between the Levites before the ark and the singers who thanked and praised the Lord, would be useful both to those who went before and to those who followed. Those who had to serve before the ark of the Lord are mentioned first. Now, what could so cheer them in their service as to read of the goodness of the Lord? What could so inspire them to attend reverently to the service of the Lord's house as to remember the former

loving kindnesses of the Lord? What arguments could they have for fidelity that would be more powerful than the record of His mercy which endures forever? Those who were to conduct the praising and the thanksgiving are mentioned *after* these recorders. But what is the raw material of which praise is made but the record of what God is and of what He has done for His people? I think whenever they wanted to sing, they would turn to these remembrancers and recorders and say to them, "Tell us something of what God has done, for the simple record of Jehovah's acts is the noblest psalmody." Do you notice that whenever we praise God best, we simply declare what He is, for the bare fact about God is the highest praise—you have only to mention what He does in order to produce the most sublime poetry—the grateful mention of His glorious acts is, in itself, adoration! You cannot adore the Lord better than by devoutly rehearsing His mighty acts—so good is His name, so blessed are His deeds. "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all His praise?"

Now, from the fact that David set apart certain Levites to record, I gather three or four thoughts of which I am going to speak tonight. The first is—it is implied that *there is a fault in man's memory*. It is equally clear, in the second place that *we ought to endeavor to assist memory*. Thirdly, it is certain, too, from the appointment of recorders, that *there is a good deal worth remembering*. And, fourthly, from the connection of these recorders with the singers, we see that, *to right-minded persons memory will always produce praise*. When we have recorded the great mercies of the Lord, then we shall be sure to thank and praise Him.

**I.** First of all, we may gather, I think, without any straining of the text, that if recorders were appointed, THERE IS SOME FAULT IN OUR MEMORY TOWARDS THE LORD.

What faults there are in our memory touching the work and word of God! Perhaps some of you have very powerful memories and may be able to treasure up whole volumes as some have done. It might be said of you as it was of Dr. Lawson, that if the whole Bible had been destroyed, he could have reproduced it from memory. This is a great gift and a worthy use for it, but I fear that few of us have it. It is not likely that men could say of us, as of the famous Grecian, that out of 10,000 soldiers he knew every one of his men by name. I do not find fault with short memories, but with memories which are treacherous towards divine things. What I complain of is that memory may be very strong concerning self-interest, grievances and trials—yet towards God's mercies it may be very weak. I am not going to speak about memory in general. I speak only of that faculty as it is exercised towards the favors and lovingkindnesses of the Lord—and I am sure there is a fault in it, for, first of all, *it has been prejudiced by the fall*. Do you not know that if anything bad ever reaches your ear you cannot forget it? That lewd song which you heard in your youth—in your unregenerate times, you would give everything to forget it, but it will come up—a snatch of it has perhaps been suggested by a hymn sung in worship, or even by the language used in prayer! What a grasp memory has for things that never ought to have crossed the mind

at all and which, though they have crossed the mind, ought to be forgotten! Well said an old divine, "Man's memory is a pond in which all the fish die and all the frogs live." I am sure it is so. The bad remains, but the good—ah, how you have to charge and constrain yourself to remember a tenth of it! The filth of Sodom is drawn to shore by memory, but the fair products of Jerusalem are permitted to glide down the stream to the ocean of oblivion. The fall has given a sad bias to memory—like a strainer, it lets the good liquor run through and only retains the dregs.

Again, memory towards God's mercy has been *very much impaired by neglect*. Any part of the body left unused will lose power—and any faculty of the mind which is never exercised will gradually become weak. You may have very powerful memories, as I said before, towards *earthly* things, but I will venture to say that some of you have never sought to remember the mercies of the Lord. No, you have not seen them to be God's mercies! It has never occurred to you to try and remember what God has done for you. I would not bring a harsh impeachment, but I suggest the question—have you not lived as if there were no God? As if His mercies of everyday were, indeed, of your own procuring? As if you had no indebtedness to God and were under no obligation to be grateful to Him? I do not wonder that your memory towards divine things is weak, for you have never exercised it—never *thought* of exercising it—and consequently, my friend, if ever you *are* to learn to praise the Lord, you will have need of great help in the work, for your memory will not furnish you with materials. It has no store of good things with which to feed your devotion! You have kept its chambers empty by neglect.

Memory, concerning God's mercy, is often *overloaded with other things*. Memory can only carry a certain amount, but, oh, what wagonloads of mischief memory is freighted with! Some of us can remember so little that it is a pity for us to try to remember anything trifling or of minor importance. It might be well to dedicate that faculty to the weightiest things only—to things imperative for this life—to things essential for the life to come. How foolishly some will stuff up their memory with rubbish that is not worth harboring; there are songs, and pieces of "poetry," so called, and scraps taken from novels, and I know not what besides, with which poor memory is gorged till it is blown out as a balloon with foul gas! It is fed upon mere husks till it is surfeited, stuffed and crammed, and labors under indigestion! I think Aristotle used to call memory the stomach of the soul in which it retains and digests what it gathers. But men cram it full of everything that it does not need—upon which the soul cannot really feed—and thus they ruin it for remembering the best things. Some people can hardly carry home the text of the discourse. Is it likely they would? Other thoughts choke up the memory and put the good thing, the gracious thing, the grateful thing, the right thing, entirely out of the mind! Unload your memory tonight, if you can, even of your necessary cares! It is good when a sermon helps to unload you. You remember the man who said that generally, when he went to church, he used to calculate how many looms the building would hold and how many workmen might be employed in it? "But," said he, "when I heard

Mr. Whitefield, I forgot that there was a loom in the whole world.” I wish it was always so in God’s house! But there, the good woman remembers her household—she does not know whether she put the guard on the fire—she wonders what may have become of the baby while she is away. Another misses a ring from her finger—did she leave it in the basin when she washed her hands before she came to worship? The merchant is worrying about that bill which is coming due tomorrow. He wishes that he could forget it, but the thing will come in. And this is why you cannot remember God’s mercy, because your memory is occupying itself with a host of earthly things which ought not to intrude into God’s day and into God’s worship. Or if they do, should be treated as Abraham treated the carnivorous birds when they came down upon his sacrifice. The ravens and the kites came to defile and eat what he had offered unto God, but we read that, “when the birds came down upon the sacrifice Abraham drove them away.” So must you try to do. When the time has come to remember God’s mercies and to worship Him, you must keep the birds away, or else they will devour the ripe fruit of your praise before you can gather it.

Memory has also suffered from another cause, namely, from *its connection with the other faculties*. Every power of the mind has been injured by sin. The evil results of the fall went through the entire system and weakened and perverted our entire nature, so that the whole head is sick. *The understanding*, among the rest a very noble power, has been very much darkened, and as every single part of a man operates upon the rest, the darkening of the understanding has caused a grievous weakening of the memory with regard to divine things. You will see this in a minute, for what a man does not understand he does not readily remember. Many forget God’s mercies because they do not appreciate them when they have them. They do not see the mercy of them. They have not the power to see how much love there is in them, and how little they deserve them, and therefore, they are not impressed by them so as to make a note of their being received. When daily favors come, such men take them into stock as wholesale dealers receive parcels of goods and send them out, again, without so much as opening them, or checking their quantity. They scarcely know the meaning of the loving-kindness of the Lord, for He is not in any of their thoughts! And, of course, a man does not remember what he does not understand! If you set a boy to learn a passage without any meaning in it, he may be able to repeat it to you the next time he says his lesson, but before long it must glide out of his memory because he does not understand it. Becloud the light of the understanding and the image formed upon the memory will be dull and indistinct, and very apt to vanish in time.

Again, *the affections* have been perverted, as well as the understanding. Man, by nature, does not love God. I tremble when I think of that sad truth; for it seems to me the most awful thing that can happen to an intelligent being is not to love God. That would be *my* hell! I count it the hell of hell not to love God—to be in such a condition that the infinitely lovable one—so perfect both in His character and His actions, so fitted to

be adored—should not be loved is horrible! It is death, and worse than death! I will not say it is blindness, deafness and the loss of every honorable moral power—it is utter *death* not to love God. It is partly because we do not love Him that we forget His mercies. Reflect a moment, and you will soon see. Here is a present which has been given you by a complete stranger, and though it may be of some value, you do not think much of it; but there is a ring that was given you by your mother—your mother now among the angels. Ah, you will not forget *that* gift! Love has registered it among your richest possessions. I have many things that have been given to me by friends and I value them all. I never forget them—I never can because of my esteem and affection for those who gave them to me. And so when you view divine mercy as given you by your dear and ever-blessed Father in heaven, then you do not forget it! But if it is merely regarded as a passing stranger's gift, you care not for it. If you think of a blessing as "the gift of fortune," as the world generally does, or look upon it as a windfall from the tree of luck, you will not remember it. See in the bread you eat a Father's hand supplying you. See, even, in the cup of cold water the bounty of your God. See in the comforts of home and health and the sparing of your reason, the goodness of Him who loves you and whom you love—and memory will put forth her strength! Lack of love breeds lack of recollection in us, and so the memory grows faulty.

And, alas, one thing more: our memory of God's goodness is often *crushed down by a sense of present pain*. When you suffer from sharp pains and weary aches and a fevered brow, you are prone to forget the days of health and strength—and only remember the sharp intervals of weakness and sorrow. When you stand over the grave of one you love, you are apt, in the loss, to forget he was a loan from God. When a dear one is taken away, the right way to look at it is that a precious loan has been called in by its owner. We ought to be very grateful to have been allowed to borrow the comfort so long. We ought not to repine when the owner takes back what He so kindly lent. The husband to whom you have been married these 10 years, or the child that has nestled in your bosom two years, or the friend that communed with you half a lifetime, or the brother who was such a comfort all his days—when these are gone, do not look at the going, only, but thank God that you ever had them. Be honest enough to acknowledge the good as well as to lament the evil. Bless a taking as well as a giving God, for He takes but what He gave. It is not so with us as a rule. We are living in the present too much. We strike a mark of oblivion across the happy past. We look with dread upon the unknown future and dwell on the troublous present—and so we forget the Lord's mercy to us. You are getting old, now, and you are feeble, but bless the Lord you had 50 years of manly vigor! You cannot, now, do what you once did, and your mind is enfeebled, but bless God there was a time when you could serve Him with body and soul without fatigue!

Perhaps you are brought low in estate and are afraid of poverty. Be grateful that you have had enough and to spare for many long years.

Perhaps you are now a little sad. Yes, but remember the days when you use to praise the Lord on the high-sounding cymbals and stood upon the high places of the earth! Do not let memory fail you because of the present crushing sorrow, but bless the name of the Lord for what He has done. May the Holy Spirit help your infirmities and bring the loving kindness of past years to your remembrance.

Memory is defective—this is our first inference—and I think it is clear enough.

**II.** Now, secondly, as David appointed recorders, this proves, in the second place, that **WE OUGHT TO DO ALL THAT WE CAN TO ASSIST OUR MEMORIES TOWARDS GOD.** We should not allow the mercies of the Lord to lie forgotten in ingratitude and die without praises, if we can help it. How can we strengthen memory?

I conceive that sometimes it is a good thing *to make an actual record* of God's mercy—literally to write it down in your pocketbook, so as to look at it another day. I am sure it is a proper thing to do and it will often prove to be a very useful memento. I do not believe in keeping diaries and putting down everyday what you feel, or what you think you feel but never did feel. I fear it would become a mere formality, or an exercise of imagination to most of us, for when I read very pious people's diaries, they always seem to me to have had an eye to the people who would read them, and to have put down both more and less than the truth. I am a little frightened at the artificial style of experience which it must lead to. The fact is that we have not a great deal to put down everyday if we lead an ordinary life! But there are days which ought to have a memorial. Days of sore trouble and of great deliverance, days of sharp temptation and of wonderful help—these need to be chronicled. Some days of brilliant mercy are like seven days in one. There are days which seem like chips of heaven, fragments of eternity, and stray days of delight which have broken loose from the days of heaven and wandered down to earth. Make a note of the favored days. Put the event down in black and white just as it occurred. Never mind if nobody else ever reads it—you will read it one of these days and thank God that it stands recorded for the strengthening of your faith. Therefore make a record. "I cannot express myself well in writing," says one. Well, you know, Jacob used to set up a stone and pour oil on the top of it. That was his way, though he knew little or nothing about pen and ink. You can invent some way, surely, by which you can remember choice favors! You can make a notch somewhere, a mark on an old tree, a line on the margin of the Bible over against the text that blessed you. You can put a scratch somewhere of which you shall say afterwards, "I know what that means. I did not want to forget the divine goodness—and there is the record. glory be to God, it comes fresh to my soul, again, as I look upon it!"

Another help to memory is to *be sure to praise God thoroughly at the time you receive His goodness.* You will not forget it if, when it has come, your mind is in a suitable condition of gratitude, and indeed if you use the mercy at once to God's glory, you will do better, still! Days that are full of thanksgiving will be remembered, and those mercies around which

we burned the incense of praise will leave their fragrance in the heart's secret chambers. Take care that if your memory is weak, you praise God while the mercy is newly born in your house.

Frequently it will help memory much to *set apart a little time for meditation*. A godly man and his wife were accustomed to take half-an-hour on Saturday evening to go over the mercies of the week—this is a good example. But, says one, “I could not spare so much time.” No, no, I do not suppose you could, but you spare hours to grumble over the *miseries* of the week! Oh, yes, we talk freely, when we get together, about our pains and our losses and about the bad times. They are very bad now, are they not? And you have all talked about them seven days a week for many a long week together. You have said 50 times, “I never saw such a season, there is no business, there is nothing stirring—there never was such stagnation.” Now, as we all know all about that and are pretty well agreed that it is true, could we now go on to something else, and could not the time which we waste in telling out our troubles be spent in meditating on our mercies? See if you cannot spare half-an-hour with your wife for such an exercise as I have mentioned, and I believe that you would never spend 30 minutes more happily and profitably. Say, “Come, wife, and help me. Help my memory and I will help yours. Let us remember what God has done for us this week.” Then go over your own story and listen to her pleasant annotations. I do not hesitate to say that my life story is as full of mercy as a honeycomb is full of sweetness when it drips with honey. How God has treated you, I do not know, but He has indulged me with such love that if He will only let me get into a corner in heaven and praise Him to all eternity, I will scarcely ask Him for anything else but the opportunity to adore Him. I mean to bless Him whatever comes to me—I cannot help it. I have been so favored of providence and grace that if I were crushed into mortar, I think every little bit and fragment of me would bless and praise His Holy name, “for He is good and His mercy endures forever.” This is my advice, then, and I have not given it without having tried it myself—often meditate on what the Lord has done and that will help your memory.

Then, again, *often rehearse His mercy in the ears of others*. I like to get with dear brothers and sisters who talk about God's loving-kindness—they are good company. I have noticed the difference between two farmers, for instance. One of them never did have a good crop, though, to my knowledge, he had a “middling” one, once, and that was at the time that he could hardly gather it, for it was too heavy for the reapers! But then it was a “middling” one. He has never made any money. I know he was a poor man when he began and I know he has brought up a large family and is rich, now, but he never made any money—never! Nobody ever does by farming, or by any other business, as you all know by common report. Well, I heard the grumbler's story and I turned to another friend. *This* farmer says, “Well, it may not have been a very good year for wheat, last year, but then there is a capital crop coming on to make up for it.” Another year he said, “Well, I do not think the grain will pay, but the sheep are turning out uncommonly well.” He has always something to

say by way of honoring God's mercy! And is not that as it ought to be? He says, "Blessed be God, I have always had bread to eat and clothes to put on. I am a great deal better off, now, than I thought I would be, and I have my portion to give to the work of the Lord who has dealt so well with me." That is the way to talk, for it is truthful and it praises God—and it is the talk that God should hear from us! If you tell others of your mercies, you will not be so likely to forget them.

Sometimes it will help you to remember your mercies *if you use everything about you as a reminder*. How can that be? Have you got a boy? Look at him and think of what mercy is bound up in that child—remember when he was little and sickly—and you prayed that he might live. Remember when he met with an accident and yet he was not killed, as he might have been. Remember when he went out into life and God kept him out of temptation. Remember when you saw the first sign of piety, when you heard his first prayer, when you found that he was trying to be useful. Remember when you heard his first address as he tried to speak to others about the Lord Jesus. I know the joy of such mercy, and I cannot hold my tongue when I think of it, for I am highly favored! And I hope that you either have had the same blessing on your growing lads or will have it. Well, the boy will be a reminder of God's mercy. Look at anybody's child and say, "I, also, was a child once," and then think of the mercies of God to you from childhood to the present time. Go into the street and meet a beggar. Should not *that* make you thank God that you are not forced to beg for your bread, and wear rags, but are provided for? Turn down by Bethlehem hospital and as you pass that institution, thank God that you have not lost your reason. Look at the Blind School and thank God that you have not lost your eyesight. Pass by the hospital and thank God that you are not stretched upon a bed of agony, having lost a limb. Go into a churchyard and thank God that you are yet alive. Reflect upon the judgment to come and thank God that you are not in hell. Oh, my dear friends, everything ought to make us praise God! From the little birds that wake the morning to the twinkling stars that gladden the night! Every breath of air, drop of rain and gleam of sunlight ought to refresh our memory and awake us to praise the Lord! That is the second point—we ought to do our best to assist our feeble memories.

**III.** Thirdly—and here I shall ask you to preach to yourselves—**WE HAVE ALL HAD MERCIES TO REMEMBER.**

I am going to include everybody in these remarks, first, whether they are converted people or not.

We have all had *common* mercies. I have already hinted at them in speaking of those who are suffering from their losses. From our childhood until now we have had bread to eat and clothes to put on. Some of us have enjoyed an *abundance* of common mercies. We have not had to live from hand to mouth, nor labor like slaves. Others, who have had a harder lot, should thank God that there has always been deliverance in the hour of need—bread has been given and water has been sure. They have not always had what they might have liked, but there has been enough to keep them alive, and here they are in good health to prove it!

Oh, to have your reason! To have the use of your limbs! To have your children about you! Even though you are poor, these are great blessings! Even these ordinary mercies should awaken your gratitude.

Then, in addition to common mercies, we have had those of *special providence*. Is there one person here who has not been, at times, favored with remarkable interpositions of God's providence? Flavel used to say, "Those who notice providences will not be long without providences to notice." I think it is so. I could remember scores. If I had time to write them I could mention dozens of remarkable providences which have occurred to me, some of which would not be believed by anybody else, and therefore, shall not be told, but they are true for all that. There are matters known only to the Master and His unworthy servant for which I praise His name in my heart of hearts. Have you not had some such secrets between you and God—remarkable things, special things which, if you could write them, men would not believe? Well, praise His name for the peculiar favors, but do not forget the more usual ones! Remember what the Puritan said. He and his son had to ride some 20 miles, each, to meet each other. And when his son came in, he said, "Father, I have had a most remarkable providence. My horse stumbled badly three times and yet he did not fall." "I am grateful," said the old gentleman, "but I have had a remarkable providence, too, for my horse never stumbled all the way." We do not think of that. If there is a railway accident and we just escape by the skin of our teeth, we say, "What a wonderful mercy!" Ought you not to be quite as grateful when you travel *without* an accident? Should you not see, as much, the hand of God in your perfect safety as in your rescue from danger? Remember the hourly providence of God which watches over you when you observe it not!

I should like to remind every unregenerate man and woman here present of *the long-suffering mercy of God*. You have not loved Him, but He has blessed you. You have sometimes spoken very sad things against His gospel, but He has not resented it. Possibly I speak to some who have even cursed His name, but He has not cursed you. You have defied Him and oh, it often seems to me to be an amazing thing that a man should lift his hand to heaven and defy God and that God remains quiet in pitying patience! Do you think that God—the infinite God—is going to be put into a passion by such a puny thing as you are? No, He has appointed a day in which He will settle these matters with you through His son Jesus Christ who will judge the quick and the dead. He will not stir Himself out of His sublime compassion for you. But what an amazing thing it is that He does not! Why there are thousands of men who, if we had done a hundred thousandth part as much evil towards them as they have done towards God, they would have fallen upon us with a word and a blow—or rather there would not have been any word—there would have been two blows! And if it had been in their power to take our lives, they would not have hesitated! Men could not have borne such provocation as sinners heap upon the Lord! You have provoked Jehovah to His face and thrust your finger into His eye. "No," you say, "how is that?" Why, when you mock religious people—when you make jests and mirth about those who

fear Him, you do this. Remember that text, “He that touches you touches the apple of My eye”? That is an irritating thing enough, is it not? And yet you have touched the apple of Jehovah’s eye—and instead of smiting you into nothingness in return, or sending you down to hell, He has still had mercy upon you! Let us gratefully remember this almighty patience and bless His name, whoever we may be—

**“Lord, and am I yet alive?  
Not in torment, not in hell?  
Still does Your good Spirit strive—  
With the chief of sinners dwell?  
Tell it unto sinners, tell,  
I am, I am, out of hell!”**

Furthermore, we should all praise God, or at any rate the most of us, here, that we have enjoyed *gospel privileges*. If you have not *believed* in Jesus, yet you have *heard* of Him. If you have rejected His grace, yet the kingdom of God has come near unto you. The door has been set open even if you have not entered. And the call of the gospel has been given though you have not accepted it. You are still on praying ground and pleading terms with God. You are still where you are wooed by a Savior’s love. Thank God for this! Thank God that you are not living in the dark ages, or in a far-off heathen land where the saving name is not known! Thank God you are where the bronze serpent is lifted high and the message comes to you—“Look and live!” “To you is the word of this salvation sent.”

Dear brothers and sisters, though I have thus spoken to everybody in the place, there is a special class to whom I must address myself. You, my brothers and sisters in Christ—you have, above all others, ten thousand times ten thousand reasons for remembering the past and blessing the name of the Lord! Look back to the hole of the pit from where you were raised! Remember Him who raised you from there! Look to the blood that bought you! Look to the Holy Spirit who renewed you! Look at the pardon which absolved you! Look to the divine grace that changed you! Look to the love that saved you! Look to the wisdom that has guided you! Look to the power that has upheld you!

The life of a Christian should be unbroken gratitude, for it is a life of unceasing mercy! While others should praise God as creatures, we must praise him as *new* creatures. They can praise Him because He made them—we must praise Him because He has “begotten us, again, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Therefore, lift up your hearts and voices, beloved, and praise the Lord at the remembrance of His goodness!

**IV.** The last thing is this—that ALL OUR MEMORIES SHOULD TEND TO MAKE US PRAISE AND BLESS GOD. We can rest but a minute here.

Remember mercies. Remember there is not one you have *deserved*. That bread which does not choke the sinner might justly do so, for he is an unworthy recipient of it. The earth which does not open to swallow you up must often wonder why it is not commissioned to do so, for you are so rebellious against God. We do not deserve the air we breathe, or the water we drink. Everything we have is sweetened with unspeakable

mercy! All the good that we enjoy comes from God. Remember that! Alas, most men forget it. Rowland Hill used to say that worldlings were like the hogs under the oak which eat the acorns, but never think of the oak from which they fell, nor lift up their heads to grunt out a thanksgiving. Yes, so it is. They munch the gift and murmur at the giver. Would God we did begin to remember that *every* good gift comes to us from the divine hand and that, therefore, the Lord is to be praised. We have received mercies at times, when, if we had not had them, the absence of them would have ended our lives, or would have involved us in misery worse than death. Do not, some of you, remember when you said in your soul, “O Lord, if You do but help me this time, I will praise You as long as I live”? Yet, when you received the benefit you rendered no fit return. You were grateful for a time, after a sort, but, as eaten bread is soon forgotten, so your remembrance of the mercy of God passed away. It ought not to be so!

I am now going to put a few questions to all present. First, *have you ever lived in gratitude?* Are you now living to God’s praise? Are you now conscious of your obligations and anxious to show that you feel them? If not—if not, I would like you to *feel how evil you are*. Does that offend you? I would like you to be offended with yourselves! What do you think of those who are ungrateful *to you* when you have been kind to them? Ah, you look upon them with indignation! Sometimes when I know that a man has been ungrateful to a *friend* of mine, very ungrateful, I cannot help looking upon him with contempt. If you have lived in this world for 50 years, and have never shown any gratitude to God in life, *feel evil*; feel what a miserable wretch you are to be living wholly for yourself while the God who has fed you, and blessed you all your life, has not had the turn of a penny from you in the way of real praise and true gratitude! I say again, feel evil, and then go to Jesus’ feet and tell Him that you feel it, and cry, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” If you have never been a drunk or a swearer, or unjust, think it bad enough to have been *ungrateful*. If you have lived without serving your God, think it sin enough to have made yourself as base as the dirt beneath your feet, and at the thought of it, humble yourself before your gracious God!

Next if you are able to say, “Through divine grace I have praised God and I do desire to live entirely to His glory,” yet, dear brothers and sisters *have you or I ever praised Him enough? Have we ever praised Him as we ought?* “Oh, no,” you say, “and we never shall.” And I agree with you—we never shall. The poet stretched the words a little, but his meaning was right enough, when he said—

**“But, oh, eternity’s too short,  
To utter all Your praise.”**

We must feel, we *ought* to feel the happy burden of the Lord’s praise to be too heavy for us. We confess that we cannot bless the Lord enough, either as to heartiness, frequency, or service. No human strength can praise God sufficiently, but still, let us be doing something more for God than we have ever done! We sang just now, and we sang, I think, very fairly. But let us *act* as well as sing! Let us consecrate ourselves and our substance far more fully to God. What are you doing for God? What are

you doing for my Lord Jesus? Have you a precious alabaster box at home which you would like to break, that you might pour the ointment on His head? Do it, and do it soon! Some are very protective about their alabaster boxes and keep them under lock and key. They take their friends upstairs and show them their rare treasures. They ask them to visit their houses to see their alabaster boxes and they even talk of what will be done with their choice things when their estate shall go through the Probate Court. That is what they are talking about, but as to actually pouring the costly perfume on the head of the Lord Jesus *personally*, in their own lifetime, it has not entered into their heads! God lead you to honor your Redeemer at once with the best you have! Give God your best—your very best! Give God *yourself*—your *all*—He is worthy of it. And, oh, count it a high honor if He accepts it at your hands through Jesus Christ your Savior!

Lastly, if anybody here says, “I would like to begin to remember the Lord’s mercies and to praise His name,” then you must begin at the cross! The center of everything that is good is the cross of Christ! No man begins a life of praise, or a life of prayer, or a life of holiness aright unless he begins within sight of the crucified Savior, led there by the Holy Spirit! Go there with your ingratitude like a burden on your heart—and look to the flowing of the Redeemer’s precious blood—and the load of ingratitude will roll into His sepulcher and will never be laid to your charge! And then when you get rid of the guilt you can begin—yes, you *will* begin—from that time on, to praise Him and magnify His name! God give you a memory capable of treasuring up His favors. May He enrich you with the benedictions of His covenant that you may have much to treasure up, and may the whole of the sweet canes and precious spices which memory has laid up be used as fuel for the flame of thanksgiving in life, in death, and through eternity! Amen. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
1 CHRONICLES 16:1-36.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—  
130, 229, 720, AND THE DOXOLOGY.**

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# THE LITTLE DOGS

## NO. 1309

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 6, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”  
Matthew 15:26, 27.***

***“But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs.”  
Mark 7:27, 28.***

I TAKE the two records of Matthew and Mark that we may have the whole matter before us. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditation.

The brightest jewels are often found in the darkest places. Christ had not found such faith, no, not in Israel, as he discovered in this poor Canaanite woman. The borders and fringes of the land were more fruitful than the center, where the farming had been more abundant! In the headlands of the field, where the farmer does not expect to grow much beyond weeds, the Lord Jesus found the richest ear of corn that as yet had filled His sheaf. Let those of us who reap after Him be encouraged to expect the same experience. Never let us speak of any district as too depraved to yield us converts, nor of any class of persons as too fallen to become believers. Let us go, even, to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, though the land is under a curse, for even *there* we shall discover some elect one, ordained to be a jewel for the Redeemer’s crown! Our heavenly Father has children everywhere!

In spiritual things it is found that the best plants often grow in the most barren soil. Solomon spoke of trees and discoursed concerning the hyssop on the wall and the cedar in Lebanon. So is it in the natural world—the great trees are found on great mountains and the minor plants in places adapted for their tiny roots. But it is not so among the plants of the Lord’s right hand planting, for there we have seen the cedar grow upon the wall—great saints in places where it has apparently impossible for them to exist! And we have seen hyssops growing upon Lebanon—a questionable, insignificant piety where there have been innumerable advantages! The Lord is able to make strong faith exist with little knowledge, little present enjoyment and little encouragement. And strong faith in such conditions triumphs and conquers and doubly glorifies the grace of God! Such was this Canaanite woman, a cedar growing where soil was scant. She was a woman of amazing faith, though she could have heard but little of Him in whom she believed, and perhaps, had

never seen Him at all until the day when she fell at His feet, and said, "Lord, help me!"

Our Lord had a very quick eye for spying faith. If the jewel was lying in the mire, His eyes caught its glitter. If there was a choice ear of wheat among the thorns, He failed not to perceive it. Faith has a strong attraction for the Lord Jesus! At the sight of it, "the king is held in the galleries," and cries, "you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck." The Lord Jesus was charmed with the fair jewel of this woman's faith and watching it and delighting in it, He resolved to turn it round and set it in other lights, that the various facets of this priceless diamond might, each one, flash its brilliance and delight His soul! Therefore He tried her faith by His silence, and by His discouraging replies, that He might see its strength. But He was, all the while, delighting in it and secretly *sustaining* it. And when He had sufficiently tried it, He brought it forth as gold, and set His own royal mark upon it in these memorable words, "O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will."

I am hopeful, this morning that perhaps some poor soul in this place under very discouraging circumstances may, nevertheless, be led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a strong and persevering faith. And though as yet it enjoys no peace and has seen no gracious answer to prayer, I trust that its struggling faith may be strengthened, this morning, by the example of the Canaanite woman.

I gather from the story of her appeal to the Lord Jesus and her success, four facts. The first is, *faith's mouth cannot be closed*. The second is, *faith never disputes with God*. Thirdly, I perceive that *faith argues mightily* and fourthly, that *faith wins her suit*.

**I. THE MOUTH OF FAITH CAN NEVER BE CLOSED**, for if ever the faith of a woman was tried so as to make her cease from prayer, it was that of this daughter of Tyre. She had difficulty after difficulty to encounter and yet she could not be put off from pleading for her little daughter because she believed in Jesus as the great Messiah, able to heal all manner of diseases—and she meant to pray to Him until He yielded to her importunity—for she was confident that He could chase the demon from her child.

Observe that *the mouth of faith cannot be closed even on account of the closed ear and the closed mouth of Christ*. He answered her never a word. She spoke very piteously—she came and threw herself at His feet—her child's case was very urgent. Her motherly heart was very tender and her cries were very piercing. And yet He answered her not a word! As if He were deaf and dumb, He passed her by. Yet she was not staggered. She believed in Him and even He, Himself, could not make her doubt Him, let Him try silence even if He would. It is hard to believe when prayer seems to be a failure. I would to God that some poor seeker here might believe that Jesus Christ is able and willing to save and so fully believe it that his unanswered prayers shall not be able to make him doubt! Even if you should pray in vain by the month together, do not allow a doubt about the Lord Jesus and His power to save to cross your mind. What if you

cannot, yet, grasp the peace which faith must ultimately bring you? What if you have no certainty of forgiveness of your sin? What if no gleams of joy should visit your spirit? Still believe Him who cannot lie! "Though He slay me," said Job, "yet will I trust in Him." That was splendid faith! It would be a great deal for some if they could say, "Though He smite me, yet will I trust Him," but Job said, "Though He *slay* me." If Jesus puts on the garb of an executioner and comes out against me as though He would destroy me, yet will I believe Him to be full of love! He is still good and gracious. I cannot doubt it, and therefore, at His feet I will lie down and look up, expecting grace at His hands! Oh for such faith as this! O soul, if you have it, you are a saved man, as sure as you are alive! If even the Lord's apparent refusal to bless you cannot close your mouth, your faith is of a noble sort, and salvation is yours!

In the next place, *her faith could not be silenced by the conduct of the disciples*. They did not treat her well, but yet, perhaps, not altogether badly. They were not like their Master—they frequently repulsed those who would come to Him. Her noise annoyed them. She kept to them with boundless perseverance, and therefore, they said, "Send her away, for she cries *after us*." Poor soul, she never cried after *them*, it was after their Master! Sometimes disciples become very important in their own eyes and think that the pushing and crowding to hear the gospel is caused by the people's eagerness to hear them, whereas nobody would care for their poor talk if it were not for the gospel message which they are charged to deliver! Give us any other theme and the multitude would soon melt away! Though weary of the woman's importunate cries, they acted somewhat kindly towards her, for they were evidently desirous that she should obtain the gift she sought, or else our Lord's reply would not have been appropriate, "I am not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was not her daughter's healing that they cared for, but they consulted their own comfort, for they were anxious to be rid of her. "Send her away," they said, "for she cries after us." Still, though they did not treat her as men should treat a woman, as disciples should treat a seeker, as Christians should treat *everybody*, yet for all that, her mouth was not stopped! Peter, I have no doubt, looked in a very scowling manner, and perhaps, even John became a little impatient, for he had a quick temper by nature. Andrew and Philip, and the rest of them considered her very impertinent, and presumptuous, but she thought of her little daughter at home, and of the horrible miseries to which the demon subjected her, and so she pressed up to the Savior's feet, and said, "Lord, help me"; cold, hard words, and unkind, unsympathetic behavior could not prevent her pleading with Him in whom she believed. Ah, poor sinner, perhaps you are saying, "I am longing to be saved, but such-and-such a good Christian has dealt very bitterly with me; he has doubted my sincerity, questioned the reality of my repentance, and caused me the deepest sorrow. It seems as if he did not wish me to be saved." Ah, dear Friend, this is very trying, but if you have true faith in the Master you will not mind us disciples—neither the gentlest of us, nor the most rough

of us—just urge on your suit with your Lord till He deigns to give you an answer of peace.

*Her mouth, again, was not closed by exclusive doctrine which appeared to confine the blessing to a favored few!* The Lord Jesus Christ said, “I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” and though properly understood there is nothing very severe in it, yet the sentence must have fallen on the woman’s heart like a talent of lead. “Alas,” she might have thought, “then He is not sent to me! Vainly do I seek for that which He reserves for the Jews.” Now, the doctrine of election, which is assuredly taught in Scripture, ought not to hinder any soul from coming to Christ, for, if properly understood, it would rather encourage than discourage! And yet, often, to the uninstructed ear the doctrine of the divine choice of a people from before the foundation of world acts with very depressing effect. We have known poor seekers mournfully say, “Perhaps there is no mercy for me. I may be among those for whom no purpose of mercy has been formed.” They have been tempted to cease from prayer for fear they should not have been predestinated unto eternal life! Ah, dear soul, if you have the faith of God’s elect in you, you will not be kept back by any self-condemning inferences drawn from the secret things of God! You will believe in that which has been clearly revealed, and you will be assured that this cannot contradict the secret decrees of heaven. What? Though our Lord was only sent to the house of Israel, yet there is a house of Israel not after the flesh but after the *spirit*, and therefore, the Syrophenician woman was included even where she thought she was shut out—and you may, also, be comprehended within those lines of gracious destiny which now distress you. At any rate, say to yourself, “In the election of grace others are included who were as sinful as I have been, why should not I? Others have been included who were as full of distress as I have been on account of sin and why should not I be, also?” Reasoning thus, you will press forward, in hope believing against hope, suffering no plausible deduction from the doctrine of Scripture to prevent your believing in the appointed Redeemer.

*The mouth of faith, in this case, was not even closed by a sense of admitted unworthiness.* Christ spoke of *dogs*—He meant that the Gentiles were to Israel as the dogs—she did not at all dispute it but yielded the point by saying, “Truth, Lord.” She felt she was only worthy to be compared to a dog! I have no doubt her sense of unworthiness was very deep. She did not expect to win the blessing she sought on account of any merit of her own—she depended upon the goodness of Christ’s heart, not on the goodness of her cause—and upon the excellence of His power rather than upon the prevalence of her plea. Yet, conscious as she was that she was only a poor Gentile dog, her prayers were not hindered! She cried, notwithstanding all, “Lord, help me.” O sinner, if you feel yourself to be the worst sinner out of hell, still pray, believingly pray for mercy! If your sense of unworthiness is enough to drive you to self-destruction, yet I beseech you, out of the depths, out of the dungeon of self-loathing, still cry unto God, for your salvation rests in no measure or degree upon yourself or upon anything that you are or have been or can be! You need

to be saved *from* yourself, not *by* yourself! It is yours to be empty, that Jesus may fill you! It is yours to confess your filthiness, that He may wash you! It is yours to be less than nothing, that Jesus may be everything to you! Allow not the number, blackness, frequency, or heinousness of your transgressions to silence your prayers, and though you are a dog—yes, not worthy to be set with the dogs of the Lord's flock—yet open your mouth in believing prayer!

There was, besides this, a general tone and spirit in what the Lord Jesus said which tended to depress the woman's hope and restrain her prayer, yet *she was not kept back by the darkest and most depressing influences*. "It is not meet," said the Lord Jesus, "it is not becoming, it is not proper, it is hardly lawful to take children's bread and throw it to dogs." Perhaps she did not quite see that entire He might have meant, but what she *did* see was enough to pour cold water upon the flames of her hope, yet her faith was not quenched! It was a faith of that immortal kind which nothing can kill, for her mind was made up that whatever Jesus meant, or *did* not mean, she would not cease to trust Him! She would continue to urge her suit with Him. There are a great many things in and around the gospel which men see as in a haze, and being misunderstood, they rather repel than attract seeking souls. But be they what they may, we must resolve to come to Jesus at all risks. "If I perish, I perish." Beside the great stumbling stone of election, there are truths of God and facts which seekers magnify and misconstrue till they see a thousand difficulties. They are troubled about Christian experience, about being born-again, about inbred sin and all sorts of things. In fact, a thousand lions are in the way when the soul attempts to come to Jesus! But he who gives Christ the faith which He deserves, says, "I fear none of these things. Lord, help me, and I will still confide in You. I will approach You. I will press through obstacles to You and throw myself at Your dear feet, knowing that him that comes to You, You will in no wise cast out."

**II. FAITH NEVER DISPUTES WITH THE LORD.** Faith worships. You notice how Matthew says, "Then came she and worshipped Him." Faith also begs and prays. You observe how Mark says, "She besought Him." She cried, "Lord, help me," after having said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David." Faith pleads, but never disputes, not even against the hardest thing that Jesus says. If faith disputed—I am uttering a mistake—she would not be faith, for that which disputes is *unbelief*! Faith in God implies agreement with what God says, and consequently it excludes the idea of doubt. Genuine faith believes anything and everything the Lord says, whether discouraging or encouraging; she never has a "but," or an "if," or even a "yet," to put in, but she stands to it; "You have said it, Lord, and therefore it is true! You have ordained it, Lord, and therefore it is right." She never goes beyond that.

Observe in our text that *faith assents to all the Lord says*. She said, "Truth, Lord." What had He said? "You are comparable to a dog!" "Truth, Lord. Truth, Lord, so I am." "It would not be right that the children should be robbed of bread in order to feed dogs." "Truth Lord, it would

not be fitting, and I would not have one of Your children deprived of grace for *me*.” “It is not your time yet,” said Jesus, “the children must *first* be fed, children at the meal times and dogs after dinner. This is Israel’s time and the Gentiles may follow after. But not yet.” She virtually replies, “I know it, Lord, and agree.”

She does not raise a question or dispute the justice of the Lord’s dispensing His own grace according to His sovereign good pleasure. She fails not, as some do who quibble at divine sovereignty. It would have proven that she had little or no faith if she had done that. She disputes not as to the Lord’s set time and order. Jesus said, “Let the children first be filled,” and she does not dispute the time, as many do, who will not have it that *now* is the accepted time, but are as much for postponing as this woman was for antedating the day of grace! She entered into no argument against its being improper to take the covenant bread from the children and give it to the uncircumcised heathen. She never wished Israel to be robbed for *her*. Dog as she was, she would not have any purpose of God nor any propriety of the divine household shifted and changed for her. She assented to all the Lord’s appointments. *That* is the faith which saves the soul, which agrees with the mind of God even if it seem adverse to herself—which believes the revealed declarations of God whether they appear to be pleasant or terrible—and assents to God’s word whether it is like a balm to its wound or like a sword to cut and slay. If the word of God is true, O man, do not fight against it, but bow before it! It is not the way to a living faith in Jesus Christ, nor to obtain peace with God, to take up arms against anything which God declares. In yielding lies safety. Say, “Truth, Lord,” and you shall find salvation!

Note that she not only assented to all that the Lord said, but *she worshipped Him in it*. “Truth,” she said, “but yet You are my Lord. You call me, ‘dog,’ but You are my Lord for all that. You account me unworthy to receive Your bounties, but You are my Lord, and I still acknowledge You as such.” She is of the mind of Job—“Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?” She is willing to take the evil and say, “Whether the Lord gives, or whether He refuses, blessed be His name! He is still my Lord.” Oh, this is grand faith, which has thrown aside the argumentative spirit and not only assents to the Lord’s will, but worships Him in it! “Let it be what it may, O Lord, even if Your truth condemns me, yet You are still Lord, and I confess Your Deity, confess Your excellence, acknowledge Your crown rights, and submit myself to You. Do with me what You will.”

And, you observe, when she said, “Truth, Lord,” *she did not go on to suggest that any alteration should be made for her*. “Lord,” she said, “You have classed me among the dogs.” She does not say, “Put me among the children,” but she only asks to be treated as a dog is! “The dogs eat the crumbs,” she says. She does not want a purpose altered nor an ordinance changed, nor a decree removed—“Let it be as it is. If it is Your will, Lord, it is *my* will”—she spies a gleam of hope, where, if she had not possessed faith, she would have seen only the blackness of despair! May we have such a faith as hers, and never enter into controversy with God.

**III.** Now I come to an interesting part of our subject, namely, that FAITH ARGUES, though it does not dispute. "Truth, Lord," she said, "yet the dogs eat the crumbs." This woman's argument was correct and strictly logical throughout. It was an argument based upon the Lord's own premises, and you know, if you are reasoning with a man, you cannot do better than take his own statements and argue upon them. She does not proceed to lay down new premises, or dispute the old ones by saying, "I am no dog." But she says, "Yes, I am a dog." She accepts that statement of the Lord, and uses it as a blessed *argumentum ad hominem*, such as was never excelled in this world! She took the words out of His own mouth and vanquished Him with them, even as Jacob overcame the angel! There is so much force in the women's argument that I quite despair, this morning, of being able to set it all forth to you. I would, however, remark that the translators have greatly injured the text by putting in the word, "yet," for there is no, "yet," in the Greek! It is quite another word. Jesus said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." "No," she said, "it would not be right to do this, because the dogs are provided for, for the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." "It would be very improper to give them the children's bread, because they have bread of their own." "Truth, Lord, I admit it would be improper to give the dogs the children's bread, because they have *already* their share when they eat the crumbs which fall from the children's table. That is all they need, and all I desire. I do not ask You to give me the children's bread, I only ask for the dog's crumbs."

Let us see the force of her reasoning, which will appear in many ways. The first is this. *She argued with Christ from her hopeful position.* "I am a dog," she said, "but, Lord, You have come all the way to Sidon. Here You are close on the borders of my country, and therefore, I am not like a dog out in the street—I am a dog under the table." Mark tells us that she said, "The dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." She as good as says, "Lord, You see my position—I was a dog in the street, afar off from You—but now You have come and preached on our borders and I have been privileged to listen to You. Others have been healed and You are in this very house doing deeds of grace while I look on, and therefore, though I am a dog, I am a dog under the table. Therefore, Lord, let me have the crumbs." Do you see, dear hearer? You admit that you are a sinner and a great sinner, but you say, "Lord, I am a sinner that is *permitted* to hear the gospel, therefore bless it to me! I am a dog, but I am under the table, deal with me as such! When there is a sermon preached for the comfort of Your people, I am there to hear it. Whenever the saints gather together and the precious promises are discussed, and they rejoice therein, I am there, looking up and wishing that I was among them. But Lord, since You have had the grace to let me be a hearer of the gospel, will You reject me, now that I desire to be a *receiver* of it? To what end and purpose have You brought me so near, or rather *come* so near to me, if, after all, You will reject me? Dog I am, but still, I am a dog under the table. It is a favor to be privileged to be among the children, even if I may only lie at their feet. I pray You, good Lord, since now I am permitted

to look up to You and ask this blessing, do not reject me.” To me it seems that this was a strong point with the woman and that she used it well.

Her next plea was *her encouraging relationship*. “Truth, Lord,” she says, “I am a dog, but the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from *their master’s table*.” See the stress laid there by Matthew—“From their master’s table”? I cannot say that you are my father. I cannot look up and claim the privilege of a child, but you are my Master, and masters feed their dogs. They give at least the crumbs to those dogs which acknowledge them as their lord.” The plea is very much like that suggested to the mind of the poor returning prodigal. He thought to say to his father, “Make me as one of your hired servants,” only his faith was far less than hers. For hers pleaded, “Lord, if I do not stand in relation to you as a child, yet I am Your *creature*. You have made me and I look up to You and beseech You not to let me perish. If I have no other hold upon You, I have at least this, that I ought to have served You, and therefore, I am Your servant though I am a runaway. I do belong to You—at least under the covenant of works if I do not under the covenant of grace, and oh, since I am Your servant, do not utterly reject me! You own me by creation, at any rate. Oh, look upon me, and bless me; the dogs eat what falls from their master’s table—let me do the same.” She spies out a dog’s relation to its master and makes the most of it with blessed ingenuity, which we shall do well to imitate.

Notice next, she pleads *her association with the children*. Here I must tell you that it is a pity that it was not, I suppose, possible for our translators to bring clearly out what is, after all, the heart of the passage. She was pleading for her *little* daughter, and our Lord said to her, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the *little* dogs.” The word is a diminutive and the woman focused upon it. The word, “dogs,” could not have served her turn one half as well as that of, “*little* dogs.” But she said, “Truth, Lord, yet the little dogs eat of the crumbs.” In the East, as a rule, a dog is not allowed indoors. In fact, dogs are looked upon there as foul creatures, and roam about uncared for and half wild. Christianity has raised the dog, and made him man’s companion, as it will raise all the brute creation, till the outrages of vivisection, and the cruelties of the vulgar will be things unheard of except as horrors of a past barbarous age. In the East a dog is far down in the scale of life—a street wanderer, prowling for scanty food—and in temper little better than a reformed wolf. So the adult Easterns do not associate with dogs, having a prejudice against them. But children are not so foolish, and consequently, the Eastern *children* associate with the little dogs. The father will not have the dog near him, but his child knows no such folly and seeks out a little dog to join him in his sports. Thus the little dog comes to be under the table, tolerated in the house for the child’s sake. The woman appears, to me, to argue thus—“You have called me and my daughter whelps, little dogs, but then the little dogs are under the children’s table; they associate with the children, even as I have been with Your disciples today. If I am not one of them, I have been associating with them, and would be glad to be among them.” How heartily do I wish that some poor soul

would catch at this and say, “Lord, I cannot claim to be one of Your children, but I love to sit among them, for I am never happier than when I am with them. Sometimes they trouble and distress me, as little children pinch and hurt their little dogs, but oftentimes they caress me and speak kindly and comfortably to me. And they pray for me, and desire my salvation. So, Lord, if I am not a child, yet You call me a little dog, and so I am. So give me a little dog’s treatment—give me the crumbs of mercy which I seek.”

Her argument goes further, *for the little dog eats the crumbs of the children’s bread with the child’s full consent*. When a child has its little dog to play with while he is eating, what does the child do? Why, of course, it gives a little bit to the dog every now and again and the doggie, himself, takes great liberties and helps himself as much as he dares. When a little dog is with the children at meal time it is sure to get a crumb from one or other of its playmates—and none will object to its eating what it can get. So the woman seems to say, “Lord, there are the children, Your disciples. They do not treat me very well. Little children do not treat little dogs always so kindly as they might, but still, Lord, they are quite willing that I should have the blessing I am seeking. They have a full portion in You; they have Your presence; they have Your word; they sit at Your feet; they have obtained all sorts of spiritual blessings, and I am sure they cannot grudge me so much less a blessing—they are willing that I should have the devil cast out of my daughter, for that blessing, compared with what they have, is but a crumb—and they are content that I should have it. So Lord, I answer Your argument. You say it is not meet until the children are filled to give bread to dogs, but, Lord, the children are filled and are quite willing to let me have my portion. They consent to allow me the crumbs! Will You not give them to me?”

I think there was another point of force in her plea—*the abundance of the provision*. She had a great faith in Christ and believed big things of Him, and therefore, she said, “Lord, there is no great strength in Your argument if You do intend to prove that I ought not to have the bread for fear there should not be enough for the children, for You have so much that even while the children are being fed, the dogs may get the crumbs and there will still be enough for the children!” Where it is a poor man’s table and he cannot afford to lose a crumb, dogs should not be allowed. But when it is a *king’s* table where bread is of small account, and the children are sitting and feeding to the full, the little dogs may be permitted to feed under the table for the mere droppings—not the bread the master casts down, but the crumbs which *fall* by accident are so many that there is enough for the dogs without the children being deprived of a mouthful. “No, Lord,” she said, “I would not have You take away the bread from Your own children! God forbid that such a deed should be done for *me!* But there is enough for Your children in Your overflowing love and mercy, and still enough for me, for all I ask is but a *crumb* compared with what You are daily bestowing upon others.”

Now, here is the last point in which her argument had force. *She looked at things from Christ’s point of view*. “If, great Lord,” she said, “You

look at me as a dog, then behold I humbly take You at Your word, and plead that if I am a dog to You, then the cure I ask for my daughter is but a crumb for Your great power and goodness to bestow on me." She used a diminutive word, too, and said, "A little crumb." The little dogs eat of the little crumbs which fall from the children's table. What bold faith this was! She valued the mercy she sought beyond all price! She thought it worth 10,000 worlds to *her*, but yet to the Son of God she knew it to be a mere crumb, so rich is He in power to heal and so full of goodness and blessing! If a man gives a crumb to a dog, he has a little the less, but if *Jesus* gives mercy to the greatest of sinners, He has none the less—He is just as rich in condescension and mercy, and power to forgive as He was before! The woman's argument was most potent. She was as wise as she was earnest, and best of all, she believed most marvelously!

I shall close this outline of the argument by saying that at bottom the woman was, in reality, arguing according to the eternal purposes of God, for what was the Lord's grand design in giving the bread to the children, or, in other words, sending a divine revelation to Israel? Why, it always was His purpose that through the children, the dogs should get the bread—that through Israel the gospel should be handed to the Gentiles! It had always been His plan to bless His own heritage that His way might be known upon earth, His saving health among all nations! And this woman, somehow or other, by a divine instinct, fell into the divine method. Though she had not spied out the secret or at least it is not told us that she did so in so many words, yet there was the innate force of her argument. In other words, it ran thus—"It is through the children that the dogs have to be fed. Lord, I do not ask You to cease giving the children their bread. Nor do I even ask You to hurry on the children's meal—let them be fed first—but even while they are eating, let me have the crumbs which drop from their well-filled hands and I will be content." There is a brave argument for you, poor coming sinner. I leave it in your hands and pray the Spirit of God to help you to use it! And if you can turn it to good account, you shall prevail with the Lord this day!

**IV.** Our last and closing head is this—FAITH WINS HER SUIT. This woman's faith first *won a commendation for herself*. Jesus said, "O, woman, great is your faith." She had not heard of the prophecies concerning Jesus. She was not bred and born, and educated in a way in which she was likely to become a believer, and yet she *did* become a believer of the first class. It was marvelous that it should be so, but grace delights in doing wonders. She had not seen the Lord, before, in her life. She was not like those who had associated with Him for many months and yet, with but *one* view of Him, she gained this great faith! It was astonishing, but the grace of God is always astonishing! Perhaps she had never seen a miracle—all that her faith had to rest upon was that she had heard in her own country that the Messiah of the Jews was come—and she believed that the Man of Nazareth was He and on this she relied. O brothers and sisters, with all our advantages! With the opportunities that we have of knowing the whole life of Christ and understanding the doctrines of the gospel as they are revealed to us in the New Testament—with

many years of observation and experience—our faith ought to be much stronger than it is! Does not this poor woman shame us when we see her with her slender opportunities, nevertheless so strong in faith, so that Jesus Himself commending her says, “O woman, great is your faith”?

But her faith prevailed further in that it *won a commendation for the mode of its action*, for, according to Mark, Jesus said, “Go your way; *for this saying* the devil is gone out of your daughter.” It was as if He rewarded the *saying* as well as the faith which suggested it! He was so delighted with the wise, prudent and humble, yet courageous manner in which she turned His words against Himself, that He said, “For this saying the devil is gone out of your daughter.” The Lord who commends faith, afterwards commends the fruits and acts of faith! The tree consecrates the fruit! No man’s actions can be acceptable with God till He, Himself, is accepted, and the woman, having been accepted on her faith, the results of her faith were agreeable to the heart of Jesus.

The woman also *gained her desire*—“The devil is gone out of your daughter,” and he was gone at once! She had only to go home and find her daughter on the bed taking a quiet rest—something which she had not done since the demon had possessed her! Our Lord, when He gave her the desire of her heart, gave it in a grand manner! He gave her a sort of *carte blanche* and said, “Be it unto you even as you will.” I do not know that any other person ever had such a word said to them as this woman, “Be it unto you even as you will.” It was as if the Lord of glory surrendered at discretion to the conquering arms of a woman’s faith! The Lord grant to you and me, in all times of our struggling, to be able, thus, by faith, to conquer—and we cannot imagine how great will be the spoil which we shall divide when the Lord shall say, “Be it unto you even as you will.”

The close of all is this—this woman is a lesson to all outsiders—to you who think yourselves beyond the pale of hope, to you who were not brought up to attend the house of God, who perhaps have been negligent of all religion for almost all your life. This poor woman is a Sidonian. She comes of a race that had been condemned to die many centuries before—one of the accursed seed of Canaan! And yet, for all that, she became great in the kingdom of heaven because she believed! And there is no reason why those who are reckoned to be quite outside the church of God should not be in the very center of it—and be the most burning and shining lights of the whole! O you poor outcasts and far-off ones, take heart and comfort! Come to Jesus Christ and trust yourselves in His hands!

This woman is, next of all, an example to those who think they have been repulsed in their endeavors after salvation. Have you been praying and have you not succeeded? Have you sought the Lord and do you seem to be unhappier than ever? Have you made attempts at reformation and amendment and believed that you made them in the divine strength—and have they failed? Yet trust in Him whose blood has not lost its efficacy, whose promise has not lost its truth, and whose arm has not lost its power to save! Cling to the cross, sinner! If the earth sinks beneath you,

hang on! If storms should rage and all the floods are out, and even God, Himself, seems to be against you, cling to the cross! There is your hope! You cannot perish there!

This is a lesson, next, to every intercessor. This woman was not pleading for *herself*, she was asking for another. Oh, when you plead for a fellow sinner, do not do it in a cold-hearted manner! Plead as for your own soul and your own life! That man will prevail with God as an intercessor who solemnly bears the matter upon his own heart and makes it his own and with tears entreats an answer of peace!

Lastly, remember that this mighty woman, this glorious woman, is a lesson to every mother, for she was pleading for her little daughter! Maternal instinct makes the weakest strong, and the most timid brave. Even among poor beasts and birds, how powerful is a mother's love! Why, the poor little robin which would be frightened at the approach of a *footstep*, will sit upon its nest when the intruder comes near when her little ones are in danger. A mother's love makes her heroic for her child! And so, when you are pleading with God, plead as a mother's love suggests to you, till the Lord shall say to you also, "O woman, great is your faith; the devil is gone out of your daughter; be it unto you even as you will." I leave that last thought with parents as an encouragement to pray. The Lord stir you up to it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
MATTHEW 15:1-31.**

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—906, 551, 540.**

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# THE BLIND BEFRIENDED

## NO. 1310

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 9, 1876,  
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”*  
*Isaiah 42:16.*

This promise is not made to every blind man, or to all sorts of blind people, for there are some blind people whom God does not lead. There is only a peculiar sort of blind people to whom this promise is given; that He will guide them and not forsake them. If you go outside the Tabernacle, take the first turn on the left and walk down what is called the St. George's Road till you come to the end, you may see asylums built for three sorts of blind people. On your right hand you will have the Blind School. That is for the physically blind—those who have lost the sight of these outward eyes. On the left hand you will see the Bethlehem Hospital. That is for the mentally blind, who have lost the inner sight, and are in the more unhappy state of lunacy. Then straight before you, you will see the St. George's Roman Catholic Cathedral. That is for the *spiritually* blind, whose case is all the more pitiable, because these blind people have blind *leaders*, and their deluded souls are prescribed for by physicians who foster their delusions. Now, the promise of divine guidance is not addressed to any of these. It is not necessarily given to the physically blind, for, alas, some of them, in addition to their loss of natural sight, are without a sight of Christ. Nor is it given to the mentally blind, for some of them, before they lost their reason, had made ill use of it, and had despised the Savior; neither is it made to the spiritually blind, for strong delusion is upon them that they should believe a lie, and alas, they wander in the light as in the darkness, and grope like the blind at noonday. There is, however, a fourth kind of blindness which you, who are genuine Christians, will attribute to yourselves. A painful experience has made it clear to you. The promise is made to the confessedly, the *consciously* blind—and I shall try to show that this fitly describes every Christian! Every believer in Christ is a witness of that “judgement for which Christ came into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind” (John 9:39). It is to him and to such as him, that the Lord has said, “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known.”

**I.** Our first inquiry shall be, WHO ARE THEY? Who are these blind people?

We have already said they are *consciously blind people* and they confess that they were once totally blind. Years gone by, before they knew

the Savior, they knew nothing aright. Before the light from heaven shone upon them they were in the gross darkness of their natural state. Now, it is not every man that *knows* that he is, by nature, in the dark—and when he *does* know it, he becomes one of the blind to whom the Lord makes this promise! The Pharisees in Christ's day were as blind as bats, but they said, "We see." "Therefore," said Christ, "your sin remains." They were the very people whom it was hard to save because they were a seeing people in their own estimation. But the man who has been converted knows, now, that there was no light in him by nature, that he did not understand anything aright, that he put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light, and light for darkness. He knows that in him—that is in his flesh—there was no good thing, but all manner of corruptions, tendencies towards evil, envy of mankind and hatred of God. Soul, have you ever seen your own darkness? Have you ever seen that nature's light is nothing better than midnight? Have you ever been made to see that, as it were, through Adam's fall, you were plunged into the state of the blind and could not possibly find your way? Well, if you are of that sort, the promise is made to you!

These blind people, knowing their infirmity and feeling their privation, recognize that *what they thought was sight, before, was all delusion*. Ah, there was a time with me when I thought I was righteous. And as I looked upon myself I saw fair white linen upon my loins, but now I know that it was my blindness that made me think I was fully dressed when I was naked. I thought I had many goods, and many treasures. I used to go from case to case to inspect my jewels. I would gladly persuade myself that I was rich. But now I see that I was in the delirium of sin, and therefore, flattered myself that I was rich when I was poor. I thought then, too, that I was happy. There was mirth and a frothy joy which I thought well worth the having. But now I call that joy, misery, which is sinful, and that mirth to be wretchedness, which is apart from God.

Now our eyes are open to see that we did not see and to discover that it was all dark, and yet we thought it light! Phantoms passed before us—mere shapes of things that were not—but we counted these to be substantial realities. Dear hearer, have you discovered that those bright eyes of yours which you used to possess, which made you see such righteousness in yourself and such pleasure in sin, were, after all, blind eyes and that you did not see at all, but were duped and deluded, and under the witchcraft of Satan, fascinated by the world and beguiled by your own corrupt heart? Well, if it is so, you are one of those blind people who confess their blindness, to whom the promise is most graciously made.

But I think I hear you say, "You are telling us rather of blindness that we used to be afflicted with than of one from which we are now suffering." Well, the figure will not run on all fours; we must use it, however, to set forth *the present truth* and this is as it ought to be used. Surely, the description, "blind," may well be applied to the Christian for this reason—that now he does not expect to see that upon which he builds his hope. All that he sees is nothing to him! That which is to him substantial and real is that which he believes. If you ask any believer what he rests his hope upon, he will tell you that it is upon an *unseen* Christ, "whom

having not seen we love.” He will tell you that there is a promise, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” And he has realized the sweetness of that word. He does not rest his confidence on a crucifix which he can see with his eyes, but on the Savior who is not here—for He is risen, and ascended into heaven! He does not rest upon a *priest* whose voice he can hear—a man like himself—his confidence is in another priest who has gone within the veil and entered into glory! He depends no longer upon his own doings. These he can see, but what he sees of them makes him despondent. He dares not rest in his own works—he rests in the works of another who has gone up to the throne of God, and carried a matchless righteousness into Jehovah’s presence. He will tell you that he does not even depend upon his own *feelings*—he is very conscious that they are fickle—they change like the weather. As one day we have a little bright sunshine, and perhaps, in an hour we have a hailstorm, and by-and-by are brought back to the very cold of winter, so is it with our feelings. Our experience is always varying and the man that knows himself aright dares not trust in his feelings, nor rely upon his experiences. No, he rests in the feelings of Him who sweat great drops of blood in the garden! His confidence is in the anguish of one who was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, and not in his own anguish. He rests in the death and resurrection—in the wounds and in the triumphs—not of himself in any respect, but of Christ, whom having not seen, he nevertheless trusts, and relies upon! Oh, it is a blessed thing to be thus blind, so that you cannot see any good in yourself, cannot see any good upon which you could rest—cannot discover, even in God’s work apart from Christ—any foundation on which to build! You cannot find in heaven or earth any prop and pillar for the soul, except Jesus crucified. Ransack the universe and where others can see grounds of confidence these truly blind men are unable to see anything, and only say, “These we count dross and dung that we may win Christ and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Oh, blessed blindness, never more to be able to see a solitary ray of hope except in Christ—never more to be able to find any confidence anywhere but in Him whom God the Father has set forth to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in His precious blood!

Moreover, besides this, these blind people are *content not to see a great many things*. He that is blind in the blessed sense knows that there are many things which he cannot see and does not want to see. For instance, he cannot see into the future. He leaves others to say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and will buy and sell and get gain.” This man is so wisely blind that he cannot presume to peer into tomorrow. He has been told to leave tomorrow with God, for “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” I know some of the Lord’s people who look so far forward that they see a great deal too much for their own peace of mind. They catch a glimpse of trouble ahead and yet that trouble will never come. Some of them see dreadful disasters which never happen! I have known some good old people who were afraid that they should have to spend their last shilling and yet they left ample

stores behind when they went home. I have known some who were afraid that they should live so long that they would be a nuisance to their friends, and yet their friends bewailed them when they, at last, fell asleep. I have known a Christian man dread what would happen if—and that, “if,” was entirely his own conjuring up. Some are afraid to die and they feel a thousand deaths in fearing one! There will be no terrors to them in death! There was one who used to be always in bondage through fear of death—he died in his sleep and it would have been a good thing for him if he had been so blind that he could not see the thing he dreaded. Oh, it is a happy thing not to be able to see the trouble which, if wisely appointed, is as wisely concealed, but to leave it all with God! You have enough to do to fight the battles of today. Permit me to repeat a figure which I have often used before. When Leonidas and the Spartans went into the narrow pass of Thermopylae, where their enemies could only come up one or two at a time, they kept the whole Persian host at bay. But, when afterwards they gave up in despair and rushed into the plain to fight the Persians, they soon fell. Now, if you will stand in the narrow pass of today and just meet your troubles as they come, single-handed, in the name of God Almighty, who is your defender, you will be sufficient for the evil as the evil will be sufficient for the day. But if you get to meddling with all the troubles that may come to pass between now and the next 12 months—you will soon compass yourselves about with perplexities and plunge yourselves into dismay! You had better let them alone. Be blind to the future. Be happily blind and plead the promise, “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not.”

There are some other things, too, that these blind people know they cannot see. They are quite aware that if they open their eyes ever so wide they will never see clearly all the *deep secrets*, the profound mysteries of God’s covenant. I know men who are wise in their own eyes and very well assured of their own intellects, who, while palpably ignorant of everything that is rational, are conscious that they know everything that is *spiritual*. Their acquaintance with theology is thoroughly exhaustive. They have learned, long ago, to count five, to reckon them at their fingers ends—one, two, three, four, five! These mystic fingers comprise all the doctrines of the gospel! They know them and they double up their fists at the mention of any of those five points—and they are ready to fight anybody about them. They are men of a great deal of wisdom—seeing men—but I think a man that gets a little nearer to God discovers that he does not know everything and he is quite clear that he can no more compass the whole of divine truth than he can hold the ocean in the hollow of his hand. I have long felt that I shall never understand where the two great truths of God of free agency and predestination meet. I believe them both—believe them with equal faith—but how to reconcile them, I no longer wish to know, because I do not think that God intends we *should* know! Oh, brothers and sisters, there is such a thing as *prying* when you ought to be *believing*! Such a thing as forever quibbling and needing to see where your faith has to acquiesce in being led blindfolded! And who would not wish to be blind, if the blind man’s privilege is to be led by *God*? Who is not willing not to see, if, instead of seeing, which will always

be fallible, there shall come guidance from God which is constantly infallible?

Thus, you see, I have attempted to describe these blind people. I have not given a full description of them but I hope there are some of them here. They are people that feel their own weakness, their own lack of knowledge, their own *nothingness!* They are people that are willing to be led, willing to be guided. They are people that cannot see everything and do not *expect* to see everything, but are willing to walk by faith in the unseen God and to trust Jehovah where they cannot trace His footsteps.

**II.** Now let us consider THE PROMISE THAT IS MADE TO THEM. What shall be done for them?

Well, they have this pact of heaven for their solace—"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known." Do you catch the idea? Do you discern the sense of this gracious undertaking? If so, you must be wonderfully struck with the condescending goodness of the Lord in that *He* offers to lead blind men! Certainly it is not an office generally sought! It is not one supposed to be attended with any great honor, but it is a very kindly office and one which any Christian may be right glad to render to his afflicted friend. But only think of God, Himself, coming and guiding the blind—leading His blind children. "I will bring them," said He. "I will guide them." So our first thought is that *God Himself will be the guide of His people when they feel their blindness.* He will not leave you to stumble and to grope your way, nor will He bid you depend upon your fellow Christian, who is as blind as yourself, but *He* will be your guide. Think of it! Omniscience shall bow itself to instruct your ignorance! Infinite power shall stoop that you may lean upon its shoulder! Boundless love shall deign without any degradation to take you by the hand and pick your pathway for you! And infinite patience shall continue to direct every step of your course till you are brought to heaven at last! As I said, just now, who would not be blind if he could have God for his guide? Oh, blessed weakness that links me to the strong! Oh, blessed poverty that gives me a lien upon Jehovah's wealth! Oh, blessed wretchedness that issues in beatitude and conducts me to the happiness and bliss of God! Beloved, as you think of your own blindness, be comforted because *He* sees. As you think of your own ignorance, be cheered because *He* knows. And as you comprehend your own aptness to stumble, be of good courage because *He* faints not, neither is weary! There is no searching of His understanding. God will be their guide.

And, being their guide, *He will lead them in ways they never went before.* The beauty of the promise appears in its special adaptation to meet *the peculiar need*—"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not." Of course, when a blind man knows the way, he can almost go without a guide. Many of our friends afflicted with the loss of sight find their way, day by day, along the accustomed road. And there have been some that have been so expert, though blind, that they could go over 50 miles of country, or thread their way up and down the streets of a milkman's walk in town, serving at each customer's house without ever making a mistake. In fact, they have often acted as guides to others, but, then, it

has always been along a way that they have known. And oh, brothers and sisters, there are many blind sinners here tonight who, I have no doubt, could guide others in the ways that they know! They could guide others in the way of the drunk, in the way of the licentious, in the way of the swearer! They know that way very well! I dare say they could guide young people into the way of infidelity—put a thousand horrible thoughts into their minds. But when the Lord takes such a man as that in hand, He does not lead him that way—He leads him in a way that he never went before! Oh, I remember being led by the divine hand down the dark lane of *repentance* with many a sigh and many a groan! I remember being led into the more pleasant way of *faith* by the same divine hand and brought to the Savior's feet. And since then I have not known the way, have not expected to know the way—for the way of grace that lies before us may be described as the Lord described the way of Israel in the wilderness—"You have not passed this way before." It is a *new* way—and when God undertakes to be our guide, it is all new! Is it not written, "Behold, I make all things new"? I hope that many of us know what it is to be led in a way we have not known. And I trust that others who do not know that, may breathe the prayer at once, "Lord, lead me in the way I have not known." Somebody said, the other night, that the way to heaven was very easily learned. It is the first turn to the right and keep on. Well, that is very good, but I have heard it described another way—out of self, into Christ—only one step and you are on the road to heaven! Out of self and into Christ. It is a way that you know not, but the Lord will lead you in it.

Yet, although the way by which we go is a way that we know not, *we shall be led safely in it*, for it is not only said, "I will lead them," but, "I will *bring* them," which is more. You may lead a man and still he may be unable to follow you. You may be a good enough guide, but his legs may fail him. Happily the text says, "I will bring them," that is to say, "They will assuredly follow where I effectually lead." O believer, though you cannot see the way to heaven, trust implicitly in the Lord, your God, and you shall surely find your way there, for He that *leads* you will also *bring* you! There has never been a vessel which sailed with Christ as a convoy that was captured by the enemy! There was never a pilgrim who entrusted himself to Christ as a guide that lost his way and stumbled to destruction. Now, as of old, our Lord Jesus Christ can affirm, "Of all that You have given Me, I have lost none." He preserves His sheep. He keeps them, yes; unto eternal life does He preserve them. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Blessed are they, then, who, having no sight of their own and being, themselves, unable to find their way, are trusting in Him who has promised that He will effectually lead and bring them home!

Yes, and He will do this in the very narrowest ways, too, for the text says, "I will bring them by a way: I will lead them in paths." I suppose a way may be descriptive of the high road and the path may be like a track across the fields, over hedge and ditch, over stiles and down lanes, through the mire and through the slough. Be it, however, along a high road or among by-paths, the Lord will lead them. Oh, beloved, there are

some very narrow ways in the Christian's pilgrimage! Do you not, sometimes, hear a sermon which makes you question whether you can truly be a child of God? What a narrow way it is! You thought, when the preacher discoursed the other day about free grace and dying love, what a glorious highway it was, and you were running along it! But now that he begins to preach about regeneration, the work of the Spirit, and its inward marks and evidences, you are afraid, you hesitate, you stand still and wonder whether you are traveling in the right direction! The road seems so narrow! Well, then, you must pray to your great guide, and say, "Lord, lead me in the paths that I have not known. If there is any very narrow place; something very stringent and searching, and testing, and trying—if there is some high attainment that I have not yet reached; if there is some sweet enjoyment I have not yet known, Lord, lead me there." You have the promise, the performance rests with Him—"I will lead them in paths which they have not known." So, you see, the blessing of the text is wrapped up in this—*you* are to be blind, and God is to be your guide! You are not to want to see, but you are to let Him see for you! You who feel yourselves incapacitated by infirmity are to be led by His unerring wisdom.

**III.** And this brings us, thirdly, to note WHAT SHALL COME OF IT. What shall come of it? Why, the Lord says, "I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Where are you, brothers and sisters? Are you in a dilemma where everything is dark around you, where you see not your signs and where you feel no sweet tranquilizing assurance? Presuming that you are one of the blind—truly blind—it will not make much difference to you! Do you not perceive that? Why, should you or I, who have sight of our natural eyes, want to read, it would be of little use when the sun has gone down. "Between the lights," as we say, there is a little wasted time—we cannot make out the letters. Well, now, a blind man is as well off, then, as he is in the middle of the day! When you happen to be in the dark you begin fretting and need a light. The blind man does not need a light—he is just as well without a light as with one. Thus it is a great mercy when God has so far enabled you to be blind—so little needing to see—that when it is all dark around you, you are just as happy as when it is all bright around you—because when it was bright you did not walk by sight—and now it is dark you do not need to walk by sight, either! Oh, blessed is the secret art of living by faith, for as you turn to God in days of happiness and trust Him, so you likewise turn to Him in days of sorrow and distress. In trial or in triumph you still trust Him! It is a dangerous thing to begin to draw your happiness from your circumstances. Thereby you will weaken yourself, for once having drawn happiness from prosperous circumstances, you will, with equal ease, draw unhappiness from adverse circumstances. But if the Lord has taught you not to live according to the sight of the eyes at all, but to rejoice in the Lord always, then you will be prepared to enjoy the same calm, the same peace and the same happiness whatever the circumstances. It was a glorious speech of Job when he said, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." Was it not as much as to say, "I do not trust in Him because He gave me the camels, gave me the gold, and silver, and

the sheep and oxen; I do not trust Him for them, though I am glad and thankful, and I do not trust Him because of the earrings of gold, and because of the respect I had when I sat in the gate among the citizens; but I trust Him, let Him do what He likes. If He shall take all away, till there is nothing left, and afflicts me till I scrape my sores with a potsherd, I will not relax my trust in Him. And since I never did trust in my substance, or my health, though He goes farther, still, and slays me, yet will I trust in Him." Say, then, dear friends, is it not a sweet contentment that does not need to see? To be delivered from regret and repining, knowing that He makes darkness light before us, and why?—Because it is as light in the dark as at any other time, and as safe to those who cease to walk with the eyes, and only walk by faith!

Nor is this all the meaning we may extract out of this gracious promise. If, my dear brothers and sisters, you are surrounded by the darkness of trouble, trust in God and the trouble will vanish. I do not say that the *cause* of the trouble will vanish. Perhaps you will have to bear with that—but the trouble, itself, will cease to trouble you. It will not touch your heart any longer, and very likely the trouble, itself, may go, and the cause of it may go, too, for when the Lord brings His people to be resigned to what they have to endure, He frequently does not call them to endure it any longer. If you are in trouble, I can recommend to you, by experience, to be resigned. I have not as long an experience as some of the friends with gray hairs and bald heads before me, but I believe that they cannot contradict me when I say that He is a faithful God. At any rate, of this I can speak confidently—

***"When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,  
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,  
He, near my soul, has always stood;  
His loving-kindness, O how good!"***

Thus the light of His countenance has chased away the darkness of my trouble.

And are you in the dark, child of God, through a sense of sin? Some of our friends, you know, get up so high in the scale of perfection that they never have any folly or negligence to bemoan. Most of us ordinary people are afflicted, every now and then, with such heart-searchings and such inward conflicts that we walk in darkness and see no light. Somehow I think the Bible was written for people like we, rather than for our fine brethren, for it rather abounds in the details of such experiences! Should it ever be my lot to get rid of all conflicts and all darkness, I shall be able to dispense with a great part of the Book of Psalms. In fact, I do not know that I should need anything particular except Solomon's Song, and I am afraid I could hardly get on with that, for even the spouse had to seek her Lord in the dark and was unable to find Him, sometimes, when she had been unwary or remiss. But, oh, if you are dejected by reason of darkness, dismayed with a sense of sin, or distressed through soul-trouble, trust in your Lord and you shall find ready relief!—

***"When we in darkness walk,  
Nor feel the heavenly flame;  
Then is the time to trust our God,  
And rest upon His name.***

***And when your eye of faith is dim,  
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;  
Still at His footstool bow the knee,  
And Israel's God your peace shall be."***

He will make the darkness light before you, whatever other sort of darkness may happen to befall you. Only be as the blind man who does not need to see—just leave it all to Jesus—trust in His dear name and He will make the darkness light before you.

And as we are delivered out of darkness, *so shall we be rescued out of difficulty.* "I will make crooked things straight." And God can make crooked things straight! Who among us has not got some crooked thing or other to deal with? As they say that there is a skeleton, somewhere, in every house, so there is a crook in every lot, and none can make straight what God has made crooked! Awkward embarrassments and anxious perplexities full often drive us to our wit's end until we do not know which way to turn! To the right hand shall I go, or to the left? Both seem equally blocked up! Shall I go forward, or shall I go backward? Both ways seem equally hazardous! The judgment has lost chart and compass. And sometimes a child of God really does not know what he ought to choose. He seems to be in a maze and he has not a clue. The road goes in and out, backwards and forwards like a map of the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness. "There," he asks, "what shall I do?" "Well, dear brothers and sisters, the best thing to do in such a case as that is to do nothing at all, but just to trust in the Lord! There is more wisdom in a quarter of an hour's prayer than there is in a quarter of a year's consultation with friends. Oftentimes when we have sought counsel of the living God, He has befriended us. When we have left things with Him, we have always gone wisely. Oh, how He can make the most crooked thing that ever did happen suddenly turn out to be the very straightest thing that ever occurred for our welfare! I know that sometimes I have puzzled my head about some difficulty in my Master's service—asked opinions of lots of people, like a stupid—and I have gone home with my head aching in deeper uncertainty than ever what to do. And I have never discovered how to unravel a knotty point by my own ingenuity—but I have always found that when I, at last, bend my knees, by His grace, and say, "heavenly Father, it is rather Your business than mine. It is quite beyond me and I now leave it in Your hands to guide me." And when I have just put it up on the shelf and said, "I will never take it down again whatever happens," it has gone all right. If I had maneuvered to manage it for myself it would have gone wrong enough. You are often, dear friends, busy in doing yourself a mischief when eager to do the right thing. You do the wrong thing, after all, as though there were a fatality about it. "Stand still and see the salvation of God"; full often a hard lesson to learn, and especially to impetuous spirits, as some of us are, but when it is learned, if we continue to practice it, we shall find it the way of wisdom. Now, my dear sister, do not fall in too hastily with that proposal which has been made to you. Think it over first. Pray about it. Just stop. You may get yourself into a world of trouble. Young man, it certainly looks as if a very fine opening was presented before you, but mind what you are doing! There is a fine opening for flies into many a spider's web—and they

would be glad to find an opening for getting out again! Just stop awhile. Stand still and give reflection time to whisper in your ear. Do not delude yourself with flattering visions. Confess that the eyes of your understanding are dark and blind. Let the Lord guide you! Do not have an eye to your own advantage; do not have an eye to the opinion of this world. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all things will go well with you. Ah, they will call you such a fool not to jump at that chance of commencing trade with a man who you know is no Christian. But you are told not to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. Therefore, do not disobey your Master's command, I pray you! Just back out of it and give yourself up to be led and guided by the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and you will go right enough. Here is one of the benefits of being blind in this sense, and this is what shall come of it.

**IV.** And now, lastly, WHAT WILL BE THE END OF IT? Why the end of it will be, if you can see nothing, if you are blind and yield yourself to the Lord to lead you—leaving all that concerns you to His counsel and His care, your life will be strewn with His mercies—fulfilled promises! “These things will I do unto them.” And you shall have a life of everlasting love, for He adds, “And not forsake them.” You shall find God present with you as long as you live!

Never does a child of God venture everything by faith but the venture answers! You that speculate—I have no doubt that you find that your speculations are as often bad as good. But if you risk everything apparently in your confidence in God, it is no speculation—it is a certainty! He will not fail you! I was greatly refreshed, yesterday, by what you may think to be a very small thing, but it was not small to God. I was turning over our church books and I came to the year 1861, and somewhere in January there is the record—“This church requires £4,000 in order to pay for the new Tabernacle, and we, the undersigned, not knowing where it will come from, fully believe in our heavenly Father that He will send it all to us in the proper time, as witness our hands.” And there stands, subscribed, my hand and the hands of my deacons, and the hands of my elders, and the hands of a great many Christian women among us. Well, I was pleased to see that we had thus put our confidence in God. There were one or two names down there of very prudent brothers and sisters, and I remember at the time I saw them sign it, I was rather surprised, because they had been doubting most of the time whether we should ever get the money—but they signed their names! A month or two afterwards—say two months—there is this recorded—“I, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who am less than the least of all saints, set to my seal that God is true, for He has supplied us with all this £4,000.” And then follows a fresh minute like this, “We, the undersigned, hereby declare our confidence in Almighty God who has done to us according to our faith, and sent us, even before the time when we needed it, all that was needed. We are ashamed of ourselves to think that we ever had a doubt, and we pray that we may always confide in Him in all things from now on and forever.” And then there is a long list of signatures. Some of the names down there are those of people whom I can see now. You put your names down there thanking God that faith was honored. Well, brothers and sis-

ters, we have had a good many times to do something like that for large amounts, as a church, but has the Lord ever failed us yet? Never! And He never will! And you may depend upon it that in your business, in your household affairs, in your spiritual struggles, if you will trust God, He will be as good as your trust and better! You will never be able to say, "I rested in Him, and was ashamed; I trusted in Him, and I found His promise fail." Mind, you must have a promise to rest on. You must not go and ask the Lord for every whim you like to get into your heads. But, if He has promised it to you and you can plead a promise, and it is for His glory and you know it is, then see if ever He will run back! Search this book, given by inspiration, and see whether ever a promise of His did fail. Turn, then, to your own lives, by strange experience led, and answer this question: Has He ever been a wilderness unto you? Has He ever been a dry well, or a cloud that mocked you and yielded you no rain? You have trusted in men and you have met your reward, for, "Cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm." But when you have trusted in God, have you not met a very different reward? And can you not say, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is"? There, you see, you have got this—"These things will I do unto you." If you can just trust, the promise will be fulfilled!

Then the last clause of the text is peculiarly inspiriting: "*And not forsake them.*" "And not forsake them." This is no vain tautology. I think that the Lord's people are subject, at times, to a sudden fluttering of heart, a nervous depression of spirits and a great trembling just when their faith has been in the fullest exercise and the goodness of God has been most conspicuously displayed to them. And I do believe that this little sentence is intended to be at once a powerful tonic and an efficacious sedative. Why is it used? Did it arise from weariness of the flesh in the case of Elijah? You remember how he showed his zeal for the Lord of hosts on Mount Carmel? You remember how vehemently he contended with the prophets of Baal—how signally his prayer was answered when the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust—and licked up the water that was in the trench? You remember how he brought down the prophets of Baal to the brook Kishon and slew them there? And you remember how soon, afterwards, he went a day's journey in the wilderness, sat down under a juniper tree, requested that he might die and said, "It is enough. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers"? He had much fear, but there was no danger that the Lord would forsake him. Or it may be that this strange terror is the reaction and result after intense excitement. David had been again and again delivered out of the hands of Saul and had heard his old enemy acknowledge that he had sinned and played the fool and erred exceedingly. Yet he went on his way and said in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul!" But was he forsaken of God? Had he any real cause to suspect such a climax to the Lord's dealings with him? Far from it!

I do not know, but I am prone to attribute this fear, sometimes, to the infirmity of age—when decay creeps over the mortal frame and the soul sympathizes with the weakness of the flesh. The Psalmist, as I have al-

ready intimated, touches all the keys of human passion and all the moods to which believers are subject. Certainly his faith was in full vigor when he said, “*I will go in the strength of the Lord God. I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours only.*” Nor could his gratitude have been at fault when he reviews his life from childhood to advanced years, saying, “*O God, You have taught me from my youth, and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works!*” But you can never forget the impassioned prayer that followed, “**NOW, ALSO, WHEN I AM OLD AND GRAY-HEADED, O GOD, FORSAKE ME NOT!**” Just ring this bell once or twice, this silver, this delicious silver bell—“These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.” They will yet get into trouble. Their friends will desert them as the leaves are gone from the trees in winter, but, says the Lord, “I will not forsake them.” They will be very sick and they will lie in bed till the bed gets hard beneath them, but, “these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.” They will come to die and the devil will tempt them. Flesh will be very weak and their bodily pains distressing, but, “these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.” They will pass through the river, and they will stand in Judgment, but still, as it is written so shall it be, “these things will I do unto them and not forsake them.” Go on, beloved! Go on, beloved! Though blind, and you cannot see your way, go on, beloved! In the dark and crooked paths, go on, beloved! For as surely as you trust in God, God will fulfill every promise of His to you—and to the last these shall be His words in your ears, “And not forsake them.” For, “I will not fail them or forsake them.” is His promise to His people. Throwing that grateful reflection into a verse—the verse of a familiar hymn, I will conclude—

***“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,  
He will not, He will not, desert to his foes.  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
He will never, no never, no never forsake.”***

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 43.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—23, 741.**

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# GOD OF THE HILLS AND GOD OF THE VALLEYS NO. 1311

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 27, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And there came a man of God, and spoke unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus says the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord.”*  
*1 Kings 20:28.*

THE Syrians had been defeated by the Israelites whom they despised. This victory had been achieved by so small a number of men over so vast a host that the Syrians were driven to the conclusion that there was something supernatural about it and they ascribed their defeat to the God of Israel. They were right in doing so. Brothers and sisters let not these heathen shame us! They knew to whom the crown of the victory belonged and, little as they understood Jehovah, yet they recognized that His right hand and His holy arm had gotten for His people the victory. Now, if the Lord has prospered you, if in your souls peace and joy are reigning, or if you have enjoyed success in Christian service, take heed that you do not lift up your horn on high and take honor to yourselves! Render all the glory to God, to whom it is most justly due. Let that psalm, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory,” be always on your heart and often on your tongue. The tendency of the human heart towards pride is very strong and Satan, the great usurper, is always eager to stir us up to rob God of His glory. Yet nothing is more fatal to peace, nothing more sure to provoke God, nothing more certain to bring upon us times of disaster and distress! “The Lord your God is a jealous God,” and He is jealous of this thing, among others—He will not give His glory to another! He will not allow those whom He uses for His purposes to ascribe their victories unto themselves! The Lord, alone, must be exalted. Whatever has been done by us, the great Worker who used us must have the praise. We have been nothing more than the axe in the hand of God if we have felled the cedar! We have been nothing more than the net if we have brought the fish to shore. Unto Him, therefore, be praise forever! So far let us learn from the heathen Syrians.

While the Syrians thus ascribed their defeat unto Jehovah, they made a great mistake as to His character, for they supposed Him to be a *local* God, like their own imaginary deities. They had gods for the mountains and gods for the lesser hills, gods for the rivers, gods for the fields, gods for their houses, gods for their gardens and these so-called gods were powerless out of their own sphere. They imagined the only living and true God to be a god like their idols. Let us abhor this dishonoring of God and avoid the sin by never daring to make unto ourselves a god after our own ideas. The art of god-making is very common among men. Instead of go-

ing to revelation to see what God is and humbly believing in Him as He reveals Himself, men sit down and consider what sort of God He *ought* to be and, in so doing, they are no wiser than the man who makes a god of mud or wood or stone! If we make a god in our own thoughts, after our own ideas, we have virtually made a similitude of Him to whom no creature can be compared. We have tried to comprehend the Incomprehensible and limit the infinite—and in so doing we are idolaters, for we have made the likeness of something that is in our own mind and, consequently, in the earth beneath—and even though it is not a material image, we have broken in spirit the first and second commandments. No man knows what God is, save only as He has revealed Himself—thoughts and imaginings apart from this are idolatrous. Believe what He reveals, but do not, after the fashion of the Syrians, begin to conceive of Him according to the darkness of your own feeble and foolish mind! Benhadad's counselors were led in their error to utter a blasphemy. They said, "He is the God of the hills, but not the God of the valleys," and I know not into what profanities our own proud thoughts may lead us, also!

It is worthy of notice that because of this blasphemy of the Syrians, God was pleased to deliver His people Israel. It is not the only time, but one of many, in which the blasphemies of the adversary have worked good for the people of God. You might have supposed that God would have said, "It matters nothing what these ignorant heathens say. Who cares for their slanderous falsehoods?" But our God is jealous—He is ever represented in Scripture as being tender of His own glory and, therefore, though Israel was guilty, and Ahab, their king, was detestable, yet God determines that Ahab and Israel shall smite Benhadad and Syria because of what Syria had said. I would invite all of you who tremble for the ark of the Lord to draw courage from the evil language of the ungodly. When the infidel scoffs at God, you are sorry for his sin, but you may take heart and hope that, perhaps, God will now interpose. "It is time for You, Lord, to work, because they have made void your law." When you see a skeptical philosophy growing, as it is at this day, more and more daring and insulting towards the truth of God, do not be downhearted because of that, but rather say, "They will provoke the Lord, and by-and-by He will pluck His right hand out of His bosom—He will rend the heavens and come down and make the mountains to flow at His feet—He will give to His gospel great power, so that His truth shall be triumphant and His adversaries shall know that, verily, there is a God in Israel." As choice flavors are by a happy chemistry extracted from poisonous substances, so may we draw comfort from the blasphemous letter of Rabshakeh and from the impious language of Benhadad, for God will be provoked against them and will come forth to the avenging of His chosen nation and the establishment of His own cause.

Now, this morning I have one lesson to teach, which is this—As the Syrians fell into a great and blasphemous sin by thinking that God was a local God, a God of the hills and not of the valleys—we may fall into much evil by the same surmising. The subject of this morning's discourse will be a warning against imitating the Syrians by limiting the Holy One of Israel under any circumstances whatever. We may do so on several occasions and in several ways.

**I. WE MAY LIMIT THE LORD BY MISTRUSTING THE SUCCESS OF HIS CAUSE.** We are very often tempted to tremble for the ark of the Lord and to stretch out a presumptuous hand to steady it as Uzzah did. Our fathers tell us, and we are getting a little into their modes of thinking, that we have fallen upon evil days and degenerate times. We have seen them shake their heads and call the present age a day of blasphemy and rebuke. And although we have not quite thought so, for there has been enough of youth left in us, still, to look more hopefully upon things and we have said, and we think we are not wrong in saying, that these are good times and hopeful—and that there are many things which should make the Christian wear a cheerful aspect and rejoice in the hope of better times. Yet we have, in a measure, shared in their fears. The temptation is at times heavy upon us to think that the gospel cannot conquer the world, that the truth of Jesus cannot spread in the midst of the thick darkness which surrounds us, that the good old cause is falling into a desperate condition and that; perhaps, the victory we have looked for will not come, after all. Here let us convict ourselves of having thought God to be the God of the hills and not the God of the valleys, for we have generally based our fears upon our perception that the front of the battle has changed! In the olden times the church of God was persecuted beyond measure—the furnace was heated seven times hotter. *Destruction* was the word—the emperors of Rome determined to stamp out Christianity as though it were a disease—and they vowed to put an end to its very name. But the church of God triumphed over all opposition. Like a good ship in stormy waters, she mounted the waves which sought to engulf her and made headway by the winds which howled around her. We all perceive that God was with His church in those tempestuous times, and yet we are apt to fear that the petty persecutions suffered by our village churches and the cold contempt that is often poured upon Christian men in polite society will prove too much for the faithful. God, who could help Christians to play the man in the amphitheatre at Rome and enable them to die at the stake, or on the gridiron, is yet mistrusted! And we dare to suspect that He will not gain the victory in the battle which is waged by a few poor peasants in a village against a popish priest and a persecuting squire? For shame! Do we really dream that He is the God of the hills and not the God of the valleys? We have heard good men argue mistrustfully from another point of view. They say that persecution, after all, does not hurt the church—it only winnows her and drives away her chaff—and these are far worse days, for prosperity undermines piety. They say Christians take things easy and there are so many false professors, so much of a name to live while spiritual death abounds—all of which is deadly to the church of God. Depend upon it, since Satan could not kill the church by roaring at her like a lion, he is now trying to crush her by hugging her like a bear, they say!

There is truth in this, but it is not all the truth. Do you really think, my brothers and sisters that God cannot preserve His church in the particular trial through which she is now passing? Is He the God of the hills of persecution, but not the God of the valleys of prosperity? Chase away the thought! Besides, you are in great fear, my brother, because a new heresy has sprung up, or an old one has revived. Dreadful doctrine dis-

mays you. You are saddened by teaching which assails the vitality of Christianity, and is so insidious that it is hard to meet it, and you say, "Any other than this, the church could have resisted, but this will deaden her very soul—it eats as does a canker." What? My brethren, are you now afraid? Do you not remember when the church was full of Gnostic heresy and when, afterwards, Arianism afflicted her? Have you not read of the times when the Deity of Christ was almost universally denied and yet the gospel lived on? Every truth of God was, in its turn, assailed, and the professing church, itself, for centuries was almost universally apostate! And yet the gospel is not dead, nor its voice silenced! The Lord was the God of the hills and put these heresies down and trod them under foot as straw is trod for the dunghill! And let new heresies come, let men assail the gospel with fresh errors—God is God of the valleys as well as God of the hills—and He will defeat them one by one as they arise! Ritualism, spiritualism and materialism will go the way of all the other adversaries of the Lord—into smoke shall they consume away.

"But," says one, "infidelity is now so rampant; it takes the form of science and philosophy, and calls into its aid the very thoughtfulness of man which once seemed to be on the side of the gospel! There is cause for great alarm." Yet will we not fear, for many infidelities have shone forth and have died out as meteors of the night. They come like shadows and like shades they vanish! As successive summers have brought forth new harvests of leaves upon the trees of the forest, which in the following autumns have faded and gone, even so new infidelities have flourished and decayed, but God's eternal truths shine on the same as ever, like the sun in the heavens, without variableness or shadow of turning! Trust in the Lord forever! He who shamed the first races of blasphemers against His holy cause and turned their craftiness into folly and made the wise men mad can do the same, again, yes, and *will* do it even unto the end. If the church is assailed in any novel method by new modes of Satanic influence, or fresh inventions of human craft and philosophy, let us never entertain a doubt concerning the cause whose banner Christ has stained with His heart's blood, and whose honor the eternal power and Godhead of the Almighty are sworn to maintain! Let the times shift and change as they may, but God is master of the times! Circumstances alter cases, but they do not alter God! New modes of attack may threaten us with new fears, but they do not really involve any new dangers, for God, who knows all things, can meet the new adversary and foil him as He did His foes of old.

I have known this despondency of heart arise from another cause. "Ah," say some, "I do not know what is to become of the church, because in those olden times which you have mentioned, it is true she had great enemies, but then she had great men in her midst. Look at the Fathers and how they fought! Remember the Reformers and the men who took up their descending mantles, the godly and learned Puritans! Consider the great names of church history and where do you find such men in these days? Have we not fallen on an age of little men and nobodies?" Well, suppose we have. I do not anticipate any ill results from *that*, since great men are only *men*, and little men are still men! The God who used those men whom we call great, first *made* them great! They were nothing of

themselves and He is just as able to use the men whom we call little, and to make them so efficient that the next generation will think them as great as those who went before! The so-called greatness or littleness of men must, after all, depend on the power of God which is shown in them. I dare to hope that if the instruments grow less and less likely to claim the honor of success for *themselves*, they are growing more and more fit to be used by the Lord our God! For this reason I look for even greater displays of divine power in this time of supposed decline. He is the God of the hills and truly, He is the God of Augustine and Luther, the God of Knox and Whitefield! And He is the God of the valleys, also, and, therefore, our God and our confidence! He can use the men of our own time to build up His church and convert the nations!

“Ah,” says one, “I do not so much lament the lack of eminent men as the absence of the grand old spirit of the early church.” What was that spirit, do you think? There was a freshness, an enthusiasm, a heroism about the first Christians which we do not see now. I grant you there was—but if it were real power, from where did it come but from the Holy Spirit? And has the Holy Spirit ceased to illuminate, quicken and strengthen the minds of men? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Do the heavens no longer drop with dew? Is the horn of anointing oil emptied? Is there no sacred breath with which to fan the gracious flame in the church? No, my brothers and sisters, the Spirit of God has not ceased to work! If we cannot manifest the enthusiasm of the church’s youth, we will cultivate the undying perseverance of the church’s manhood and strive and struggle on, God helping us, till our Lord appears! The day must and shall come when the truth of God shall prevail and the God of truth shall be exalted and to the moles and bats the demon gods and their images shall be cast forever. Dishonor not your God by unbelief, faint-hearted soldiers! Bring not defeat upon yourselves by your cowardly fears! Believe in God and so shall you be established! God waits till you believe in Him—and when His whole church shall, with brave confidence, be sure of victory—victory shall certainly come to her! The Lord increase our faith, and from now on in this respect, let us never dream that Jehovah, the God of the hills, is not the God of the valleys!

## II. WE MAY COMMIT THE SIN OF SYRIA BY DOUBTING THE HELP WHICH THE LORD WILL RENDER TO US.

Sometimes we are brought into sore trouble and then we imagine that the Lord will not help us as He helped the old saints of whom we read in the Bible. We can believe all about Abraham and Moses and David—but we question whether the Lord will help *us*. We look at those men as the great hills and we regard ourselves as the valleys—and we dare not hope that the Lord will deal with us as He did with His servants in the days of yore. Now, don’t you think this is making God to be a local God? Ought we not have the same faith in God as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had? And if we had such confidence, should we not see same wonders? Not miracles, perhaps, but something quite as marvelous? God would perform His purpose by ordinary providences, but the purpose would be quite as surely achieved as if miracles were worked! Let us never admit the thought that the divine promises are now fictions and that divine aid will not be given. The God of the patriarchs and prophets faints not; nei-

ther is He weary; He is our God from generation to generation—and is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Now that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, the Lord has not become less gracious! He still shows Himself strong on behalf of those who trust Him and there is no reason for doubt.

When we get into deep trouble we are apt not only to forget the days of old, but even to overlook the Lord's former loving kindnesses to *ourselves*, or to regard them as exceptional cases, the like of which we cannot again look for. We unbelievably think, "The Lord helped me when I put my trust in Him at first, but I cannot expect Him to help me now. In my young days I was full of vigor—the Lord was very gracious to me and worked wonders. But now I am less vigorous, my youthful energy is failing, I cannot cope with difficulties as I once did, and I cannot expect the Lord to help me now." I am almost ashamed to mention such fears! They are utterly unworthy of a Christian, and he who has indulged them ought most heartily to repent of them! Has the Lord changed? Because *you* are older and feebler is *He* weaker? Does He only help us when we can help ourselves, and leave us in our extremity? God forbid! He said, "I am God. I change not. Even to gray hairs I am He. I have made and I will bear, even I will carry." Yet so it is—we readily imagine that the difference of time alters the hope of divine deliverance! Oh fools, and slow of heart, thus to mistrust immutable love and infallible wisdom! In every time of need God will work our deliverance, for having loved His own, He loves them to the end.

The circumstances of our troubles, also, form occasions for unbelief when we are in that vein. "The Lord helped me when I was very poor," says one, "and if I were poor, again, I could trust Him concerning it. But now I am passing under slander and reproach which is far bitterer to my soul." Your heart unbelievably supposes that now you will fall by the hand of the enemy, but, dear brother, do you really think that God can only help us in certain sets of troubles and that when we enter upon new trials we shall find Him fail us? "Oh, but the scene is so changed! I could trust Him if I had to suffer as I did before, but this is so surprising to me." Is it also new to God? You are perplexed—is *He* perplexed? You are now at a nonplus—is *He* nonplussed? Think this over and do not imagine that He who could help you yesterday will leave you today or tomorrow. If your condition alters for the worse a thousand times, it will signify little if your faith can but maintain its hold upon the unchanging God!

I have even known Christians to say, "I cannot go to God about my trials, they are so ordinary and commonplace. I can pray about *spiritual* things, but may I pray about temporals? I can take my sins and burdens of serious care to Him, but may I pray about little domestic troubles?" How can you ask that question? He tells you the hairs of your head are all numbered—surely those are not *spiritual* things! You are told to cast all your cares on Him. Is He the God of the hills of the higher spiritual interests of His children and is He not the God of the valleys of their hourly troubles? Does He not bid us ask Him to give us, day by day, our daily bread? Has He not given His angels charge to bear us up lest we dash our foot against a stone? Has He not said of His people that they shall lack no good thing? Oh, what mistakes unbelief makes about God and

what questions it raises which ought never to be raised at all! Troubled one, you may go to your heavenly Father about anything, about everything! He will help you in every trial wherever you may be! Though the thing is little, yet remember *everything* is little to *Him* and the difference between an archangel and a sparrow is not so very great with God. The difference between the ruling of a kingdom and the guidance of your Sunday school class may seem great to you, but it is almost invisible to God, to whom the nations are as a drop in a bucket! As you feel you could trust Him with great troubles, so be sure that you rely upon Him as to the minor ones. Yes, tell Him all your griefs and cast all your burdens upon Him. Truly He is the God of the hills, but He is the God of the valleys, too.

Sometimes this fear that God will not help us arises from a change in our inward experience. "Oh," said one, "I have been in deep waters of soul-trouble before now and the Lord has helped me. I have fought with dragons and done battle with the Prince of Darkness in the valley of the shadow of death, and Jesus was with me. I do not wonder at it, for the fight seemed worthy of a God! But now it is only a little thorn in the flesh that worries me and I hardly dare beseech the Lord to remove it, or help me to bear it. I have experiences of a different sort, altogether, from that of former days. I grow cold, torpid, indifferent, and careless. I do not seem to live the grand struggling life I once lived when I was familiar with gigantic spiritual difficulties and tasted exalted delights! "Can I expect God to help me now? Will He awake me from my lethargy? Will He stir me to devotion when I feel that I cannot pray? Will He bring back my spiritual feelings when I feel numbed and dead to all but pain? Can the Lord revive Laodicea? Can He heat, again, the lukewarm? Will He quicken such a dead lump, such a mass of lifeless flesh as I am?" O my brothers and sisters do not ask such questions! There is no condition into which a believer can fall but God can and will deliver him out of it! There is no trial or temptation, though it is low, degrading, base, but what the Lord can as much assist you when laboring under it as in the more sublime struggles of the noblest life. Commit yourself to God and entertain no fears as to His all-sufficiency and faithfulness.

But you say, "I would not entertain any of these fears if I were like eminent saints. But I am far inferior to the godly men of whom I read and hear. I am obscure and insignificant. I have little talent and even less divine grace. I am nobody." Be it so, but is our God the God of the hills and not the God of the valleys? Will God help Oliver Cromwell and not help a private soldier who trusts in God and keeps his powder dry? Will God aid a Whitefield and not help a poor local preacher holding forth upon the green? Will He assist the earnest minister who addresses thousands and desert the simple girl who teaches a dozen little children the old, old story of the Cross? Is this after the fashion of God, to patronize the eminent and neglect the lowly?

Does Jesus despise the day of small things? Surely you have misread the Scriptures if you think so, for the Christ of the gospels took note of a widow's two mites and was pleased with the hosannas of boys and girls! He rejoiced that His Father revealed His great things not to the wise and prudent, but to babes! And He called to His work, not the high priests

and the philosophers, but the fishermen and the publicans! So do not, because you see a difference between yourself and others, and a change in the circumstances of your trials and all the rest of it, begin to think that the Heavenly Father will desert you, or else I shall again have to tell you that He is God of the valleys as well as the hills!

**III. IT IS VERY EASY TO FALL INTO THIS SIN BY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THE EXPERIENCES OF OURSELVES AND OTHERS.** Some minds are rugged and craggy, broken up and tossed about. In them you are astounded by seeing great rifts of conflict and terrible chasms of unbelief. Their hearts wear awful scars where the tempests of trial have swept all before them and laid bare the roots of their being. And then, on the other hand, they show such wonderful elevations of thought. Their soul mounts aloft beyond the clouds into the blue serene sky where God dwells, among the things unlawful for a man to utter. Everything about them is stupendous, majestic, sublime, or amazing—and little men who have heard of their awful experiences suspiciously enquire whether such feelings and conflicts can be consistent with the grace of God. Yet who would say off the bleak and desolate mountains that the Lord is not there? Was He not on Sinai? Did He not come from Paran? Is not the strength of the hills the heritage of the Lord? Among the cloud-capped Alps, Jehovah's voice is often heard and the rocks are split by His flames of fire. The thoughtful soul may often hear the rustle of the hem of Jehovah's garments in the stillness of those lone hills. God is in rugged souls, in the ravines of a broken heart, and in the caves of dread despair! He overrules the whirlwind of temptation and the tempests of Satanic blasphemy, and soon He is seen in the bow of hope and the sunshine of full assurance. The Lord is in every heroic struggle against sin and in that eager clinging to His word which is seen in so many tempted souls. Yet men judge their fellows and say, "The Lord cannot be there," even where He is most mightily! On the other hand, I have known persons fashioned in this rough mold look down on the gentle, quiet life of the useful, less thoughtful and perhaps less intelligent Christian, who is like the valley, and they have said, "Lord, what shall this man do? He does not sympathize with my soul-troubles. He has had little or no law work. He does not understand my grand conceptions of truth. He enters not into the deep things of God." Remember that this may be true and yet the brother may be a far better man than you are! He may be one of the fields which the Lord has blessed—a low lying valley—cultivated by God's Spirit till it yields golden sheaves by which multitudes are fed! If He blesses many by his quiet menial life, who are you that you should condemn him? Brother from the valley, do not misjudge the dweller in the mountain and inhabitant of the crag! Do not look down with contempt upon the tenant of the plain, for God is in *both* your lives! God is in the stormy life of the afflicted and God is in the restfulness of the humble and contented. In the tried life and in the useful life God is variously but equally manifested, and I beg you always to see God as far as He can be seen in all His people. Recognize the virtues of your brothers and sisters wherein you are deficient, and not the graces wherein they fail. Condemn not the man whom God has approved. He is God of the hills and He is God of the valleys—take your delight in both.

Then about yourself, dear friend, do not mournfully complain, "Alas, I have never experienced what I perceive has been the lot of my brother in the Lord. He has had a deep, rugged, amazing experience of fights with the devil and of contests with his own corruptions—I know very little of these matters." Do not *desire* to know them, for if you know Christ it will suffice! Or if, on the other hand, you are much buffeted and tossed about, do not condemn yourself and say you are no child of God because you have not the constant enjoyment, the sweetness and rest of other believers—it is enough for you, too, that Christ is yours! You are a crag Christian, be satisfied to have your feet upheld upon your high places! God is the God of the hills as surely as He is God of the valleys. Thus I have shown how, in a third way, we may fall into this error, but time fails me and I cannot enlarge. May the Holy Spirit further instruct you in all wisdom and prudence.

**IV. A VERY COMMON SHAPE OF THIS SIN IS LIMITING THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.** Listen to this, you who would gladly be saved but fear you cannot be! I have known you to limit the power of the gospel by supposing that it will only save certain sinners. You heard of a great drunk who was converted, of a swearer who turned to God and you said to yourself, "I do not wish to be a drunk or a swearer, but I have seen many of that sort of people saved, and I, who have led a moral life, have not been renewed in heart—it makes me envy them." Dear friend, why should you not, also, obtain salvation? Is Jesus the Savior of open and gross sinners and not of the more secret offenders? Is the very foulness of sin an aid to salvation? Impossible! There is certainly no need of adaptation in the gospel to meet the case of the naturally moral and excellent—and you must not think there is! Jesus, who saves publicans and harlots, also blesses the seeker of the truth of God and sows the honest and good ground. When you read of such-and-such a person who has been a great offender being suddenly struck down and turned to God, you do not wish that you were like he in his *sin*, but you could endure that evil if there might but be in you as manifest a change as can be seen in him. I know the feeling, but it is based upon an error and tends to foster the idea that more of God's grace is displayed in one case than in another. True conversion is in all cases the work of God and, consequently, a display of omnipotent power. The Lord presents the gospel to every creature and whoever believes in Jesus, whether he has been a gross offender or only a common sinner, shall find salvation through the blood of the atonement! Jesus is not the Savior of a class, but His power is unto all and upon all them that believe. To men of all sorts, His grace extends—He blesses both hills and valleys.

"Ah," says another, "I could believe in Jesus, whatever my sins had been or had not been, if I had known the awful conviction and painful sense of sin which some have known! I read of one that he was ready to lay violent hands upon himself when tormented by conscience! I have never felt like that. I know that sin is a dreadful thing, but I do not feel driven to despair by it as I have heard others say, or else I could believe." Friend, do you think that Christ's ability to save depends upon *your* fearful apprehensions of your guilt? O soul, He is not the God of the hills, only, but of the valleys, also! He saves a Saul of Tarsus, whom He strikes

down as a proud hill sinner, but He also saves Lydia, whose heart He opens to His truth, as one of the dwellers in the plain. Those who are gently brought to Christ, if they do but rest in Him, are as truly saved as those who are driven to Him by fierce terrors and terrible forebodings of the wrath to come! Jesus is essential to every saving experience, but no form of experience is essential to fit a man for Jesus.

“Yet,” cries another, “I am afraid that the Lord Jesus will never conquer the kind of sin which has set up its dominion in my soul; I believe He can drive out of men their great and crying sins, but my tendencies are more subtle and injurious. I feel a dreadful indifference stealing over my spirit—where shall *I* find awakening and enlivening?” I answer, you will find help to overcome your sin just where the blasphemer and the drunk find theirs, namely, in Christ Jesus and the sanctifying power of His Holy Spirit. Jesus can overcome one sin as well as another. There is no sin in the whole catalog but what the blood of Christ can wash its guilt away—and the water which flowed with the blood can take away its power over the soul! Jesus can give us the double deliverance, both from the criminality and the bondage of sin, whether the sin is of the mountain or of the valley! Only trust Him, and the dominion of sin shall be broken.

Christian people, I shall now speak to you and remind you that too frequently when you are about to tell of Jesus and His love, you feel a desire to *select* your hearers. In your heart you dream that certain persons are more conquerable by the power of God than others. “It is of no use trying after the conversion of So-and-So,” you say. You put certain characters down on the black list and regard them as hopeless, while for others you feel more hopeful and work among them with more spirit. Have you not, in a measure, fallen into the sin of Syria? Is not your Christ, evidently, the God of the hills and not the God of the valleys? Your business is to tell the gospel to every sort of sinner, to every class of mind, and to every rank of persons. And when you do so, believing that the gospel in the hands of the *Holy Spirit* has an omnipotent power and works on all sides, and among all classes of people, then shall you see the hand of God working mightily with you!

**V.** Upon the last point we must only give a hint or two. WE CAN, AFTER THE FASHION OF SYRIA, LIMIT THE POWER OF GOD BY NOT EXPECTING HIS DIVINE AID TO BE GIVEN TO US IN HIS SERVICE.

When we are urged to labor for the Lord we are tempted to excuse ourselves upon various grounds. We speak as if we could not reckon upon divine assistance. Often the plea is that gifts and talents are scanty with us. This may be quite true, but it does not prevent our being used of the Lord for His gracious purposes! God is the God of the many-gifted and gracious man, but He is also the God of the one-talented man who seeks to glorify Him. We are accepted according to what we have—not according to what we have not. “But I have such peculiarity of disposition! I am so retiring that I cannot hope for a blessing.” brothers and sisters, is this an argument which will hold water? Is God the God of the impudent and bold, but not the God of the modest? Is grace given to bronze faces, but not to those who are meek and lowly? I am sure it is not so! Cease from such vain excuses. “Ah, but my sphere of life is a very

difficult one. I dwell among such strange people. I find no sympathy and very few back me up in what I attempt." Ah, you would like a sphere made on purpose for *you*, would you not? And when you had it, there would be no necessity for your entering upon it, because all the good would be done already! Here is a lamp well lit! It objects to be placed where it is dark. It would like to be hung up in the sunshine. But what is the good of a lamp in the daylight? And what is the use of a Christian in a place where everything is already as he desires it to be? If the servant of the Lord is wise, he will look at the needs of the people as a call for his labors! He will regard disadvantages as advantages, and difficulties as things to be overcome. Indeed, to the believer, even impossibility is only another name for a matter in which the power of God is more than ordinarily to be manifested in answer to believing prayer! The man who knows his God is strong and performs great exploits, judges all things to be alike easy with the Lord—he knows *nothing* of a God of the hills who is not, also, God of the valleys!

"Ah," says one, "but I cannot expect God to bless *me*, for I feel so unworthy." Do you suppose, then, that those whom God greatly blesses are worthy? If you ever meet with a man who feels worthy to be blessed, he is the very person whom God does not bless at all! The most favored feel most their unworthiness of such favors. Your sense of unworthiness must not be taken as a reason why God cannot bless you! It may, rather, be regarded as, itself, a blessing.

"Still," you say, "I do not know how it is, but I feel such a trembling about my work and the place in which I live, and the people among whom I labor." Now, to be brief, this feeling is your great hindrance and you *must* get rid of it! There is no reason for trembling if you look the matter in the face. Has God sent you? Then God is with you and why should you fear? If you give yourself up to God, entirely, desiring that He should use every atom of you exactly as He pleases—and *where* He pleases, then there can be no cause for fear. All things are equally possible with God and every sphere is equally hopeful when God leads the way! Every time, every age and every man are all in the hands of the Omnipotent and eternal Lord! If God sends you to prophecy to dry bones with Ezekiel, or to preach to Ninevites with Jonah, He will be with you in either case! And you, brother, will be quite as happy in your preaching as if He sent you to expound the Scriptures to Bereans or tell of Jesus to devout and honorable women. Your surroundings should not be the cause of fear to you, for they are of small weight in the scale. Is the Father with you? Is Jesus with you? Is the Holy Spirit with you? Then though you are one man, like Samson, the lone champion, and have no weapon to fight with except that which your enemies compare to an ass's jawbone, yet lay hold of it, brother, and throw yourself upon the whole army of foes—and heaps upon heaps shall they lie before you! Greater is He that is for you than all they that are against you. "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain." Do I hear you sigh, "Would God I could get to this faith and stay there." I pray the Lord to help you, for if you believe the utmost you can concerning the Lord, it will not be one whit too much! If you trust Him most implicitly, you will not trust Him too fully. You shall often be ashamed of your un-

belief, but never of your hope! You shall often have to blush to think you doubted, but never because you trusted! Nobody shall ever meet you, not even a devil, and say, “You fool, you have relied on the Lord too much!” Time will prove otherwise—therefore rest in the God of the valleys and in the God of the hills—and glory in Him forever and ever!

It is possible for unconverted men to fall into the sin of which we are speaking and I would like to give them this caution before dismissing them. Do any of you unconverted ones hope to escape from the punishment which God will bring upon the ungodly? If you do, your reasons are vain and will turn out to be lies! God punished Pharaoh and others in this life and He will punish *all* the ungodly in the life to come. As surely as He smote sinners of old, He will smite you before long. You may say, “I am not a thief or a drunk.” Very well! But He who is the God of the hills is the God of the valleys, and if you remain unregenerate, even though you have never been an open offender, you shall be visited for your *heart* sins! God will smite the valley sinners as well as the hill sinners, and though you say, “I have always attended the house of God and used the outward means,” yet assuredly, unless you believe in Jesus, God, who smites the thoughtless heathen, will smite the yet guiltier hearer of the word who rejects the blood of Christ! God will deal out equal justice to all mankind. He is the God both of the hills and of the valleys, and no impenitent sinner shall escape the rod of His justice! If you believe not on Christ you shall be lost, whoever you may be! If you will now trust Jesus you shall be saved, whether you dwell in the hills or the valley! God grant you grace to believe at once, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
1 KINGS 20:1-30.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—92, 212, 499.**

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# GOOD NEWS FOR SEEKERS

## NO. 1312

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
SEPTEMBER 3, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"They shall praise the Lord that seek Him."  
Psalm 22:26.***

THESE are the words of Jesus on the cross, which the inspired prophet wrote beforehand concerning Him. When the Savior uttered this sentence, He had just passed through the experience of a seeker as far as it was possible for Him to do so. He had been engaged in earnest, fervent, pleading prayer on account of His having been left without His Father's presence. He had cried, "Be not You far from Me, O Lord: O My strength, hasten You to help Me." With strong crying and tears He had implored salvation from the lion's mouth. He had, at last, been heard and delivered, and He exclaimed with joy, "He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither has He hid His face from Him; but when He cried unto Him He heard. My praise shall be of You in the great congregation: I will pay My vows before them that fear Him." Thus, you see, because He had known the agony of an anxious seeker, had been heard in His seeking, and therefore, felt praise rising in His own soul. He learned sympathy with all seeking souls of every age, and foresaw that they also would magnify the name of the Lord. Jesus knows every experience, for He has passed through the same. Does not this thought already whisper comfort to your soul? My seeking friend, is it not a good omen that Jesus was heard in that He feared? Does not the fact that Jesus can sympathize with you raise some hope in your heart? It is true He never lived without the presence of God, as you have done, in consequence of personal *sin*, but for a grand reason, namely, because He stood in our place, He was forsaken of God, and therefore, was compelled to cry after Him, even as you are doing, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me?" He, therefore, understands the grief which troubles your fainting heart, and enters into all your distresses while you are bewailing yourself, and lamenting that you cry in the daytime, and the Lord hears not, and that in the night season you plead in vain. This reflection, at the outset of our discourse, should be as the note of a silver bell, soft and restful to your wearied ears! Jesus foretells your success in seeking as the result of His own experience!

Our Lord's great objective in laying down His life upon the cross was the Father's glory. No other objective was worthy of Him. He sought the salvation of men in order to the glory of God, and so in His extreme agonies, our Lord Jesus placed this joy before Him, and consoled Himself by foreseeing that God would be praised by seeking souls in consequence of

His death. He solaces Himself with the reflection, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship You." He dwells upon the truth of God that, "They shall praise the Lord that seek Him," and He sees in this honoring of God the reward which His soul sought after! What He foresaw from His look-out upon the cross is actually taking place everyday—for seekers are learning to be *singers*! The choirs of heaven, how shall they be filled? As yet there are many vacant seats, and the full chorus is not as yet heard. From where shall they come who shall complete that orchestra? They shall be called by grace from among ungodly men, and led to long for God—"They shall praise the Lord that seek Him." Fear not, for the number of the elect shall be accomplished, and no part of heaven's music shall flag for lack of minstrels. From the choirs of earth the saintly souls are being withdrawn, one by one, to unite in the harmonies of heaven. Just when their voices become most mellow, and most clear, they leave us for the ivory palaces and their ceaseless melodies. How shall the praises of God be maintained here below? If one by one the sweet voices grow dumb, and the singers are laid in the sepulcher, from where shall we replenish our numbers and maintain the daily praise? Fear not, there are new voices on the way. "They shall praise the Lord that seek Him."

There are souls now weeping because of sin, and longing for a Savior who will soon find Him—and then will become most hearty singers of the new song! They are coming, coming in their thousands even now! The music of praise shall be continued as long as the sun, and the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. From generation to generation shall the name of the Lord be praised! This brings great gladness to my spirit as a pastor, for I know that there are some present here this day who are seeking the Savior, and it rejoices me to know that they will soon be among the most earnest in praising the name of the Lord! They will not always wear sackcloth. They will put on the silken garments of praise before long. We do not know where they are, for seekers are usually very quiet and retired, but there are some present whom I suspect of secret searches after my Lord. The Lord has seen them as He did Nathanael under the fig tree, and even His servant begins to spy them out. There are young children seeking—boys and girls who dare not yet speak to their parents—are in private, praying for grace. Blessed be the Savior of the young! These little ones shall grow up and praise God when their fathers have gone to their reward. Young men and maidens, too, are turning to Christ, though perhaps they would blush if personally charged with the holy search. Men, too, who are in their prime, are coming to Jesus to spend their strength in the service of the Redeemer. The Lord is gently touching many hearts, and drawing them to Himself, and each one, when he finds the Lord, will make a sweet singer to swell the tune of divine grace. Perhaps in this place there may even be some aged people whose voices are becoming feeble with lapse of years who, nevertheless, will sing with their hearts most melodiously to the glory of the God of all long-suffering. Be they who they may, when

they have found the Lord Jesus Christ, they must and will glorify the God of their salvation! So, you see, the great objective of our Lord Jesus was that God might be praised, and He foreknew that this objective would be effected by the praises of those who, in seeking, should find His grace.

This assurance which Christ here gives, that they shall praise the Lord that seek Him, ought to be very encouraging to all seekers, for, my dear friends, it were wise for you to seek the Lord even if you had no stronger hope than a mere, “perhaps He will save us.” It would be wise to do as the men of Nineveh did, to repent and turn to God, even if you had nothing better than, “who can tell?” to encourage you in so doing. But since our Lord Jesus Christ, in dying, felt confident that seekers would find peace and joy, and so would come to praise God, we have double comfort. He could not have been mistaken, rest you sure of that, and therefore, seekers shall have reasons for praising the Lord! It is from the fact that He died upon the cross that it becomes certain that the seeker shall be a finder. This it was which made Him sustain the scorn of men, the faintness of fear, the darkness of death, and the horror of desertion—because He knew that His prostration in agony, and His yielding up the ghost would render it certain that no seeking soul should ever seek the Lord in vain! Had there been no suffering Savior, there had been no way to God. Had there been no dying Christ, there had been no living consolation! But now that His atoning work is accomplished, and He has said, “It is finished,” they shall live that seek Him, and their lives shall be spent in His praise.

The subject of this morning is the plain statement of the text in which I shall handle in all simplicity of speech. “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.” And you have here three things—the persons, the promise, and the praise.

**I.** Observe first of all, THE PERSONS—“They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.” Notice how unrestricted the description of the persons is. It does not say *certain* persons who seek God, but *any* persons who seek Him shall ultimately praise Him. You, my friend, among the rest! None are excluded from the sweep of this precious promise, provided they are really seekers. In other matters many seek, and but few find, but the rule of the gospel kingdom is, “He that seeks finds,” and the rule has no exceptions!

But what is meant by “seeking” the Lord? Who are the seekers to whom this promise is made? They include, first, *those who really desire to commune with God*. Some, when they say a prayer, are satisfied with the mere *form*. But he who really prays, desires to *converse* with God in prayer—he longs that his desires should be heard by the Most High—and that he should obtain the needed blessings for which he asks. No devotion can ever satisfy a true heart but that which brings him into contact with the Most High. We do not seek fine words in prayer. We do not seek choice music in praise. We do not seek the church—we seek God—and when any man is really awakened to seek after God, although he may

know but very little yet of the true faith, he has a desire within him to which the Lord always gives an answer of peace. You may be a stranger, and a foreigner, and you may have stepped in here, dear friend, quite ignorant of the doctrine and teaching of the Lord Jesus. But if in any nation any man shall really seek after the one only living and true God, he shall receive further light, and shall ultimately come to praise the Lord!

Those who seek after God Himself very soon discover that they are at a distance from Him, so that one mark of a true seeker is that he is humbly conscious of his having gone astray from the Lord, his God. What a man has, he does not seek after, and what is close at hand is not an object of search. But when a man longs after God, there suddenly springs up in his soul a consciousness that he has departed from the Most High. And he cries unto the Lord to remove the separating mountains, and to fill up the dividing valleys—and he that does this, in very deed, is the man who shall yet live to praise God!

The soul that is, *by the Holy Spirit* made conscious of distance from God, if it is really seeking God, is anxious that everything should be taken away which created the distance, and which keeps it apart from God. If it is unpardoned sin, the true seeker longs for such forgiveness as God may justly give. If it is the power of sin in his members, the earnest seeker cries for power to overcome every *thought* of evil. The awakened soul soon becomes conscious that nothing separates it from God like the love of sin, and therefore, it seeks to have sin slain, lust crucified, and the enmity towards God forever destroyed. O how we long to be delivered from every false way, from every pollution, and even from every *appearance* of evil which would tend to prevent our walking in happy fellowship with God! We know that two cannot walk together except they are agreed, and therefore, seeking after the Lord leads the soul to grieve over sin, and to strive with all its might with holy violence, to break away from pernicious habits which bind it, and to tread under foot tendencies which would lead it astray. Are you conscious, dear friend, of such a seeking of God as this? Do you desire Him as the weary watcher on the castle wall desires the morning light? Do you pray to have everything taken away from you which separates between you and your God? Do you long for someone to bridge the chasm, and to bring you near to the Lord in spirit and in truth? If such is the case, the promise of the text is certainly yours! “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.”

What the seeker longs for is that he may so approach the Lord as to feel himself a friend of God, and know that divine love is most surely all his own. Oh, the sweetness of knowing that there is nothing between God and you but amity and love—that all the sad past is forgiven, and even blotted out of the Lord’s remembrance—and that now you may speak to Him without fear, and trust in Him without dread! Atonement has removed His righteous wrath and settled fast His boundless love! Now you may come and lie in His bosom, for it is your *Father’s* bosom, and hide, even, under the dark shadow of His wing, for it is your *Father’s* wing,

and it will cover you from all harm even as a hen covers her chickens. It is the prelude of heaven to feel that—

***“The God that rules on high,  
And thunders when He pleases,  
That rides upon the stormy sky,  
And manages the seas,  
This amazing God is ours!”***

All His power is for our protection; all His wisdom for our direction; all His tenderness for our consolation; all His truth for our encouragement; all His grandeur for our ennobling, and all the infinity of His nature for our eternal glorification! He wills that we should be partakers of the divine nature, and dwellers in the divine blessedness. This is very sweet, and this is what the soul that seeks God is following after. It aspires to walk with God, and to dwell with God. It longs to abide in Him, to be forever His beloved, to be accepted in Christ Jesus and to become daily more and more conformed to the divine image. To be cleansed from everything which is alien to the design and the nature of God and to be perfectly at one with God is our grand ambition! O beloved, this is a blessed longing for a soul to have and he that has it, by the grace of God, though he may mourn and languish now, shall, one day, praise and bless God!

It may help you to discern whether you have such longings if I say that the man who really has them is in earnest to seek after God *now*. He hates the idea of postponement. A moment's delay to a seeking soul is a dreadful thought—he desires immediate salvation—he would be reconciled to God at once! As the hungry man does not wish the meal to be postponed, but would gladly be fed at once, so in the true seeker his heart and his flesh cry out after God, for the living God—even as the hart pants after the water brooks, so does his soul pant after God. This desire is abiding, and cannot be turned aside to another object. Not always can a man perceive this desire with vividness because he is in the world and his thoughts must be somewhat diverted by his ordinary business and cares. But, still, the desire is always alive in his soul and whenever the stress of worldly care is taken from his mind, his heart flies back to its longings and begins, again, to sigh and cry after God. Such a man will break away from his fellows to plead with God alone. He will be praying without as much as the movement of his lips, even when he is in company. He will lie at night tossing on his bed and saying, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” He will wake in the morning with this desire strong upon him and will seek after the Lord as one that searches for hidden treasure. This desire hovers over the man who is subject to it. It overshadows his being and masters him completely! I have known it deprive food of its tastefulness and home of its comfort and make the seeker cry, “Woe is me until I find my God! I draw near unto the gates of death until He appears! Let others ask for the increase of their corn and wine, Lord, lift up the light of Your Countenance upon me, for this, and only this, will content my soul.”

Now, beloved, all this seeking of the soul which I have feebly described prepares a man for praising God when he finds mercy at the cross, as

you will readily see upon reflection. This is the *Holy Spirit's* way of tuning the harp for future psalmody. No man can praise God like the believer who has sought the Savior, sorrowing as His mother and Joseph did in the days of His flesh, and at the last found Him. The seeker knows the bitterness of sin and, therefore, he can appreciate the sweetness of pardoning mercy. He has been made to know his own lost estate and, in consequence, he will be the more rejoiced when he is *found* by the Good Shepherd and restored to his home by his Great Father! He knows his helplessness. No one knows it better, for he has tried the works of the law and failed. He has even tried prayer and gospel ordinances—but he has not succeeded in them so as to find rest unto his soul. He knows that he is broken in pieces, all asunder and, therefore, when he finds his help in the Lord Jesus, even he who feels himself to be such a helpless worm, what praises Christ will have and what love in return for all His gracious aid! The poor seeker has known in his own heart what he deserves at the hands of the law. He has had a glimpse of the world to come and the terrors of judgment and the burnings of eternal wrath. And with the unquenchable fire scorching his very face, he must and will praise His deliverer who has plucked him as a brand out of the burning! All his seeking, I say, helps him to prize divine mercy, when he receives it, and trains him to praise God according to the promise of our text, “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.” Never is a babe as dear to its mother as when it has just been restored from a sickness which threatened its life. Never does a father rejoice over his little child so much as when he has been long lost in the woods and, after a weary search, is at last brought home. No gold is so precious to a man as that which he has earned by hard labor and self-denial—the harder he has toiled to gain it, the more rejoiced is he when, at length, he has enough to permit him to rest. No freedom is so precious as the new found liberty of a slave, no enlargement so joyous as that of one who has long been sitting in the valley of the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron. No return to a country is so full of delight as that of sorrowful exiles who come back from cruel Babylon, by whose waters they sat and wept, yes, wept when they remembered Zion. “When the Lord turned, again, the captivity of Zion, we were like men that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, the Lord has done great things for them. The Lord has done great things for us, of which we are glad.” If there are any seekers here at this good hour, I hope that if they have seen themselves in the picture which I have outlined they will still further be enabled to take heart and be of good courage! I am laboring, this morning, to drop words of consolation, even as the reapers, when Ruth came into the field of Boaz, let fall handfuls on purpose for her, that she might glean and return with a full portion.

**II.** Now we come to THE PROMISE—“They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.” Blessed promise! It is gradually, but surely, fulfilled.

First, *it is fulfilled unconsciously while the man is seeking.* Did you ever think of this? Without knowing it, the humble seeker is *already* praising

God. That confession of sin which he made with so many tears was a glorifying of God by bearing witness to the justice of God's law, and the truth of the charges which it brings against our fallen nature. "My son," said Joshua even to Achan, "I pray you give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him." There is a measure of true praise in confession and it is as pure and real as that which angels present before the throne of God! The seeker, when he acknowledges that he deserves to be sent to hell is, in fact, praising divine justice—he is adoring the Judge of all. Even though in so doing there is a mixture of unbelief, and a forgetfulness of other attributes, yet there is a firm belief in divine Justice, and a suppliant adoration of it which is far from being unacceptable. There is also in the seeker a measure of delight in God's mercy, for while the poor sin-smitten soul is craving for pardon, it confesses heartily how sweet mercy is, in itself, if it might but obtain it, how gracious forgiveness is, how precious loving kindness is if it might but be favored with them. No living man has so keen an eye to the tender attributes of God as he whose soul is covered all over with wounds, bruises and putrefying sores through a sense of sin! Meanwhile, the seeking soul is really praising the Lord Jesus by appreciating the preciousness of His love and the value of His blood and saying within itself, "Oh that I might know the value of these in my own case! Oh that I could but touch the hem of His garment for myself! Would God I did but know what it is to be washed in His blood and to be covered with His righteousness!" There is in all these emotions a measure of latent praise none the less accepted of the Lord because it is not perceived by man. There is a precious fragrance of deep reverence and holy awe about a seeker's prayers which render them sweet unto the Lord. So, you see, the seeker is already praising God and, thus, in a measure, the promise is fulfilled.

*But the praise exceedingly abounds when the desire is granted.* As a bird lies hidden among the heather but is seen when, at last, it is startled and made to take to the wing, so does praise take to the wing and display itself when, at last, those who seek the Lord are permitted to find Him! What thunderclaps of praise come from poor sinners when they have just found their all-in-all in God in the person of Christ Jesus! Then their joy becomes almost too much for them to hold, vastly too much for them to express! Oh, the praises, the day and night praises, the continuous praises which rise from the returning, repenting soul which has, at last, felt the Father's arms around its neck and the Father's warm kisses on its cheek, and is sitting down at the table where the happy household eat and drink and are merry! *Praising* time has come, indeed, when *finding* time has arrived. Happy day! Happy day when we meet with God in Jesus Christ!

Now, dear soul, the promise secures that you *shall* find God in Christ, because the promise is that you shall praise Him—and you cannot praise *Him* until you have found His grace and favor in *Christ*. Therefore I am sure you will enjoy salvation before long! Oh, it is not to be thought of that a soul should seek after God and not find Him! Imagine the penitent

prodigal son seeking after his father, reaching his father's house, searching in the chambers of his father's mansion, going abroad into his father's fields and crying, "My Father, my Father, I have lost you! Will you not be found of me?"—doing all this, I say, and doing this by the month and the year together and not finding his father, after all! There is no such parable as that in Holy Writ, nor could there be one—it would not be God-like or Christ-like! There is nothing like it, as a matter of fact, nor shall there ever be, except where *unbelief* comes in and wickedly misrepresents the Lord. My God, in Your universe You think of everything! The beast has its lair and the sea bird has its home. The fish finds its food and even the insect has a table provided for it! And as for Your poor creature, man, though greatly erring, You do not forget him! You have made us wonder that You are so mindful of him, that You have such tender regard unto him, and do visit him so graciously! It is not possible that any of all your creatures should be seeking after You like a child that cries after its mother in the dark, and not find You, for after all, You are not far from any of us!

God may try you, He may let you wait awhile before He grants you the comforts of realized pardon. There may be that about you, especially that *unbelief* about you, which prevents your finding Him, but found of you He must be and He shall be before long! Which of you has a child who has offended you, but who, with many tears, comes to you and says, "My Father, forgive me," and you will not forgive? You know that, for a while, you may chide and say, "The offense is great, it has been oft repeated. I cannot readily pass by it this time." But if you see your child still weeping and still with a broken heart imploring your favor, does not your heart yearn over him? Do you not long to say, "My child, I have forgiven and forgotten your fault"? You know you do! And if you, being evil, know how to forgive your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give pardon and free grace to them that seek Him! You shall praise the Lord that seek Him! Lay hold on that promise.

Well, and when you have found Him, to the joy of your heart, the promise of the text shall be fulfilled in a third sense, *for you shall go on seeking and you shall go on praising*. Seeking the Lord is sometimes used in Scripture as the alias for *true religion* and it very aptly describes it, for our life consists in endeavoring to know the Lord yet more and more. Now, since Christ has died, true religion is *praise*. The genius of the Christian religion is joy, its proper spirit is delight, and its highest exercise is praise! "They shall praise the Lord that seek Him." Now we go up to the house of the Lord with the congregation of the faithful with songs of holy joy! Now we draw near to the feast of communion at the Lord's table with delight and, before we depart, we sing a hymn. Now we go forth to the good fight of faith and our battle song is a jubilant psalm! Now do we even go to our beds of painful sickness and sing the Lord's high praises there! Since Jesus died, our heaviness is dead, our murmuring is buried in His tomb. Since Jesus endured the wrath of God, which was due to us, that wrath has passed away forever and it is now

the privilege, no, the *duty* of every Christian to rejoice in the Lord! Let all the people praise Him and let the redeemed of the Lord be foremost in the joy!

Nor is this all. There comes another day and another state, when we shall be in another place and then we shall praise the Lord, even we who seek Him. *Every soul that has sought God on earth shall see Him and delight in Him in heaven.* What praises will you and I pour forth then! There are reasons why I consider myself to have been the greatest debtor to God of any man that ever lived—I can see special undeserving in my own case and special mercies on the part of God towards me. I challenge you all to bear witness that I am under bond to praise the name of the Lord more ardently than you because I am more deeply indebted to His grace. Each one of you, I have no doubt, cater to the same vein of thought and not without reason. You will each feel as if you had the most cause to magnify His blessed name when you find yourself seated among the blood-washed and in your hands the palm branch of eternal victory! Oh, what a song shall go up then! What “shouts of them that triumph, and songs of them that feast” shall make heaven’s high arches ring in that glad day when “they shall praise the Lord that seek Him.”

What a promise this is! I leave it in your hands, only remarking that it takes the most delightful shape possible, because if you are a true seeker, the thing you want above all things is to be able to glorify God! You desire to be pardoned and to be renewed in heart with this objective—that you may be able to render acceptable praise to Him whom you have offended. Well, that is the very blessing which is promised you! “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.” And it includes, of course, the removal from your heart of everything that would prevent your praising Him—and the breaking down of every barrier that would keep you back from joining celestial choirs who, day without night, with their eternal symphonies circle His throne rejoicing!

**III.** Thirdly, THE PRAISE. “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.” What will the praise be about? What will be the subject of the song? Ah, now I have before me an utterly endless task if I am to catalog the subjects of praise for a seeking soul when it has found peace with God! Why, beloved, *we praise Him to think that we found Him as we did!* Some of you found Him so readily—you only heard a sermon and that one sermon led you to Christ! Others of us did not find Him so soon or so easily and, yet, we found Him in the very nick of time. Just when we were going to lie down in despair, when Satan suggested that no hope remained, then man’s extremity was God’s opportunity and we found the Lord exactly to the tick of the clock at the best moment! Blessed be His name! Oh, to find Him at all! How great a blessing! If a man should lie a thousand years in the prison of despair, yet if he did but find Christ, at last, it were worth while to have suffered the thousand years of daily death! If we may but at last say, “My God, my God,” with unfaltering tongue and a heart that feels itself reconciled to Him, we shall make it our heaven to praise Him with all our might!

The chief point of praise, perhaps, with most saved ones is *that they found such a Savior*. Our Lord is represented as on the cross when He utters this promise, “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him,” and when we find the Lord we always find Him in Christ upon the cross—and the atonement becomes a chief feature in our joy. Do you remember the first time you had a view, by faith, of the Incarnate God bearing human sin—when that grand doctrine of substitution flashed on your soul like the first sight of the sun to a man that had been blind? Do you remember when you first really knew that God did lay on Christ *your* iniquities and that *He* was punished instead of you, so that you cannot, by any possibility, be punished, for it were unjust, twice, to exact the penalty for one offense? Did you ever get the glory of that light concentrated on your soul, so that you knew, absolutely, that God, for Christ’s sake had forgiven you and justly forgiven you because of the blood of Jesus? Did you ever drink in the meaning of those words, “faithful and just to forgive us our sins”? Then I know after the first overwhelming impression of intense delight you did praise God, yes, and you have not left off doing so, for there is enough in that one simple fact to set you praising God throughout the ages of eternity! Salvation by substitution so satisfies the conscience that it fills the heart with overflowing delight—

***“The love I prize is righteous love,  
Inscribed on the sin-bearing tree.  
Love that exacts the sinner’s debt,  
Yet, in exacting sets him free!  
Love that condemns the sinner’s sin,  
Yet, in condemning, pardon seals.  
That saves from righteous wrath, and yet  
In saving, righteousness reveals.  
This is the love that calms my heart,  
That soothes each conscience-pang within,  
That pacifies my guilty dread,  
And frees me from the power of sin.”***

Oh, to think that such an one as Jesus should be our Savior, that heaven’s Darling should condescend to assume our nature and become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh! That He should live such a life and die such a death! That He should present to God a work so perfect, without flaw, without excess! Is there not room for praises here? Now we are as clean before the Lord because we have been washed in Christ’s blood, yes, we are as pure as if we had never sinned! And standing arrayed in Christ’s righteousness, we are more righteous, even, than Adam before the fall, for he had only a human righteousness, but we have a *divine* righteousness. In Christ Jesus, the second Adam, we are nearer to God than if we had been born of the first Adam while untainted by sin! Now, there is a man who is akin to God, even Jesus, our brother, who is also very God of very God. Man is exalted to the highest conceivable degree in the person of Jesus Christ and we have become heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ. As the seeking soul learns more and more of this, it praises God more and more. Is it not so? Does not your soul bless the Savior? Yes, and the longer we live and the more we know

about the Lord the more we find causes for extolling Him! Indeed, everything around us, within us and above us seems to suggest a reason for blessing His name!

Think of *our security*, at this moment and, again, praise God! Many a song has been poured from my soul as I have remembered that my Lord has given me a life that cannot die—that He has written me on His heart from where my name can never be erased—that He has made a covenant with me to which He has pledged His honor and His word! And He has sealed it with His blood! I am His child and, by His grace, I know that He never did and never can tear from His heart's love even the least of His children—the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of His peace can never be removed—for so He has declared—

***“My name from the palms of His hands,  
Eternity cannot erase!  
Impressed on His heart it remains  
In marks of indelible grace.  
Yes, I to the end shall endure  
As sure as the earnest is given!  
More happy but not more secure  
The glorified spirits in heaven:”***

There is abundant raw material for praise in all this! Where can you find better? “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.”

Brothers and sisters, *we see cause for praise in the very fact that we ever sought the Lord at all.* Think what it was which made us seek Him—what but Sovereign grace? What bedewed our eyes with the first tears of Repentance? What fetched from our soul the first sigh of desire after Christ? What, I say, but GRACE? And from where came that grace but from His eternal promise which He promised in Christ Jesus before the world was? And from where that promise but from His divine sovereignty, even as it is written, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”? Therefore let us glorify His holy name and think not of works or merits, or anything in man that could have won for us the love of the Most High! Boasting is excluded, but praise is secured! Give all the glory to His holy name forever and forever, and let the text stand true in your case, “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.”

Our final thought on this occasion shall be, if these things are so, let us praise the Lord, even we who have sought Him! If our poor friends, the seekers, are soon to bless His name, let us show them the way! We sought and we found—let us magnify the Lord at once! Do you think we praise our heavenly Father half enough? Do we not rob Him of His glory by getting down in the dumps and giving way to care and, perhaps, to murmuring? This is not the right spirit for a Christian! Where there is so much undeserved mercy, there ought to be more grateful joy! Do you think we are demonstrative enough in our praise? I am sure we are not! Few around us would ever dream that we were half as favored as we are! Do we sing one-tenth as much as Christians ought to sing? We hum over a tune, now and then, very quietly, but we are terribly afraid of being

heard and of annoying people. I do not find the giddy world much afraid of annoying us with *their* songs—do they not wake us up at night with their lewd discords? If we were half as earnest as we ought to be, we should sometimes, at least, make the streets ring with the praises of God! It would be well to be a little indiscreet occasionally and, now and then, provoke the charge of fanaticism, for this would be a proof of earnest sincerity! Once, at least, in our lives we should let our Lord ride through the streets, again, in public triumph amid our own most hearty enthusiasm, till Pharisees rebuke us and say, “Do you hear what these say?”—

***“Oh, for this love let rocks and hills  
Their lasting silence break!  
And all harmonious human tongues  
Their Savior’s praises speak.”***

Yes, and all inharmonious tongues, too! Let all creatures that have breath praise the Lord—

***“Yes we will praise You, dearest Lord,  
Our souls are all on flame.  
Hosanna round the spacious earth  
To Your adored name!”***

May the Lord set our hearts on fire! May we be full of exulting praise, marching on with hosannas and hallelujahs, magnifying, praising and extolling the Lord whom we sought in the hour of trouble, and whom we found in the day of His grace!

## **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 22.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—563, 775, 548.**

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# A SECOND WORD TO SEEKERS

## NO. 1313

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
SEPTEMBER 10, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And you shall seek Me, and find Me, when  
you shall search for Me with all your heart.  
Jeremiah 29:13.*

LAST Sabbath morning [See Sermon No. 1312, “Good News for Seekers.”] we gave forth words of good cheer to those who seek the Lord, dwelling upon those encouraging words of the Savior upon the cross, “They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.” We aimed only at the one point of encouraging seekers, for a single objective is always enough for one discourse and the impression made is more likely to be permanent. We had neither time nor desire to qualify our language with discriminating remarks which would help to show who are true seekers and who are not. One cannot reap and winnow with the same machine. I think it is right, therefore, that we should follow up that discourse by another in which we shall discern between those who truly seek and those who only nominally seek the Lord. Such discrimination will be useful in many ways. Perhaps, dear friend, after last Lord’s-day, you said, “I do not understand this promise that seekers shall praise God, for I have been seeking for many months, but I have not been able to praise Him. Surely the promise cannot be true for me.” Rest assured, dear friend, that the promise *is* true for you if you are true to it. The word of the Lord is sure. There can be no question upon that point—the questions to be raised must deal with yourself and your searching—either you do not seek or else you seek amiss. Always conclude that if a general promise does not turn out to be true in your particular instance, there is something in *you* that hinders it. You must have fallen short of the character to which the promise is made—the promise, itself, cannot be suspect. “Let God be true and every man a liar.” You may account for your not obtaining the blessing which you have asked upon any theory which *humbles* yourself, but you must never suppose that the Lord will break His promise, for that would be to dishonor His holy name, deny His faithfulness and pour contempt upon His truth! If His good word appears to fail towards you, is there not a cause? Does not *sin* lie at the door? Is there not some idol in the inner chamber which must be searched for and taken away? “Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you?” It is a general truth that proper food will build up the human frame, but if food is eaten and yet no nourishment whatever is obtained from it, we conclude that the system is thrown out of order by some inward disease. The meat is good—it must, therefore, be the stomach or some other organ that ails and turns that which is good into evil. If a fire is kindled and a person is

placed close to it, and yet he declares that he is not warmed by the heat, we do not, because of this, entertain any doubt of the power of *fire* to warm the human body! We conclude that the man has a chill or some other malady which prevents his feeling the natural warmth of the fire. The failure of warmth cannot lie in the *fire*—it must be in the man—for fire must warm any healthy limbs which are held near to it. If a medicine which has been known to produce a cure in hundreds of cases is taken by an individual and it is found to have no result, or to work in a manner contrary to its natural and ordinary effect, we conclude that either the state of the case has been badly judged, or that there is present some other potent drug which neutralizes its effect. The man, himself, may not be aware that he is eating or imbibing that which acts in an opposite direction to the prescription of his physician and yet it may be so and, therefore, the medicine is not to be distrusted, but the interposing substance must bear all the blame. For this reason we will try, this morning, to discriminate a little, with no wish whatever to grieve any seeking soul, but with a strong desire to indicate any weak point in the seeking, any counteracting habit which may be, at this time, preventing the soul from entering at once into the peace and joy for which it is seeking. “He that seeks finds” is an indisputable fact. But, as all is not gold that glitters, so all is not *seeking* which bears the name!

We come at once to our point by noticing *the quality required in every true seeker*. The verse tells us—“You shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.” Whole-heartedness is the quality required. Secondly, we shall show *the reasons why wholeheartedness is required*. And, thirdly, *indicate one or two of the main hindrances to it*, which we pray the Lord to remove.

**I. THE QUALITY REQUIRED IN THE SEEKER** is whole-heartedness—he must search for the Lord with all his heart. This means, I take it, three things.

First, in order to find the Lord there must be *an undivided objective in the seeker’s mind*. See how the text runs—“You shall seek *Me*, and find *Me*, when you shall search for Me with all your heart.” The objective is one and only one. The sinner is at a distance from God and guilt divides him from his God. He longs to draw near to the heavenly Father and to be reconciled—he therefore seeks after God and God, alone. “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” “O that I knew where I might find HIM!” Now, the Lord is to be found by the guilty only in Christ Jesus, who is the mercy Seat where God meets sinners and hears their prayers. It is there that the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily and there the fullness of divine grace and the truth of God are stored up so that we may receive of them. We must turn our eyes, then, to God in Christ Jesus, and keep our eyes fixed there. “My soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” If the eyes are not only on Christ and in desire of salvation through Him, it will be no wonder if we seek for God’s mercy but seek in vain! How can a man run in two ways at the same time? Brothers and sisters, you must shake off from you all trust in *self*, for God will have none of it! You must not seek God by the works of the

law, or by any supposed merit that is or ever can be in yourself, for this He utterly refuses. If you attempt to mix law with gospel, self with Christ and merit with mercy, you will certainly miss your aim—your whole soul must concentrate itself upon this—to find God as He is revealed in Christ, a God of grace and love, the God who justifies the ungodly when He looks upon the merit of His Son and sees the sinner's confidence in Him.

You must so seek the Lord as to make no provision for the lusts of the flesh and the desires of the mind. If it cost you the giving up of every pleasure that you have, yet in searching after the Lord you must seek Him so entirely that you would cut off right arms and pluck out right eyes sooner than you should miss Him and so miss eternal life! However sweet the sin may have been to your palate, you must cast it out of your mouth, for it is as poisonous as it is pleasant and, therefore, it is to be put away far from you. "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof," for if you do, you have not sought the Lord with all your heart. There must be one objective and that must be neither self nor sin, but you must feel and say, "in God is my salvation, and my glory. The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God. Therefore with strong desire do I follow after the Lord, even the Lord, alone."

Moreover, there must be no reservations made in this search to gratify pride in any of its shapes. If you say within your heart, "I will only accept mercy if it come to me in a certain way"—you put yourself out of all hope of grace, for God is a sovereign, and will do as He wills with His own. Some will not have Christ without signs and wonders—they demand singular experiences, horrible depressions, or delirious excitements—and they will not believe unless some marvelous thing is worked in them or before them. You must make no conditions with God, either of this or of any other kind. You shall find Him if you will seek Him without bargains and terms and demands—for what are you that you should demand anything of your Maker—and lay down rules and regulations for the dispensing of a mercy to which you have no claim? Come as you are, poor sinner, and without any reservation submit yourself to the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, only desiring this one thing—that you may find God and His love in Christ Jesus—

***"Lord, deny me what You will,  
Only ease me of my guilt.  
Suppliant at Your feet I lie,  
Give me Christ, or else I die."***

You shall find the Lord to be your help and your salvation if you seek Him as the one sole objective of your desire. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after."

The phrase, "with all your heart" means, next, *with the entire faculties of our being*. A man must seek after God in Christ Jesus with his entire nature. David said, "My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You." If one part of the man refuses to seek the Lord and remains reserved for Satan, then the evil one has a lien upon the whole man! Here is a little bird and it tries to fly into the open air, but it is not free. And why not? Its wings are loose, see how it flutters! Its head is not bound, hear how it

sings! And this foot is free, too—why is it not at liberty? Do you not perceive that the other leg is bound by a thin twine? True, it is only held by that single thread, but it is not free. The whole bird is bound, because that *one foot* is held by that single thread! And so long as a man of free choice gives up any part of himself to the power of sin and keeps back any part of his nature from seeking after God, he is not really seeking the Lord at all, but remains a slave of sin. O man, if you would find God, set your faculties upon the search! Marshal your powers, muster your forces and let your entire nature, body, soul and spirit search after Jesus Christ as the merchantman seeks goodly pearls! Set your thoughts at work and let them search the Scriptures! Awake your understanding and endeavor to comprehend your danger and to know your remedy. Set your wits to work—let your ingenuity and your research be brought to bear on heavenly things, for perhaps when you *do* understand the gospel you will believe and have peace. An enlightened judgment is a great help towards faith. Many a man remains without peace because his understanding has never been exercised upon the gospel and divine things. But if he would think them over, meditate upon them and ponder them in his heart, by the enlightening of the sacred Spirit, new light would flash into his soul and he would see and believe. “Do you understand what you read?” is an important question and suggests that in the search after salvation the understanding should be called into play. Do not expect to be saved as dumb driven cattle, but as a reasonable man and, therefore, use your reason and understanding upon divine things, asking the Lord to teach your reason right reason—and to give your understanding a right understanding of His word.

It will be well for a man, in seeking the Lord, to use his *memory* and his conscience. Let him go over the list of his past sins and recall the wanderings of his heart, the follies of his tongue, the iniquities of his hands. Perhaps memory will call up conscience and become the mother of repentance! The recollection of the sinful past will, by the Spirit’s grace, create a penitent. Forget not, I pray you, to remember your former days, for God requires that which is past. Remember, too, what God has done by way of mercy to others. Think of friends and companions saved. Remember the grand old records of Inspiration—turn to the Bible and see how God has saved seeking souls—and your memory may thus beget faith in you by the work of the Spirit of God. The text bids you search “with all your heart,” and your memory, as one of the faculties of your mind should assist in the search.

As for your *will*, how necessary that this, also, be captured and compelled to join heartily in the pursuit. It is a stubborn thing, and will not readily bend, but how can you expect to find mercy if you are not willing to submit to God’s rebukes and accept His methods of salvation? Bring forth my Lord Will-Be-Will and let *grace cause him* to submit himself! Though he was once Lord Mayor of Mansoul, he must bare his neck to the yoke of Christ and admit that the will of the Lord is higher than man’s will! Make him say, “Not as I will, but as You will.” As to every other faculty that you have, if you are, indeed, in earnest, let it be awak-

ened! Leave not a single part of your nature behind you when you come to God, but seek Him with your whole heart, with intense eagerness and strong desire. "My son, if you will receive My words, and hide My commandments with you; so that you incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry after knowledge and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then shall you understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."

I have now given you two meanings for the phrase, to seek the Lord with all our heart—it indicates an undivided objective and the entireness of our faculties in the search. But, thirdly, it signifies, mainly, *awakened energy*. "When you shall search for Me with all your heart you shall find Me." It includes the getting out of that dull, sluggish, indifferent spirit which seems so common. Indifference to eternal realities seems to impregnate the very air we breathe in this sleepy world—sleepy I mean as to things spiritual and divine. We are busy about a thousand things, but sluggish about our souls! Yet be not deceived, if men are to be saved, it will not be accomplished while they slumber, nor will mercy be found by listless, careless, lackadaisical searching after it. When the Spirit of God sets a man searching, he becomes earnest, intense, fervent, vehement and strives to enter in at the strait gate, "for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." He who would be saved must be resolved to escape from the wrath to come. It must come to this with you—that you will not rest till you find Christ and eternal life, for you can not endure to be damned and, therefore, you are determined that if there is on earth or in heaven any remedy for your soul's sickness, you will have it if seeking can obtain it! When the Lord has made you thus resolute, you will need to have perseverance to follow hard after Him till you have beheld His face in peace. If you have once read the Scriptures to find Christ in them, you will read them again and again—and dig the field of the word over 10 times till you find the hidden treasure! If you have once prayed for grace and peace you will pray again and again, and again, and again till your knees are calloused rather than you will miss the blessing! If you have heard the word preached many times and yet it has not brought peace to your soul, you will be early and late in your waiting at the posts of Jehovah's doors to hear those glad tidings of which it is written, "Hear, and your soul shall live." There will be in your spirit a determination that cannot be shaken, a desire which cannot be appeased! We must be importunate, like the widow with the unjust judge, or the man at midnight with his friend, for importunity prevails. "Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the Lord." If you cannot rest till you receive the kiss of pardon, you shall soon obtain it! If you cannot be easy until you are taken into the Father's house and acknowledged to be His child, you shall soon rejoice in the adoption! May the Lord be pleased to awake all seekers to passionate earnestness, for when they are filled with travail of soul they shall obtain mercy! If you are content to go without salvation

you shall go without it, but if your soul longs, yes, even faints for it, you shall have it.

There are some poor souls who will, perhaps, be distressed with these remarks upon energetic seeking. They are constitutionally weak and feeble in all that they feel and do and, therefore, they will say, "Alas, sir, I am afraid I never was so earnest as you describe. I am a poor feeble soul and very low in spirit. I fear I have no such eagerness and energy." No, dear trembler, and I would not have you misunderstand me, for the force I am now commending is not physical, but *spiritual* and rather that of *weakness* than of strength! Have you not heard that once upon a time two knocks were given at mercy's door and he who kept the door, opened to one in an instant, but to the other there was no reply. The knock to which the door was opened was but a gentle one and scarcely could be heard by those outside the gate, yet it evidently struck some secret spring upon the door, for the sound thereof thundered along the palace halls! The second knock was very loud and was heard by all who stood around the door, but it commanded no answer from within. Then he who thus had knocked marveled and inquired of him that kept the gate and said, "How is it that I have knocked so loudly, and yet have not entered, while the trembling woman whose knock was very soft and low obtained immediate admittance?" Then he that kept the door answered, "She who knocked so feebly, yet knocked with all her might. Her strength was little, but it was all she had and, therefore, it sounded powerfully within these palace walls. As for you, you have put forth much energy, but it was not your all and, therefore, there is no response to you. Take you the hammer of the gate with both your hands and throw your whole soul into each blow, and see if the door does not yield you admittance." He did so, the gate flew open to him, and he entered into the place which his feeble sister had already gained. If you seek God with all your heart, be your heart strong or feeble, you shall find Him!

**II.** Secondly, we have to consider THE REASON FOR THIS REQUIREMENT. The requirement is so natural that it needs no excusing—it must recommend itself to every thoughtful person. But since it may help us to be earnest if we are told why it is required of us, I would answer first, that *in every other pursuit where the objective is at all worthy of a man's efforts, whole-heartedness is required.* I knew a man who had a business, but if you called to see him upon any matter you seldom found him in—he was taking a holiday, or else he had not risen. He made an appointment with you, but he never kept it, or came in so late that you were weary with waiting. Commissions that he was entrusted with were often left unexecuted by the week together, or attended to in a slovenly manner. Do you wonder that when I passed by his shop one day I saw the shutters up and learned that he had failed? Do you not know that success in life depends upon *earnestness* in it? Do you not teach your sons this important lesson? And if it is so in the lower things of this mortal life, how much more is it in the matters of the world to come? No man becomes learned by sleeping with a book for his pillow, or famous by slumbering at the foot of the ladder of honor. You find, everywhere, that

the kingdom of this world suffers violence and never more so than in these days of increasing competition. Surely you cannot expect that if you must run for this world, you may creep and win the next! No, no, you shall find the Lord, seeker, if you seek Him with all your heart, but no other way! Spiritual sluggards shall starve! Labor, therefore, for the meat which endures to eternal life.

*The danger from which the need to escape is so great, that the utmost earnestness is none too much!* Consider for a moment the imminence of our peril and the overwhelming nature of it. The unsaved man lies under the wrath of God and if any man did but know what the wrath of God is, he would think Nebuchadnezzar's furnace to be cool compared with that burning oven! He is, in instant danger of death and of the Judgment, and of that second death which follows on the heels of condemnation and consists in banishment from the presence of God and the glory of His power. Oh, if a man did but know, while he lived, what it is to *die*—if he could but guess what it is to stand before God's bar and if he could have an inkling of what it must be to be cast where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched—this would surely make him seek the Lord with all his heart! O Man, if you were in a burning house you would be eager to get out of it! If there seemed a probability that you would sink in a river, you would struggle desperately to get to shore! How is it, then, that you are so little moved by the peril of your soul? Man is awakened when his life is once known to be in peril—how much more earnest ought he to be when eternal life or eternal death are the solemn alternatives! "What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon your God!"

Look, moreover, at *the greatness of the mercy* which you are seeking. It is none other than pardon of all your sins, perfect righteousness in Christ Jesus, safety through His precious blood, adoption into the family of God and eternal enjoyment of the presence of God in heaven! They that seek for pearls, gold and precious stones, use all their eyes and all their wits, but what are those gaudy toys compared with these immortal treasures? How ought a man to seek after heaven and eternal life? Should it not be with all his heart?

Remember that in this matter *everybody else is in earnest*. Poor Seeker, everyone that you have to do with in this matter is in earnest! Look down on hell's domain and see how earnest Satan is to hold you and to ruin you! How diligently the enemy baits his hooks and sets his traps to catch the souls of men! How does he compass sea and land to hold his captives lest they escape. See how earnest, on the other hand, Christ is! He proved His earnestness by a life of toil by day and of prayer by night—by hunger, thirst, faintness and bloody sweat. The zeal of God's house had eaten Him up. He was earnest even to the death for sinners. And God is in earnest—there is no mockery with Him, or carelessness or indifference about human souls. When He speaks of the sinner's perishing, He cries out with a solemn oath that He has no pleasure in their death. But if they, to the last, refuse His love and defy His Justice, He will not trifle with them, but will judge in earnest and punish in earnest. Has He not said, "Beware therefore, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces,

and there be none to deliver.” The Majesty of His power is revealed in flaming wrath against transgressors! Hell is no trifle and His wrath is no small matter. Heaven and hell, then, are in earnest, and so must you be if you would find salvation. Shall we, who have to tell you to escape from the wrath to come, pray to be in earnest and shall we never feel earnest enough, but always cry that we may be seized with a yet more intense passion for your welfare? And shall it seem to you to be a common-place affair—a thing that you may let alone and let happen as it may? Oh, sirs, if you talk so, the madness of sin is very manifest in you! May the Lord make you sane!

Where everything else is in earnest, you need to be in earnest, too. *You have been earnest enough and whole-hearted enough in the ways of sin.* Think of yourself as engrossed with those things of which you ought to be ashamed. Have you not been earnest, indeed, *there?* Concerning this world you have risen up early and sat up late, and eaten the bread of carefulness. When you went into sin, did you not sin with both your hands? Perhaps I speak to some here who could never sin enough. When they were in company they were ahead of all others—ringleaders in every sort of wickedness; it was not enough for them to be as *common* sinners, but they were known by everybody to be the boldest and most daredevil of all the crew. They led the van in the march to hell! Ah, sirs, are you going to manifest all that earnestness in reviling and rebelling against God and is there to be no warmth, no ardor, no strong excitement of your nature when you seek the Lord and His grace? Think of this and chide your laggard steps!

Besides, look, sirs, *how can there be anything true about your seeking if it is not whole-hearted?* Here is a man who *almost* repents of his sin, or half repents of it. Does not that mean that he does not repent of it at all? How can there be repentance of a deed to which half the heart is still wedded? If only half the heart seems to be separated from sin, it is but a *seeming*—the man’s whole heart, in truth, still loves his sin. And how can there be half-hearted faith? He that half-believes, believes not at all. If you say, “I almost believe,” where is your faith? If you believe with all your heart you may be baptized and added to the church. But if you believe half-heartedly, what sort of faith is this? For a man to turn half from sin, and half to God, is that conversion? No, he has not turned to God who has turned but half to God. He abides where he was, only probably he has added hypocrisy to his other sins. He who leaves half his heart behind him when he comes to God comes not at all. “Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty.”

And also, my brethren, you that are seeking the Lord, there must be whole-heartedness in your seeking because *that which you seek, if you obtain it, is a whole-hearted thing.* Hear how true Christians *pray*. Do they pray with half their hearts? No, for one said, “with my whole heart have I sought You.” So say all the saints. They know that if they ask in a chilly style they are asking to be denied and, therefore, they besiege heaven with all the *power* of prayer. They knock and knock again with fervor and importunity when they would obtain what they need. They say

with wrestling Jacob, "I will not let You go unless You bless me." Prayer is the vital breath of the Christian and if he cannot pray without whole-heartedness, then it is clear that to have spiritual life, you, O seeker, must give all your heart to it.

*Obedience* to God in the believer is whole-hearted. What did David say? "I will keep Your Precepts with my whole heart." There is no doing the will of God with half a heart. That would be such an obedience as He could not, in any way, accept. It would be a sign of formality and hypocrisy, but not of sincerity. Genuine Christians love God with all their heart. What is the demand of the old law, but, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul"? To love God with half your heart would be another name for not loving God at all! Love to God is the proof and test of a believer, but how can you have it if even in your seeking your heart is divided? When believers praise God, they do it in the style of the psalmist who said, "I will praise You, O God, with my whole heart." What other songs can have music in them to the ears of the God of truth? Vain must all ten-stringed instruments be if the heart praises not. "Unite my heart to fear Your name," said the holy man, and we must pray the same, for the Christian life is impossible without wholeness of heart.

Only imagine for a moment that I were permitted to come here and say to you sinners, "God is very easily entreated and if you seek Him, no matter in what cold and careless way, He will be found of you. You may be half asleep, but yet so long as there is a little desire in your soul, it will go well with you. You need not be very earnest or specially prayerful, or whole-hearted—you may take it very easy—it will all go well with you"? What pretty preaching that would be! Some might like it, but what sort of Christians should we produce by it? Even when we preach earnestness, a great number of professors are drowsy enough! But what would they be if we had such a slumbering gospel as this to preach? I have known persons go to sleep in the House of Prayer when the seats have been hard. But suppose we provided pillows for all armholes and downy cushions for drowsy heads? Who would wonder it you all went to sleep? What sort of a church should we build up if we did not bid the inquirer seek with his whole heart, but urged him to be indifferent from the very first? Have I not reduced the whole thing to an absurdity? And do you not see, at once, that there must be a seeking of the Lord with all your heart if, indeed, you are ever to find Him? May the divine Spirit, who comes as a rushing mighty wind and as a consuming fire, come upon all wavering hearts at this hour and cause them to be eager after the things which make for their peace!

**III.** I am going to mention, in the third place, one or two of THE HINDRANCES which stand in the way of a sincere, whole-hearted, persevering search after the Lord and His salvation.

I verily believe that a principal hindrance is *presumption*. The ungodly say within themselves, "God is very merciful and ready to forgive. We like to hear the preacher set forth the abundant mercy of God. We are pleased to hear him show how willing the Father is to forgive and how He

delights to receive returning prodigals.” Yes, and after saying this you continue in sin—your mean, dastardly, worse than brutish heart resolves to sin because God is merciful! I know not how to find adjectives sufficiently strong to set forth the degradation of a nature which can multiply offenses because the offended one is of a forgiving spirit! How worse than brutish are they who say, “Because God is so merciful, therefore we will go on in sin!” Are you not ashamed of yourselves? I am sure I am ashamed of you, that such a thought should ever dwell in your mind! It is so ungrateful, so ungenerous—I was going to say, it is so devilish—but the devil himself has never been so guilty, for he has never had any *hope* of mercy! To sin because of mercy is a step lower than even the devil has descended. Because God is merciful, therefore, you will not seek His mercy, but will continue in sin. Ah, be ashamed and be ashamed! You hear us continually say that whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned. And you say to yourself in the secret of your heart, “This is very easy. Only believe, and you shall be saved. Simply put your confidence in Christ,” and from this you take license to go on in sin! Let me put this to you again that you may see the meanness of such a course. Do you say, “Because the way of salvation is so simple, therefore I will not attend to it at present. Any day will do. I will put it off”? Oh, man, can it be that you have fallen so low as this? Oh, the deep depravity of your spirit, that if God is so ready to forgive, you are, therefore, all the more unready to be forgiven! And because He puts it on such easy terms, you, therefore, turn upon your heels and refuse His love! What is this but virtually to crucify Christ afresh by sinning because He is gracious? What is this but mocking Him and spitting in His face by refusing His salvation because it is so free? Oh, do not do this! Be not so unmanly, so cruel to yourself, and so ungenerous to the Christ of God. “Ah,” says one, “a few words of prayer at the last will do.”—

**“While the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return.”**

Ah, I have often wondered how men can venture to speak thus within themselves! They seldom talk like that to others because they dare not! But they flatter themselves in secret. How do you know that you will have the few minutes in which to utter those pious words? “God be merciful to me a sinner,” may be more than you will be able to say! Beware, lest He take you away with a stroke, for then you will not be able to raise even the shortest prayer! Some have been smitten down in their sins and those have been the very men who said, “Any time will do. I can turn to God when I please and make my peace with Him.” Many men have fallen from a height, or been killed on the railway, or drowned at sea, or seized with an epileptic fit and their souls have stood in all their naked shame before the bar of God to answer for their ungodly speeches! Presumption upon the mercy of God is the reason why so many wrap themselves up in the garments of carnal security and put far from them the evil day. God deliver you from this great evil!

Secondly, many are hindered, I doubt not, by *remains of self-confidence*. If they knew that they could not save themselves they would

be in earnest to seek after God and His righteousness. But they still harbor some vain notion that there must be at least a little good thing about them, at least a spark—and a great fire may come from a spark. They never were as bad as some—they were not swearers or drunks—they have never plunged into actual lust and defiled themselves with uncleanness. Somewhere or other they have hoarded up a little store of native goodness and upon this they dote in a timorous, half suspicious way and, therefore, they do not cry out to God with the energy of those who must find mercy in Christ or be forever lost. He who thinks that he can swim will never seize the life buoy with the clutch of a drowning man. How fierce is the grasp of a man who is drowning and knows that his fast hold is his only chance! How he clutches, as if his fingers were made to be welded to the buoy! When a man feels that nothing is left for him but God in Christ, then with earnestness he seizes upon the hope set before him!

I am afraid that some are hindered by a very opposite evil, namely, *despair*. Ah, some of you do not believe that you can be forgiven! You fancy that you never can be God's people. If you were quite sure that you could obtain perfect peace with God—if you knew that before the sun goes down today you might have the bright eye which looks up to heaven and say, "There is a throne there for me," and the placid heart that feels perfect rest in Christ—if you knew that these could be yours, would you not seek them? Well now, I want to read you a verse which comes before my text. And as I read it, I pray the Holy Spirit to apply its comfortable assurance to your soul. Look at the 11<sup>th</sup> verse—"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." Oh, if God's thoughts towards you are good, come to Him now and kiss His feet! The prodigal, when he was returning home, did not doubt that his father would receive him somehow or other, even if it were as one of his hired servants. He knew that he would be received, somehow, and he was willing to be received!

Come, poor soul, the Lord will receive you, whoever you may be! If with your whole heart you do consent at once to trust the Lord Jesus, He will receive you! Yes, He will show you how to trust! He will give you faith and give you the blessing which your faith seeks. Why should you not meet your Lord in these pews this morning? Why, before you descend the steps of the Tabernacle, should you not breathe the prayer of faith and lean your weight upon the cross of Christ, and find the mercy which our text declares you shall find if you seek it with all your heart?

Lastly, I am afraid that some people have been kept from whole-hearted seeking by *the conduct of Christian professors*. Let me urge you never to take your pattern—you that are coming to Christ—from those who *profess* to be His followers, for some of them are a sorry sort! Yet let them be as bad as they may, what is that to you? You have your own soul to look after—and you have to seek Christ with all the more earnestness because some who think that they have found Him have been mistaken! It is a great pity when there are Christian people about, or those who *say* that they are Christians, to whom a poor seeking soul is

unable to appeal because he would get no sympathy from them. I heard of one who, being ill, desired someone to visit him, occasionally, and pray with him. A young man, a professing Christian, was mentioned as one who would willingly do so. “No,” said the other, “I do not want *him* to pray with me, for his *life* does not pray.” There are people of that sort about, many of them. There are some such here. One would not have much faith in their prayers, or derive much comfort from their conversation, for, though you may hope, charitably, that there may be grace in them, it is like coal in a pit—it is a long way down and hard to get at. Their hearts are lukewarm at the best and, therefore, they never boil with warm and loving expressions. The genuine and healthy Christian is one who is so full of love that his heart boils over with a good matter and others are compelled to feel that the fire of God is burning in his soul, for they see and feel the effects. O Christian brothers and sisters, I do trust that you will see to this, because if you are half-hearted, the chill which surrounds you will freeze the hearts of many who are seeking the Savior! Father, mother, may you not fear that you are hindrances to your children? Sunday school teachers, if you go to your class like blocks of ice this afternoon, you will have cold attention when you come to talk of Christ! If the minister preaches with icicles hanging on his lips, how can he expect that men’s hearts will be thawed by his icy words? No, we must set the example of seeking God with our whole heart—we that are His people—and then God, by the Holy Spirit, will bless our example to others and they will come to seek Him with their whole hearts, too.

The Lord make us to be in downright earnest, so we may hope that toward us He will fulfill that ancient promise, “I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul.” Think of God thus blessing us with His whole heart and His whole soul. Amen, Lord, so let it be!

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 11:1-28.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—427, 594, 605.**

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# THE MIGHTY ARM

## NO. 1314

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
SEPTEMBER 17, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“You have a mighty arm: strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand.”  
psalm 89:13.*

WHEN the soul is perfectly reconciled to God and comes to delight in Him, it rejoices in all His attributes. At the first, perhaps, it dwells almost exclusively upon His love and His mercy, but it afterwards proceeds to find joy in the sterner attributes, and especially delights itself in His holiness, and in His power. It is a mark of the growth of Christian knowledge when we begin to distinguish the attributes, and to rejoice in God in each one of them. It betokens meditation and thought when we are able to discern the things of God, and to give to the Lord a psalm of praise for each one of His glories, and it also indicates a growingly intimate communion with the Great Father when we begin to perceive His adorable character, and to rejoice so much in all that He is, that we can take the attributes in detail, and bless, praise, and magnify Him on account of each one of them. Under the Jewish law there were forms of the sacrifices which were of the simplest kind, such as the offering of turtle doves or young pigeons, which were simply torn asunder, and burned upon the altar. But there were other and more elaborate rules for the sacrifices which were taken from the flock and the herd; these were rightly divided, and the parts laid in their places—the head, the fat, the inwards, the legs, and so on—as if to show that although some believers only know the atoning sacrifice as a whole, and after a superficial manner, there are others still further instructed who look deeper into divine mystery, and see the various forms which the great truths of God assume. It is a saving thing to know the Lord God with all your heart, but I would, beloved, that you knew all the varied rays of His pure light; that you beheld the many glories of His crown, and could rejoice in each distinct excellence of His infinite perfection.

The subject of this morning is the power of God as the subject of adoration. Here, dear brothers and sisters, we have large scope for thought, for the power of God is manifested in connection with all His other attributes. It is the cause of all His works, and the basis and working force by which His kingdom is maintained, and He is revealed. How clearly is His power beheld in *creation*. There, indeed, O Lord, “You have a mighty arm.” We injure ourselves, and dishonor our Creator when we pass over His works as if they were beneath the notice of spiritual minds; it is per-

verse on our part to forget the exhortation, “What God has created, call not you common.” The psalmist sang concerning the creating might of God in verses 11 and 12 of the psalm before us—“The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours: as for the world, and the fullness thereof, You have founded them. The north and the south, You have created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Your name.” David did not divide between revelation and nature. He loved the word of God, and meditated therein day and night, but at the same time he triumphed in the works of God’s hands. In the 104<sup>th</sup> Psalm he found music in rocks and rills, in fowls and fir trees, and rejoiced that the glory of the Lord shall endure forever, the Lord shall rejoice in His works. In the 8<sup>th</sup> Psalm he considered the heavens, and burst forth with the exclamation, “O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!” With the same feeling I led you to sing this morning that child’s hymn in which the power of God is revered—

***“I sing the almighty power of God,  
Which made the mountains rise,  
Which spreads the flowing seas abroad,  
And built the lofty skies.”***

The Lord made Job, and his friends remember His power as seen in creation. Indeed, it was by revealing that one attribute that Job’s friends were silenced, and the Patriarch himself was led to cry, “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You?” We ought not to overlook that which had so salutary an influence upon others; it is a pity when people become so spiritual that they have no eyes whatever for the Lord’s power in rivers and mountains, in seas and storms—for God has made them all, and as in a glass He is darkly to be seen in them. “The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.” I can understand the feeling of some who say, “I prefer spiritual preaching, and I delight most to read the spiritual parts of the word of God rather than the historical records, and to think of His grace rather than of His wisdom in nature.” But there is a fault about such a preference, excellent as it is in one way; it is as though you had a friend who was a great artist, and a master in statuary, able to make the marble almost live, and speak with his magic chisel! You are accustomed to call upon this eminent sculptor, and it gives you great pleasure to talk with him, and to associate with his children, but you have never gone into his studio, for his masterpieces do not interest you. Now, this is poor fellowship; if ever you get to be in perfect sympathy with your friend, you will be interested in that which interests him, and charmed with the various proofs of your friend’s powers in design and execution; you will study his works for his sake, and love him all the more because of those wonders of beauty and joy which his hands produce! If the Lord thinks fit to display the hand of His power in the visible universe, it would ill become any of His children to close his eyes to it! “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.” “All the works praise You, O God; but Your saints shall bless You.”

So, too, the power of God is to be seen in *providence*—in the overruling hand which controls common events. Our sweet singer writes in verse 9, “You rule the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise You still them.” God’s power is seen in the great phenomena of nature. And even in the lesser matters of everyday life; His hand guides the fall of every withered leaf, and adorns each blade of grass with its own drop of dew! But chiefly His way is in the whirlwind, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. The mighty hand of the Lord is to be seen in the events of human history. His power is manifest in courts and armies, in the rise and fall of empires, in the growth of nations, or in their overthrow. Behold how He broke Egypt in pieces as one that was slain, and scattered His enemies with His strong arm. His people did not refuse to sing of His great power when He smote great kings, and slew famous kings because His mercy to His people endures forever! It ought to be a subject of great joy to all righteous souls that the world is not left to itself, or to tyrants. The might is with the right, after all, for power belongs to God; there is a Governor and Ruler who is Lord of all, and all power is in His hands. Have you not often wished more power to the arm of the man who attacks insolence and cruelty? Be glad, then, that all power is in the hand of the Judge of all the earth, who must and will do right. He will not leave bloodshed unavenged, nor suffer wanton cruelty and horrible brutality to go unpunished. And if the great ones of the earth pass by with indifference, or wink their eye at wicked policy, there is an eye that sees, and a hand that will mete out stern and sure vengeance! In patience possess your souls, O you people of God, for, “God reigns over the heathen, He sits upon the throne of His holiness.” The needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the oppressed forever trodden down, for verily the Lord reigns, and His power shall defend the cause of right.

It is another subject for which we have reason to adore God, that His power is seen in *the ultimate judgement of the wicked*—a terrible subject upon which I will not enlarge—but one which should prostrate us in the dust before His awful majesty. There are two flaming jewels of Jehovah’s Crown which will be terribly seen in hell—His wrath and His power. “What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?” Righteous indignation and omnipotence will be glorified together in that last tremendous act of Judgment in which He will separate the righteous from the wicked. And apportion to the unbelievers their due. “Who knows the power of Your anger?” What must be the strength of an angry God! Who shall stand against Him when once He stirs up His indignation, when He shall break the nations with a rod of iron, and shiver them like potters’ vessels? “Beware,” He said, “you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” Who shall stand against this great and terrible God in the day of His wrath? Who shall endure in that day when mercy’s day is over, and justice, alone, sits on her burning throne?

Neither of these, however, is the subject of this morning, though we would not have completed the topic without alluding to them. The subject is the power displayed in connection with the mercy of God, for so Ethan begins this noble covenant psalm: "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations." Power in alliance with grace is our one theme.

First, we shall consider the mighty power of God in His grace, as *revealed in our experience*; secondly, divine power, as *displayed in Christ Jesus*; and thirdly, we shall endeavor to reflect upon the same power, and consider how it should be *practically recognized*. We must be brief on each point, for our time is short.

**I. First, the mighty arm of God displayed in the way of grace, as MANIFESTED IN OUR EXPERIENCE.**

First, beloved, remember the *divine long-suffering*. What a mighty arm of grace it must have been which held back the anger of God while we were in a state of rebellion and impenitence! For God to rule the angry sea seems nothing, to me, compared with the power which He exercises upon Himself when He endures the provocations of ungodly men, the hardness of their hearts, their rejection of Christ, and oftentimes their blasphemous speeches, and their filthy deeds. O sinner, when you are sinning with a high hand and with an outstretched arm, is it not a wonder of wonders that God does not cut you down, and end your insolence? He said, "Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries." Is it not a marvel that He has not eased Himself of *you*, and taken you away with a stroke? You know how it is with some men—a word and a blow—but it has not been so with God! There have been many words of love, and many deeds of kindness; He has waited long, and is waiting now, stretching out His hands all day to a disobedient and gainsaying people! What power is this which restrains its own power, the power of God over His own omnipotence, so that He does not let His anger flame forth at once, and devour the ungodly, nor allow the sword of execution to smite down the rebel in the midst of his provocations? Glory be unto Your loving-kindness and Your long-suffering, O God, for in them we see Your mighty self-restraining power!

But, next, we saw the power of God so as to recognize it when *the Lord subdued us* by His mighty grace. What omnipotence is displayed in the conquest of every rebellious sinner! By nature the sinner stands out very stoutly against God, and will not obey His voice; often he is bulwarked round with prejudices, and you and I, who seek to convert him, are quite unable to reach him. Prejudice is an earthwork into which you may fire with the heaviest cannon, but without use, for the balls are buried in the earth, and no result follows. When men will not see, no light can help them, for they willfully close their eyes; when they will not hear, the charms of the gospel are useless, for they have resolutely closed their ears. It is a wonder of wonders, when, at last, *God conquers prejudice*, and the man finds himself where he would have sworn he never would

be—melted down and penitent at Jesus' feet! If a prophet had told him it would ever be so, he would have said, "You are mad! This cannot be! I abhor the very name of it." You have a mighty arm, O God, when prejudiced Saul of Tarsus falls down at Your feet, and rises to become your apostle!

Men are surrounded often with a granite wall of *obstinacy*—they will not yield to the power of divine love; preach as you may, they are not to be moved, but remain like an impregnable fortress, frowning from its own inaccessible rock, defying all assaults. You can find no way to get at them; you would be almost willing to die if you could capture their hearts for Christ, but they are neither to be taken by threats nor by wooing. They are like leviathan whose scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. "Can you fill his skin with barbed irons, or his head with fish spears?" They appear to have no joints to their harness through which the arrow of conviction may penetrate! But You have a mighty arm, O God, and Your enemies are made to feel Your arrows! Those who were exceedingly stout against You have, nevertheless, come crouching at Your feet, and have become Your servants! Glory be to God, the northern iron and the steel become wax at His bidding!

We have seen some, also, who have been rooted in their *habits of sin*, altogether severed from their old sins. Wonder of wonders, the Ethiopian has changed his skin, and the leopard has lost his spots, for he who was accustomed to do evil has learned to do well! Behold a miracle of mighty grace! The sinner has grown old in sin—like an old oak he has become rooted to the earth by a thousand roots; to transplant him seemed impossible—it were far easier to cut him down; yet the giant hand of grace has taken hold of that ancient tree, and shaken it to and fro by conviction of sin, and at last it has by conversion been drawn from its place right up by the roots, so that the place which once knew it knew it no more! The rock and soil in which it had been imbedded for, perhaps, half a century, were made to give way before the upheaving, uprooting force, and the man, divided from his former life, has been a proof of what the Lord can do! The Lord knows how to cleave the mountain, and divide the sea, and therefore He can separate men from their darling lusts, and teach them to cut off right arms, and pluck out right eyes rather than perish in sin! Truly, Lord, You have a mighty arm!

Satan teaches men to defend themselves against grace by bulwarks of *pride*. They say, "Who is the Lord that we should obey His voice?" They lift up their horn on high, and speak with a stiff neck; they are self-righteous; they are sure that they have done no ill—the gospel is powerless upon them because they are so lofty in their looks, and insolent in their thoughts. But You have a mighty arm, O Lord! You lay proud sinners very low; You make them hungry and thirsty, and then they cry to You in their trouble. You have a mighty arm among the proud, and You bring down their heart with labor, they fall down, and there is none to help. "He has put down the mighty from their seats." Nebuchadnezzar,

from saying, "Behold this great Babylon that I have built," learned to confess that those who walk in pride the Lord is able to abase.

Equally mighty is the Lord to overcome *despair*, for this is another one of the fortresses in which sinners entrench themselves against divine grace. "There is no hope," they say, "therefore we will give up ourselves to our iniquities." And it is almost idle to attempt to convert those who are willfully despairing. They resent the consolations of the Bible, and reject the promises of God; and yet, the Lord can break the bars of iron, and cut the gates of brass in pieces! He can bring up the captives from the dungeons of despair, and set them on a rock; He can put a new song into their mouths, and make them praise His name forevermore. From the iron cage, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, can set the captives free! All glory be unto His name! When God resolves to save the sinner, He will have His will without violating the will of man! In a sweet, soft, gentle manner, in which His power lies in the gentleness, and the force lies in the tenderness, the Lord can conquer the most obstinate! He makes the lion to lie down with the lamb, so that a little child shall lead it. Thus the power of God is seen in the conquest of sinners.

That power is equally seen in *their transformation*, for is it not a marvel that God should be able to make old and corrupt rebels into new creatures in Christ Jesus? Every conversion is a display of omnipotence! To create the world was but half a wonder compared with the creation of a right spirit, for there was nothing to hinder when God spoke, and the world began; but when God speaks to ungodly men there is a resisting force, which impedes the work, and even defies the great worker. There is darkness and death, there is a force of evil, and an inability towards good which must be overcome, yet the Lord makes all things new, and causes the new creation to arise in the hearts of His people! Verily He has a mighty arm! Glory be to the Lord who only does great wonders with a high hand and an outstretched arm!

Conversion is also called a resurrection. It will be a great feat of His power when dead carcasses shall live at the sound of the last trumpet, but it is an equal wonder when the dry bones of dead sinners come to life—when those who were scattered at the grave's mouth, the hopeless, graceless, Christless—are, nevertheless made to live at the sound of God's word by the power of His Spirit! Oh, you that have been new created, and quickened into newness of life, adore His power today! Who but a God could have made you what you are? Consider what you were, and reflect upon the glorious position to which the Lord has brought you by the blood of the cross! Think what rebels you were, and how set on mischief your nature was—and now, subdued by sovereign grace, your spirit longs for His embrace—you follow after holiness, and seek to have it perfected in the fear of God. What a revolution is this! What a turning of things upside down! To turn the wilderness into springs of water, and the desert into a flowing stream is nothing compared with turning the dead, cold, dry heart of man into a mighty wellspring of love springing up unto

eternal life! Glory be to Your power, oh You infinitely mighty Jehovah, You have a mighty arm!

That same power is seen, dear friends, *in the various deliverances* which the Lord gives to His people at the outset, when their enemies come against them so fiercely. Behold, my brothers and sisters, how strong was the hand of God which delivered us from the bondage of our first doubts and fears, when conscience accused, and the law condemned, when we thought ourselves only waiting for the death warrant and the execution. Behold the Lord has routed our despair; He has set us free from fear, and brought us into the liberty with which Christ makes men free! We were slaves to sin, too, and oh how sin marshaled all its armies against us at the first, hoping it might cut off our earliest hopes. But mighty was that Christ of God who put all our sins to the rout, and drowned them in the Red Sea of His blood! "There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle." Then Satan came forth with the most horrible temptations, and roared upon us like a lion, for he will not willingly lose his subjects; he sought to cast about us all his nets, that he might hold us captive, and prevent our flying to the divine refuge. But, behold, the prey has been taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive has been delivered! And we are, this day, rescued from the power of sin and Satan. Even the law, itself, has no power over us to condemn us, for Christ has satisfied it, and we are free! Mighty is Your arm, O God! Your own right hand and Your holy arm have gotten You the victory!

And since then, beloved, *in the continual upholding of the saints*, in their final perseverance which is guaranteed, how much of the power of God is seen! You have passed through many troubles, some of you, troubles most heavy and sore, but they have not prevailed against you, nor overthrown you. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord deliverers him out of them all." Fierce were the foes that gathered against us, many a time, and had not the Lord been on our side, they had swallowed us up! But You, O Lord, have a mighty arm, and in Your name have we found a refuge. They compassed us about like bees, yes, they compassed us about, but in the name of the Lord have we destroyed them! Out of what sins and temptations have we come forth victorious! With some of you, your path has been through the wilderness, and through one continuous scene of warfare; snares and traps have been thickly strewn all along your path—trials and discouragements have fallen like a storm of hail perpetually beating—and yet you are not overthrown! He keeps the feet of His saints. The life of any Christian is a world of wonders, but in some believers their experience consists of a series of great miracles. "O my Soul, you have trodden down strength." How has our soul escaped as a bird from the fowler's snare! The mighty adversaries have been overcome by Him who is mightier than all! The divine strength has been manifested in our weakness. My brothers and sisters, is it not a wonder that being such a poor worm as you are, yet you

have never been crushed? Is it not a marvel that though your faith has been as a bruised reed it has not been broken—and though your piety has been like smoking flax it has never been quenched? Kept alive with death so near, preserved when enemies have been so fierce, will you not say indeed, “You have a mighty arm; strong is Your right hand”?

Brethren, the end comes, but it will all be right at last, for unless the Lord shall come, we have yet to meet *the last grim adversary*, but we are not afraid! Our brethren who have gone before us have set us an example of how to die triumphantly. How gloriously have they triumphed in their last hours. We have stood by their side, seen the brightness of their eyes when all around was death, and heard their exulting songs when all that looked upon them wept at the thought of their departure. Their cheek blanched? Far from it! They have been as jubilant in their dying hour as the warrior when he divides the spoil. As the bride rejoices on her wedding day, they have looked forward to the coming of their great Lord, and to their being blessed forever in His embrace! We have been ready to cry out with them, “O death, where is your sting! O grave, where is your victory! Truly, Lord, when Your poor, weak, suffering people die triumphantly, we see that You have a mighty arm! When flesh and heart are failing, when friends cannot help, when every earthly comfort vanishes—for the heart to still rejoice and triumph—this is to see the arm of the Lord made bare, and this causes us to bless and magnify His holy name!

I would to God that I had more ability to set forth this majestic subject, but I have done my best. I ask your meditations in the quiet of this afternoon to assist me, that you may really adore and bless the power which is so conspicuous in every vessel of mercy, so revealed in yourself if you are indeed a child of God! O Holy Spirit, make known to us who believe, the exceeding greatness of Your mighty power!

**II.** Secondly, let us behold the mighty arm of God as specially DISPLAYED IN THE PERSON OF CHRST JESUS. And here will you kindly follow me in the psalm itself, for there you will see that the power of God displayed in Jesus Christ, in *the choice* of Him, and the exaltation of Him, to be a Prince and a Savior. See verse 19—“I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.” Christ is the incarnation of the power of divine grace, in Him dwells the power of God to save the sons of men. And yet in what weakness it dwelt! He was a man despised and rejected, lowly and meek, poor and without worldly honor. His was the weakness of shame and suffering, poverty and dishonor; but the power of God was upon Him, and is upon Him now. It is a grand thing to know that God, by the weakness of man, taking it into connection with His own nature, has routed sin, Satan, death, and hell! The battle in the wilderness was between Satan and a man, tempted as we are, but oh, how gloriously that matchless man overthrew the tempter and prevailed! The agony in the garden of Gethsemane was that of a man—it was a man, though God, who sweat great drops of blood, and uttered strong cries and tears, and won the victory by which evil is de-

throned; and He that met the powers of evil on the cross and stood alone and trod the wine-press till there remained not an uncrushed cluster, was a man! It is by His power, even the power of the man of Nazareth, that all the powers of evil have been forever blasted and withered so that, though they rebel, it is but a struggling gasp for life. As surely as God sits on His throne, the foot of the seed of the woman shall be upon the serpent's head, to crush it forever; for mighty as were the hosts of evil, God has exalted one chosen out of the people, and laid help upon Him, that He may eternally vanquish all the hosts of darkness. Strong is Your right hand, O Savior, for by weakness, and suffering and death You have overthrown all Your people's foes!

His power was seen, next, in our *Lord's anointing*. "I have found David My servant, with My holy oil have I anointed him." You know how in His preaching there went out of His mouth a sharp two-edged sword with which He smote sin, because the Spirit of God was upon Him. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit bore witness in the entire body of Christ, making all His servants speak with tongues of fire the word of the gospel. The Spirit of God is still with Christ on earth in His church, so that, feeble though the speech of His ministers may be, a secret power attends it, irresistibly subduing the forces of evil. Rejoice this day, beloved, for the anointing still rests in the church of God, and the anointed Redeemer must be victorious in every place. Thanks be unto God which causes His word to triumph in every place by the power of the eternal Spirit! We ought, therefore, to adore Jesus Christ as having the power of God, because the Holy Spirit is always with Him and with His word, and He is therefore mighty to save!

We must equally magnify the power of God because of *the continuance of the empire of Christ in the world*. As said the Psalmist—"with whom My hand shall be established, My arm also shall strengthen Him. The enemy shall not exact upon Him; nor the son of wickedness afflict Him; and I will beat down His foes before His face, and plague them that hate Him." These 1,800 years every effort has been put forth to root up the church of Christ; the devil and all his servants on earth have conspired to overthrow the growing kingdom of our Lord—but they have never succeeded.

Think, my brothers and sisters, what the power of God must be which has kept the church alive under fiery persecutions, rescued it from the fangs of the inquisition, preserved it from the poison of heresy, and the pestilence of infidelity, and, what is more amazing, enabled it to survive the horrible dragon of Popery which has altogether threatened to carry away the church with the blasphemies which it pours out of its mouth! Yet the chosen seed live on, and are multiplied in the land, even as it is promised in the 36<sup>th</sup> verse of the psalm before us: "His seed shall endure forever, and His throne as the sun before Me." The establishment and continuation of the church is an extraordinary proof of divine power!

So are all *the conquests* of Christ, some of which we have seen, and more of which are to come. "I will beat down His foes before His face, and

plague them that hate Him,” is the divine promise. “I will make Him My first-born, higher than the kings of the earth; I will set His hand also in the sea and His right hand in the rivers.” glory be to God, Christ is still triumphant! Still in the preaching of His truth He rides forth conquering and to conquer! The gospel has not lost its old force, but whenever it is preached in faith it wins the day. See what power it has in drawing together the multitudes, and holding them in breathless attention: a man has nothing to do but to preach Christ simply, and with all his might, and the people will hear it! We need no endowment of the State! We seek no acts of Parliament to help us! Give us a clear stage and no favor, an open Bible and an earnest tongue, and the people shall yet be awakened, and the multitude shall bow before the people’s King! Jesus Christ is still the mightiest name which can be pronounced by mortal tongue! Its all-subduing power shall yet be felt in the remotest regions of the earth!

Beloved, I have not time to do more than say that the great power of God’s grace is embodied in Christ’s *mighty intercession*. See verse 26—“He shall cry unto Me, You are My father, My God, and the rock of My salvation.” This makes Him mighty to save—“He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” I should like to have an hour to expound upon the gracious power of God as seen in the intercession of Christ! Omnipotence dwells in every plea that falls from those dear lips, as the eternal Son pleads His own merits with the everlasting Father! Beloved, the power of Christ is well-known to many of you. Did it not call you from the dead? Has not it kept you from going down into the pit? Is there not such power in His name that it makes your heart leap? If we speak of anything else, you listen to it and glide into sleep, but if you hear about *Him*, does it not stir the very deeps of your soul? Have you not often, when you felt faint and weary, sprung to your feet with exultation at the very thought of *Him*? Has not His presence made your sick bed soft, and you even thought your dying couch to be a throne whereon you sat and reigned as in the heavenly places?—

**“Jesus, the very thought of You  
With transport fills my breast.”**

You know it is so! The power of Jesus’ name; who can measure it? And what will be your sense of His power when you reach another world—when He shall have brought you into His rest, even you who were so unworthy; when He shall reveal in you all the majesty of His goodness; when heaven shall be yours. and all its boundless plains and golden streets—and when, looking around, you shall find all your Christian brethren there, without exception, as many as loved the Lord below, all safely gathered into the fold at last? What a shout shall sound throughout heaven when the armies of the living God shall assemble and find not a soldier missing! They shall read the muster-roll, and Little Faith shall be found there, and Ready-to-Halt shall be there without his crutches, and Miss Much-Afraid shall be there, and Mistress Despondency shall be

there—each able to answer to his or her own name, and say, “Here I am.” Satan has not devoured a single lamb of all the flock, nor slain a single man of the entire host! All along the line Jesus has been victorious! When you shall see the whole host assembled, and remember the struggles through which each one of them came, the tribulation through which they waded to their crowns, you will exclaim with rapture, “You have a mighty arm, strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand!” All glory be to Jehovah Jesus, our almighty Savior!

**III.** Now this brings me to my conclusion, and here we have to answer the question—HOW IS THIS POWER TO BE PRACTICALLY RECOGNIZED? If you will practically carry out what I say, a few words will suffice.

First, if the power of God is so great, *yield to it*. Man, do you hope to resist *God*? Have you an arm like God’s, and can you thunder with a voice like His? Throw down those weapons, and cease to wage a hopeless war! Capitulate at once, surrender at discretion. Oh, if there is a man here who is the enemy of God, I beseech him to count the cost before he continues the war, and see whether he is able to brave it out with God! Shall wax fight with fire, or twigs contend with the flame? He would go through a host of such as you are, O man, as fire burns up the stubble, and before you have time to think of it, you shall be utterly destroyed! “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little.”

The next practical use is this—is God so strong? *Then trust Him to save you*. Never say that He cannot snatch you from perdition! Never doubt His power to save, even in extremity. I have shown you that He has treasured up His gracious power in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, therefore look unto Jesus Christ and be saved! All power lies with Him. He can forgive all sin, and He can also subdue all iniquity, change the most depraved heart, and implant every grace in the soul. “Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”

Next, if He is so strong, then *trust Him in everything*. Oh, you that are His people, never dare to distrust Him! Is His arm shortened? Cannot the Lord deliver you? Bring your burdens, your troubles, your needs, your griefs; pour them out like water before Him; let them flow forth at the feet of the Almighty, and they shall pass away, and you shall sing, “The Lord is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation.”

Is God so strong, then *shake off all fear of man*. Who are you that you should be afraid of a man that shall die? Man is but *grass*, withered in an hour—why should you tremble at *his* frown? He is crushed before the moth—why, then, fear *him*? Let not the faces of proud men confuse you; trust in God and fear not, for the mighty God of Jacob is with us, and greater is He that is for us than all they that can be against us.

And now as to *your service*, to which you are called by the Lord. If He is so strong, do not think of your own weakness any longer, except as being a platform for His strength! Have you only one talent? God’s Holy

Spirit is not limited in power; He can make your one talent as fruitful as another man's ten! Are you weak as water? Then rejoice this day; and glory in infirmity, because the power of God shall rest upon you! Think not of what *you* can do; that is a very small affair; but consider what *He* can do *by* you! He can strengthen the feeble against the strong! Behold, this day He said unto you, "Behold I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff. You shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them."

Last of all, with regard to all *the future* which lies before you—is God so strong? Then commit it to His hands! You have a great trouble to face tomorrow—you are expecting a still greater trouble at the end of the week. Now, be not afraid, for the Lord lives to deliver you! What? Do you fear? Has your Counselor perished? Has your Helper failed you? How can you sink in the deep waters when underneath you are the everlasting arms? The mighty God is your refuge, how can you be in danger? Why do you look into the future at all? Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. God is the God of tomorrow as well as the God of today! Cease from your troubling, for it weakens you, and cannot help you! It dishonors your God, your Savior—and thus it is evil! In patience and quietness wait for the fulfillment of His promise. Rest in Him and be at peace; stand still, and see the salvation of God! O Lord, glorify Yourself this morning in both saint and sinner, by manifesting the greatness of Your power, for You have a mighty arm, strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand!

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 89.**

### **HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—205, 679, 680.**

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# AENEAS

## NO. 1315

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 16, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

**UPON THE OCCASION OF THE REGULAR HEARERS  
VACATING THEIR SEATS  
TO ALLOW STRANGERS TO FILL THE HOUSE.**

***“And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down, also, to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain Man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole: arise, and make your bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.”***  
**Acts 9:32-35.**

I MAY not hope that I shall see you all again, and so, as I have the opportunity of only preaching one sermon to you, I must make it as full as I can of the *essence of the gospel*, from beginning to end. We have heard of a chaplain who preached in a jail, who selected a subject which he divided into two heads. The first part was the sinner's *disease*. This he took for his topic on one Sabbath, and closed the sermon by saying that he would preach upon the sinner's *remedy* upon the following Sunday. Now, there were several of the prisoners hanged on Monday, according to the custom of the bad old times, so that they did not hear that part of the discourse which it was most necessary for them to hear. It would have been well to have told out the great news of salvation at once to men so near their end, And I think that in every sermon, if the preacher confines himself to one subject, and leaves out essential gospel truths under the notion that he will preach salvation by Jesus another day, he is very unwise, for some of his congregation may be dead and gone—alas, some of them lost—before he will have the opportunity of coming to the grand and all-important point, namely, the way of salvation! By the grace of God we will not fall into that evil tonight! We will try to shoot at the very center of our target, and preach the plan of salvation as completely as we can, and may God grant that His blessing may rest on it, the Holy Spirit working with it.

I shall only preach this one sermon to some of you. You will, therefore, have the greater patience with me as I shall not inflict myself upon you again. But, if we are to have only one communication with each other, let us come to real practical business and waste no time. A good deal of sermon-hearing is mere trifling—let us come to matter-of-fact preaching *and* hearing at this time! I am afraid that some sermon-preaching is *playing*, too—fine words and oratorical fireworks—but no agony for souls.

We mean business tonight! My heart will not be satisfied unless many of you who came in here without Christ shall go down those steps saved by His atoning blood! Bitter will be my disappointment if many do not lay hold of Jesus, and realize in their own souls Peter's words, "Jesus Christ makes you whole." I have faith in the great Physician that many of you will go away whole tonight though you were sin-sick when you came into this house of prayer. Much supplication has gone up to heaven for this, and the Lord hears prayer—therefore do I reckon that miracles of healing will surely be worked in this house on this occasion!

To the point, then! Peter came to Lydda and found one who bore the classic name of Aeneas. He was no mighty warrior, however, but a poor paralyzed man who had been confined to his bed for eight long years. Touched with a sight of the man's feebleness, Peter felt the impulse of the Spirit upon him, and looking at him as he lay there, he said, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole: arise, and make your bed." Touched by the same Spirit who inspired the apostle, the man believed the message; believed that Christ had healed him; and at once rose and made his bed, and in an instant was perfectly restored! Now, let us hear something about this man. We are not to hear Virgil sing, "arms and the man," but we are to let Luke tell us of the man and his Savior!

**I.** In the first place, then, it is very clear that THE MAN WAS TRULY SICK. Had he not been *really sick*, the incident before us would have been all a fake; a feint and a pretence from beginning to end, but he was hopelessly infirm. He had been anxiously watched by his friends for eight years, and was so completely palsied, that during all those years he had not left his bed, which had grown hard as a stone beneath him. Now, as there is no room for a great cure unless there is a great sickness, so there is no room for God's great grace unless there is great sin! Jesus Christ did not come into the world to save sham sinners, but *real* sinners; neither did He descend from heaven to seek those who are not diseased with sin, for the whole have no need of a physician; but He has come to seek those who are deeply diseased, and to give them real healing. This man's sickness was no imaginary ill, for he could not move. His hands and feet were quite paralyzed. If in any limb there was a measure of motion, it was only a tremulous quiver, which rather indicated growing weakness, than remaining force. He was bereaved of all strength. Are you such by nature, my friend, in a *spiritual* sense? Certainly you are so, but have you found it out? Has the Spirit of God made you feel that you can do nothing aright apart from Him, and that you are altogether ruined and palsied unless Jesus Christ saves you? If so, do not despair because you feel how terribly your soul is smitten! On the contrary, say to yourself, "Here is room for God's mercy in me; if ever a soul needed healing, I do. Here is space for divine power to operate in me, for if ever a soul was weak and palsied, I am just that soul." Be cheered with the hope that God will make your infirmity a platform upon which He will display His power!

The man had been paralyzed *eight years*. The length of its endurance is a terrible element in a disease; perhaps yours is no eight years' mala-

dy, but 28, or 38, or 48, or 78—perhaps 88 years you have been in bondage! Well, blessed be God, the number of years in which we have lived in sin cannot prevent the mercy of God in Christ Jesus from making us whole! You have a very long bill to discharge, while another friend has but a short one, and owes comparatively little—but it is just as easy for the creditor to write, “paid,” at the bottom of the large bill as the smaller one. And now that our Lord Jesus Christ has made full atonement, it is as easy for God to pardon the iniquities of 80 years, as the sins of the child of eight. Be not despairing, then, Jesus Christ can make such as you are whole, even though your heart and your understanding have been long paralyzed with sin.

The man’s disease was one which was then reckoned to be, and probably is now, *entirely incurable*. Who can restore a palsied man? Aeneas could not restore himself, and no merely human physician had skill to do anything for him. Dear hearer, has the Spirit of God made you feel that your soul’s wound is incurable? Is your heart sick? Is your understanding darkened? Do you feel your whole nature to have become paralyzed with sin, and there is no physician? Ah, I know there is none among *men*, for there is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there! There never was, or else the daughter of my people would have been healed of her hurt long ago. There is no soul physician except at Calvary! No balm but in the Savior’s wounds! If you feel that you are incurably soul-sick, and the case is desperate unless infinite mercy shall interpose, then I am glad that you are here tonight; I am glad that there is such a one as Aeneas present! Do you know that the most delightful task in the world is to preach to those who consciously need the Savior? Mr. Whitefield used to say that he could wish to preach all day and all night long to those who really knew that they needed Christ. We are bound to preach to everybody, for our Master said, “Preach the gospel to every creature” under heaven. But, oh, when we can get at a knot of hungry souls, it is easy and pleasant work to feed them with the bread of heaven! And when hearts are thirsty, it is sweet work to hand out the living water, for they are all eager to take it! You know, the great difficulty is that you can bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink if he is not thirsty—and so you may set Jesus Christ before men, but if they do not feel their need of Him, they will not have Him. You may preach in tones of thunder, or plead with accents of intense affection, but you cannot stir them to desire the grace which is in Christ Jesus unless they feel their *need* of it. Oh, I am happy tonight—thrice happy—if anywhere in this house there is an Aeneas who is sick, and knows that he is sick; who knows his disease to be incurable, laments that he is palsied, and can do nothing, and longs to be healed by divine power! He is the man who will welcome the glad news of the gospel of free grace! The man was really sick, and so are you, my hearer! Your sins are great, your sinfulness of nature is grievous, and your case is beyond reach of human skill.

**II.** In the second place, THIS MAN, AENEAS, KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT JESUS because otherwise, when Peter said, “Jesus Christ makes you whole,” Aeneas might have earnestly inquired what he meant, and

could not intelligently have acted upon what he could not comprehend. He could not have believed what Peter said because he would not have understood his meaning; mere words, unless they appeal to the *understanding*, cannot be useful; they must convey light as well as sound, or they cannot breed faith. When Peter said, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole," I have no doubt that Aeneas remembered what he had heard about Jesus Christ and His wondrous life and death. Now, lest there should be one in this congregation who does not know Jesus Christ, and does not understand how it is that He is able to heal sin-sick souls, let us briefly tell the old, old story over again.

"Jesus Christ," translated into English, means, "Savior anointed." Who is He? He is the Son of the Highest, very God of very God! And when we were lost in sin, He who is called the Son of God, laid aside His most divine array, and came here to be dressed like ourselves in this poor flesh and blood! In the manger He lay as an infant, and on a woman's breast He hung a feeble babe; the God who stretched forth the heavens like a tent to dwell in, and dug the deep foundations of the earth, came down to earth to take upon Himself our nature, and to be born of a woman! Oh, matchless stoop of unbounded condescension that the Infinite should be an infant, and the Eternal God should conceal Himself within the form of a babe! This marvel was performed that we might be saved! Being here, the Lord of angels lived some 30 years or so among men; He spent the earliest part of His life as a carpenter's son, obedient to His father, and He was, throughout the whole of His earthly sojourn, obedient to His Father, God. Inasmuch as we had no righteousness, for we had broken the law, He was here to make righteousness for us, and He did so, but there was also needed atonement, for we had sinned, and God's judgment demanded that there should be punishment for sin. Jesus stepped in as the Surety and the Substitute for the guilty sons of men! He bared His back to the lash of justice, and opened His breast to her lance, and died that sinners might live! The just for the unjust, He died that He might bring us to God—

***"He bore, that we might never bear,  
His Father's righteous ire."***

Now, when He had thus lived and died, they placed His body in the tomb, but He rose again on the third day, and He is yet alive! And by this man, Christ Jesus, who is risen from the dead, is preached unto the nations the remission of sins, for after 40 days this same Jesus, who had been dead and buried, rose into the heavens in the presence of His disciples, ascending till a cloud concealed Him from their sight. And He now sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, pleading there the merit of His blood, making intercession for sinners that they may be reconciled to God. Now, beloved, this is the story that we have to tell you, with the addition that this same Jesus is coming again to judge the quick and the dead, for He is Lord of all! He is, at this hour, the Mediator appointed by the infinitely glorious Jehovah, having power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to as many as Jehovah has given Him, and this we beseech you to consider, lest when He comes as a judge you should be

condemned at His bar. Aeneas had heard, more or less, of these great facts; the story of the incarnate God had come to his ears by some means or other, and Aeneas understood that though Jesus Christ was not in the room, and there was only Peter and a few friends there, and though Jesus Christ was not on earth, but was gone to heaven, yet His power on earth was the same as ever it was. He knew that Jesus could work miracles from heaven as well as when He was here below; He understood that He who healed the palsy when He was here, could heal the palsy, now that He has risen to His throne. And so Aeneas believed in Jesus Christ from what he had heard, simply trusting in Him for healing. By means of that faith Aeneas was made whole!

I will very earnestly dwell on that point for a second or two. I am persuaded that in this congregation all of you know the story of Jesus Christ crucified. You have heard it on the Sabbath from the pulpit; your children sing it when they come home from Sunday school; you have a Bible in every house, and you read the “old, old story” in the plain but sublime language of our own noble version. But, oh, if you have heard it and know it, how is it that you have not drawn from it the same inference that this poor paralyzed man did? How is it that you have no faith? Jesus lives! He sits on Zion’s hill! He still receives poor sinners! Jesus lives “exalted on high to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins.” He can heal you now, and save you now, as well as if you met Him in the street, or saw Him standing at your door knocking for admittance. I would to God that this inference was drawn by you all!

**III.** We have got this far—the man was sick, and the man knew something about Christ, and now came the most important point of all—THE MAN BELIEVED ON THE LORD JESUS.

Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole.” The man did not believe in *Peter* as the healer, for you notice Peter does not say anything about himself. Peter does not say, “As the head of the church, I, by power delegated to me, make you whole.” There is no allusion to any such claim! Peter preached too clear a gospel for that! That is the purest gospel which has the least of *man* in it, and the most of Christ! I charge you, men and women, do not listen to that teaching which sets the priest in *front* of the Savior, or even by the *side* of the Savior, for it is false and ruinous! Your forefathers, Englishmen—your forefathers bled and died that they might never submit to that vile superstition which is being now propagated by a considerable party in the Established Church of this once Protestant land! No man beneath the sky has more power to save your soul than you have yourself! And if any presumptuous priest tells you that he has, do not believe him, but despise his claims! An old woman asks me to cross her hand with a sixpence, and says that she will tell my fortune; I am not such a fool! And if another person dressed in robes, which are not quite so becoming to him as a red cloak is to an old woman, tells me that he can regenerate my child, or forgive my sins, I treat him with the same contempt and pity as that with which I treat the wicked hag! I believe in neither the one imposter nor the other! If ever you are

saved you must be saved by Jesus Christ, alone, through your own personal belief in Him—certainly not by the intervention of any man, or set of men—hail them from whatever church they will! May God send the Pope and the priesthood, and all their detestable deceits down in this land, forever, and may His Christ be exalted!

As this man had no faith in any supposed power coming from Peter, much less had he any faith in himself, neither did he look within himself for hope! He did not say to Peter, “But I do not *feel* strength enough to get well.” Neither did he say, “I think I feel power enough to shake off this palsy.” He said neither the one nor the other! Peter’s message took him off from himself. It was, “Aeneas, JESUS CHRIST makes you whole! It is not that you have stamina in your constitution, and rallying points about your bodily system; no, Aeneas, you are paralyzed; you can do nothing. But Jesus Christ makes you whole!” That was what the man had to believe, and it is very much what you, also, my dear hearer must believe.

With his faith Aeneas had the desires which showed that it was not mere speculation, but solid practical believing; he anxiously wished to be made whole. Oh, that sinners anxiously wished to be saved! Oh, that yonder angry man wished to be cured of his bad temper! Oh, that yonder covetous man wished to be cured of his avarice! Oh, that yonder lustful man wished to be cured of his uncleanness! Oh, that yon drunk wished to be cured of his excess! Oh, that men really wanted to get rid of their sins! But no! I never heard of men reckoning a cancer to be a jewel, but there are many men who look upon their sins as if they were gems which they keep as hidden treasures so that they will sooner lose heaven than part with their lustful pleasures! Aeneas wanted to be made whole, and was ready to believe when Peter spoke to him about Jesus Christ.

And what did Aeneas believe? He believed—and may you believe the same—first, that Jesus could heal *him*, could heal *him*, Aeneas. John Brown, do you believe that Jesus Christ can cure you? I do not care, John, what your faith is about your *wife’s* case—it is about *yourself* that you need faith! Jesus Christ is able to save *you*—you, Aeneas; you, John Brown; you, Thomas; you, Sarah; you, Mary. He is able to save *YOU!* Can you grip that and reply, “Yes, He is able to save *ME*”?

And Aeneas believed that Jesus Christ was able to save him *then and there*, just as he was! He had not taken a course in medicine; he had not been under hypnotism to strengthen his nerves and sinews, and prepare him to be cured, but he believed that Jesus Christ could save him without any preparation, just as he was, then! Immediately with a present salvation! When you think what Christ is, and what He has done, it ought not to be difficult to believe this. But truly, God’s power must be revealed before your soul will believe this unto salvation. Yet it is true that Jesus Christ can heal, and can heal at once! Whatever the sin is, he can cure it! I mentioned a whole set of sins just now. The scarlet fever of pride, the loathsome leprosy of lust, the shivering ague of unbelief, the paralysis of avarice—He can heal all with a word, instantaneously, forever, completely, right now! Yes, sinner, He can heal *you NOW!* Aeneas believed that; he believed, and as he believed, Jesus made him whole! Oh, I

wish I could, tonight so preach the gospel that my Lord and Master would lead many unbelievers to believe in Him! O Holy Spirit, work with the word! Sinner, do you need forgiveness? Christ has worked it out! Every sin that you have done shall be forgiven you for His name's sake if you trust Jesus to do it. Do you see your sins like a great army pursuing you? Do you think they will swallow you up? Jesus Christ, if you believe in Him, will make an end of them all! You have read in Exodus how Pharaoh and his hosts pursued the tribes of Israel, and the people were terribly alarmed, but early in the morning they were no more afraid, for Miriam took her timbrel, and the daughters of Israel went forth with her in dance, and they sang, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." One of the most magnificent notes in that marvelous song was this. "The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left." The damsels took up the refrain, and sang, "Not one, not one, not one! The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left." Now, if you believe in Jesus, the whole army of your sins shall sink beneath the sea of His blood, and your soul shall sing, "The depths have covered them: there is not one of them left!" Such shall be your song *tonight*, if you are enabled to believe in Jesus Christ, God's crucified Son.

But do not think that we preach about the pardon of past sins only, because if a man could get his past sins pardoned, and go on as he did before, it would be so much the worse for him. pardon of sin, without deliverance from its power, would be rather a curse than a blessing! But wherever sin is pardoned, God breaks the neck of its power in the soul. Mind you, we do not tell you that Jesus Christ will forgive the past, and then leave you to live the same life as before—but we tell you this—whatever the sin is that is now a disease to you, Jesus Christ can heal you of it! He can save you from the habit and power of evil doing and thinking! I will not attempt to go into details. There are people coming into the Tabernacle on ordinary occasions, and so I dare say there may be tonight. How often has there come in a man to whom I might say, "Put out your tongue, sir. Ah, I see red spots, and black spots, for you are a liar and a swearer." Can my Master heal such a diseased tongue as that? Yes, trust Him tonight, and He will make you truthful and purge you from your profanity! But here is another I dare not describe. Look at him! He has lived an unchaste life, and strong are his passions! He says, "Can I ever be recovered from my vile desires?" Oh, sir, my Lord can lay His hand on that hot heart of yours, and cool it down to a sweet sobriety of chastity! And you, fallen woman, do not think that you are beyond His powers! He shows Himself mighty to save such as "the woman that was a sinner." Ah, if you are a slave to vile sins, Jesus can give perfect freedom from vicious habits! You, young man there, you know that you have fallen into many sins which you dare not mention—they coil about your heart, and poison your life like serpents writhing within your conscience. My Lord can take them all out of the soul, and deliver you from the results of their fiery venom! Yes, He can make you into a new creature, and cause you to be born-again! He can make you love the things which you

once hated, and hate the things which you once loved! He can turn the current of your thoughts in quite another way. You see Niagara leaping down its awful height, and you say, "Who can stop this?" Yes, indeed, who can stop it? My Master can! If He speaks to the Niagara of your lusts, and says, "Cease your raging!" they will cease at once! Yes, if He bids the waters of desire leap up instead of down, you shall be as full of love to Christ as once you were full of love to sin! He made the sun to stand still, and caused the moon to pause upon the hill of Gibeah, and He can do all things; spoke He not the world out of nothing? And can He not create new hearts and right spirits in the souls of men who have been far off from Him by wicked works? He can do so, and blessed be His name, He will! The world of your mind is as much beneath His control as that of matter. If you believe, O man, to you I may say as Peter did to Aeneas, "Jesus Christ makes you whole."

**IV.** Well, now, let us pass on to notice, next, that the MAN WAS MADE WHOLE. There was no counterfeit about it; he was made whole, and made whole then and there! Just fancy for a minute what would have been the result if he had *not* been made whole. What dishonor it would have been to Peter! Peter said, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole"—but there lies Aeneas as palsied as before! Everybody would say, "Peter is a false witness." Well now, I will not say that the preacher of the gospel must see souls saved or else he is a false witness; I will not say *that*, but I *will* say that if ever my ministry, under God, does not save souls, I will give it up! For it seems to me that if we do not bring souls to Christ, we preachers are just good for nothing. What are we if we do not turn many to righteousness? We are reapers who never reap, soldiers who never win a battle, fishermen who take no fish, and lights which enlighten no one! These are sad but true comparisons. Do I address any unsuccessful minister? I would not speak harshly to him, but I would speak very severely to myself if I were in his case. I remember the dream of a minister; he thought that he was in hell, and being there, he was dreadfully distressed, and cried out, "Is this the place where I am to be forever? I am a minister." A grim voice replied, "No, it is lower down for unfaithful ministers, much lower down than this." And then he awoke. Ah, and if we do not agonize till souls are brought to Christ, we shall have to agonize to all eternity! I am persuaded of it—we must have men saved, or else we shall be like Peter would have been if he had said, "Jesus Christ makes you whole," and the man had not been made whole—we shall be dishonored witnesses.

What dishonor would have been brought upon the name of Jesus if the man had not been made whole! Suppose, my dear fellow sinner, you were to believe in Jesus Christ, and yet were not saved—what then? Oh, I do not like to suppose it, for it is almost a blasphemy to imagine it! But yet, consider it for a moment: Believe in Jesus, and not be saved? Then He has broken His word, or lost His power to save, either of which we are unwilling to tolerate for a minute! If you believe in Jesus Christ, as surely as you live, Jesus Christ has saved you! I will tell you one thing—if you believe in Jesus Christ, and you are damned, I will be damned with you!

Come! I will risk my soul on that as surely as you will risk yours, for if the Lord Jesus Christ ever loses a soul that trusts Him, He will lose mine! But He never will, He never can—

***“His honor is engaged to save  
The meanest of His sheep.  
All that His heavenly Father gave,  
His hands securely keep.”***

Rest in Him and you shall be saved, else were His name dishonored!

And suppose that like Aeneas, you trusted Christ—if you were not saved, what then? Why, then the gospel would not be true! Shut up those churches, close those chapels, banish those ministers, burn those Bibles—there is no truth in any of them if a soul can believe in Jesus, and yet not be saved! The gospel is a lie and a counterfeit, if it is true that any poor sinner can put his trust in Jesus, and not be healed of his sins, for thus said the Lord of old, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” This is His last word to His church, “Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believes and is baptized shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned.” If men believing are not saved from the power of sin, then the gospel is not true, and we are sent on a fool’s errand! But they *are* saved, blessed be the name of God, and the gospel is the truth of God itself!

Oh, my dear hearer, gladly would I urge you to put your trust in Jesus Christ tonight, by the experience which I and other believers have enjoyed. Some of us have relied on the name of the Redeemer, and He has saved us. We shall never forget the day, some of us, when we left off self-righteousness, and believed in Christ to the salvation of our souls. The marvel was done in a minute, but the change was so great that we can never explain it, or cease to bless the Lord for it—

***“Happy day! Happy day!  
When Jesus washed my sins away!”***

I remember the morning when salvation came to me as I sat in a little Primitive Methodist chapel under the gallery, and the preacher said, “That young man looks unhappy.” He added, “Young man, you will never find peace except you look to Christ!” And he called out to me, “Look!” With a voice of thunder he shouted, “Young man, look! Look now!” I did look; I turned the eye of faith to Jesus at once! My burden disappeared, and my soul was merry as a bird let loose from her cage, even as it is now as often as I remember the blessed salvation of Jesus Christ! We speak what we know; ours is no hearsay or second-hand testimony! We speak what we have felt and tasted, and handled, and our anxiety is that you may know and feel the same! Remember, my dear hearer, that the way to use the gospel is to put it to yourselves like this: What is your name? I said, “John Brown,” just now, did I not? Suppose it is John Brown, then, well, the gospel says, “He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.” Then it means, “If *John Brown* believes on Jesus he has everlasting life.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “Then I, *John Brown*, believing and being baptized, shall be saved.” Lay hold of it in that way. Perhaps you say, “But may I put my name to a promise of God and appropriate it in that fashion?” Yes, you

may, because there is nothing in the Bible to say that your name was left out from the list of those to whom the promise is made! If I were a beggar in the streets and were very hungry, and I heard that there was a gentleman who was giving a good meal away, and that he had advertised that any beggar might come, I do not think I would say, "Well, my name is not down on his list." I would go immediately unless I found that he inserted an excluding clause, "Charles Spurgeon shall not have any of the food I distribute," but not till then! Until I read in black and white that he excluded me, I would run the risk, and get in with the other hungry folk; until he shuts me out, I would go. It should be his deed, and not mine that kept me from the feast. Sometimes you say, "But I am not fit to go to Christ." The fittest way to go to Christ is to go just as you are! What is the best clothes to wear when you go begging? I remember a long time ago, when I lived not far from here, in the extremeness of my greenness, I gave a man who begged at the door a pair of patent leather boots. He put them on, and expressed great gratitude. But I met him afterwards, and I was not at all surprised to find that he had pulled them off—they were not at all the style of things to go about begging in! People would look at him and say, "What; you are needing shoes while wearing those handsome boots? Your tale won't do." A beggar succeeds a deal better barefoot than in fine shoes; rags are the dress of beggars! When you go and beg for His mercy at the hand of God, do not put on those pretty righteousnesses of yours, but go with all your sin and misery, and emptiness and wretchedness, and say, "Lord, here I am. You have said that Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto You by Him. I am a soul that needs saving to the uttermost, and here I am; I have come. Lord, save me!"

Now, summing all up; this is what you have to do, sinner, in order to be saved tonight. Simply believe in Jesus Christ! I saw a young woman from America in the vestry some little time ago who came in great concern of soul to know the way of salvation. And I said to her, "Can't you see it? If you trust Christ, you are saved." I quoted the Scriptures which teach this great truth of God, and made them plain to her, until the Holy Spirit opened her eyes! Light came on her face in a moment, and she said, "I do see it! I trust Christ with all my heart! And I am to believe that I *am* saved because I trust Jesus, and He has promised to save believers?" "Yes," I replied, "you are getting on the rock, now." "I feel," she said, "a deep peace beginning in my soul, but I cannot understand how it can be, for my grandfather belonged to the old school Presbyterians, and he told me it was six years before he could get peace. He had to be put into a lunatic asylum, for he was so miserable." Ah, yes, I have no doubt such cases have happened. Some will go 17,000 miles round about merely to go across a street, but there is no need for it. There it is—"The word is near you, on your lips, and in your heart; if with your heart you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and with your mouth make confession of Him, you shall be saved." There is nothing to be done! There is nothing to be felt! There is nothing to be brought! No preparation is needed! Come

just as you are and trust Christ to save you, and this night you shall be saved! God's honor and Christ's word are pledged to it!

**V.** This is the last thing. **WHEN AENEAS WAS HEALED, HE ACTED IN CONFORMITY THEREWITH.** "Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole: arise, and make your bed." He did so; he rose at once, and made his bed.

Now, if any of you say tonight, "I have believed in Jesus," remember you are bound to *prove* it. How prove it? Why, if you have believed in Jesus, you are made whole, and you are to go home and show people how whole you are! This man was palsied, and had been lying there prostrate eight years; he could never make his bed, but he proved he was healed by making his bed for himself! Perhaps there is a man here who, when he has entered his house, has generally opened the door with an oath. If there is such a person here, and Christ saves you—He will wash your mouth out for you. You will have done with profane language forever! Your wife will be surprised, when you go home, to hear how differently you talk. Perhaps you have been used to mix with rough companions in your work, and you have talked as they have done. If Jesus Christ has made you whole, there is an end to all filthy speaking! Now you will talk graciously, sweetly, cleanly, profitably. In years gone by you were angry and passionate. If Jesus Christ has made you whole, you will be as tender as a lamb; you will find the old lion lifting his head, and giving an occasional roar and a shake of his mane, but then he will be chained by the restraints of grace, while the meek and gentle lamb of the new nature will feed in pastures wide and green! Ah, if the Lord has saved you, the drunk's ale bench will have no more of you, for you will need better company than the seats of scoffers can afford you! If the Lord saves you, you will want to do something for Him, to show your grateful love. I know this very night you will long to tell your children, and tell your friends that Jesus Christ has made you whole. John Bunyan says that when he was made whole, he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land about it! I do not wonder that he did! Tell anybody; tell everybody, "Jesus Christ has saved me!" It is a sensation the like of which no man can imagine if he has not felt it, to be made a new creature right away, in a moment! That surprises all who see it, and as people like to tell news—strange news—so does a new-born man long to go and tell others, "I have been born-again—I have found the Savior!"

Now, mark, you will have to prove that this is so by an honest, upright, consistent, holy life—not, however, by being merely sternly honest. If Christ has saved you, He will save you from being selfish; you will love your fellow men; you will desire to do them good; you will endeavor to help the poor; you will try to instruct the ignorant. He who truly becomes a Christian becomes in that very day, a practical philanthropist! No man is a true Christian who is not Christ-like—who can live for himself alone, to hoard money or to make himself great. The true Christian lives for others. In a word, he lives for Christ! If Christ has healed you, gentle compassion will saturate your soul from this time forth and forever! O

Master, You who did heal men's bodies in the days of Your flesh, heal men's hearts tonight, we pray You!

Still this word more. Somebody says, "Oh, I wish I had Christ!" Soul, why not have Him at once? "Oh, but I am not fit." You never *will* be fit! You *cannot* be fit, except in the sense in which you are fit even now! What is fitness for washing? Why, being dirty! What is fitness for alms? Why, being in distress! What is fitness for a doctor? Why, being ill! This is all the fitness that a man needs for trusting in Christ to save him! Christ's mercy is to be had for nothing! Bribe or purchase is out of the question! I have heard of a woman whose child was in a fever and needed grapes. There was a prince who lived near, in whose hothouse there were some of the rarest grapes that had ever been grown. She scraped together the little money she could earn, and went to the gardener and offered to buy a bunch of the royal fruit. Of course he repulsed her, and said they were not to be sold. Did she imagine that the prince grew grapes to sell like a market gardener? And he sent her on her way, much grieved. She came again. She came several times, for a mother's importunity is great. But no offer of hers would be accepted. At last the princess heard of it, and wished to see the woman. And when she came, the princess said, "The prince does not sell the fruit of his garden," but snipping off a bunch of grapes and dropping them into a little bag, she said, "He is always ready to give it away to the poor." Now, here is the rich cluster of gospel salvation from the true vine! My Lord will not sell it, but He is always ready to give it away to all who humbly ask for it! If you want it, come and take it, and take it *now* by believing in Jesus! The Lord bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 55.**

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—100, 982, 992.**

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# WHY THE HEAVENLY ROBES ARE WHITE

## NO. 1316

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
SEPTEMBER 24, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”*  
*Revelation 7:14.*

OUR curiosity inquires into the condition of those who have newly entered heaven; like fresh stars they have lit up the celestial firmament with an added splendor; new voices are heard in the choir of the redeemed. In what condition are they at the moment of their admission to the heavenly seats? Their bodies are left behind, we know, to decay back to mother earth, but how fare their unclothed immortal spirits? What now occupies those pure and perfect minds? We are not left in the dark upon this matter—our Lord Jesus Christ has brought immortality and life to light—and in the words of our text, and the preceding and following verses we are informed as to these new comers, these recruits for the church triumphant! Were our text properly translated it would run thus—“These are they that come out of great tribulation,” or who “are coming”—in the present tense. If the word does not distinctly refer to those who have “just come,” it certainly includes such. Those who “come” are those who *have* come, and those who *shall* come, but it must also include those who are, at this moment, *arriving!* These are those whom I venture to call heaven’s new-born princes, her fresh blooming flowers whose beauty, for the first time, is seen in Paradise! Lo, I see the newly departed passing through the river of death, ascending the other shore, and entering in through the gates into the City. What are these new comers doing? We find that they are not kept waiting outside, nor put through a quarantine, nor cast into *purgatorial* fires—but as they arrive from great tribulation they are at once *admitted to holy fellowship!* Therefore are they before the throne of God—dwelling in the courts of the great King—to go no more out forever. Earthly courtiers only stand at times in their monarch’s presence, but these abide forevermore before the throne of God, and of the Lamb, favored to behold the face of God without a veil between, and to see the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off. How quickly has earth faded from their minds, and heaven’s glory flashed upon them! The sick bed and the weeping friends are gone; the throne of their God and Savior fills the whole field of their delighted vision!

They are *arrayed for holy service*, and arrayed at once, for they wear white robes fitted for their priestly service. It is true they have no material bodies, but in some mystic sense which is applicable to the spirit

world, these holy ones wear a vesture which qualifies them for celestial worship, and all the holy service of the heavenly state.

They are not only admitted to see God, and prepared to engage in His most glorious worship, but they are, at once, *permitted actually to commence their holy lifework* by serving God day and night in His temple. We find them already engaged in actual adoration, for they cried with a loud voice, saying, “salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” These pure spirits yet have voices which our God, who is a Spirit, hears and approves! Their song is full of purest gospel truth, and their earnestness is shown by the loudness of their voices; they need no angels to instruct them in the manners and customs of the upper world, for even while they sojourned on earth their conversation was in heaven, and they are at home at once! They are not waiting till they have learned the song—but they know it already—for grace is the rehearsal of glory! They do not need to be initiated into the sacred mysteries, for they have had access within the veil while here below; they will begin their heavenly life at once, take up the tune just where they find it, and join in the hymn just as soon as they arrive! They begin at once to praise Him that sits upon the throne, and to adore the Lamb! How sweet it is to think of those who have lately left us, that though they broke off this mortal life, as it were, before it was complete, and left it a fragment, yet they do not begin life up yonder prematurely or abruptly, but exactly at the right time! The new singer takes his place in the choir just when his part is coming on, and takes up the keynote as if he had been there a century! He begins his song with his white robe on and his palm branch in his hand, as one who is well prepared to take his part in the endless adoration. Sudden glory does not startle the inhabitants of heaven as sudden death startles the dwellers upon earth; the immigrants to heaven are expected, and the gates stand always open to welcome them! There are no untimely births into the church of the first-born—each one comes in his season.

As to the state and condition of the newly glorified, they are described to us still further in the verses which follow the text. It seems to me that those pure spirits who are without their bodies as yet are pictured as being like the children of Israel when the great camp was pitched in the wilderness; in the desert the Lord God would have dwelt among them, had it not been for their sins. In heaven He *does* dwell in the most supreme sense: “He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them.” Over the heads of the great camp in the wilderness there hung a cloud of glory which, in the daytime, sheltered them from the great heat of the sun, and at night lit up the whole camp so that all the streets of that canvas city were brilliant through the whole night. That bright light indicated the presence of God—He did, as it were, hover over them, and cover them with His wing, but in heaven He shall be still nearer, and *dwell* among them! His presence shall sanctify, enlighten, and overshadow all. The Shekinah, the holy and mystic light which indicated the presence of God in the tabernacle, was veiled from the sight of the multitude—but in heaven all shall behold the glory of the Lord, and be surrounded with it.

The saints above enjoy a conscious nearness and fellowship with the Lord, such as we cannot hope to rival on this side of Jordan; He shall dwell among them! Happy spirits who have this felicity to have God indwelling them, abiding with them, and surrounding them forever! Hence it is that they hunger no more, for as Israel fed upon the manna, so they feast on divine love. They thirst no more, for as Israel drank of the rock, so are the glorified ones with Christ, and drink forever of His love. "The sun shall not light on them nor any heat." How can it, when they are utterly withdrawn from the influence of materialism, and screened from all evil influences of every kind by the matchless presence of the mighty God who, of old, was vanguard and rear-guard to His people, and forever is their all-in-all? With the Lamb for their Leader, what choice company they keep! What hallowed paths they tread! What sacred communications they receive! What amazing raptures they feel! With the Lamb to lead them to fountains of waters undiscovered by their feet aforetime, what fresh joy shall burst in upon them! With God Himself to be their Comforter, how all regrets at having left beloved ones down below shall be driven away completely! And how completely shall their whole souls be filled with perfect bliss without a single briny tear to mar the joy!

In the vision before us, the most striking point about the newly arrived, according to the speech of the Elder and the remark of John, was their *wearing white robes*. The venerable elder does not appear to have taken notice of much else except this, for he asks the question, "Who are these that are arrayed in white robes, and from where came they?" That was the point to which he would direct John's thoughts—who can they be that shine so brightly there before the eternal throne? From where have they come in such attire? So this morning we will consider first, *what did their white robes indicate?* Secondly, *how did they come by them?* And lastly, *what is the lesson of the text to us?*

**I. WHAT DID THESE WHITE ROBES MEAN?** Why were they *white robes*? Of course it is all symbolism—these spirits wore no garments because they had no bodies—but their robes signify their character, office, history, and condition.

The white robes show, first, *the immaculate purity of their character*. "They are without fault before the throne of God." Into the heavenly place no sin could possibly enter, and they have brought no sin with them; no, not so much as a trace, or relic, or scar of a sin! They are "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," presented holy, without blame, and faultless in the sight of the Most High! White signifies *perfection*. It is not so much a color as the harmonious union and blending of all the hues, colors, and beauties of light. In the characters of just men made perfect we have the combination of all virtues, the balancing of all excellences, a display of all the beauties of divine grace; are they not like their Lord, and is He not all beauties in one? Down here a saint has an evident excess of the red of courage, or the blue of constancy, or the violet of tenderness—we have to admire the varied excellences, and lament the multifarious defects of the children of God, but up yonder each saint shall combine in his character all things which are lovely and of good repute;

his garments shall be always white to indicate completeness, as well as spotlessness of character. We ought to note that the white here meant is bright and shining, to indicate that their characters shall be lustrous and attractive. They shall be the admiration of principalities and powers as they see in them the manifold wisdom of God. In these white garments they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Our Lord's garments in the transfiguration are not only said to have been "whiter than any fuller could make them," but they are said to have been glistening and "white as the light." The redeemed before the truth of God shine like stars before the eyes of all who are favored to gaze upon their assembly! What a glory there will be about the character of a child of God! Even those who have seen it long shall still be filled with wonder at what grace has done! God, Himself, shall take delight in His people when He has made them "white in the blood of the Lamb." That the white robes must refer to their own character is clear; I have taken it for granted that it is so because the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is the righteousness of the saints, cannot possibly be meant here, since that cannot be either defiled or washed. To speak of washing the righteousness of Christ in the blood of Christ would not only be an erroneous idea, but it would involve a conglomeration of metaphors not to be tolerated for a moment! The white robes here intended are the *personal characters* of the saints as they appear before God Himself. They are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and so cleansed that they are absolutely perfect.

By "white robes," we also understand *the fitness of their souls for the service to which they are appointed*. They were chosen before all worlds to be kings and priests unto God—but a priest might not stand before the Lord to minister until he had put on his appointed linen garments; therefore the souls which have been taken up to heaven are represented in white robes to show that they are completely fitted for that divine service to which they were ordained of old—to which the Spirit of God called them while they were here, and in which Jesus Christ leads the way, being a priest forever, at their head. They are able to offer acceptably the incense of praise, for they are girded with the garments of their office. We know not all the occupations of the blessed, but we know that they are all such as can be performed by a royal priesthood, and therefore the priestly garb betokens that they are ready to do the will of God in all things, and to perpetually offer the sacrifice of praise unto the Lord.

"White robes" also signify *victory*. I should think that in almost every nation, white has indicated the joy of triumph. Often when generals have returned from battle, they and the warriors have been clothed in white, or have ridden upon white horses. True, the Romans adopted purple as their imperial color, and well they might, for their victories and their rule were alike bloody and cruel! But the Christ of God sets forth His gentle and holy victories by white—it is on a "white cloud" that He shall come to judge the world, and His seat of judgment shall be "the great white throne." Upon a "white horse" He shall ride, and all the armies of heaven shall follow Him on white horses. Lo, He is clothed with a "white" garment down to His feet! Thus has He chosen white as the symbolic color

of His victorious kingdom, and so the redeemed wear it, even the newly born, freshly escaped out of great tribulation, because they are all of them, more than conquerors! They wear the victor's garb, and bear the palm which is the victor's symbol.

White is also the color of *rest*. If a man desired to do a day's work in this poor grimy world, a snow-white garment would hardly suit him, for it would soon be stained and soiled. Therefore the garments of toil are generally of another color, more fitted for a dusty world. The day of rest, the day of Sabbatic joy and pleasure is fittingly denoted by white garments. Well may the redeemed be thus arrayed, for they have finally put off the garments of toil, and the armor of battle; they rest from their labors in the Rest of God.

Chiefly, white is the color of *joy*. Almost all nations have adopted it as most suitable for bridal array, and therefore these happy spirits have put on their bridal robes, and are ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Though they are waiting for the resurrection, yet are they waiting with their bridal garments on, waiting and rejoicing, waiting and chanting their Redeemer's praises, for they feast with Him till He shall descend to consummate their bliss by bringing their bodies from the grave to share with them in the eternal joy!

So, you see, the white garments have a great deal of teaching about them, and if it were the objective of my discourse to bring it out, I could well spend a full hour in describing what is meant. But I am rather driving at something else, and to that I invite you. May the Holy Spirit lead us into it!

**II.** Secondly, HOW DID THEY COME BY THOSE WHITE GARMENTS? How came they to be so white? It was the whiteness which struck the mind of the elder, and of the apostle. What could be the cause of it? "From where did they come?" he asked.

Those characters were not so pure, or in other words, those garments were not so white by *nature*. They are washed, you see, and therefore they must once have been *stained*. They have "washed their robes." They were not always white. No, original sin has stained the character of all the sons of Adam! There is about us from the very beginning, an abundance of leprous spots; the garment is not white when first we put it on; how shall he be clean that is born of woman? Then, alas, there are by nature upon the robe, the stains of *actual* sin which we committed before conversion. We altogether tremble at the remembrance of it, and we would utterly despair if we did not know that it has been washed away in the blood of the Lamb! Then, alas, there are the iniquities we have committed since we have known the Lord; under some aspects these are the most baneful, and the most sinful of all our transgressions, for we have transgressed against eternal love, since we have known it, and rebelled against an electing, redeeming, forgiving God. Ah, this is sin indeed! Among the hosts above there is not one robe but what needed to be washed. They all required it, for by nature they were all stained by sin in many ways. Do not think of one saint who has gone to his reward above, as being in any way different in nature from you! They were all of like

passions with us; ones who had within them the same tendencies to sin. If we suppose them to have been naturally better, they will not yield us so much stimulus, for then we shall ascribe their victory to the goodness of their nature, and shall despair for ourselves! But if we remember that they were just as fallen, and just as tainted with inbred sin as we are, we shall then rejoice and take courage, for if they have entered heaven with unspotted garments, having washed them, why should not we be also washed, and be white as they?

But it might be suggested that perhaps they came to their rest by a cleaner way than that which now lies before us. Possibly there was something about their course of life, their surroundings, the condition of the age in which they lived which helped them to keep their garments white. No, my brothers and sisters, it was not so! They passed along the road of tribulation, and that tribulation was not of a less trying kind than ours, but was severe enough to be called "great tribulation." So they followed the same pathway as we do—

***"Once they were mourning here below,  
And wet their couch with tears.  
They wrestled hard as we do now,  
With sins and doubts, and fears."***

Their road was just as miry as ours, and perhaps even more so. They came through every slough staining their garments even as we do, and sorrowing because of it even as we do! They went where we go, even to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and they washed their garments white. How this ought to assist us to feel that although our pathway is one in which we meet with innumerable temptations, yet inasmuch as all the glorified have come up white and clean from it, by virtue of the atoning blood, even so shall we!

But I want to conduct you a little further into the central meaning of the text. Brothers and sisters, their garments came to be white *through a miracle of divine grace*. Through nothing less than a miracle of grace because they came through *the* great tribulation, where everything tended to defile them. The word, "*the*" ought to have been in the translation; it is marvelous how the translators came to leave it out! The text should read, "These are they which come out of *the* great tribulation." Note, also, that the half Latin word, "tribulation," upon which so many dwell as signifying *threshing*, is not in the Greek, but is merely a translator's word, and therefore not to be insisted on. The original simply signifies *oppression* and *affliction* of any sort. Now, all the children of God have had to go through *the* great oppression, and to endure its ills. What am I driving at? I will show you. I do not think that the text refers to some *one* great persecution, but to the great conflict of the ages in which the seed of the serpent perpetually molests and oppresses the seed of the woman. The strife began at the gates of Eden when the Lord said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed: He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." Satan takes care to nibble at the heel, though his own head has been broken by our great Lord. There is a hereditary conflict, a great tribulation, always to be suffered by the saints below, for he that is born after the flesh per-

secutes him that is born after the Spirit. The enmity takes all sorts of shapes, but from the beginning, even until now, it is in the *world*. Now, the white-robed ones had come out of that continuous and general conflict uninjured—like the three holy children who came out of the furnace with not so much as the smell of fire upon them. Some of them had been slandered; men of the world had thrown handfuls of the foulest mud upon them; but they washed their robes and made them white. Others of them had come out of remarkable temptations from men and devils. Satan himself had poured his blasphemies into their ears so that they verily thought they would, themselves, blaspheme! They were tried by the most defiling of temptations, but they overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and were delivered from every polluting trace of the temptation by the efficacy of the atoning sacrifice! Some of them were cruelly persecuted and trodden down as mire in the streets—and yet they rose to glory white as snow! They went through fire, through water, and wandered without a certain dwelling place; they were made to be as the offscouring of all things, but they came uninjured and unspotted out of it all! I would have you look upon the text as an exclamation of surprise uttered by the elder to John as they both mentally looked down upon the great struggle going on in the world below, where temptations and trials of all sorts surround the chosen company of the church militant. They watched the warring band, and marked that a goodly host of men, though they fought in the thick of the battle and were covered with dust, and had their garments rolled in blood, yet instead of perishing on the battlefield, as they seemed to do, came up out of it—came up wearing spotless and shining garments! Here was the wonder of it that they were white after such a trial! I have heard this text used as if the great tribulation had assisted in purifying them, whereas it was that which would have in itself *defiled* them! It was that which by their own natural operation tended to make them foul! The marvel was that they came out of it and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!

Now let me conduct you into the thought which we have at this moment laid before you, namely, that it was by the operation of the *blood of Christ*, and by nothing else that the glorified saints were made clean! They came out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Tribulation, or affliction, or oppression—call it what you will—is overruled by a miracle of divine grace so as to benefit the believer. But in and of itself, the great tribulation is not the cleanser, but the *defiler* of the soul! Affliction of itself does not sanctify anybody, but the reverse. I believe in sanctified afflictions, but not in sanctifying afflictions! Afflictions of themselves awake the evil which is in us to an unknown energy, and place us in positions where the rebellious heart is tempted to forsake the Lord; this will be seen if we consider the matter closely. The great tribulation of which I have to speak is, under some aspects a sin-creating thing, and if the victorious ones had not perpetually gone to the blood of Christ, they would never have had their garments white—it was the blood, alone, which made and

kept them white. They were familiar with the atonement, and knew its cleansing power.

Brothers and sisters, *some of the trials of the saints are evidently intended, by those who are the instruments of them, to make them sin.* Satan and wicked men assail the saints with this as their end and aim. Satan, for instance, when he tried Job, did it with the distinct intention of causing him to curse God to His face. He did not at all hide his intent, even before the throne of God, but boldly avowed it, and said, "Put forth, now, Your hand, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face." The Lord had other designs, but the objective of the affliction, as far as Satan was concerned, was to remove Job from his integrity, and cause him to blaspheme. Satan is very wise, and he knows if we do not, that affliction is an admirable instrument for his purpose, and so much tends to make a man sin, that if he does not fly to the blood of Jesus to counteract the tendency of the tribulation, he will speedily fall. What would Job have done had he not known that his Redeemer lived? As it is with the prince of tempters, so is it with those who serve him—they vex the saints in order to make them sin! When ungodly men persecute the children of God, whether it is by scoffing at them or by injuring them in their estates or persons, their direct objective is to make them renounce their religion, and forsake Christ! Or if this cannot be done, they aim at making them dishonor their profession by sin. Has not this been the real objective of all persecution, from the days of the chief priests and Pharisees, even until now? If they can make the saints sin, their end is gained; so that that part of the great tribulation which comes from Satan and the world is directly designed to make us sin against the Lord! The saints of God are preserved from the great tribulation, but the *influence* of these troubles makes them sin as it made Job sin in a certain way, and as no doubt, it caused the martyrs many a secret sin even though they were triumphant over death. As for this, I say they are cleansed from it by the blood of the Lamb, and so the actions of the enemy are defeated at every point.

Tribulation of any kind is pretty sure to make us feel the need of the precious blood, because it *brings sin to remembrance.* The widow of Sarepta said to the prophet, "Have you come to bring my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" Some sins never trouble the conscience until trials bring them up, and make the heart tender about them. Trouble, like a strong electric light, casts another color over the formerly dark scene, and we discover what we had forgotten; trials work a degree of tenderness of spirit, and so make sin conspicuous to the weeping eyes, and to the troubled heart. Many a man, when in great trouble about other matters, has begun to be in deep distress on account of sin, and oh, dear friend, if you are passing through any portion of the great tribulation and its effect upon you is to make your old sins come up before you, I pray you fly to the blood of Christ! That is the only way by which your faith can keep her hold; you can only believe in a sin-pardoning God by going to the cleansing fountain—for when sin is vividly seen, pardon is known to be impossible except through the divine atonement.

Tribulation has *a tendency to create even in good men, new sins*—sins into which they have never fallen before! “Brother,” you say, “I shall never grieve against God.” How do you know that? You say, “I have never done so unto this hour.” I answer, why should you have done so? Has not the Lord set a hedge about you and all that you have—why should you murmur? Are not your wife and children about you? Are you not in health and strength? Why, then, should you grieve? There is small credit in being satisfied when you have all that you need! But suppose the Lord were to strip you of all these things? O man, I fear you might murmur as others have done before you, and the sin of rebellion to which you have been a stranger might yet triumph over you! Are you better than others? Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall! You will need to wash your robes even as others have done.

*In some men, tribulation works a very fierce temptation to distrust.* Ah, we think we have a deal of faith until we need it, and then when the time comes, we who have taught faith to others find that we have very little ourselves! Ah, how unbelief will insinuate itself, and dare us to drive it out! Sharper and blacker doubts than we dare speak of will come, such as, “Is there providence? Is there a God?” Ah, we must fly to the blood, or else this tribulation will drive us into atheistic questions, and cover us with horrible sins which will dishonor God and wound ourselves!

*Tribulation, too, has an amazing tendency to stir up all our old sins.* While things go well with us, that cage of unclean birds will hardly peep or chatter, but affliction comes and stirs them all up, and how horribly they hoot and call to each other! Ah, my perfect brother, you do not know what a host of devils nestle inside your bosom! Whenever I hear a brother talk of ceasing from conflict, I think how quiet the devils in his soul are—and how they are chuckling at his folly! Sins swarm most where pride swears that there are none! There is an ocean of sin within the heart of any one of us, and it only needs a trouble to stir the polluted mass, and we shall see what it is like. Just put you, who are so very good in your own esteem, into certain positions, and your mighty fine holiness will crack and blister like so much varnish in the sun! There lies lurking in the soul even of the most sanctified believer, before he gets to heaven, enough of sin to set the world on fire, and it only needs a fierce breach of strong temptation to set the embers, which seemed as if they were all quenched, blazing away like Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace! The fire of sin would soon burn our souls to destruction if Christ did not interfere! See, then, my brothers and sisters, we must hasten away to the blood of atonement. You see how the two things are mentioned together—the tribulation and the blood-washing—and they must go *together* or else there will be no white robe for us at last, no character which will stand the gaze of the thrice holy Lord. The product of tribulation, by itself, will not be a white robe, but washing in the blood will give us that honorable array. Let us continually seek to have the atoning blood applied to cleanse our souls from the stains which tribulation is sure to make.

So, too, beloved brethren, *great trials are wonderfully apt to reveal the weakness of our graces and the number of our infirmities.* It is sure to

make the believer see what an unbeliever he is! It will make the man who is full of love see how little he loves! It will show the child of patience how impatient he is, and will make the strong learn his weakness, and wise men learn their folly! Ah, captain, you are a wise mariner, so you think, and so you are in a moderate squall, or in even an ordinary storm; but if the Lord were to let loose all His winds against you, I tell you what you would do—you would reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunk man, and be at your wits' end. Think of that! Those who have never done business in deep waters do not understand this. Your pleasure yachts which run between the islands, up the rivers, and in and out of the creeks know nothing about storms! Their crews are quite able to handle a vessel, so they say, but Atlantic storms would soon take the conceit out of them! Believe me, when a whirlwind takes the ship, and twists her round; and plays with her as with a toy; seafaring becomes no amusement! When the boat mounts to heaven, and then goes down into the abyss, it melts the soul because of heaviness, and forces a man to cry out for mercy! *Spiritual* storms make a man discover how utter weak he is, and then he is wise to fly to the blood of the Lamb! Oh, what a sweet restorative is found in the atoning Sacrifice! God in Christ Jesus reconciled to me by the blood once shed for many is my great joy! How the soul seems to get rid of all the mischief which tribulation otherwise would breed in her, when she bathes in that sacred fountain! Then, indeed, she puts on her white robes and chants a victorious song!

**III.** Now, thirdly, WHAT LESSON COMES OUT OF THIS? What is the teaching of the passage? The teaching is this, beloved, that when we are in tribulation, *then* is the time to have the most diligent dealings with the precious blood of the Lamb!

I would say to you, first, *meditate on it!* A sight of Christ in *His agony* is a wondrous cure for *our agonies*. That crown of thorns about Your head, O my Master, this shall ease my throbbing brow! Those eyes so red with weeping shall look consolation into my soul! Your cheeks, stained with spit, shall make me forget the reproach I bear for Your sake. When I see You, Yourself, stripped naked and hung up on the cross, the sight will make me think highly of being slandered and persecuted for Your sake! What are our griefs compared to His? On the table of sorrow they place the little drinking cups for us little children. But for our great elder brother, what a flagon did they set for Him! Yet He drank it, saying, "Not as I will, but as You will." When we see the elder brother drinking of the same cup as ourselves, it makes us cheerfully put ours to our lips, and pledge Him in fellowship, "O Lord Jesus, shall we refuse what You take! No, glorious brother of our souls, we will be true brothers—we will prove our fellowship in this sad communion, and drink with You of Your cup, and be baptized with Your baptism." So, you see, meditation on the blood of Jesus helps us in our tribulation by letting us see how much greater His woe was than ours is!

Another sweet consolation growing out of our subject is this—we see how great His love is to us. Perhaps He has seen fit to smite us, and we think Him angry; but we know He loves us because we see Him bleed. If

you will only follow Christ through Gethsemane, and watch Him for a while on Calvary, and watching with Him for one hour, begin to taste His sufferings, we will say, "My Master, oh, how You love me! I perceive that Yours is a love which many waters cannot quench, which death itself cannot drown! Then if You love me so, You love me even in this, my affliction, and I will rejoice in it! I cannot doubt Your love, for Your blood seals the truth of it, and therefore I am confident under Your chastening hand."

Meditation also comforts us when we follow another line of reflection, and say within ourselves—Jesus triumphed—and how? By suffering! The victories of Christ were not obtained by crushing others, but by being crushed Himself! His way to the throne was downward through the grave! He shows us the power of weakness, and the sublimity of suffering ridicule. Though here rejected, despised, and made nothing of, He is now exalted above all principalities and powers! "Well, then," the heart argues, "so shall I be honored and glorified by suffering! If I endure patiently, and hold on my way, still flying to the precious blood, I shall in my weakness find my strength! In my sense of sinfulness I shall find purity in Christ and in death shall find my everlasting life!" So, you see, there is really something in meditating upon the blood of the Lamb!

But, beloved, the chief thing is this; in all times of tribulation the great matter is to have the blood of Christ *actually applied to the soul*. If you lie soaking in the atonement; if you put your broken heart to sleep on the breast of Christ, hard by His wounds, you will get peace by this method better than by any other. "How so?" one asks. Why, if the blood is applied to the conscience, it will breathe such peace through the soul, such sweet peace, that nothing else will be able to disturb you! I have known in hospitals where there have been foul gases and ill smells that have burned choice herbs, and odoriferous plants, and sweet perfumes have been used to kill the noxious odors. Oh for a little of Christ's blood sprinkled in the chambers of the soul! It is better than frankincense or calamus! It will make death sweet, and cause the chamber of affliction to smell deliciously with Christ's precious name! If sin is pardoned, I am secure! If Christ stands in my place and His precious blood pleads for me, I am content to lie down at His feet, and say, "Do what You will, now You have pardoned me! Do what You will, Lord, for I am forgiven!" Such is the peace-giving power of the blood!

When the blood is applied to the soul, there is another gracious result—it takes the sting out of affliction by making us know that there is nothing *penal* in it. If Christ was punished in my place for my sin, then I can never be punished for my sin and therefore whatever I may have to endure daily by way of trial or suffering, there is no punishment in it! There may be my Father's loving and wise *chastisement*, and doubtless there is, but there is never a *punishment* such as a judge inflicts as a penalty for transgression! God brings no charge against His people—how can He? It is He that justifies them—and as He has no charge to bring, certainly He never punishes! Who is he that condemns since Christ has died? Are we not strengthened to bear the tribulation when we know that

it does not come upon us as a punishment for sin? Our Father's providence has no wrath in it, or, if it has wrath at all, it is that "little wrath" we read of in Isaiah—"In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you."

And, oh, brothers and sisters, if the blood of Christ is applied to the soul (and let us ask that it may, whether we are in great tribulation or not), we are assured that the end will be glorious! We are all in the great tribulation in one way or other—we are fighting and contending, and must do so to the end, but that end is guaranteed to us! The blood of Jesus Christ gives us a sweet assurance that it is all well with us, and shall be well with us forever! It opens the gates of heaven to us, and cries, "Courage! Courage! The battle is sharp, but it will soon be over, and there awaits for you a victor's crown." May not the soldier lift up his head and wipe his face from the sweat of battle, and say, "Then I will fight it through! Yes, in God's name, and by His grace, I will fight it through! What? Though this wound seems to have stunned me for a moment, and almost split my skull, I will fight it through if such is the promise and the reward! I will stir my soul, and the Holy Spirit shall awake it, to put on a noble daring, and on I will go to win for Christ! Well may I bear His cross since He prepares my crown." That is the sweet effect of the blood, and I ask that everyone here of us, tried or not, may feel it now to the praise and glory of His grace! O divine Spirit, grant us this grace!

What do *you* do, I wonder, who have not the blood of Christ to flee to? Ah, what do you do in time of sorrow who have no Christ to help you? I will ask you that question, and leave it to ring through your souls! Remember, when you feel you need Him, my Lord is ready, for the fountain is still opened for sin and for uncleanness! You have but to wash and be clean! A simple faith will obtain complete purification from all sin. God grant you may believe in Jesus at once. Amen.

## **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—REVELATION 7.**

### **HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—872, 877, 818.**

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# OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD

## NO. 1317

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
OCTOBER 8, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”  
Romans 12:21.***

THIS is a very meaty verse, and the form of it greatly assists the memory; it is worthy to be called a Christian proverb. I would recommend every Christian to learn it by heart, and have it ready for use, for there are a great many proverbs which convey a very different sense, and these are often quoted to give the weight of authority to unchristian principles. Here is an inspired proverb—carry it with you and use it as a weapon with which to parry the thrusts of the world's wisdom. “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Observe that the text appears to give us a choice between two things, and bids us choose the better one; you must either be overcome of evil, or you must overcome evil—one of the two. You cannot let evil alone, and evil will not let you alone; you must fight, and in the battle you must either conquer or be conquered! The words before us remind me of the saying of the Scot officer of the Highland regiment when he brought them up in front of the enemy, and said, “Lads, there they are: if you dinna kill them, they'll kill you.” So does Paul marshal us in front of evil, and like a wise general, he puts us on our mettle by saying, “Overcome, or be overcome.” There is no avoiding the conflict, no making truce or holding parley, no suspension of hostilities after a brief skirmish; the battle must be fought through to the end, and can only close with a decided victory to one or the other side. Soldier of Christ, do you need to debate which of the two to choose, victory or defeat?

To be utterly overcome of evil would be a very dreadful thing! I shall say but little about it, because I trust we shall, by divine grace, be upheld so as never to know by experience what it is to be overcome of evil! May we be “more than conquerors through Him that loved us”; may we be happily ignorant of what it is to be vanquished by the powers of evil, and remain like the British drummer boy who did not know how to beat a retreat, for he had never had any use for such a thing! May we not know the dishonor and misery of being overcome of evil because divine grace continually gives us the victory! When we *are* overcome of evil, even for a moment, it discovers the sad weakness of our spiritual life. We must still be babes in grace, and sadly carnal if sin is allowed to master us. If we were stronger in the Lord, and in the power of His might, we would overcome the world, itself, by faith! Did not John write unto young men and say, “You are strong and have overcome the wicked one”? If we

are overcome of evil, even for a moment, it will cause us great sorrow if we are in our right mind; a tender conscience will be greatly vexed as soon as defeat is sustained, and in looking back upon our fall, if fall we do, it will be a daily grief to us that we allowed ourselves to be overcome by evil at all. To be overcome of evil is dishonoring to our Lord, and opens the mouths of adversaries; those who watch for our falling will be sure to make much of it. "Report it, report it," they shout, and they *do* report it through the length and breadth of the land—that a servant of Christ has been overcome of evil! And if to be overcome of evil were not occasional, but were continuous; if it could be said of our whole life that we were overcome of evil, it would prove that we were none of Christ's, for he that is born of God overcomes the world. Our Lord Jesus said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," and He makes all His *true disciples* partakers of this victory! Only to *conquerors* are the great promises of the Book of Revelation given—"To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna." "Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the house of My God." "To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father on His throne." To be defeated in the battle of life would prove that we did not belong to that conquering seed which, if its heel is bruised, shall nevertheless break the foeman's head! Fix it, then, in your minds that evil is to be overcome! It is a matter of necessity that we wage this war and succeed in it; we must triumph over the powers of darkness!

Few are the words, but weighty is the meaning of our text. In one terse sentence the conflict is set before us, and the sword of the battle is put into our hands: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil *with good*." Good is the *only* weapon which, in this dread conflict, we are permitted to use! And we may rest assured it will be sufficient and effectual, for to use any other weapon is not only unlawful, but altogether impossible, for he who wields the sword of evil is no longer Christ's soldier at all!

The reference in the text is to *personal injuries*, and therefore we shall confine ourselves to that one point, though the principle is capable of very great extension. In fighting with sin and error, our weapons must be holiness and truth, and these alone. It is a wide subject, and I will not venture upon it. That *personal injury* is referred to in my text is clear from the preceding verses, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine: I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head."

With regard to the evil of personal injury, *the common method is to overcome evil with evil*—let us talk about it; secondly, *the divine method is to overcome evil with good*—let us speak of that, and this will, no doubt, exhaust our time. As this is a very practical subject, let us entreat the Holy Spirit to teach us the will of Christ, and then to enable us to obey it in all things. I shall be much disappointed if the subject does not humble as well as instruct us, and if it does this, it will be well for us to

fly at once to the blood of the atonement, that we may be purged from former faults, and cleansed for future holiness.

**I. THE COMMON METHOD OF OVERCOMING INJURIES IS OVERCOMING EVIL WITH EVIL.** “Give him a Roland for his Oliver.” “Give him as good as he sends.” “Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.” “Be six to his half dozen.” I might go on with a score of proverbs, all inculcating the sentiment of revenge, or at least of meeting evil with evil.

I have to observe that the overcoming of evil with evil is, in the first place, *a most natural procedure*; it suggests itself to any fool to overcome evil with evil! A lunatic or idiot could do that! You need not train your children to do it, it will be suggested in their infancy, and they will strike the floor upon which they fall, and beat the post against which they stumble—to punish it for their hurt! It is natural, very sadly natural; a sort of instinct suggests it—the instinct of the worm which turns if it is stepped on. This instinct says, “Surely we are not to allow evil without resenting it, and what can we do better than to treat others as they treat us?” It must be admitted, also, that there is a *show of justice* about such a method of combating evil; why should not a man be made to suffer who makes me suffer? And if he does me wrong, why should I not defend myself, and make him smart for making me smart? I freely admit that this is exceedingly natural and has a show of justice about it. But to which part of us is it natural? Think for a minute; is it natural to the new-created spirit which dwells in believers, or is it natural to us because there is a part of us which is animal? Is it the new man in us which suggests revenge? Or is it the flesh, the mere animal in us which strikes out to avenge itself? A moment’s reflection will let you see that the returning of evil for evil is natural to the *animal* nature, but that it is not, and never can be natural to the new-created spirit whose nature is like the God from which it came, namely love, gentleness, and kindness. “Good for evil is God-like. Good for good is man-like. Evil for good is devil-like. “Evil for evil—”; what is it? I quote it to prove my point. It is beast-like! It is like the beast which kicks because it is kicked, gores because it is gored, and bites because it is bitten! Surely we cannot allow the lower part of our triple nature to dictate to our heaven-born spirit. We cannot let the servant be the master! We will be natural, but the nature which we will follow shall be that which we received in our *regeneration* when we were made partakers of the divine nature, and enabled to escape the corruptions of the world. That returning evil for evil looks like rough and ready justice, I have confessed, but then is any man prepared to follow out for himself, and in his own case this rule of justice? Is he prepared to stand before God, and receive evil for his evil? “He shall have justice without mercy that shows no mercy.” Is he willing to stand before God on the same terms as he would have the offending one stand before himself? No, our best, and indeed our *only* hope must lie in the mercy of God who freely forgives offenses! We must look up to infinite love, and entreat the Lord to have mercy upon us according to the multitude of His loving-kindnesses, and therefore we must render mercy to others. To recom-

pense evil for evil is natural, but may God deliver us from the nature which makes it natural! It is just, no doubt, after a fashion, but from that sort of justice may our Redeemer rescue us!

Again, it is admitted that the art of returning evil for evil is very, *very easy*. If, my dear friend, you make it a rule that nobody shall ever insult you without having to pay for it, nor treat you with disrespect without meeting his match, you need not pray to God in the morning to help you to carry out your resolve. There will be no need to wrestle in prayer that you may be graciously enabled to take vengeance on your adversaries, and stand up for your rights; you can do that decidedly better by trusting to yourself than by looking to God. Indeed, you dare not look to God about it at all! The devil will help you—and between your own passion, and the evil one, the thing may be very easily managed. There will be no reason for watchfulness; you need not be on your guard, or keep yourself in check; on the contrary, you may give to the very worst part of your nature the greatest possible license, and go ahead according to the rage of your passionate spirit. Prayer and humility of mind will of course be quite out of the question; nor will there be any need for *faith*—you will not commit your case unto God and leave it there—you will fight your own battles, wipe off old scores as you go, and place your dependence on fierce speeches, on mighty fists, or on the law and the policeman! Christian graces will be too much in your way for you to think of them! Gentleness, meekness, forbearance, forgiveness—you will bid good-bye to these, and cultivate the virtues of a savage, or of a bulldog! All this is wonderfully easy; though it may be that before long it will turn out to be difficult!

Now, I put it to Christians whether that which is so very easy to the very worst of men can ever be the right procedure for those who ought to be the best of men? If the divine plan of love is difficult and requires great grace to enable you to follow it, and I freely admit that it does—if it is very difficult to maintain it, and will require much prayer, much watchfulness, and much conquest of yourself—is it not, therefore, the more sure to be right? As for that which is so easy, let that be left to publicans and sinners! But as for you who have received more mercy of God than other men, should you not render more? You believe yourselves to be twice born; you have received a new and heavenly life; what do you do more than others? Ought you to not show that there is more in you than in others by letting more come out of you than comes out of others? Much more is expected of us than of the unregenerate; naturally and rightly, expectation runs high in reference to men who make such high professions, and if the professed Christian is no better in his daily conversation than the ungodly, depend upon it, he is no Christian at all! We possess a higher life, and we are lifted to a nobler platform than the common sons of men, and therefore we must lead a nobler life, and be guided by more sublime principles. Let the children of darkness meet evil with evil, and carry on their wars and fights, their strifes and their envy, their malice and their revenge! But as for you, O believers, you are the

children of the God of love, and love must be your life! You have been renewed in the spirit of your minds, and you must not be conformed to this world, but be transformed into the likeness of Christ, your Master. Evil for evil should be a principle *detested* by you, and such should be your loving spirit that it ought to be no longer easy to recompense evil with evil, but difficult, yes, *impossible* to bring you to do anything of the kind! Revenge and fury should be as alien to the spirit of a child of God as they would be to an angel before the throne of God!

By many, to return evil for evil has been judged to be the *more manly course*. Years ago if a gentleman imagined himself to be insulted, it was necessary, according to the code of honor then in vogue, for him either to shed the blood of the offending person, or at least to expose himself to the like peril of his life. Thank God that murderous custom is now almost entirely gone from the face of the earth! The spirit of Christianity has, by degrees, overcome this evil; but there still abides in the world the idea that to stand up for yourself, to just let people know what you are, never to knuckle down to anybody, but to defend your own cause, and vindicate your honor has something extremely manly about it. And to yield, to submit, to be patient, to be meek, to be gentle is considered to be unworthy of a man of spirit. They call it showing the white feather, and being cowardly, though to my mind, he is the bravest man who can bear the most. Now, Christian, who is your model of a man? You do not hesitate for a second, I am sure; there is but one model of a Christian, and that is the man, Christ Jesus. Will you then remember that whatever is Christly is manly, and whatever you think to be manly which is not Christ-like, is really unmanly, as judged by the highest style of man? The Lord Jesus draws near to a Samaritan village, and they will not receive Him, though He was always kind to Samaritans. Good John, gentle John, becomes highly indignant, and cries, "Lord, will You that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" Jesus meekly answers, "You know not what manner of spirit you are of: for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." See Him on another occasion. Your Master has risen from His knees, with the bloody sweat still on His face, and Judas comes and betrays Him; and they begin to handle Him very roughly, and therefore, being highly provoked, brave Peter draws out his sword, and just to flash it a little, he cuts off the ear of Malchus! Hear how gently Jesus says, "Put up again your sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." And so He heals that ear at once! Was that manly, do you think? Was it manly to refuse to call fire from heaven, and to touch and heal the wounded ear? To me it seems superlatively manly! And may such be my manliness and yours! Look at our Lord, again, before the high priest, when an officer of the court, incensed by His gentle answers, smites Him on the cheek. What does Jesus say? Observe the difference between Christ and Paul. Paul says, "God shall smite you, you white wall." Bravo, Paul! That is speaking up for yourself! We cannot blame you, for who are we to censure an apostle? But look at Paul's Master, and hear *His* words, "If I have

spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you smite Me?" Is not the example of Jesus the more noble, the more God-like? No man, for a moment, can put the two side by side without feeling that the Lord's conduct is by far the more sublime. It is not for us to imitate the *servant* of Christ when Christ, Himself, excels him! Here is victory, when a man so overcomes himself that he replies to evil language with good and wise answers, not with fierce and reviling words! O Christians, look to Christ, your Lord, who all His life endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself; who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, but submitted Himself to Him that judges righteously, and who, even on the cruel tree, when He was mocked by those around Him, had nothing to say but this—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." O Man of men, be You the criterion from now on of all the manliness at which we aim! And if others count the opposite to be manly, let them count it as they will—we are not of their mind!

Dear friends, we are now bold to affirm concerning the old, easy, natural method of returning evil for evil, that it does not succeed; nobody ever overcame evil by confronting it with evil. Such a course *increases* the evil! When the great fire was blazing at London Bridge, it would have been a strange way of putting it out or keeping it under if our firemen had lit another fire close to it, or had pumped petroleum upon it! Yet I have known some try to overcome the evil of a passionate temper in a man by becoming passionate themselves—rolling up another tar barrel to his fire, and so making it burn more furiously than ever! That is not conquering evil, nor is evil ever to be so conquered till water drowns the sea! A soft answer turns away wrath, but anger excites more anger and more sin. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindles, when it comes to be heaped up with fuel, and blown upon by furious winds!

What is worse, *when we assail evil with evil, we are already overcome*—we have fallen into the very wrong which we complain of. As long as we can be calm and quiet, we are victorious, but our breaking loose into an ill temper is our own defeat—and being overcome, how can we overcome others? Brothers and sisters, the desire to return evil for evil does not succeed because it injures us much more than it injures the person whom we seek to overcome! It has been said that the worst peace is better than the best war, and I believe almost anything is better than becoming angry! Scarcely any injury which we can ever sustain will so injure us as the injury which must arise to us from becoming angry and revengeful! Our enemies are not worth putting ourselves out about, and ten minutes of a palpitating heart, and of a disturbed circulation causes us greater real damage in body than an enemy could inflict in seven years. Ten minutes of a fiery deluge overflowing the whole soul is a serious catastrophe! Ten minutes in which you could not look Jesus in the face; ten minutes in which you would be ashamed to think of the Master's being near; ten minutes of broken fellowship—why this is a very serious self-torture; let us not allow it to please our foes! Alas, I have known professors keep up this wrath for days and weeks; how it must

hurt a man to have his soul broiling all that time; to have his heart roasting in the fire of wrath. I feel it to be too painful to bear, even for a brief season. It is bad for us in every sense, it hurts the mind permanently. Evil for evil is a sharp-edged tool which cuts the man who uses it—a kind of cannon which is most dangerous to those who fire it, both in its discharge, and in its recoil. If you wished to destroy your enemy, it would be wise to make him a present of this dangerous gun, and allow him to have the entire monopoly of it. I may truly say that when we oppose evil with evil, the evil which comes from us does us far more injury than any evil which we experience from others.

Again, the method of overcoming evil with evil does not bear inspection; it does not bear to be pondered and meditated on. Let any renewed man sit down for a minute, after he has fallen into this practice, and ask himself as a Christian, how he feels about it; he has usurped the place of God, for vengeance belongs only to the judge of all the earth—how does he feel while acting as a usurper? Who am I that I should clamber to the throne of God and seize His sword, and attempt to make myself judge and executioner among mankind? Will this bear consideration? Can a child of God thus see himself guilty of high treason against his King? How does a man feel when he is on his knees and remembers what he has done? How does he say, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us”? Do not his eyes fill with tears, and is not his heart heavy with regret? How will your hard speeches and fierce actions appear when viewed from your dying bed? Will railing, fighting and lawsuits be sweet memories there? Can such a thing as repaying evil with evil be the subject of our praise to God? Can we ever thank the God of love for enabling us to avenge ourselves? If we cannot pray about it, or praise about it, let us let it alone! Is there *anything* about it which we could whisper in the ear of Christ? Is there *anything* in it that will help us to closer fellowship with Him? Is there *anything* in anger and wrath which will prepare us for the business of earth, or for the bliss of heaven?

It is bad, bad altogether! The best that I can say of it is that there may be rare occasions in which the provocation may be so great as to present others from condemning us, but then I must add that at such times we had better, even then, make no excuse for ourselves, for the mind of Christ is that when smitten on one cheek, we turn the other, and that in *no case* we render unto any man evil for evil. Beloved brothers and sisters, I beseech you by the mercies of God that you refrain forever from the method of seeking to overcome evil with evil, and that you follow the example of your Lord, taking His yoke upon you and learning of Him, for He is meek and lowly in mind.

**II.** Let us now consider THE DIVINE METHOD OF OVERCOMING EVIL WITH GOOD. And here I freely admit, to commence with, that this is a *very elevated mode of procedure*. “Overcome evil with good! Ridiculous!” says one. “Utopian,” cries another. “It might do for Plato’s republic,” says a third, “but it will never do for ordinary, everyday life!” Well, I shall not

blush to admit that this is a very high course of conduct, and one which the mere worldling cannot be expected to follow—but of Christians we expect higher things! You have a high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and you are therefore called to a high style of character by your glorious Leader, the Lord Jesus Christ! Brethren, if it is difficult, I commend it to you because it is so; what is there which is good which is not also difficult? Soldiers of Christ love those virtues most which cost them most; if it is hard to obtain, the jewel is all the more precious! Since there is sufficient grace to enable us to become like our Lord, we will labor after this virtue, and obtain the great grace which its cultivation requires.

Notice that this text inculcates not merely *passive* non-resistance, though that is going a good way, but it teaches us *active* benevolence to enemies. “Overcome evil with good,” with direct and overt acts of kindness; that is, if any man has done you a wrong, do not only forgive it, but avenge it by doing him a favor! Dr. Cotton Mather was never content till he had bestowed a benefit on every man who had in any way done him an injury. If anybody has slandered you, or treated you unkindly in any way, go out of your way to serve him! “If your enemy is hungry, feed him.” You might say, “Well, I am sorry for him, but really, he is such a vagabond! I could not *think* of helping him.” Yet according to this Scripture, he is the very man you are bound to feed! If he is thirsty, do not say, “I hope somebody will give him a drink; I feel no animosity to the man, but I am not going out of my way to give him a drink.” According to your Lord’s command, he is the man to whom you *must* give drink! Go straightway to the well and fill your pitcher—and hasten to give him a drink at once, and without stint; you have not merely to forgive and forget, but you are bid to inflict upon the malicious mind the blessed sin-killing wound of your hearty and practical goodwill! Give a blessing for a curse, a kiss for a blow, a favor for a wrong. “Oh,” you say, “this is *high*; I cannot attain unto it.” God is able to give you strength equal to this also. “It is hard,” you say. Ah, but if you take Christ to be your Master, you must do what He tells you, and instead of shrinking because His command seems difficult to flesh and blood, you must cry, “Lord, increase my faith, and give me more of Your Spirit.” To forgive to 70 times seven would not be hard to Christ, for He did it all His life, and it will not be hard for you if the same mind is in you which was also in Christ Jesus. It is to this that you are called! It is a sublime temper, and it is exceedingly difficult, and needs divine grace, needs watchfulness, needs living near to God—but for these reasons it is all the more worthy of a follower of Jesus, and therefore we should aim at it with our whole heart.

The benefit of the method of returning good for evil is that *it preserves the man from evil*. If evil assails you, and you only fight it with good, it cannot hurt you, you are invulnerable; if any man curses you, and you answer him with a blessing, it is clear that the curse has not hurt you, it has not made you full of curses, or else one would come out of you! If a man has slandered you, but you never return him a reproachful word, he has not hurt your real character—the dirt which he has thrown has

missed you—for you have none to throw back upon him! If when much provoked your temper still remains calm and quiet, the provocation has not touched you; the arrow has passed harmlessly by! The very thing your enemy wants is to make you descend to his level of anger and malice, but as long as having much provocation you remain unprovoked, you vanquish him! Believe me; you are provoking your adversary terribly if you are quite calm yourself! You are disappointing him; he cannot insert his poisoned darts, for you are clad in armor of proof. He tries to injure you, but he cannot; he fails to make you sin, and so he misses his mark. Do you not see what a wonderful armor it is? If God preserve you so that you have nothing but good wishes and goodwill towards the man who hates you and seeks your ruin, then you are a conqueror indeed!

While this conduct protects you, *it is the very best weapon of offense against the opposer*. William Ladd had a farm in one of the states of America, and his neighbor, Pulsifer, was a great trouble to him, for he kept a breed of gaunt, long-legged sheep, as active as spaniels, which would spring over almost any sort of fence. These sheep were very fond of a fine field of grain belonging to Mr. Ladd, and were in it constantly. Complaints were of no use, for Pulsifer evidently cared nothing for his neighbor's losses. One morning Ladd said to his men, "Set the dogs on those sheep, and if that won't keep them out, shoot them." After he had said that, he thought to himself, "This will not do; I had better try the peace principle." So he sent for his men, countermanded the order, and rode over to see his neighbor about those troublesome sheep. "Good morning," he said, but he received no answer. So he tried again, and got nothing but a sort of grunt. "Neighbor," he said, "I have come to see you about those sheep." "Yes," Pulsifer replied, "I know. You are a pretty neighbor to tell your men to kill my sheep! You, a rich man, too, and going to shoot a poor man's sheep!" Then followed some very strong language, but Ladd replied, "I was wrong, neighbor, and I am sorry for it; think no more about it. But, neighbor, we may as well agree. It seems I have got to keep your sheep, and it won't do to let them eat all that grain, so I came over to say that I will take them into my homestead pasture, and I will keep them all season; and if any is missing you shall have the pick of mine." Pulsifer looked ashamed, and then stammered out, "Now, Squire, are you in earnest?" When he found that Ladd really meant to stand to the offer, Pulsifer stood still a moment, and then said, "The sheep shan't trouble you anymore. When you talk about shooting I can shoot as well as you; but when you speak in that kind and neighborly way, I can be kind too." The sheep never trespassed into Ladd's lot again. That is the way to kill a bad spirit! That is overcoming evil with good! If one had begun shooting, and the other had followed suit, they certainly would have been both losers, and both been overcome. But when the offended one made kindness his only return, the battle was over!

I remember, years ago—though I only quote it, not for my own praise, but as an illustration—a certain person; a very good man too, did not admire a course of action that I felt bound to take. He was very angry,

and called upon me to express his objections. At last he said, "If you do that I shall expose you in a pamphlet." I was in a gracious mood at that time, and was not to be ruffled in temper, nor yet turned from my course. I said to him quietly, "What do you think the pamphlet would cost?" "Oh," he said, "I don't know, but whatever it costs I shall do it." I answered, "Well, if you feel you ought to do it, I should be sorry to see you go into debt, and therefore I will pay the printer's bill. I will trust you to give a truthful account of the matter, and I am not at all ashamed to have my course of action made as public as possible, indeed I had rather it should be." He said he would not like to take any money from me. "Well," I replied, "perhaps you think that there might be some profits upon the sale; you shall be quite welcome to them; your own friends can print for you. I will find the money, and you shall have the profit." I never heard anymore of that pamphlet—and he is an exceedingly good friend of mine at the present moment—and will I hope always remain so.

To remain quiet is generally the way to baffle an adversary; indeed there is no weapon with which he can wound you. If you will not yield so as to give railing for railing, what is to be done with you? It is much the same as when a certain duke proclaimed war against a peaceful neighbor, who was resolved not to fight. The troops came riding to the town, and found the gates open as on ordinary occasions; the children were playing in the streets, and the blacksmith was at his forge; the shopkeepers were at their counters; and so, pulling up their horses, the soldiers inquired, "Where is the enemy?" "We don't know. We are friends." What was to be done under the circumstances but to ride home? So it is in life—if you only meet evil with good, the bad man's occupation is gone!

It has sometimes happened that *evil men have been converted into good men*, and conquered thus in the very best possible way by seeing the patient Christian, by the grace of God, return good for evil. Some years ago a wicked, reprobate sailor was engaged in tarring a vessel, and while he was at his work there came along an old man well known in the district as a Christian. One of the sailor's mates standing by, said to him, "Jack, you cannot provoke *that* man; he is such a gentle-spirited man you cannot put him out of temper." Jack was quite sure he could, and it became the subject of a wager. The wicked fellow took his bucket of tar with which he was tarring the keel, and dared to throw it right over the good old man! It was a most shameful assault, and the fellow deserved the utmost penalty of the law. The old man turned round and calmly said to him, "The Lord Jesus Christ has said that he who offends one of His little ones will find that it were better for him that a millstone had been tied about his neck, and that he were cast into the sea. Now, if I am one of Christ's little ones, it will be very bad for you." Jack slunk back, dreadfully ashamed of himself. What was more, the old man's quiet face haunted him. Night after night he woke up, and in his dreams he saw that old man; and those tremendous words, "that it were better for him that a millstone were about his neck," broke him down before the mercy seat of God. He asked and found pardon; he sought out the old man,

confessed his fault, and received forgiveness. Who would not have a bucketful of tar thrown over him if it would *save a soul*? Now, suppose the old man had turned round on him, and uttered some fiery language, or struck at him—who could have blamed him? But then there would have been no triumph of grace in the Christian, and no conversion in the sinner! God has often made use of a gentle, meek, quiet, forbearing spirit to be the power with which He subdues the lion-like rebel, and turns the course of ill-disposed and ungodly men. He makes them see how amazing goodness is, how strong is gentleness, and how omnipotent is love!

Returning good for evil, again *reflects great honor upon Christ*. I do not know of anything which makes the blind world see so much of the glory of Christ as this. When one of the martyrs was being tortured and tormented in a horrible way, the tyrant who had caused his sufferings said to him, “And what has your Christ ever done for you that you should bear this?” He replied, “He has done this for me, that in the midst of all my pain, I do nothing else but pray for you.” Ah, Lord Jesus, You have taught us how to conquer, for You have conquered! There are many mighty names on the battle roll of earth, but Your name is not there—there is another conflict, sterner and nobler, and You stand at the head of the heroes who are engaged in it! Read the name, my brethren, it is written in His own blood, “Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified, the chief of those who overcome evil with good.” Who among you will say, “Write down *my* name, sir, beneath my Lord the Lamb, for in that battle I would have a share, and on those lines I would fight the foe”? Remember *you must* do it or you cannot be like He, and if you are not like He, you have not His Spirit, and “if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.”

I will not explain how this principle can be carried into other things, for there is no time, but I will close by noticing that *everything that is admirable may be said of this method of overcoming evil with good*. It is so noble; it is so becoming one whom God has lifted up to be His child, that I commend it to every person of sanctified feeling. A Christian is the noblest work of God, and one of the noblest features of a Christian is his readiness to forgive and the cheerfulness with which he seeks to recompense good for evil. The Emperor Adrian, before he reached the throne, had been grievously insulted. When he had attained the imperial purple he met the man who had insulted him. The guilty person was, of course, dreadfully afraid of his mighty foe; he knew that it only needed a wish from the Emperor, and his life would be taken away. Adrian cried out, “Approach. You have nothing to fear. I am an Emperor!” Did this heathen feel that his dignity lifted him above the meanness of revenge? Then, my brethren, let those whom Christ has made kings unto God scorn to render evil for evil! Let us say, “I am a Christian, and my resentments are over; what can I do to *serve you*? I could have fought you to the death before, but now I am dead myself and born-again, and having commenced a new life, behold Christ has made all things new. My animosities are buried in His tomb; my revenges are lost in the abyss into which He has

cast my sins; and now, as a new man in Christ Jesus, my life shall be love, for He has said, ‘love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He makes His sun to rise upon the evil and on the good.’”

Good for evil is nobly congruous with the spirit of the gospel. Were we not saved because the Lord rendered to us good for evil? The spirit of the law is, “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” but the spirit of the gospel is, “freely I forgive you: your many iniquities and vast transgressions are all blotted out for Christ’s name’s sake, therefore be pitiful towards others.” Forgiveness is one fruit of the gospel, and doing good in return for evil is another. Should not the spirit of every Christian be one of unconquerable love? For by unconquerable love he is saved! And, beloved, this spirit of forgiveness is the Spirit of God, and he that has it becomes like God. If you would rise to the highest style of being, rise to the condition of a being who can be injured and yet forgive! To be just is something, scarcely for a righteous man would one die, but to be *merciful* and *kind* is much more, since for a good man some would even dare to die—such is the enthusiasm which a loving spirit will kindle! Rise above mere righteousness into the divine atmosphere of love!

And whether men love *you* or not is a small matter; whether you conquer *them* or not is also a little matter, but that you should conquer *evil*, that you should be victorious over *sin*, that you should receive from your Lord at the last, the “Well done, good and faithful servant,” and that you should be like God in your *nature*—these are of the utmost importance to you, for these are heaven! Heaven is to have self dethroned; heaven is to be purged of all anger—to be delivered from all pride. Heaven is, in fact, to be God-like! May we be made so through Jesus Christ our Savior, by the work of His Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 12.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—175, 706, 262.**

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# INCREASED FAITH THE STRENGTH OF PEACE PRINCIPLES NO. 1318

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 15, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"The apostles said to the Lord, increase our faith."  
Luke 17:5.*

THE sermon of last Sabbath morning, [#1317, *Overcome Evil with Good*] in which I earnestly endeavored to teach the doctrine of overcoming evil with good, and the frank and full forgiveness of all injuries for Christ's sake, has raised much discussion. I know that it startled a great many of you, and that you have a great many questions among yourselves as to whether such precepts are practicable by ordinary Christians. At that I am not at all surprised, because when our Lord preached the same doctrine, His disciples were so astonished that the apostles exclaimed in surprise, "Lord, increase our faith." It is most important in this case to see the connection of the text, or you will fail to see its drift and bearings. It was not for the sake of working *miracles* that the apostles sought increased faith; it was not in order to bear their present or future trials, and neither was it to enable them to receive some mysterious article of the faith. Their prayer referred to a common everyday duty enjoined by the gospel—the forgiving those who do us wrong—for the previous verses are to this effect, "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother trespasses against you, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. And if he trespasses against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turns again to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him." And it was upon hearing this that the apostles cried, "Increase our faith." If you have been surprised, dear friends, at the high standard of Christian duty which my Lord has laid down for you, I only trust your surprise may drive you to the same resort as it did those first servants of the Lord, and compel you to appeal for help to Him who issued the command! Will He not help us in walking in His ways? When we feel that His commandments are exceedingly broad, to whom should we appeal for aid but to Him who is our leader in all holy conversion and godliness? He will not set you the task and refuse you His assistance in performing it!

Observe that these apostles did not, because of their having sinned against this precept in former times, conclude that they had no faith. They did not conclude because the precept was so much above them that therefore they were unbelievers. Despair is no help to Christian duty! To doubt our discipleship will not help us to obey our Lord; if any of you have cut yourselves off from the household of faith because you fall short of the noblest forms of Christian love, I entreat you to begin again, and

instead of doubting the existence of your faith ask to have it increased. There is a fountain opened for your past uncleanness—and sanctifying power for your future lives; apply to Jesus at once for the double deliverance, and doubt not that He will deal graciously with you.

Neither did the disciples reject the precept as utterly impossible, nor excuse themselves from it on the ground that in their peculiar circumstances it must be modified. They did not complain that it was too much to expect of human nature, nor did they regard the command as only fit for dwellers in Utopia. No, they respected the precept which surprised them, and admired the virtue which astonished them. As loyal followers of the Lord Jesus, they felt bound to follow where He led the way, for they believed that He was too wise to issue an impossible command, too good to teach an impracticable code of morals, and too honest to set up a standard to which no mortal could in any measure, attain. They looked on His command and they felt such confidence in Him that instead of drawing back they resolved that it should be obeyed at all costs. Their resolve was to do His bidding, but feeling that they could not achieve it in their own strength they began to pray, and their prayer was for faith. They felt that only *faith* could work such a wonder of patient love; it was far out of the ordinary line of action—flesh and blood could not accomplish it, mere resolve would not achieve it—faith must do it and even faith itself would need strengthening or it would fail in the attempt. They felt also that the kind of faith which could forgive to 70 times seven must be supernatural, and not such as *they* could grow in their own breasts without divine assistance, and therefore they said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” They needed such faith as He could give in order that they might perform such duties as He enjoined. Beloved, imitate the example of these apostles! Whenever you feel that you have something to do that is beyond you, stop a moment and breathe a prayer for more strength. If ever the leap is too wide, draw back, take a breath, ask for strength, and then, in the name of Him that will surely bear you over it, take your leap and succeed! He has not brought you into a condition in which you shall feel your infirmities so abjectly as to lie down and die, but He does intend you to feel your weakness so much that you may importunately pray for His aid, and then in the strength which you have gained by prayer may attain to heights of virtue which otherwise had been far above and out of your sight. We are all the more likely to rise to holiness when we have seen our own incapacity for it. Those who at the first blush were somewhat staggered by the high and glorious precepts of Christian forgiveness, of non-resistance, and of returning good for evil, are none the less likely to become good practitioners of this holy art, but all the more so if their astonishment drives them to pray, “Lord, increase our faith.”

Let us then, this morning, in that connection, *consider the prayer of the text*; let us, secondly, *see how it bears upon the duty of forgiveness*, how the increase of faith can help us to forgive; and then, thirdly let us *note how our Lord Jesus answered this prayer*. O divine Spirit, lead us in-

to these truths of God while we meditate together, and afterwards help us to show in our lives the mind of Christ.

**I. First, LET US CONSIDER THE PRAYER ITSELF.** It may help us to see its meaning if we consider for a moment *where the apostles learned to pray like this*. Who suggested to them to say, “Lord, increase our faith”? Now, faith is the *act* of man—truly, it is the *gift* of God, but it is as surely the act of man. God does not believe for us, the Holy Spirit does not believe in our place—the man himself believes. This would be clear enough to the apostles, but they might not so readily learn that Jesus had power to give and to increase faith. It is assuredly most proper to ask the Lord to increase our faith, but it was not very early in their Christian career that the apostles did so pray; in fact, it is a very singular fact that I think this is almost the only instance in which, as an apostolic company, they asked any *spiritual* thing of the Master! They did say, “Lord, teach us how to pray,” but I am afraid they meant to learn a *form* of prayer rather than to be filled with the spirit of prayer. As to spiritual blessings, our Lord might well say to them, “To this point you have asked *nothing* in My name.” But they were at last so overwhelmed with a consciousness of their own weakness when they perceived the exceeding breadth and height of the law of Christian forgiveness, that they felt assured that there must be strength laid up for them somewhere or other! And where could it be but in their Lord? And so they prayed to the Lord, “increase our faith.” It is not the only time in which a sense of their personal emptiness has convinced men of the divine fullness, and driven them to it.

I think it was Jesus who had taught them to pray so. They must have caught the idea from that which is recorded in the 11<sup>th</sup> of Mark, at the 22<sup>nd</sup> verse, where you have much the same passage as the one before us, though expressed in different words. “Jesus answering said unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whoever shall say unto this mountain, Be you removed, and be you cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he said shall come to pass, he shall have whatever he said. Therefore I say unto you, What things you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them. And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.” Note that our Lord according to Mark commenced this exhortation concerning forgiveness by saying, “Have faith in God”; then showed the power of faith in working wonders, and especially in obtaining answers to prayer, and last of all commanded forgiveness of trespasses. Was not that sentence “Have faith in God” the mother of their prayer “Increase our faith”? Jesus had said “Have faith,” and now when they fully understand what it is that He teaches, they take the words out of His mouth, and they say to their Lord, “Add to our faith. We trust we have some of that precious grace, but add to it yet more and more, we beseech You.” Our Master in His teaching was continually connecting the forgiveness of others with

the exercise of faith. In the passage just referred to, and in that which surrounds my text, you have our Lord referring to the faith which moves mountains, or plucks up sycamore trees by the roots—and coupling with it the forgiving of offenses. Surely this may have led them so to pray.

Our Lord had also suggested this prayer for faith from the fact that as He had taught them that there must be faith in prayer, so He had also insisted upon it that prayer must always be connected with a forgiving spirit; in fact, in the model prayer, according to which we are always to shape our petitions, He has taught us to say, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” or, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.” He has allowed us, as it were, to cut out for ourselves the measure of pardon that we wish to receive—and the measure is to be precisely that which we are prepared to give to others! God will pardon us in proportion as we are prepared to pardon. If you have a trespass which you cannot pardon, God also has an unpardonable sin written in His book against you: I mean unpardonable as long as you are unforgiving. If you will only pardon slowly, and after a stingy fashion, you shall not for many days enjoy the freeness and the bounty of the unlimited mercy of God! So you see as our Lord had connected success in prayer both with forgiveness and faith, he had suggested the increase of the one with the view of accomplishing the other. No man can pray successfully while he is in an unforgiving frame of mind, but a believing man always prays successfully, therefore a believing man is ready to forgive. As faith increases we become more able to overlook the provocations we endure.

I think that the apostles had also learned this prayer, not only from the Master, but from one who was very much inferior to themselves, but who nevertheless had outrun them in the knowledge of the struggles of the heart—I mean the father who had a lunatic child. That was a wonderful prayer of his, when Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.” The poor man cried out, “Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief.” This was a deeply experimental prayer. It showed how familiar he was to the workings of his own soul. He detected unbelief in his own heart and yet he saw faith there too; whereas a great many Christians, if they discern some unbelief in their hearts, straightway imagine that there cannot be any faith, And if they possess a degree of faith, they fancy that there cannot be any unbelief surviving—whereas the two powers are in one man at the same time, and contend within his soul. The apostles appear to me to have learned a noble lesson from that tried father, and now they put his prayer into their own language, and use it on their own account. They do as good as confess their lingering unbelief, and yet they acknowledge that they do believe while they pray, “Lord, increase our faith”; so that with the teaching of Jesus, and with the example of that poor struggling soul, they had been taught to pray as they should. It is a grand thing when every day we learn to pray better, and both from the Master’s lips and from the experience of all, His servants are being taught what to pray for as we ought. By the use of such

means the Spirit helps our infirmity, and teaches us how to prevail with God.

Now let us come a little closer to the prayer itself, and notice *what it confesses*. It confesses that they *had* faith, for they say, "Lord, *increase* our faith." He who asks for faith must *have* some faith, or he would not ask at all; indeed, it is with faith that we ask for faith. He who pleads, "Add to my faith," acknowledges that he has some already, to which more is to be added. So that these apostles, notwithstanding that they were staggered by the duty before them, believed that Christ could help them through it, and also believed that He could *at once* give them the necessary faith. When you ask for any blessing, always do so in such a way as to acknowledge what you have already received. Do not despise the little faith you have, even though you feel bound to plead for more. They also confessed that while they had faith they had not enough of it. My brethren, must we not all make the same confession? You believe in Jesus Christ to the salvation of your soul, but, brethren, do you believe to the comfort of your heart? You have faith enough to bear the ordinary trials of life, but, dear brethren, have you enough for the superior contests to which you have lately been called? If you have not, then here is the prayer for you, "Lord, increase my faith." Certain it is that no one among us has too much faith, or even enough should unusual storms arise. We have no faith to spare. God grants it to us always according to our day, and He gives more grace and faith when He *sends more trials*. Often, when our faith is sorely tried, we are compelled to feel as mere babes in faith's school, and need indeed to pray daily, "Lord, increase our faith."

But then by their prayer the apostles confessed that they could not increase their own faith. Faith is not a weed to grow upon every dunghill, without care or culture; it is a plant of *heavenly* growth, and requires divine watching and watering. He who is the author of faith and the finisher of it, is the only one who can increase it. As no man ever obtains his first faith apart from the Spirit of God, so no man ever gets more faith except through the working of that same divine power! The Spirit which rests upon Jesus must anoint us also, or the measure of faith will not be enlarged. Breathe then the prayer to God, my brethren, "Increase my faith"; this will be a far wiser course than to resolve in your own strength, "I will believe more," for, perhaps, in rebuke of your pride you will fall into a decaying state, and even believe less. After having made so vainglorious a resolution, you may fall into grievous despondency; do not therefore say, "I will accumulate more faith," but pray, "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief." Herein is your wisdom!

The prayer also confesses that the Lord Jesus can increase faith. Dear brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ can increase your faith by the use of common means, through His Spirit. He is able to make all grace abound towards you. Not by any magical mode, nor by miracle, but even by such things as you have, the Lord can make Little-Faith grow into Greatheart, and turn Feeble-Mind into Valiant-for-Truth. He has the key of faith, and can open more of its chambers, and fill them with His treasures. He can

reveal truths of God to you which shall cause you to believe more fully, or the truth of God already revealed He can set in clearer light, and apply more powerfully to your heart, and so can add to your faith. Do not believe, brethren, that you are condemned to lead an unbelieving life. No such necessity exists. Let no one among you sit down and say, "I have a withered arm of faith, and cannot stretch it out," or "I have a weak eye, and shall never be able to see afar off." No, the name of our God is Jehovah Rophi, and He can heal us of all these ills! God can make you strong, brethren. Present again and again the prayer "Lord increase our faith," with the full conviction that He can do so to any extent, and that He can lift even the most drooping soul among us into the full assurance of faith! May the Lord at this very hour work in you a childlike confidence in His love and faithfulness, and may you never be the victim of mistrust again!

I want you to observe *who prayed this prayer*. It is not often that the evangelists speak of "the apostles," separately, as asking anything. You will perceive in the first verse that our Lord spoke to the disciples. "Then said He to the disciples," but the persons who sought increased faith were the *apostles*. "The church *did not* think themselves infallible? Fancy the successor of Peter saying, "Lord, increase our faith!" Surely, "His Holiness" needs no increase of faith! He who boasts that he is infallible cannot be unbelieving! Ah, brethren, the apostles knew nothing of such silly and wicked pretensions; none of them ever in their lives pretended to be the "Head of the Church" or "Vicar of Christ"; but they were ready to cry to their Master for increase of faith just as soon as the rest of the disciples, yes, sooner too, because they were the first to feel their need. They were the choice of the Lord's flock, and therefore they were the first to see and to confess their own failures. No man so soon knows and so much deploras his need of faith as the man who has most of it. It was not the little ones in the church who said, "Increase our faith"—they might well say it; but it was the masters in Israel who had been best instructed by Christ, who had seen His miracles and preached His word; these were the very ones who cried to their Lord, "Increase our faith." The nearer you live to God, and the more full your soul is of faith, the less inclined will you be to be self-satisfied; and the more earnestly will you desire that your faith should be increased.

It is somewhat remarkable that the whole of the apostles thus prayed. They were unanimous in this prayer, though it did not often happen that they were so in anything else. There were divisions among them, and strifes as to who among them should be the greatest; but this time they were all one in the petition to the Lord. A petition which commended itself to the entire college of the apostles is one which surely all of us may put up to our great Lord in the presence of that supreme duty, of which we heard last Sunday morning. In order that we may not resist evil, but overcome evil with good, be pleased, O Lord, to increase our faith.

While I am still explaining the prayer, let us notice once again *why they asked for faith*. They said unto the Lord, "Increase our faith." Might they not more fitly have said, "Lord, increase our meekness, Lord, in-

crease our Christian love”? No, but they went to the bottom of the thing, they looked to the mainspring of all Christian graces—they asked for *faith*. Sometimes, brethren, we are led to see that if a duty is to be performed at all it cannot be done in the strength of nature. Now the grace which deals with the supernatural is faith, therefore we say, “Lord, increase our faith, for since this is a supernatural virtue which You do ask of us, be pleased to give us the faculty which deals with supernatural power that we may be enabled to achieve this high and difficult duty.” I know some of you think that faith was given to men of old, that they might work miracles, and you have admired the faith of Samson when he slew the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, the faith which “quenched the violence of fire,” the faith which “stopped the mouths of lions,” and so on. Yes, but faith is meant for other matters besides miracles. The faith which enables a Christian to live a holy life, especially the faith that will enable you not to be overcome of evil but to overcome evil with good, and to forgive your neighbor to 70 times seven is as great a faith as that which of old stopped the sun and divided the sea. It seems to be thought by some that faith nowadays is only meant to be used to raise money so that we may support orphanages and colleges by obtaining answers to prayer. Well, these are noble deeds, and the faith which accomplishes them brings great glory to God. May God give to His servants who are called to such work more and more success, for such works are a standing testimony to a skeptical world that God *does* hear prayer; but after all the feats which the most of you are to perform are neither miracles nor the maintenance of orphanages, but deeds of love in common life. You have not to stop the mouths of lions, but you have the equally difficult task of stopping your own mouths when you are in an angry temper; you are not called to quench the violence of fire, except as it burns in your own wrath; you have to smite no Philistine but your own sins, and cast down no walls but your own prejudices. Christian woman, your faith has to work its miracles in the drawing room, in the parlor, in the kitchen, in the chamber. Man of business, your faith is to perform its marvels on the exchange, or in the shop, or in the commercial room. Working man, you are to achieve your wonders at the forge, or by the bench, or in the field, or in the mill. Here is your sphere of service, and you have need to lift to heaven the prayer of the apostles—“Lord, increase our faith,” that you may live worthily, righteously, soberly, and after a Christian sort.

**II.** Secondly, I want to show HOW THE INCREASE OF FAITH BEARS UPON OUR POWER TO FORGIVE OTHERS. And I would answer first, that *I think you already see that it does*, although you cannot explain the mode of its operation. If I were to bring before you a person of whom I might say, “This man is strong in faith,” you would feel certain that he would be a man who would readily forgive the injuries of others. Though you do not see the connection between the two, you are very conscious that there must be such a connection. Now, when I tell you of Abraham, how when the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot quarreled, Abraham did not

quarrel with Lot, but finding that they must separate, gave Lot, his junior, the choice as to which way he would go. It seems natural that Abraham should act in that gentle manner. That calm quiet believing man of God—you have only to look into his majestic face and feel quite certain that he will act with great gentleness and nobleness of soul. Joseph, the man so full of faith that he gave commandment concerning his bones—when his brothers came before him and he made himself known to them, and wept over them and forgave them—you feel that such conduct is just what you might expect from Joseph; the very fact that he was so true a believer in God makes you feel that he will not seek to avenge himself, though he had been shamefully treated by his unbrotherly brothers. Moses was so meek, so gentle, that you trace his meekness at once to his faith. And David, when you see him standing over sleeping Saul, and hear his companion say, “Let me smite him but this once”; but David will not allow the deed to be done, but leaves his enemy in the hands of God, you say to yourself, “I expected such conduct of David, for he is a truly believing man of God.” Though you have not satisfactorily traced out the connection between the two, yet you know very well that if a man professes to be a believer in Christ you expect him to be gentle and forgiving—and you are right! And there is an actual connection between the two, which we shall, I doubt not, see directly.

When the apostles said, “Lord, increase our faith,” they meant, “*Increase our confidence in You,*” and this is a very material help towards the performance of the duty. First, God must help us so to believe in Jesus that we may not suspect Him of setting us an impracticable task. The Lord has said, “Overcome evil with good,” and has bid us “Forgive 70 times seven times”; do you not feel ready to say, “This is a hard saying, who can bear it?” Do we not fancy that we shall never get through the world in that gentle fashion? It is our *unbelief* which tells us that we must sometimes bend our fists, or at least sometimes deliver our minds with great vigor of wrath, or else we shall be trod down like mire in the streets. We need to ask for divine grace that we may be helped to believe that Christ’s way of forgiveness is after all the best way, the noblest way, the most truly manly and the most surely happy way.

Their prayer may be read as meaning “Lord, help us to believe that You can enable us to do this. We cannot by our own unaided nature be always forgiving, lowly, gentle and loving in temper, but You have said, ‘Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls.’ Therefore, O Lord, give us more faith in You that we may believe that You can make us meek and lowly, even as You are.” We ought to believe that Jesus can turn our lion-like tempers into lambs, and our raven-like spirits into doves, and if we have not faith enough for that we must pray for it—for do you not see that if a man believes a duty to be impossible, or judges that grace itself cannot enable him to do it, then he never will do it; but when he obtains a confidence that the command is within his power, or that it can be obeyed by a force which is within his reach, *then* he has won half the

battle already! In believing in the possibility of a high standard of holiness, a man is already on his way towards that holiness! I therefore earnestly exhort you to ask for more faith, that you may believe the duty of constant forgiveness to be possible of accomplishment through divine grace.

But, next, between *faith and forgiveness a very close connection will be seen if we inquire what the foundation of faith is?* Listen a moment. Faith believes that God for Christ's sake forgives us—and how much? Seventy times seven? Beloved, God forgives us much more than that. And does the Lord forgive us seven times a day? If seven times a day we offend Him and repent, does He forgive? Yes, that He does. This is to be unquestionably believed, and I believe it; I believe that, as often as I transgress, God is more ready to forgive me than I am ready to offend, though, alas, I am all too ready to transgress. Have you right thoughts of God, dear hearer? If so, then you know that He is a tender Father willing to wipe the tear of penitence away, and press His offending child to His bosom, and kiss them with the kisses of His forgiving love. The mercy of God lies at the very foundation of our faith; and surely it wonderfully helps us to forgive. Don't you see at once, O forgiven one that the natural inference is that if the Lord has forgiven you your 10,000 talents of debt, you dare not go and take your brother by the throat for the hundred pence which he owes you, but you must forgive him because God for Christ's sake has forgiven you!

Notice again, that *the joy of faith is a wonderful help to forgiveness.* Do you remember when you were first converted? I remember well the first day in which I believed in Jesus Christ; do you not also remember your own spiritual birthday? Recall then the love of your espousals, the happy honeymoon of your spiritual life. Could you forgive your enemy then? Why, you thought nothing of injuries: you were so happy and joyful in the Lord that if anybody tried to irritate you they could not do it, or if you became a little annoyed for a minute, you soon came back to your moorings again. You were too full of holy joy to indulge in quarrelling. Dear brethren, do you not know that you ought *always* to have retained that love and joy, and that the best thing you can do is to get them back if you have lost them! Therefore, pray today, "Lord, increase my faith, restore unto me once again the joy of Your salvation." When you return from your backsliding, and rejoice in the Lord with all your heart, you will find it easy enough to forgive your worst foe.

Again, it is quite certain that *a spirit of rest is created by faith, which greatly aids the gentle spirit.* The man or woman who believes enters into rest, and becomes calm of spirit, and this keeps him from seeking petty revenges. He knows that whatever happens all is right forever; he knows whom he has believed, and he walks in the integrity of his heart, and therefore he is not a man that is likely to be irritated. It is amazing when you are sure you are right with how much you can put up with! Good Joseph Hughes, of Battersea, was one of the founders of the Bible Society, and one of the most earnest workers for it. He was riding on a coach up-

on a dreadfully cold, bitter winter's day, and at his side sat a talkative person, who thought himself a gentleman. As the coach proceeded, he began talking about religion in general and denouncing Bible Societies in particular. With a sprinkling of swearing he went on to say that such societies were founded to reward lazy secretaries, and other officials. "Those fellows," he said, "get fine salaries, and then they go traveling all about the country, enjoying themselves, and charging a pretty penny for their traveling expenses. I understand they always travel in the best style." Mr. Hughes quietly replied, "But what would you say, sir, if you were informed by one of the secretaries that he never received a farthing for his services, and that in order to save money for the Society, he rode on the top of the coach on a cold day like this so that he might not pay as much as he would have to do if he went inside? Now, sir," said he, "one of them is doing this before your eyes." Now you can understand how Mr. Hughes could be very cool, and allow the talkative man to proceed as long as he liked with his lies, because he knew he had so crushing an answer for him; and so when faith gives perfect rest to the soul a man is not easily disturbed, for he knows that behind all there is a blessing which will compensate for present annoyances. Conscious strength removes us from the temptations which surround petty feebleness. May God give you that increased faith which shall fix your heart in the sphere of perfect satisfaction in the Lord and patient waiting for His will, and so shall you cease to fret yourself because of evildoers.

Again, *faith, when it is strong has a high expectancy about it, which helps it to bear with the assaults of men of the world.* "What," she says—"what matters that which happens to me here, for I am on my journey, and I shall soon be in the glory land, where I shall have a reward for all my travail by being forever with the Lord." A man readily puts up with the little inconvenience of the present when he has great joys in store for the future. If you stay at an inn for a while when you are on a journey, it is only for a night, and though things may not be very comfortable, you say, "Well, I am not going to live here a week, I shall be gone in the morning; it does not matter, I am looking forward to my sweet home at my journey's end." So does faith, by its blessed expectation of the future, make the troubles of the present to be very light, so that she bears them without fretfulness and anger. May the Holy Spirit cause faith thus to work in us.

**III.** But my time has gone sooner than I desired, and therefore I must close by noticing in the third place HOW THE LORD JESUS CHRIST ANSWERED THE PRAYER FOR INCREASED FAITH. He did it in two ways.

First, *by assuring them that faith can do anything.* The Lord said, "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say unto this sycamore tree, be you plucked up by the root and be you planted in the sea, and it should obey you." I think He meant that to be understood as a proverbial expression, to signify that faith can accomplish anything. You say, "Ah, my bad temper is rooted in me: as a sycamore tree takes hold of the earth by its roots, so an ill temper has gone into the very depth of my

nature. I am constitutionally quick-tempered. From my very birth I have found it hard to forgive." If you have faith, my brother, you can say to that sycamore tree, or better still, upas tree within you, "Be you plucked up by the roots." "But," says one, "with such a nature as mine, such a changeable, excitable, nervous disposition as mine, you cannot expect to plant in me the tree which bears the fruit of calm, quiet forgiveness." What says our Lord? "You shall say to that sycamore tree, be you planted in the sea." A strange place for a tree to be planted! In the sea! Indeed, it is an impossible thing, because every wave would shake its roots out of their places; the substance is too unsubstantial, the liquid of the sea is too moveable for a single tree to grow in it. Our Lord says, "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed it should obey you." You can by faith plant a tree in the sea—and so can you plant this fruit-bearing glorious tree of love to God and love to man within your frail nature, if you have but faith enough. Brethren, we do not need to be moving mountains. If mountains required moving, I have no doubt faith would move them, but the mountains are in the best possible places they can be, and therefore why should we uproot them? We do not require to transplant sycamore trees by faith, for there are plenty of workmen to be had to lift them up, and carry them carefully to another place, and it would be a pity that we should use faith so as to deprive poor men of their means of livelihood; but I doubt not it would be done if it were necessary. Now, there is room enough in the *moral* and *spiritual* world for faith, and *there* she can work her miracles. We can say to our bad disposition, "Be plucked up by the roots," and it will be done; and if we have faith in God we can have the right disposition, the quiet, calm spirit implanted in us. Do you believe this? If you do not, then you have not the faith, and you shall not see it, but, if you believe, it is possible to you.

Once more, how did Christ answer the prayer? He answered it in a very remarkable manner, as I think, *by teaching them humility*. He said to them in effect, "You think that if you were to forgive to 70 times seven you would be doing a great deal. You fancy that if you were never to return evil for evil, but always to be gentle and loving, you would be somebody, and that God would almost be in debt to you: but it is not so." And then He went on to tell them that the servant, when he is sent to plow or to attend to the cattle is not thanked. While he is doing his labor his master does not come to him and wonder at him as if he were doing some very extraordinary thing. The master does not hold up his hands in amazement and cry, "How well my servant can plow, how cleverly he feeds the oxen," and he does not go to him and say, "My dear, invaluable servant, I am sure I do not know what I would do without you, therefore come and sit down, and I will wait upon you." Oh, no, if he works well he only does his own work and nobody else's; He does what he is bound to do, and the master does not think of praising him, and feasting him. So says Christ, "So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." This mode of increasing our faith

reminds me of the hydropath way of strengthening some people by pouring cold water upon the spine of their backs. The parable of the servant and his lord shows us our true place, and the small value which we may attach to our own services. It takes the man who thinks, "Oh, it is a great thing to forgive everybody, and if I were to do it I should be a great saint," and it pours a torrent of cold water upon his pride, by saying, "No, if you did it you would not be anything amazing, it is only what is your *duty* to do, you would have no reason to go about the world blowing your trumpet, and saying, 'What a wonderful martyr I am,' you would only then have fulfilled a common duty." Well now, it seems to me that this is a wonderful strengthener to my faith. I feel resolved within my spirit thus—"My Lord and Master, I will no more say of anything You bid me to do, 'This is beyond my reach,' but I will pray, 'My Lord, increase my faith till I can do it, till I can live up to Your standard, for even if I should do so by Your grace, yet considering what You have done for me, considering what I owe You, considering the power of Your blessed Spirit that dwells within me, considering the richness of the ultimate reward which You will surely give me, though it is of grace and not of debt, all I could do, if I could be zealous as a seraph, and perfect as the saints in heaven, would be too little, and I would have to confess that I am an unprofitable servant, and I would have done no more than it was my duty to have done.'"

I pray God the Holy Spirit to let this sermon come on the back of the discourse of last Sunday, that you may not look upon the first as being impracticable, but may gather strength from the second to go and put into practice what you have learned. May God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
MATTHEW 18:19-35; LUKE 17:1-10.**

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—173, 626, 533.**

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# THE SINNER'S SAVIOR

## NO. 1319

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
OCTOBER 1, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying,  
He was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner.”  
Luke 19:7.*

PUBLICANS or tax-gatherers among the Jews were objects of intense aversion. The nation was always restless under the Roman yoke, for the Israelite's pride of lineage made him boast that he was born free, and was never in bondage unto any man. Moreover, they had hopes of a great future under a Messiah who would lead them on to conquest, and therefore the Roman yoke galled their shoulders exceedingly, and the payment of taxes to a foreign power was a heavy grievance. That the people of God should pay tribute to a heathen power was a bone of continual contention, and the persons of the tax-gatherers were held in bitter hatred; while they abhorred the collectors of customs as a class, they reserved their most intense contempt for any of their own countrymen who lent themselves to this obnoxious business. They regarded such as almost renouncing their relationship to Israel, and sharing the guilt of the oppressor. As a usual rule it would only be the lowest class of people among the Jews who would become collectors of tribute from their own countrymen; the outcasts and scapegoats of society would sometimes take to this detested business, but very rarely would a man of wealth and position, such as Zacchaeus evidently was, encounter the scorn which such an office brought upon him. Zacchaeus was not, perhaps, the actual tax collector who called upon individuals, but he was the superintendent of the custom house officers of the district, for, “he was the chief of the publicans, and he was rich.” He came, perhaps, under even greater contempt than others, because he occupied a more prominent position, and carried on the unsavory business on a larger scale.

Jewish society drew a cordon around the *publicans*, and set them aside as moral lepers, with whom respectable people must not associate if they studied their souls' health; and so Zacchaeus, with all his wealth, was regarded as a pariah by his fellow countrymen. He may have been a thoroughly honest and upright man, but that mattered little to those who had taken a prejudice against all publicans; he was regarded by the Pharisaic party as one of the offscouring of society—a man not to be acknowledged in the street and into whose house no one would enter. He was a man to be shunned if he had the impertinence to enter the synagogue or the temple, and only to be tolerated because it was not possible to rid the world of him. From the very first, our Lord had broken through this hard and fast rule; He disregarded all the traditional and fashionable

rules of caste; He constantly addressed publicans as if they had the same feelings as other men; He talked with them and went into their houses, so that He came to be commonly called by those who wished to show their contempt of Him, "the friend of publicans and sinners." A man who could be a friend to publicans was reckoned to be as evil as publicans, and further than that, a man could not go; for if the Jew mentioned publicans and sinners, he always gave publicans the first place, as being decidedly the worse of the two! "Friend of publicans and sinners"—who can tell what a mass of contempt was condensed into that title! Our Lord did not at all deviate from His course because of this scoffing, but He went on befriending sinners, even open sinners, sinners of the most avowed and undoubted degree of sin! He almost commenced His ministry by talking to an unchaste woman at the well of Sychar, and He finished it by dispensing pardon to a thief while hanging on the cross—and between that calling of the woman of Samaria who had had five husbands, and was living unlawfully at the time—right along to the thief who died upon the gallows tree for his crime, the Savior had been receiving sinners and eating with them! He had been seeking and saving that which was lost!

The old contempt of the sinner's Savior still lingers in the world among the self-righteous. Taking different shapes, and speaking with other voices, it is still among us and still in one way or the other, the old charge is repeated that Christianity is too lenient on the sinner. They say it tends to discourage the naturally amiable and virtuous, and looks too favorably upon the vicious and disreputable; they say that it is always talking about pardon without merit, and speaking slightingly of human goodness, and therefore some even say they regard Christianity as a foe to society, and an enemy to good morals! How easily could we turn the tables upon these slanderers, for usually those who talk thus have but a scant supply of morals and virtues themselves!

First, brethren, it was said that Jesus had gone to be a guest of a man that was a sinner, and we shall *admit the truth of the charge*; secondly, we shall *deny the insinuation which that charge is meant to cover*; and thirdly, *we shall rejoice in the fact which has been the subject of the objection*.

**I.** First, then, we shall ADMIT THE TRUTH OF THE CHARGE. We do so most cheerfully, and without the slightest reserve! Jesus *did* go to be a guest of a man that was a sinner, and He *did* so not only once, but as often as He saw a need; He went after the sheep which had gone astray, and He had a wonderful attraction for the disreputable classes, for it is written, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him." His ministry was aimed at those who were as sheep without a shepherd, and it succeeded among such, for we read that the publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom! We are not for a single moment going to deny what is so evidently true—Jesus was and is the sinner's friend. We admit most fully and freely that the gospel which now represents Christ upon earth bears the most kindly relationship towards the guilty, that in fact it contemplates their salvation, and finds its greatest triumphs among them!

To begin with: *the objective of Christ and the design of the gospel is the saving of sinners.* If there is any man in this world who is not guilty, the Savior is nothing to him; if there is anyone who has never transgressed God's law, but has kept His commandments from his youth up, and is excellent and meritorious in himself, Jesus Christ did not come into the world to call such a man to repentance. Why should He? "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." Christ comes not to proffer His needless services to those who are not sin-sick or needy! A Savior for those who are not lost! A Redeemer for those who are not enslaved! Alms for the rich! Medicine for the whole! Pardon for the innocent! These are all needless things. A physician does not at all hesitate to say that he comes into a town with his eyes upon the sick; it would be ridiculous for him to come there with a view to anybody else; and so to guilty sinners Jesus comes. Gospel promises are addressed to the guilty. Who else would need abundant pardon? Gospel invitations are addressed to the sinful. Who should be entreated to wash but those who are foul? Gospel blessings are intended for those who have transgressed, and are under condemnation, for who else would value forgiveness and justification? I know myself of no gospel for men who have not sinned! I know of no New Testament promises intended for those who have never broken the law of God; but I perceive all through the wondrous pages of the gospel that mercy's eyes and heart are set upon those who are guilty and self-condemned! The Eternal Watcher is looking over the vast ocean of life, not that He may spy out the vessels which sail along proudly in safety, but that He may see those who are almost wrecks! "He looks upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profits me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light." Our Lord was more moved at the sight of sickness than of health; He worked His greatest wonders among fevers, leprosies, and palsies. This is the end and objective of the gospel, namely, to save the unrighteous; the God of the gospel is He that "justifies the ungodly," "for when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly." "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

As the gospel's eye is thus fixed on sinners, we have to notice that *our Lord does actually call sinners into its fellowship.* Zacchaeus did not come to Jesus first, but Jesus went after Him while he was yet a sinner, and said to him, "Today I must abide in your house." So does the gospel, by the Holy Spirit's power, continually call to itself the guilty. The drunk, the thief, the harlot, the profane, the careless, the prayerless are called out—those who are consciously guilty are led to faith and pardon! Not merely those guilty of open sin, but those guilty of secret sin—sins of the heart, sins of the imagination, sins which stain the inmost soul are converted and saved! Jesus Christ causes His ministers, in the preaching of the word of God, to gather out of the world and into the church those who were enemies and alienated in their minds by wicked works. The Spirit of God does not effectually call those who are without sin, but He calls *sinners* to repentance; the Spirit of God does not quicken those liv-

ing—living in their own natural *goodness*—He quickens the *dead* in trespasses and sins. The eternal love of God does not go forth towards those who dream of their own superiority, and wrap themselves up in the mantle of their own righteousness, but it goes forth to those who sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron, because they have rebelled against the Lord and ignored the counsel of the Most High. These are they upon whom this mighty love fixes itself, and upon whom sovereign grace exerts its power. The great founder of Zion has found inhabitants for her, even as Romulus peopled Rome. It is said of that renowned builder that when he walled his city, he peopled it by permitting the offscouring of all other cities to use it as a refuge. Glorious things are spoken of you, O Zion, city of God, and yet all your citizens confess that they were guilty and defiled till Jesus washed and renewed them. Today Jesus, the Son of David, enlists under His banner men who are in debt, and are discontented, and out of such as these are, He makes heroes of the cross! Gladly would I invite to the cave Adullam of His church those who are willing to enlist under the banner of the Son of David.

Moreover, while we are about it we will make a further confession—*the man Christ Jesus does very readily come to be a guest with a man who is a sinner*, and makes Himself at home with them at once. If a Pharisee had gone to Zacchaeus' house, and been allowed to do exactly what he liked, he would have said, "Well, I may perhaps condescend to enter your profane abode, Zacchaeus, but I must wash first, and wash afterwards also; and moreover, you also must wash, and also have your house specially purified—it must be whitewashed, scrubbed, and perfumed with incense; and then, if you will take a seat up in the far corner of the room I will not mind coming near the door, where the fresh air may perhaps remove any exhalations from your guilty person, for I being so transcendently holy am exceedingly sensitive, and simply cannot come into contact with your unholiness." Now, the Lord Jesus Christ did not ask Zacchaeus even to wash his little finger, but He said, "Make haste, and come down, for today I must abide in your house." Why, Zacchaeus had the green of the tree all over him, he was not in a very elegant condition to receive the Lord, and still worse, there was his sin about him, and yet Jesus Christ said to him before he had brushed off a grain of dust, "Make haste, and come down, for today I must abide in your house." To his house Jesus came, and with him He sojourned, and all without ceremony and preparation! Yes, I have known the Lord Jesus meet with a man as black as hell, and wash him white in five minutes—and sit at his side and eat bread with him at once. I have known Him meet with the very vilest of offenders, and almost in the twinkling of an eye He has made the transgressor to be His companion and His friend! Did not the father in the parable at once receive his returning son? How many minutes did he wait before he kissed him? How many times did the prodigal wash his face before his father pressed him to his bosom? He did not even tell him to wash his hands, though he had been feeding *swine*, but fell upon his neck and kissed him then and there! Our Lord Jesus not

only has pity upon sinners, but treats them with love, comes under their roof, and brings salvation to their homes! We confess the impeachment, and rejoice that our Lord is indifferent to the censures of the proud, and still continues to provoke the question, "Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?"

Our Lord goes further, He not only requires on no ceremony to be with sinners, but *within a very little time He is using those very sinners* who had been so unfit for any holy service—using them in His most hallowed work! Note how He makes Zacchaeus to be His host—"Today I must abide in your house." Was not this going too far? Might we not have prudently suggested, Good Master, forgive Zacchaeus, but do it privately! Good Master, accept Zacchaeus as a secret disciple, but do not publicly go into such society. To sit at his table, and let him wait upon You is too great an honor for the likes of him, and surely, brethren, it seemed to the first Christians to be almost impossible that Saul of Tarsus could be allowed to be a preacher! They heard that he now preached the faith which he had persecuted, but they could hardly believe in his *apostleship*! What? When his hands were just now blood-red with putting saints to death, is he to stand up and preach, and to be an apostle—how can it be? We all have a measure of this legal hardness, and are scarcely prepared to allow the guilty to become heralds of grace too soon after their conversion. The gospel knows nothing of a purgatory at the church doors, or a quarantine before its pulpit; only be it, indeed, seen that a man has really accepted Christ, and we may both receive him into fellowship and employ him in holy service. Jesus permits the man who was a sinner to become His host, even as He allowed the woman who was a sinner to anoint His head, and Peter, who had denied Him, to feed His sheep.

Yes, and the Lord favored Zacchaeus, the sinner, *by granting him that day the full assurance of salvation*. The very day that He called him by His grace He gave him full assurance—at any rate I should not want any better assurance than Zacchaeus received when the Lord, Himself said to him, "This day is salvation come to your house."—

***"Oh, might I hear Your heavenly tongue  
But whisper, 'You are Mine.'  
Those gentle words should raise my song  
To notes almost divine."***

How often have we sung this wish, but Zacchaeus had it granted him, for the Lord said plainly, "Salvation has come to your house," and Zacchaeus could not doubt it! How happy he must have felt, how free from all trouble—"I am a saved man, and salvation having once entered the house, there is no telling where it will go—it will be upstairs, downstairs, among the servants, among the children! It will embrace all my descendants, and I and my house shall be saved!" He obtained that choice blessing within the first day of his believing on Christ; and is it not amazing, poor sinner, that though you even now have not believed in Jesus as yet, and are sitting down in sorrow, burdened with sin, yet if you now believe—before this service shall be over, you may not only be saved but

know it—and shall go home and say to your wife and children, “Salvation has come to our house!”

Blessed be the name of Jesus! All this is true, and we have no wish to conceal it, Jesus Christ has gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner!

**II.** Secondly, we are going to DENY THE INSINUATION WHICH IS COVERTLY INTENDED BY THE CHARGE brought against our Lord. Jesus is the friend of sinners, but He is not the friend of sin! Jesus forgives sin altogether apart from human merit, but Jesus does not therefore treat virtue and vice as if they were indifferent things, or in any way discourage purity and righteousness. Far from it!

For, first, Christ was a guest with a man that was a sinner, but *He has never flattered a sinner yet*. Direct me to a single passage in His word in which He ever justifies a sinner in sinning, or ever treats sin as if it were a trifle, or looks at it as a mere misfortune, and not as a crime! No religion under heaven is as strong in its denunciation of sin as the religion of Jesus Christ! His words do not only condemn acts of sin, but even words and thoughts, in such words as these—“For every idle word that man shall speak, he shall give an account in the day of judgment.” “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.” The Savior’s lips were too truthful, and too pure to pander to the vices of men; He denounced sin in every form and shape, and threatened it with everlasting fire! You do not find Jesus Christ anywhere asserting that the result of sin is a merely temporal evil, that the souls of sinners will be annihilated, or that they will, by-and-by in another state obtain forgiveness and be delivered, but, “these shall go away into everlasting punishment” rolls like thunder from His honest lips. He sweeps away from men all their empty confidences wherein they entrenched themselves, and makes them see that whatever a man sows that shall he also reap. He who lives in sin is declared to be the servant of sin; and he who brings forth evil fruit is judged to be an evil tree. Christ’s fan is in His hand, and He sweeps away the chaff; He sits as a refiner and consumes the dross; He lays the axe at the root of tree, and demands that the heart and spirit be right before God. If He sets forth obedience to the law, our Lord declares that it must be obedience in every point, or a man cannot be saved by it. If He accepts a follower He bids him count the cost and forsake all that he has, or he cannot be His disciple. His moral standard is—“Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” If you want the law of God lowered you must not go to Christ, and if you wish to see the penalties of sin mitigated you must not go to Christ, for He is of all teachers the most severe against sin of every sort, and the most clear in foretelling its penalty. The friend of sinners is too much their friend to befriend their sin—that He utterly abhors, and He will never rest till He has driven it out of them.

*Neither does the Lord Jesus Christ screen sinners from that proper and wholesome rebuke which virtue must always give to vice.* The Pharisees, no doubt, meant to say, “This man Jesus does mischief. We keep ourselves aloof from all low company, and in this way we do a good deal for

these publicans, because we let them see the difference between holy and unholy men. When they look at our phylacteries between our eyes, and observe the broad borders of our garments, and see how we wash our hands, and know how we tithes on mint and cumin, it must greatly edify them: no doubt they will go home and feel greatly ashamed that they cannot associate with such blessed and holy people as we are. Now, that man Christ, goes in among them, and eats and drinks with them, and thus in some measure our protest is broken down. They will think a great deal of themselves now that the proper distance is no longer kept up, for they will say, if this man, who is, no doubt, a good man, associates with us, then after all we are not as bad as we were thought to be." That is how the Pharisees argued, and there are some around us who still think that the best thing you can possibly do with the degraded is to isolate them. Turn your back on them: the sight of a good man's back will be a fine moral lesson to them. Make them feel that you are disgusted with them, and they will be brought to repent. But it does not turn out to be so. This process has generally been carried out by proud formalists and loathsome hypocrites, and has ended in making bad worse. Jesus never sanctions this mode of reformation. Look at Him and admire. Did He say a word to Zacchaeus about his having taken taxes by false means, or about his being cruel to the poor? No, not a syllable! Christ's presence was enough rebuke for the man's sin; no sooner does a man perceive the love of Christ, and the perfection of His blessed person, than straightway sin receives its death blow, and is ashamed to show itself anymore. Jesus is the best rebuke to sin. The gospel of Jesus Christ does not say to you who live in sin, "You are not fit company for Christians." Nor does it turn to godly people and say, "Make these your daily associates and join in their mirth." Quite the opposite—but it does nevertheless say to Christians, "Go and seek out the lost and bring them to a better mind." We go not among the sin-smitten to catch their disease, but to cure it. Going in such a spirit, a good man's presence is a far better rebuke to sin than a cold, self-righteous isolation could have been. The gospel does not aim so much at rebuking sinners as at reclaiming them. Its business is not to make men feel remorse for having sinned, but to rid them from the *power of sin!*

Again, *it is not true*, as I have heard some say, *that the gospel makes pardon seem such a very easy thing, and therefore sin is thought to be a small matter.* "Oh," says one, "if men have only to believe and be saved, you put a premium upon sin by making deliverance from it to be so speedy a business." These cavilers know better, some of them, and if they do *not* know better let us teach them. When the Lord Jesus Christ forgave me, He taught me at the same moment to dread sin. I never had such a sense of the terrible evil of sin as I had in the moment of my forgiveness, for where, do you think, did I read my pardon? I read it on His cross—written in crimson lines! I understood that, though the pardon was free to me, it cost Him cries and groans to bring me near to God. It cost His soul an agony never to be described before He could redeem one poor sinner from going down into the pit of hell. It is a gross injustice to

charge the preaching of the gospel to sinners with making sin to appear a trifle! The accusation is a baseless slander. They who know no atoning blood, they who know nothing of the sufferings of Christ—these are they who can toy with sin, but those who gaze upon the wounds of Christ cannot but tremble at sin. The great doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice, whenever it is fully received by the soul, makes sin to be exceeding sinful! Oh, sin, I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but on the cross my eyes see you slaying the incarnate God.

*Now, though Christ is the friend of sinners, is it true that He makes men think lightly of personal character?* “Oh,” say some, “these Christians teach that believing a creed saves the soul, and that it does not matter at all how they live.” This is an old libel. I remember reading much the same charge in a book which leveled its artillery at Wilberforce and his evangelical friends. The author said, “In a cant unmeaning jargon they talk much of vital faith, but they say little of vital benevolence.” He goes on to remark that to teach men to be honest, clean, kind, and truthful was far more important. Now, it is time that such a slander as that came to an end, but a lie has many lives, and though you kill it 50 times over, it soon restores itself to vitality. Look at the matter of fact. Jesus Christ did not teach Zacchaeus by going to his house that character was of no consequence; on the contrary, Zacchaeus perceived at once that character was of the greatest consequence, and so he stood forth, and said, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” Let who will deny the logic of it, the fact is that when a man comes to believe in Jesus he has a higher appreciation of the excellence of character than any other man in the world, and he does not merely appreciate it in theory, but begins to seek after it for himself. Man’s nature becomes renewed by the faith which some say will cause him to become indifferent to holiness. A man’s whole life is changed by his believing in Jesus and that which thus happily affects the character cannot honestly be said to lead to indifference concerning it. Even the remark I quoted about Wilberforce was signally false, because it was through him and the party which gathered around him that benevolence gained one of her very noblest victories. How would the slave in the West Indies have obtained his liberty if it had not been for these very men? Wilberforce and the like, who while they held that faith in Christ alone could save the soul, felt that benevolence was the essential spirit of Christianity, and liberty the natural right of every man! They spent their whole strength in fighting against the mercenary feeling of the times, till the fetters of England’s slaves were broken forever!

It has been said that if we tell men that good works cannot save them, but that Jesus saves the guilty who believe in Him, we take away all *motives for morality and holiness*. We meet that again by a direct denial—it is not so—we supply the grandest motive possible, and only remove a vicious and feeble motive. We take away from man the idea of performing good works in order to salvation, because it is a lie! Good works will not save a sinner, nor is he able to perform them if they *could* save him!

Works done with a view to salvation are not good, because they are evidently *selfish*, and so are not acceptable to God. The selfishness of the motive poisons the life of the work and takes its goodness out of it. But when we tell men, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," if they exercise faith they are saved, and being saved there grows up in their hearts *gratitude* to God, and from this springs a loving desire to *serve* God on account of what He has done; and this motive is not only very powerful but it is very pure, because the man does not then serve God with a view to self, but he serves Him out of love, and works done out of love to God are the only good works possible to men. It supplies a motive which is clean, clear, pure; a motive moreover which is proven by the lives of saved men to be potent enough to keep them in the way of righteousness all their days.

The gospel of Jesus Christ gives men something more than motive, it supplies them with power and life, for wherever men believe on the Lord Jesus the Holy Spirit is surely at work with all His wondrous power. He enters the heart and changes it, turns the whole current of the soul, and creates within the man a new, living, conquering principle, akin to the nature of God Himself, so that the man becomes and continues to be a new creature in Christ Jesus. This indwelling Spirit is not a theory, nor a doctrine, but a person; and His work is not a dream, but a conscious fact, a phenomenon to which all believers bear witness, for we have known Him and felt His power, and we have bowed before the might and majesty of His influences. As the anointing on Aaron's head went where Aaron went, so where Christ is received the Holy Spirit comes, the new creation commences, and men are delivered from living as they did before under the bondage of corruption. Thus we repel with indignation the charge that Christ is the aider of sin, and yet we preach with unabated eagerness this good news for sinners—whatever sin you may have committed, and however stained you may be with habits of evil, there is immediate pardon to be had, and complete salvation to be obtained, now, on this very spot, if you will but accept it, and trust Jesus for it. We assure you of this from our own experience. We also assure you that all your good works, and prayers, and tears, and almsgivings, will go for nothing if you trust in *them*; but though you may be covered with ten thousand times ten thousand sins, if you believe in Jesus you shall be saved from them all! He is a Savior, and a great one, and He is able to deliver great sinners. This will not make you think lightly of sin, nor cause you to continue in sin that grace may abound; but it will give you the power which you need, it will supply you with a strength you have never been able to find, notwithstanding all your efforts; it will enable you to rejoice that you are saved, and in the strength of such an assurance you will find within your heart a love for holiness and an abhorrence of sin such as you have never known before! You will go to the door of your heart and say to the devil, "Get you gone!" And to the lusts of the flesh, "Get you behind me!" And as to all the temptations which arise from old companions you will shut the door in their faces, and say, "Depart from me!"

**III.** In the third place, WE REJOICE IN THE VERY FACT WHICH HAS BEEN OBJECTED TO, that Jesus Christ comes to be a guest with men who are sinners.

And first, dear brethren, we rejoice in it because it *affords hope to us*. It often happens that we should never have a hope of His coming to be a guest with us if He were not a guest to sinners. To me such gracious facts are needed to save me from despair. Oh, it is mighty easy to build up a fine experience, and a pretty sanctification, and to imagine that you are getting on wonderfully, and becoming strong and pure, and very superior saints indeed. Let the devil deal with you five minutes, and he will show you something of quite another color! Let your old corrupt nature only bubble up for a quarter of an hour, and you will find such a condition of things in your soul that you will cry out in bitterness of anguish! Then will you find that fine words about experience do not fit your mouth, and all your notions of being somebody will evaporate like dew in the summer's sun. Oh the thousands of times when I have looked for any mouse hole through which I might creep if I might but enter into a little hope! I love to preach a sinner's gospel, for it suits me; I delight to preach holiness, and will aim at it as long as I live, and can never be content until I am perfect, but still my soul needs and must have the sinner's Savior. Nothing else will do for me! Whenever I get nearest to my Lord and feel most of His preciousness, and enjoy the closest communion with Him, I lay lower before Him than ever, and feel it to be an unspeakable privilege to creep to His feet and wash them with my tears. I have at this moment no sort of hope but in *mercy*, great mercy rendered to a great sinner through the sacrifice of Jesus! Brethren, what is there to depend upon except the sinner's Savior? If He does not save sinners, as sinners, by an act of free, rich, sovereign mercy, altogether apart from anything that is in them and of them, what will happen to you and me? We do not wish to make any excuses for our own sin, we would loathe it and abhor ourselves before God on account of it, but still, a wash in the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness suits us today as well as it did 27 years ago, when for the first time we looked to Jesus and lived! Do you not find it so, my beloved brethren? After half a century of knowing Christ, do you not find that you need a sinner's Savior as much as ever? You will need Him when you come to die even as you need Him now, and while you are languishing into everlasting life He will be your strength and your song, and you will be glad to think that "this man receives sinners and eats with them."

Again, we rejoice that it is true for another reason, because this *affords us hope for all our fellow men*. Suppose that our Lord did not visit any but the good, and moral, and excellent; then, alas, for poor London's back streets and crowded courts! Alas for the casual ward! Alas for the penitentiary, and alas for the jail! Alas for the fallen woman, and alas for the thief! But now there is hope for even these, and every philanthropist ought to feel deep down in his soul the most profound gratitude to the Lord for this fact. This is earth's brightest star, her well of hope, her dawn of joy! Since Jesus Christ receives the guilty and saves the vile, de-

spondency and despair have from now on no right to haunt the abodes of men! Hope smiles on all, and invites the most fallen to look up and live! Yes, and let me tell you Pharisees, if there are any representatives of that section here today—though you do not like the idea of grace to the guilty, but cling to the idea of your being *rewarded* for your supposed *merit*—it is a great mercy for you that Jesus receives great offenders, because *you* must be numbered among them! What is your heart but a raging sea of pride and enmity against God, and even against your fellow men? You despise God's ordained plan of grace, and you look with contempt upon the guilty whom He deigns to save! Is it not the spirit of the devil which makes you think yourself so much above your fellow men? Is it not an intolerable inhumanity which makes you wish that the gospel were molded to suit you and to shut out poor sinners? Who are you to carry your head so high? If you have never sinned as open transgressors have done, yet it is very probable that you would have done *worse* if you had been placed in the positions which they have occupied—with all their faults there are greater faults in you—and if somebody were to set to work to read the secrets of your soul aloud you would be much ashamed! Ah, there are many who are pluming themselves upon their virtues who, in the sight of God, are as rotten at the core as even the unchaste and the profane! There are more thieves, I doubt not, outside our jails than there are inside; and there are more double-dyed sinners than we ever dreamed of who appear respectable, and yet are abominable. Yes, even among nominal Christians there are plenty of scarlet sinners—they are always at the place of worship, very regular in all acts of outward devotion, and yet they indulge in secret uncleanness, and are as bad as any in the felons' prison. If my Master were to repeat today a certain scene in which He figured so wonderfully, some of those now present would be placed in an awkward position. A woman taken in adultery was brought before Him. He did not for a moment justify her crime, but He said with great power and to the point, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." I say to you who pretend that you are righteous, that if your consciences speak, you must admit that you have no righteousness, but you are so sinful that you have not a stone to fling, even against the grossest sinner. Convicted by your own conscience you may go out; but it were better still, if you were to stay here and say, "Yes, in my heart I am guilty too, and I bless Christ that He is a sinner's Savior, and that even I may look to Him this day and live."

We rejoice that this is the fact, because when we are working for the Lord *it cheers us up with the hope of fine recruits*. Many become very cold, stale, and mechanical in their work for Jesus within a short time after they are converted. The enthusiasm dies out, the warmth chills; I remember a sailor who before conversion, used to swear, and I guarantee you he would rattle it out, volley after volley. He became converted, and when he prayed it was much in the same fashion. How he woke everybody up the first time he opened his mouth at the prayer meeting; the little church had quite a revival, for their old jog-trot pace would not do for the new convert so full of love and zeal! The prayers offered in the meet-

ings had become quite stereotyped, and so had everything else about them. There were the same sleepy people, the same long prayers, and the same dreary addresses; but Jack's conversion was like an earthquake and startled everybody, and their zeal revived. They even began to think that perhaps *sailors* might be saved, and started a service on the wharf, and did many other good things. The conversion of a great sinner is the best medicine for a sick church! In all the churches, you good people who are settled on your lees need stirring up every now and then, and one of the best stirrings up you can have is to open the door of the church and see a Saul of Tarsus standing there to be admitted. The porter inquires, "Who is this that seeks admission here?" "A recruit," says he, and we look at him. Why, he is one of the devil's most famous soldiers, one of the men who carried the black flag in the battle, one who ridiculed us most! We are apt to look a little askance at him, for we feel dubious, and so we refer him to the elders, that they may inquire and sift him, to see whether he is really a changed character. Perhaps these earnest men are not quite sure, and hesitate till they see more of him, and they are quite right to do so; but if the Lord has really called the sinner by His grace, no sooner does the church receive such a man than they find that he has brought with him fresh fire and throws a fresh impetus into the whole work! Our Lord Jesus, then, when He goes to be a guest with a man that is a sinner, brings additional strength to the church, and finds her recruits of the very sort she most needs. We will therefore rejoice and bless the sinner's Savior.

I wonder, this morning, where Zacchaeus is, whether he is up in the gallery there! Has there come in here a man who is a sinner, and knows it, who, if I were to pass a label up to him inscribed with the word, "SINNER," would hang it round his neck and say, "I am the man"? Where are you, Zacchaeus? Jesus calls you! He means to save you at once! He says to you, "I must abide in your house today." Make haste down and open the door, and say, "Come in, my Lord, I am honored to receive You." Will any hesitate? Will any delay? May my Master's Holy Spirit cause today many a great sinner's heart to open and receive Jesus joyfully!

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
LUKE 18:31-43; 19:1-10.**

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—257, 543, 544.**

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# WHY SHOULD I WEEP?

## NO. 1320

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
OCTOBER 22, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”*  
Luke 23:27-31.

CAN you picture the scene? Jesus is given up by Pilate to the Jews that they may do their will with Him, and led by a small band of soldiers, He is conducted into the public street, bearing His cross upon His shoulders. Perhaps they judged Him to be weary with His night of watching, and worn out with His suffering from the scourge, and they feared lest He might die upon the road, and therefore with a cruel mercy, they laid hold upon one in the crowd who had too loudly expressed his sympathy, pressed him into military service, and compelled him to assist in carrying the instrument of execution. You see the haughty scribes and the ribald throng—but the center of the spectacle, and the cause of it all was our Lord Himself—Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. We cannot paint Him; all who have ever attempted to do so have to a large extent been unsuccessful, for there was upon His face a mingled majesty and meekness, loveliness and lowliness, sanctity and sorrow which it would not be possible to express upon canvas, or to represent in words. About His person there were abundant marks of cruelty; He had been scourged; everyone could see it—His own garments which they had put upon Him could not conceal the marks of the Roman lash. The traces of the crown of thorns were on His brow, and the rough treatment of the soldiers had left its tokens too, so that His visage was more marred than that of any man, and His form more than the sons of men.

And now He is being led away to be put to the shameful death of the cross! There were some glad eyes there, delighted that at last their victim was in their power, and that the eloquent tongue which had exposed their hypocrisy would now be silenced in death. There too were the unfeeling Romans, to whom human life was a trifle; and all around, gathered in dense masses, the brutal mob, bribed to shout against their best friend; but all then present were not in this savage mood—there were some, and to the honor of the sex it is recorded that they were women—who entered their protest by their cries and lamentations. Not silently in their sorrow did they weep, but they began to lament aloud, and bewail

audibly, as though they were attending the funeral of some dear friend, or expected the death of one of their kindred. The voice of a woman's weeping has great power with most of us, but it would not stir the stony hearts of Roman legionaries; the wail of women was no more to them than the moaning of the winds among the forest trees; yet it must have struck many of the less stern and impassive mold, and filled their souls with some measure of kindred feeling. Chiefly however did it strike one, the most tender hearted among them all, one whose ears were delicately sensitive to every sound of sorrow, and though He had not answered Herod, and had given Pilate but a few words of reply, and though amidst all the mockeries and scourging He had been as dumb as a sheep before her shearers, yet He paused, and looking round upon the weeping company, piteously, yet sublimely broke the silence by saying to them, "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

As for the words, themselves, they are especially noteworthy, because they constitute the last connected discourse of the Savior before He died. All that He said afterwards was fragmentary, and mainly of the nature of prayer; a sentence to John, and to His mother, and to the dying thief; just a word or two looking downward, but for the most part He uttered broken sentences which flew upwards on the wings of strong desire. This was His last address, a farewell sermonette delivered amid surroundings most sad and solemn, restraining tears, and yet at the same time, causing them to flow! We reckon the words to be all the more weighty and full of solemnity because of the occasion, but even apart from this, the truths delivered were in themselves of the utmost importance and solemnity. This last discourse of our Lord before His death was terribly prophetic to a world rejecting Him—predictable of a thousand woes to a people whom He loved—woes which even He could not avert because they had rejected His interposition, and refused the mercy which He came to bring. "Daughters of Jerusalem," He said, "weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." Not many hours before, He had Himself set them the example by weeping over the doomed city, and crying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets, and stone them which are sent to you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not!"

Looking even upon the surface of the words you will perceive that they bear His undoubted image and superscription. Who but He would have spoken after this sort? You are sure that the passage is genuine, for it is in all respects so inimitably Christ-like. See how self-oblivious He was—for Himself He asks not even tears of sympathy. Was there no cause for grief? Yes, cause enough, and yet He says, "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves," as if all His thoughts were taken up with other griefs than His own, and He would not have a tear wasted upon Him, but spent on woes which grieved Him more than His own pangs. Observe the majesty of the speech too steeped as the speaker was in misery. You can see that His is sorrow which well deserved to be wept over, but He is not overcome by it, but rather His royal soul reigns in the future! And as a King, He anticipates His scepter and His judgment seat, and foretells the

doom of those who now insult Him; here is no cowardly spirit, no confession of defeat, no appeal for pity, no shadow of petty resentment, but on the contrary a majestic consciousness of strength! With His calm, prophetic eyes, He looks beyond the intervening years, and sees Jerusalem besieged and captured; He speaks as though He heard the awful shrieks which betokened the entrance of the Romans into the city, and the murders of young and old, women and children. No, mark how His piercing eyes see yet further—He beholds and describes the day when He shall sit upon the throne of judgment, and summon all men to His bar; when He who was then the weary man before His foes, would alarm the ungodly by the appearance of His countenance, so that they would call to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the rocks to hide them from His face! He speaks as if conscious of the majesty that would be upon Him in that dreadful day, and yet at the same time pitiful towards those who, by their sins were bringing upon themselves so terrible a doom! He says, in effect, “Weep for those concerning whom it would have been better that they had never been born, and for whom annihilation would be a consummation devoutly to be wished.” He dries up His tears which were flowing, that the women may draw up the sluices of their souls, and let the torrents of their grief flow forth for *impenitent sinners* who will be filled with unutterable dismay at His second coming.

May the Holy Spirit help me while handling this amazing subject! The text very readily divides itself into two parts; the one may be headed “*Weep not*,” and the other, “*Weep*.” The first is, “*Weep not*,” or what the Savior suggested; the second is, “*Weep*,” or what the Savior commanded.

**I.** He said to the weeping women, “**WEEP NOT.**” There are some cold, calculating expositors who make it out that our Lord reproveth these women for weeping, and that there was something wrong, or if not altogether wrong, yet something very far from commendable in their sorrow. I think they call it, “the sentimental sympathy” of these kind souls. There is no being much more unnatural than a cold-blooded commentator who bites at every letter, and nibbles at the grammatical meaning of every syllable, translating with his lexicon, but never exercising common sense, or allowing even the least play to his heart. Blame these women? No! *Bless* them again and again! It was the one redeeming trait in the dread march along the *Via Dolorosa*! Let it not be *dreamed* that Jesus could have censured those who wept for Him! No! No! No—a thousand times No! These gentle women appear in a happy contrast to the chief priests with their savage malice and to the thoughtless multitude with their fierce cry of “*Crucify Him, crucify Him!*” They seem to me to have shown a noble courage in daring to express their sympathy with one whom everybody else hunted to death with such ferocity; to espouse His cause amid those hoarse cries of “*Crucify Him, crucify Him!*” was courage more than manly. Those women were heroines more valiant than those who rush upon the spoil! Those lamentations in sympathy with Him who was being led to die are worthy of our praise, and not of our criticism! Our Lord accepted the sympathy they evinced, and it was only His great disinterested unselfishness which made Him say, “*Spare your griefs for other sorrows.*”

It was not because they were *wrong*, but because there was something still more necessary to be done than even to weep for Him. I do not think we erred when we sang just now—

***“A moment give a loose to grief,  
Let grateful sorrows rise,  
And wash the bloody stains away  
With torrents from your eyes.”***

Have we not all felt it to be a gracious exercise to sing in unison that almost dirge—

***“Oh come and mourn with me awhile;  
Oh come to the Savior’s side;  
Oh come, together let us mourn:  
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified.  
Have we no tears to shed for Him,  
While soldiers scoff and Jews deride?  
Ah! Look how patiently He hangs;  
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified.”***

Who among us can blame Dr. Watts and others when they sing in words like these—

***“Thus might I hide my blushing face,  
While His dear cross appears,  
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,  
And melt my eyes to tears.”***

There can be nothing ill about the weeping of these women, and therefore let us proceed to say, first, that *their sorrow was legitimate* and well-grounded. There was reason for their weeping! They saw Him suffering, friendless and hunted to death—they could not but bewail Him! Had I been there, and seen Him all alone, and marked the cruel eyes that watched Him, and heard the malicious voices which assailed Him, I too would have wept! I hope I am not so past feeling as to have looked on without overflowing sorrow; look at those bleeding shoulders, those lacerated temples—mark, above all, that quiet, unrivalled God-like countenance, so marred with sacred grief. One must have surely wept if one had a heart anywhere within him, to think that He who suffered thus, and was about to suffer so much more, should be so gentle and so unresisting. Was not this cause for intense sympathy? He was meek and lowly in heart, and therefore He returned none of those fierce looks, and answered none of those ferocious words; He was like a lamb in the midst of wolves, or a dove surrounded by a thousand hawks, or a milk-white hare amid baying hounds! There was none to pity, and none to help. Shall we, then, refuse our compassion? No, you women’s eyes, you did well to weep—how could you help it, since you were mothers of children, and therefore had hearts to love? How could you help weeping for Him who was so lowly, so gentle, so unselfish, so submissive to all they put upon Him? Surely it was a superfluity of malice to be hunting Him to death who even in life was so much the man of sorrows. And then He was so innocent and pure; what had He done amiss? They could not answer Pilate’s challenge—“Why, what evil has He done?” There was no fault in Him; they could not find any; you could see by the very look of Him that He was the purest of all mankind—that all around Him was sin and vani-

ty, yet He alone was holiness and truth. Why, then, should they lead Him forth among malefactors, and nail those blessed hands and feet to the wood, and hang Him to a tree?

Above all, in addition to His being innocent of fault, He had been so full of kindness—of *more* than kindness—of infinite love to all mankind, and even in His deepest sorrow boundless benevolence shone in His countenance, beaming as the sun! He looked upon His enemies, and His glance was royal but it was tender too. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” was trembling on His lips. He would not harm them; not He! He would not curse them though His curse had withered them, nor even frown upon them, though that frown might have secured His freedom. He was too good to render evil for evil. These women remembered what a life He had led; they remembered how He had fed the hungry—perhaps some of them had even eaten of the loaves and fishes! They remembered how He had healed their children, raised their dead, and had dislodged foul fiends from the bodies of their friends. He had preached openly in their streets, and He had never taught ill will, but always gentleness and love; He had been popular, and stood at the head of the multitude at one time, but He had never used His power for selfish purposes. He had ridden through their streets in pomp, but the pomp was simple and homely—on a colt, the foal of an ass had He ridden with children for His courtiers—and with no sound of the trumpets of war, but only with the children’s cries of, “Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.” Why should they crucify Him? He had done nothing but good! His noble presence seemed to appeal to the women, and they asked each other, “For which of His works would they slay Him? For which of His actions would they put Him to death?” He, the friend of the friendless; why should He die? I cannot, I say again, but *commend* the tears of these women. It is little marvel that they should weep and bewail when they saw the innocent one about to die.

I think, too, that *this weeping on the part of the women was a very hopeful emotion*. It was far better certainly than the non-emotion or the cruelty of those who formed that motley throng. It showed some tenderness of heart, and tenderness of heart, though it is but natural, may often serve as groundwork upon which better and holier and more spiritual feelings may be placed. It is objected that persons weep when they hear the story of other griefs besides those of Jesus, and I am glad they do. Should they not weep with them that weep? It is also objected that this natural sympathy may in many cases be as much due to the skill of the orator as in others it is the undoubted result of the music of the oratorio. I know it is so. I am going to show you that mere emotional sympathy is not all, nor a half, nor a tenth of what is needed. Still, I would be sorry if I thought myself capable of remembering the griefs of Jesus without emotion while other men’s woes affected me, and I would greatly deplore the fact if it were indeed true that you were all, especially you women, so hardened that you could think of Jesus of Nazareth bleeding and dying without your hearts beginning to melt. The emotion is good at any rate so far that if it were *absent* you would be bereft of humanity and turned to

stones. It is hopeful because it opens a door through which something better may enter; this tenderness is a natural stock suitable for grafting something far higher upon. He who can weep for the sorrows of Christ may soon be on the road towards weeping over the *sin* which caused the sorrow, or he may be on the highway towards being able to lament, as Christ bids men lament, those other griefs and miseries which sin brings upon themselves and upon their children. I would not carry the emotional towards Christ to an excess, nor ask men to make Jesus' death *only* a fountain of sorrow, since it is also a source of joy! I would deplore that idolatrous emotion which weeps before a hideous image, or mourns over touching a picture; but still I would not have men at the thought of Jesus dying act as if they were sticks and stones, but prove that they mourn for Him whom they have pierced.

Having said this much, we now add that *on our Lord's part such sorrow was fitly repressed*; because after all, though naturally good, it is not more than natural, and falls short of spiritual excellence. It is no proof of the work of the Spirit upon your heart that you weep as you hear the story of Christ's death, for probably you would have been even more affected had you seen a murderer hanged. It is no proof that you are truly saved because you are moved to great emotions whenever you hear the details of the crucifixion, for the Bulgarian atrocities excited you equally as much. I think it good that you should be moved, as I have said before, but it is only naturally and not *spiritually* good. Doubtless there are many who have shed more tears over the silly story of a love-sick maid in a frivolous novel than they have ever given to the story of the lover of our souls; though they have felt emotion when they have pictured the sufferings of Emmanuel, they have felt even more when the bewitching pen of fiction has sketched some imaginary picture of fancied woes. No, no, these natural sympathies are not to be commended so that we wish you to be continually exercised with them: our Lord did well to set them healthy bounds.

Besides, such feelings are generally very elusive. Tears of mere emotion because of the external sufferings of Christ are speedily wiped away and forgotten. We do not know that any of these women ever became our Lord's converts; among those who met in the upper room, we do not know that any had taken part with this company of weepers; these were women of Jerusalem; and the followers of Christ who ministered to Him at His death were generally women from Galilee. For this see Matthew 27:54-56. I fear that the most of these Jerusalem sympathizers forgot tomorrow that they had wept today; I may be mistaken, but there is nothing in the mere fact of their lamenting the Savior's doom which would prove them to be His regenerated followers. The morning cloud and the early dew are fit emblems of such fleeting emotions.

Such weeping too is morally powerless—it has no effect upon the mind; it does not change the character; it does not cause the putting away of sin, nor create real and saving faith in Jesus Christ. Many tears are shed under powerful sermons that are so much wasted fluid—when the discourse is over, the sorrow has ceased. There was no work of grace

upon the inner heart; it was all surface work and no more. The worst of it is such feeling is often deceptive, for people are apt to think, "I must have something good in me, for what a time of weeping I had under the sermon, and how tender I felt when I heard the description of Christ upon the cross!" Yes, and thus you may wrap yourself up in the belief that you are under the influence of the Holy Spirit when, after all, it is only ordinary human feeling. You may conclude, "Surely these drops come from a heart of flesh," when it may be only moisture condensed upon a heart of stone!

This feeling, too, may stand in the way of something a great deal better. Jesus would not have these women weep for one thing, because they were to weep for *another* thing which far more seriously demanded their weeping! You need not weep because Christ died one-tenth as much as because your sins rendered it necessary that He should die! You need not weep over the crucifixion, but weep over *your transgressions*, for your sins nailed the Redeemer to the accursed tree! To weep over a dying Savior is to lament the *remedy*—it is wiser to bewail the *disease*; to weep over the dying Savior is to wet the surgeon's knife with tears—it is better to bewail that spreading polyp which that knife must cut away; to weep over the Lord Jesus as He goes to the cross is to weep over that which is the subject of the highest joy that ever heaven and earth have known! Your tears are scarcely needed there—they are natural, but a deeper wisdom will make you brush them all away, and chant with joy His victory over death and the grave! If we must continue our sad emotions, let us lament that we should have broken the law which He thus painfully vindicated let us mourn that we should have incurred the penalty which He even to the death was made to endure. Jesus wished them not so much to look at His outward sufferings as at the secret inward cause of that outward sorrow, namely, the transgression and the iniquity of His people which had laid the cross upon His shoulders, and surrounded Him with enemies! As I quoted just now certain verses which led us to lament our Lord, let me propose to you as better still those words of Watts—

***"Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,  
His chief tormentors were;  
Each of my crimes became a nail,  
And unbelief the spear.  
'Twas you that pulled the vengeance down  
Upon His guiltless head:  
Break, break, my heart, oh burst my eyes!  
And let my sorrows bleed.  
Strike, mighty grace, my flinty soul,  
Till melting waters flow,  
And deep repentance drowns my eyes  
In sorrow and in woe."***

**II.** Now we pass on from "Weep not" to "WEEP." May God the Holy Spirit help us to dwell upon that for a while with profit to our souls. Though Jesus stops one channel for tears, he opens another and a wider one. Let us look to it.

First, when He said, "Weep for yourselves," He meant that *they were to lament and bewail the sin which had brought Him where He was*, seeing

He had come to suffer for it. And He would have them weep because that sin would bring them and their children into yet deeper woe. You know that just before He uttered this remarkable saying, the husbands, the fathers, and the sons of those women had been crying with loud voices, "Let Him be crucified," and when Pilate had taken water and washed his hands to show that he was innocent of the blood of Jesus, they had imprecated upon their nation, and upon their unborn sons, the curse which follows from such a deed: "Then answered all the people, His blood be on us and on our children"; and though these women lamented and mourned, yet over their heads the men who had spoken for the nation had gathered the thunder cloud of divine wrath! Jesus points to it and says, "Weep for the national sin; weep for the national curse which will surely come upon you, because you are putting the just one to death." Yes, deeper still was His meaning, for all those about Him were in a sense guilty of His death. And you, and I, and all the rest of mankind have been in our measure the cause of the Savior's crucifixion. Oh, brethren, this is the reason why we should weep, because we have broken the divine law, and rendered it impossible that we should be saved except Jesus Christ should die! If we have not believed in Jesus Christ, we have this cause for lamentation—that our sin abides upon us at this present moment! That curse which crushed the Savior down till He cried, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*, is resting upon some who are here this morning! O souls, you need not pity the dying Christ, but pity yourselves; on yourselves your sin is resting, and your children growing up unconverted, hardened in rebellion against God by your example—their sin is resting upon them too, and this is the overflowing cause why you should weep! And you believers, you from whom sin has been lifted, who are forgiven for His name's sake—yet lament that you should have sinned, and with your joy for pardoned guilt, mourn that Christ had to carry the burden which you heaped together, and to bear the penalty which you deserved! All round, brethren, there is abounding cause for sorrow for sin—a sweet sorrow from the Lord's people, and a bitter sorrow from those who have no part nor lot in the result of Christ's passion as yet, but who nevertheless are partakers in the crime which slew the Son of God.

I beg you now to look again into the reason why our Lord bade them weep. It was, first, for their sin, but it was next *for the impending punishment of their sins*. The punishment of the *national* sin of the Jew was to be the scattering of his nation, and the total destruction of its holy city; and well does our Savior speak of it in terrible language, for under all heaven, and in all history there never was such a scene of misery as the siege and destruction of Jerusalem! I need not give you any outline of it because you must be familiar with that painful subject where every horror seems to be combined in one, and exaggerated to the utmost. Nothing has ever surpassed it; I question if anything ever equaled it. But our Lord, as I have hinted, looked further than the Roman sword and the massacre of the Jews. Often in His preaching

you do not know whether He is talking of the siege of Jerusalem or of the judgment day, for the one was in His mind such a foreshadowing, rehearsal, and type of the other, so that in His language He often seemed to melt the two into one. He means to you and to me this morning to speak, not of besieged Jerusalem, but of that day of wrath, that dreadful day—what man among us shall be able to abide its coming? There is surely cause enough for weeping, for when that day comes it will find some men in such a state that it would have been better for them that they had never been born! When the dreadful sentence shall come from the Judge, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels,” they will bless the barren womb and the breast at which no child has sucked! Then will impenitent sinners bitterly exclaim, “Cursed be the day when I was born; let not the day when my mother bore me be blessed; cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto you; making him very glad.” They will wring their hands in anguish, and curse their existence, and wish that they had never seen the light! So terrible will the doom of the wicked be that mothers who looked upon the birth of their children as the consummation of their joy shall wish they had been barren, and never carried a babe at their breasts! They shall count those happy who were childless, whom perhaps in their hearts in their past lives they despised. Existence is in itself a blessing—but what shall be the misery which shall make men wish that they had never breathed? Yet, alas, such is the condition of multitudes while I am speaking to you, and such will soon be the condition of some who are looking into my face now, unless they repent! Alas! Alas! Weep for yourselves and for your children!

Further, our Lord went on, with that melting voice of His, in overflowing grief to say that they might reserve their tears for those who would before long, wish to be annihilated, but wish in vain. “Then shall men begin to say to the rocks, fall on us and to the hills, cover us.” The falling of the mountain would grind them to powder, and they wish for that; the descent of the hill upon them would bury them in a deep abyss, and they would rather be immured in the bowels of the earth forever than have to look upon the face of the Great Judge! They ask to be crushed outright, or to be buried alive sooner than to feel the punishment of their sins! Then shall be fulfilled the word of the Lord by His servant, John, “And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them” (Rev 9:6). Ah, sirs, extinction is a blessing too great to be permitted to the ungodly! Earth will have no heart of compassion for the men who polluted her and rejected her Lord. The mountains will reply, “We fall at God’s bidding, not at the petition of His enemies,” and the hills in their emotionless silence will answer, “We cannot, and we would not if we could, conceal you from the justice which you yourselves willfully provoked.” No, there shall be no refuge for them, no annihilation into which they can fly; the very hope of it were heaven to the damned. Oh, could they but expect it, but it must not, shall not be. Their cry for extinction shall be in vain! Now, if you have tears for Jesus dying, reserve them for those to whom death is but the beginning of evils!

If you have griefs for Him to whom they said, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the paps that gave You suck," have still more tears for those who shall curse the hour in which they were conceived! Here is indeed a subject which demands the tears of nations and of ages—souls lost beyond all remedy, seeking destruction itself as a blessing, and beginning petitions of unutterable anguish which shall never cease and never be of use!

*Then our Lord goes on to draw a wonderful parallel and contrast between His sufferings and those to be lamented,* for He says, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall they do in the dry?" I suppose He meant, "If I, who am no rebel against Caesar, suffer so, how will those suffer whom the Romans take in actual rebellion at the siege of Jerusalem?" And He meant next to say, "If I who am perfectly innocent, must nevertheless be put to such a death as this, what will become of the guilty?" If when fires are raging in the forest, the green trees, full of sap and moisture, crackle like stubble in the flame, how will the old dry trees burn which are already rotten to the core, and turned to touchwood, and so prepared as fuel for the furnace? If Jesus suffers, who has no sin, but is full of the life of innocence, and the sap of holiness, how will they suffer who have long been dead in sin, and are rotten with iniquity? As Peter puts it in another place, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begins with us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

Note well that the sufferings of our Lord, though in some respects far beyond all conceivable woes, have yet some points about them in which they differ with advantage from the miseries of lost souls. For, first, our Lord knew that He was innocent, and therefore His righteousness upheld Him. Whatever He suffered, He knew that He deserved none of it. He had no stings of conscience, nor agonies of remorse. Now, the sting of future punishment will lie in the indisputable conviction that it is well deserved. If there were one woe in hell more than a lost soul deserved, it would act as an opiate to its pain—but the justice of every infliction will be the tooth of the worm, the edge of the sword. No dream of innocence, or conceit of self-righteousness will survive the judgment day, but conscience will be awakened and armed to do its work; the wicked will perceive their guilt and cling to it, and this will make their punishment the more severe.

The finally impenitent will be tormented by their own passions which will rage within them like an inward hell; but our Lord had none of this. There was no evil in Him, no lusting after evil, no self-seeking, no rebellion of heart, no anger or discontent. A man in whom there is no evil passion to stir up cannot know those fierce pangs, and wild throes in which raging sin feeds the soul. Pride, ambition, greed, malice, revenge—these are the fuel of hell's fire! Men's selves, not devils, are their tormentors! Their inward lusts are worms that never die, and fires that never can be quenched! There could be none of this in our divine Lord. Again, lost souls hate God and love sin, but Christ always loves God and hates sin.

Now, to love evil is misery when undisguised, and rightly understood sin is hell. It is love of evil continued in the soul which causes the perpetuity of the lost estate of men; but the holy Jesus, though suffering beyond all conception, could not feel the pangs which come of hating good and loving evil. He was the green tree. And the ungodly are the dry trees. Yet if the innocent one suffers so, with what pains will guilty souls be racked by their avenging consciences?

Our Lord Jesus knew that every pang He suffered was for the good of others—He endured cheerfully because He saw that He was redeeming a multitude that no man can number from going down to hell; but there is no redeeming power about the sufferings of the lost; they are not helping anyone, nor achieving a benevolent design. The great God has good designs in their punishment, but they are strangers to any such a purpose. Our Lord had a reward before Him, because of which He endured the cross, despising the shame; but the finally condemned have no prospect of reward, nor hope of rising from their doom. How can they expect either? *He* was full of hope, they are full of despair. “It is finished” was for Him, but there is no, “It is finished” for them. Their sufferings, moreover, are self-caused—their sin was their own. He endured agonies because others had transgressed, and He willed to save them. Their sufferings are self-chosen, for they would not be persuaded to forsake their sins; but He, from necessity of love was made to bleed—the cup could not pass from Him if His people were not redeemed! The torments of the lost will be self-inflicted—they are suicides to their souls—the venom in their veins is self-created and self-injected. They torment themselves with sin to which they cleave, but it pleased the Father to bruise the Son, and the necessity for His bruising lay not in Himself, but in others.

Now, dear friends, I think I have said enough on this painful matter to assure you that the most terrible warning to impenitent men in the entire world is the death of Christ; for if God spared not His own Son, on whom was only laid imputed sin, will He spare sinners whose sins are actual, and their own? If He smote Him to the death who only stood in the sinner’s place, will He let the impenitent sinner go free? If He who always did His Father’s will, and was obedient even unto death, must be forsaken of God, what will become of those who reject Christ, and live and die enemies to the Most High? Here is cause for weeping; and, very solemnly would I say it—God help me to say it so that you may feel it—the most dreadful thought is that perhaps we ourselves are in the condition of guiltiness before God, and are hastening on to the judgment which Christ has foretold! Oh, think if within the next six months—no, stretch it as far as you like—if within the next 50 years some of us should be asking the hills to cover us, and wishing that we never had been born? What an awful prospect! And yet, unless we are renewed in heart, and made believers in Jesus Christ, that certainly must be our doom! Think of your children, too, who are growing up about you, capable of understanding, and responsible for their actions. Oh, if they live as they now live, and die as they now are, you may wish they had never been given to you, and had never borne your name! Think of this and weep! Dear

friends, if the Lord would put you into a right state of heart, you would scarcely think of an unconverted person's condition without the deepest pity; you would not hear an oath in the street without tears starting in your eyes!

That was a dreadful spectacle which I pictured to you just now—our Lord bearing His cross and the women weeping; but how much more awful is that before me! I see a soul carrying about itself the instrument of its own destruction, and going onward with it to its doom! Sin is the cross to which the soul will be fastened, and habits and depravities are the nails! The soul is bearing its sin, and loving to bear it! Look, it is going to execution, but at each step it laughs! Every step it takes is bearing it towards hell, and yet it makes mirth! Lo, the infatuated one scoffs at the voice that warns him, and every scoff he utters is increasing his guilt! Look forward to his end, its never-ending end; look forward to it steadily, with calm and tearful gaze—is it not an awful spectacle? But what if you should be beholding *yourselves* as in a vision, or seeing your child in the glass of prophecy? If it is your case, I beseech you repent of your sins, bewail your condition, and fly to Christ for shelter! And if it is your child, give heaven no rest; plead continually at the throne of grace till you have brought down a blessing from God upon your offspring! Never cease to pray until your sons and your daughters are safely landed on the Rock of Ages, and so secured there that they will need no other rock to hide them in the day when Christ shall come. I beseech you, beloved Christian friends, ask for tenderness towards sinners, towards *all* sinners, and let your tenderness be shown in fervent prayer, in incessant effort, and in holy sympathy towards the wandering ones.

Alas, I have but stuttered and stammered compared with the manner in which I hoped to have spoken! I may have failed in expressing myself, but God can bless the word none the less! The subject is worthy of an angel's tongue! It needs Christ Himself to expound it completely. Would God He might by His Spirit expound it to your hearts in the leisure of this afternoon. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 23:1-31.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—178, 265, 312.**

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# WHY MAY I REJOICE? NO. 1321

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
OCTOBER 29, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you,  
but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”  
Luke 10:20 (NKJV)***

YOU will remember that last Lord's-Day we saw our Lord correcting a very natural *grief*, and supplying in its place a more necessary sorrow, as He said to the women, “Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.” [See No. 1320—“*Why Should I Weep?*”] Now, this morning we shall see Him correcting a very natural *joy*, and directing its gladness into a more elevated channel. “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” If we commit ourselves to Him, He will guide us aright in all things, and teach us to sanctify alike our grief and our gladness.

We shall commence our discourse by saying that our Lord did not blame or upbraid the 70 for rejoicing that the devils were subject to them; it would have been a very strange thing if they were not joyous on the occasion of so great a success. They had been sent forth upon their Lord's errand, they had gone forward unhesitatingly in His name, girded with His strength, and His power had been revealed so that His name had been glorified—should they not rejoice? It was the kingdom of God which they had proclaimed—should they not be joyful? It was their Lord's enemy, as well as their own, who had “fallen like lightning from heaven”—should they not exult? It was not likely, therefore, that the Lord Jesus was angry at their joy when they returned, saying, “Lord, even the spirits are subject unto us through Your name.” We must read our Lord's words according to the manner of Oriental speech. The peculiar idiom of our Savior's speech often makes Him appear to be actually forbidding what He only places in a secondary place. He did not mean in the present instance to censure their joy in their success, but only to make it *subordinate* to another rejoicing, and to prevent its growing to excess.

Some have thought that they detected in the 70 too much personal exultation, if not an almost childish triumph in the success which they had achieved. I must confess I see small traces of such a feeling in their report to their Master. Our Lord Himself evidently coincided with the truth of their report, for He also said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” I can hardly think that He could have seen that sight without joy, and therefore in some measure He shared in the feelings of His servants. Had He observed in these brothers that excess of childish exultation and vainglory which is supposed, I think He would hardly have gone on to invest such novices with yet more power—but yet He did

so, for we read in the 19<sup>th</sup> verse—“Behold I give to you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” Had they been intoxicated with a sort of childish glee, the wisdom of our Lord, as commander in that crusade, would have led Him to say to them, “I had many things to have given unto you, but you cannot bear them now. I see already that you are intoxicated with your present victories, and therefore I must withhold from you the extraordinary gifts of My kingdom till you are better prepared to receive them with humility and to use them with wisdom.” Such prudent conduct would have been in accordance with the usual proceedings of our wise Teacher; but He saw no such excessive exultation. Whatever He might fear as likely to occur by-and-by, He saw nothing as yet to blame in them, and so He went on to say, “therefore I give you power over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” We cannot understand Him to be condemning their rejoicing over the fall of devils, for He says, “Rejoice rather,” and this almost implies that you may rejoice in the first subject of joy in some degree. “Notwithstanding,” He says, “in this rejoice not; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” The one is forbidden only in comparison with the other; we may rejoice that God blesses our labors, but still it must be a far less prominent joy than that which springs out of our personal interest in the salvation of God! Church members may be glad when they see a great revival, and their numbers largely increased; but at such times it is *doubly* necessary to look to vital godliness and personal religion, or the joy may be turned into mourning.

Now, brethren, taking the incident as it will apply to ourselves, there may be some of you here present to whom God has given many gifts for use in the kingdom of heaven. He may also have given you influence in His church, and power among men of the world; and, moreover, your gifts and your power have not been used in vain, they have been made useful in many ways so that your course has been one of honor and success. The kingdom of God has come near to many through you, and the great enemy’s kingdom has suffered injury by your means; because of all this you are greatly cheered. Is this wrong? Ought you not to be full of joy? I say yes, assuredly, you are bound to be glad! We would all be grateful for gifts, grateful for influence, grateful for success—but a gratitude which is not attended with joy can scarcely be called gratitude at all! Would you have gratitude lament the possession of the blessing for which she is grateful? There must be joy in the thing received, or else one can hardly be imagined to be thankful; if gratitude for these things is a duty, then surely a measure of joy concerning them must also be a duty. You may rejoice that to you is this grace given to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and you may be glad that from you the word of God has sounded forth throughout all the region in which you dwell. Thus far we go, but we must not exceed due bounds lest we become transgressors—this joy must be held within its own lines, and never allowed to run riot. Let us pause and see how our Lord Jesus puts a restraining “notwithstanding,” and a repressing negative upon

this joy when He judges that it is in danger of passing due bounds; and let us also note how He supplies the place of this joy by something higher and better when He says—“Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

We shall dwell upon three things this morning. First, *the joy which needs moderating*—“Nevertheless do not rejoice in this.” Secondly, *the joy which needs exciting*—“Rather rejoice.” And then, thirdly, *the joy of the Lord in sympathy with this last joy*. Just read the first line of the 21<sup>st</sup> verse—“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit.” Our Lord could unite in this joy under certain aspects of it.

**I.** First, then, THE JOY WHICH NEEDS MODERATING. It is the joy of triumph over evil spirits, the joy of having preached the gospel and worked wonders—in a word, the joy of gifts, power, and success. This needs moderating, first, because *it is so apt to degenerate into pride*. The 70 were not proud, for they said, “Lord, even the devils are subject to us *through Your name*.” This was a very proper way of reporting results; they did not attach any measure of the success to themselves, but they ascribed it to the matchless, all-conquering name which they had used. So far, all was well. But, my brethren, the tendency of human nature is towards self-exaltation, and so by degrees we come to emphasize the, “*to us*,” and we allow the, “*through Your name*” to be uttered softly, and yet more softly, until it is only used as a matter of form, and we in our hearts ascribe the whole success to ourselves! If God shall bless any man with long-continued success in soul-winning, even though that is a higher achievement than the casting out of devils, there is an evil tendency in our corrupt nature which will tempt such a man to dream that in him there is some peculiar excellence or special virtue. He will say in his heart, “Lord, even great sinners and proud infidels have been turned to You by my preaching,” and he may at the same time forget that it was not his preaching, but the *name of Jesus*, which accomplished the notable deed! We are nothing, however much God may have worked by us; all the glory is due to the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, yet we are so base as to take credit to ourselves; who among us can claim to have been perfectly free from this temptation? True, the Lord keeps His servants humble when He uses them, and if they abound in grace they may safely abound in gifts also; saints may be safely trusted with abundant influence if they are abundantly under the influence of the Holy Spirit; but to be preserved when thus eminently honored is an exceedingly great favor. When we see a successful worker walking very humbly, we may say, “This is the finger of God.” Leave corrupt nature to itself, and as a warm atmosphere soon causes dead flesh to become putrid, so will the ease and comfort of self-congratulation and prosperity speedily breed corruption in human nature; therefore it is necessary that joy in gifts and success should be kept under due control, and if it is tolerated in any measure, as it may be, it must nevertheless not be indulged to any great extent lest evil consequences come to us. To here may it come, but no further, lest the Lord behold us waxing exceedingly proud, and put us aside

from His work altogether, and take unto Himself other instruments which will not attempt to rob Him of His glory.

Again, this joy which needs to be moderated should be restrained by the reflection that *it is no evidence of grace in the heart that we possess gifts, or that we are successful*. Talents are possessed even by wicked and slothful servants; grace without talent will save, but talent without grace will only increase our condemnation! “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” The highest conceivable gifts for church work, and the greatest influence in the church are *worthless* apart from divine grace! The possession of such powers may be accompanied by hypocrisy and falsehood—it was so in our Lord’s-day. Judas worked miracles; Judas preached the gospel; Judas was not only a member of the church, but a trusted officer in it, yet Judas went unto his own place, for he was a son of perdition. Our Lord tells us to expect many cases of graceless workers, for He says, “Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name; and in Your name have cast out devils; and in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity.” Observe that this warning speaks not of a few, but of many; we shall not only see a Judas once in 18 centuries, but *many* of whom this shall be the case! Men have gone forth making use of the name of Jesus, and God has honored the name though He has not accepted the men who used it; they have preached and the message has been true, and God has acknowledged the truth—but the men have not been true, and consequently they have been abhorred of the Lord. Good seed will grow even though it was scattered by a leprous hand. Let us beware however, of speaking the truth of God with lying lips; let us beware lest we be like Balaam, who had his eyes opened to see marvelous visions of the future, and his tongue inspired to utter deep things, and yet he fell among the accursed because he ran greedily after a reward! Do not rejoice then, dear brothers, because God blesses you in what you are doing so that you see souls saved, and yourself honored, for this might happen to one for whom the Lord has no regard; but rather rejoice in being really and truly one of the Lord’s own people, names written in heaven. Let us keep under our body and watch unto prayer, lest haply after having preached to others, we ourselves should become castaways. It will be a dreadful thing to keep the door of the King’s great banquet hall, and open it to others—and yet to perish with hunger!

Moreover, it is very unsafe to rejoice unduly in the work which we have done because *the work after all may not turn out to be all that it appears*. I do not know how much of real good the 70 had worked; there can scarcely have been very many converts, for otherwise the number of the names would have been greater when the disciples assembled in the upper room at Pentecost. We will not however judge the work of the sev-

enty; but we do know this, that it is very easy for us to go forth, and for a time to succeed so that it seems as if even the devils were subject to us, and yet there may be no true word of God. Crowds may gather to listen; there may be manifestations of deep emotion; the number of conversions put down on paper may be very great and yet there may be little or nothing in the whole matter worthy of real joy! And so it may be in other forms of service—in the Sunday school, or in any other place we may think we have succeeded, and yet we may have only been building a baseless structure on sand which the next tide will carry away! We ought to remember that every man's work must be tested before long, "for the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." It is too early to begin to rejoice until the fire has passed over our lifework. The edifice is very lofty, and apparently very fair, but what if those walls should turn out to be composed of straw, the foundations of stubble, and the rafters of dry wood? How soon will they yield to the fire, and how rapidly will the fabric disappear! He who has built the tiniest cell of sparkling gems, or the smallest cottage of gold has done more than he who has heaped aloft into the air a pyramid of hay! It is not the *quantity* of work done; it is not the space occupied in church history; it is not the noise of our great works—the question is what is really and truly done? The *quality* is far more important than the quantity! The enduring character of the work is far more to be considered than the flash and the glare of it! Therefore rejoice not, O young man, in all the brilliant success which has for the present attended you; and rejoice not even you, old man, though you have had half a century of prosperity! Rejoice not so much in this as to exalt yourself because of it, but rather rejoice in something safer and more gracious—rejoice that your name is written in heaven if so it is!

This joy, again, however good our work may be, is to be moderated because *it does not prove that we are anymore gracious than others of far less gifts and usefulness*. Did you notice in the chapter which precedes my text that *nine* of the apostles attempted to cast out a devil from a lunatic child, but were unable to accomplish it, so that they said to the Master, "Why could not we cast him out?" The majority of the sacred conclave of apostles failed to cast out a devil, and yet 70 inferior persons all return with joy, and say "Lord, even the spirits are subject unto us." Do you draw the inference therefore that the 70 were superior to the apostles? If you do, you have made a very grand mistake, for they were by no means so, and it would be a very great pity for any person who has been made useful in the kingdom of God to infer that he is therefore better than those whose earnest labors are crowned by no such apparent results. An obscure child of God whose name has never been mentioned in the church may yet be more worthy than we are; of all estimates of ourselves, that which is founded upon our apparent usefulness is likely to be most deceptive! Be very careful, sir, if you consider yourself to be something because you have worked wonders, for I will show you the choicest of my Master's children on sick beds; I will show you the richest and rarest piety connected with illiterate poverty; I will show you a man who cannot speak a sentence grammatically who lives in the very bosom

of Christ, and you will blush for the depth and power of his vital godliness! I will find you one who shines as a precious jewel in Jehovah's sight compared with whom you are a poor dull pebble—and yet you are highly esteemed—and he has little honor! His prayers have been a thousand times more use to the church than your preaching! Yes, it may be that your preaching has owed its success to his prayers! *We cannot judge character by gifts!* He who has one talent, and uses it well, shall have better acceptance at the last than he who has five talents, and uses them ill. And he who fills his circle, though that circle is small, shall have far more comfort, therein than he who with a vast field has nevertheless left the major part of it altogether unfilled. Great importance in the public mind is no argument of great grace! A man is none the worthier for being successful! The best may not be the most prosperous! Boast not yourself, O fisherman, because your net is filled, for as good men as you are have toiled all night and taken nothing!

Again, this joy in success needs to be kept under tight rein because *it is not an abiding joy*. If you, O man, rejoice today because of subject devils, what will you do tomorrow when the devils break loose again? If you return from your labor full of success, and rejoice, what will you do when another time you will have to plow the thankless rock, and break the plowshare? What if your Master should send you where there will be no response to your invitations? What if He should send you among Samaritans who will not even hear you and you shall have to go from city to city, and wipe off the dust of your feet against them? What if you should meet a child possessed of a devil, and find that you cannot cast out the evil spirit because this kind goes not out except with prayer and fasting? Why, man, you will be sorely depressed then, and your courage will fail! If you have fed your soul upon such light bread as apparent success, it will enfeeble you, and what will you do when your prosperity wanes? You will not have steadfastness enough to go on under discouragement, and you will shun your Lord's service; this will be evil indeed! O for a faith that is nourished on something better than appearances—a faith which does not live on gifts or influence, or present success, but sustains itself upon the unfailing promise of the ever blessed God. This is what we need!

Once again, if we were to be filled with this joy to overflowing, we would be found *unable to bear the strain of trial, trouble, temptation, and especially of death!* Take the last—will any man when he lies dying be able to console himself with the reflection, “I have testified of Christ to others”? Will he not need some other confidence? Will he not require something far more personal? Will this be the sweet morsel that shall stay the hunger of his soul? What if he had power over devils? May not devils yet obtain power over him? Will he be able to cheer himself amidst death's chilly waves with this boast—“I was a loud talker, and a mighty professor and the cause of Christ grew under my leadership”? No, in such times as that we shall need surer consolations, and more divine stays than these. Unhappy will he be who has accustomed himself to live upon the excitement of crowded meetings, or upon the laudatory criti-

cisms of friends. Gifts, attainments, labors, successes all heaped together cannot support a soul on the verge of eternity! There is ever present the fact that such things are no sure sign of regeneration; did not the sons of the Pharisees cast out devils? Did not the people say of Simon Magus, "This man is the great power of God"? Yet these were graceless deceivers! We must have sure evidence of the new birth; we must know that our citizenship is in heaven; we must know that we belong to Jesus; in one word, we must know that our names are written in heaven, or else we shall find ourselves utterly undone in our dying hours! For all these reasons then, be not too elated because of devils conquered, crowds gathered, or souls saved, but listen to your Lord's voice while He points you to other reasons for rejoicing.

**II.** So now we come, secondly, to consider THE JOY WHICH NEEDS EXCITING. "Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." I am glad, my brethren, that this is the joy in which we indulge to the fullest, because it is one in which *all the saints may unite* and take their share. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, my dear brother, though you can do but little for Him, you may rejoice that your name is written in heaven! Here the bedridden sister may rejoice! Here the incurably diseased may exult! The child of God whose tongue is silenced by infirmity, and whose conflicts with devils are confined to his closet and his chamber may come in and say, "I too can rejoice that my name is written in heaven." Have you ever remarked how our aged friends always delight to sing—

***"When I can read my title clear  
To mansions in the skies,  
I bid farewell to every fear,  
And wipe my weeping eyes?"***

They do so because experience has led them to dwell much on the joy of having their names written in heaven!

The joy which our Lord commends is one which *springs from faith*, while the other joy arises from sight alone. A man can see that he has gifts; he can see that he has power and influence; he can see that he has success; but rest assured that every joy which comes to believers through the sight of the eyes is a doubtful joy! It is a dainty of which we must eat in scanty measure. Have you found such honey as this? Do not eat too much of it lest it sickens you. But the joy caused by our names being written in heaven comes of *faith*, for eye has not seen the record, neither has any angel read it to us—and only because we believe in Jesus are we assured of it, and for this reason the joy grows in good soil, and is in itself safe. All the joys of faith are safe as the water which flowed from the smitten rock; no poisonous streams can ever issue from that source! This joy is a heavenly manna of which a man may eat according to his eating, and let his soul be satisfied. This is healthy meat which breeds no plague in the camp as the eating of the quail did, for the quail were sent in wrath to satisfy their fierce desires. We never hear of men dying of eating the manna which came down from heaven, but they did die through eating the quail—which was food for their lusts. Be it

yours to get as much as ever you can of the joys of faith, and especially of this—“Rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

*This joy consists in knowing our election*—“knowing dearly beloved, your election of God”—knowing that your names were written in heaven from before the foundation of the world! Oh, what an inconceivable delight is this! To be God’s choice is the choicest of delights! The joy of having your name written in heaven includes the joy of knowing that you are precious to the Lord, for it is written, “a book of remembrance was kept for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name, and they shall be Mine, said the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels.”

To be written in heaven means that we are precious in the sight of the Lord, that He has noted us down in the list of His crown jewels, and will preserve us for Himself till the day in which all His sacred regalia shall be complete. Blessed are those who stand recorded in the inventory of heaven’s jewel house! To be written in heaven means that you claim the right of citizenship in the New Jerusalem, “the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.” Just as there is a roll kept by great cities in which they inscribe the names of citizens, so do we rejoice that our names are written in the roll of the city above, and that from now on our citizenship is in heaven, from where we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus. This is a broad subject for rejoicing, for it includes priceless privileges and honors more than royal!

We also rejoice that our names are written, that is known and published in heaven. Paul mentioned certain of his fellow servants of whom he said, “Whose names are written in heaven.” As much as to say though they have neither fame nor honor *here*, they have a perpetual record where honor is worth receiving, namely, before the throne of God! The heavenly writing signifies that we are part and parcel of Christ’s new kingdom! We are inscribed among His soldiers; we are commissioned to bear hardness for His sake; we are written in heaven among the friends of Jesus; we are accounted as of the sacred brotherhood! In the great book of the divine fatherhood, we are numbered among the children, and from now on we shall be regarded and treated as belonging to the one family in heaven and in earth. This is the matter concerning which we are called to rejoice. “Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

*I see in this fact abundant cause for joy*, but I cannot stay this morning to bring it out in detail. I would have you joy in the great grace which first inscribed your name in God’s eternal book. Oh, bless the sovereign, distinguishing, discriminating grace which wrote down your unworthy name where there might have stood the name of a king, or of an emperor, or the name of a person of great repute, of superior talent, or of great eloquence and learning! Instead of those which men esteem to be great names, there stands *your* common name! Therefore give the grace of God all the glory evermore!

And then rejoice in the grace which has *kept* your name inscribed in that heavenly roll, so that over you that ancient threat of the law has had no power—“Whoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book.” (Exo 32:33). But up to now you have stood among those of whom

the Spirit speaks expressly in the book of the Revelation—"He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels." There stands your name, still recorded in the Lamb's book of life, though many a tear of yours might well fall upon it to think what grace it is which keeps it there, and will keep it there forever! A name among God's sons and daughters is better for you than if your name were in Debrett's Peerage, or in the Royal Almanac de Gotha, for being in the book of life guarantees you peace, joy, security, blessedness now—and secures you a place hereafter among the blood-washed host in the "many mansions," which Christ has gone to prepare for those whom His Father has given Him! Sit down now, beloved, and let your soul triumph to the last degree of joy in this—your names are written in heaven! Forget the falling devils for a while; forget your abilities; forget your successes; cast these all at your Redeemer's feet, where they ought to be, and then take this to yourself as your joy, your portion, your heaven below—that your name is written in the family register of the Eternal! May the Holy Spirit inspire you with this sublime delight.

Brethren, *this is a joy which can be cultivated*. How are we to cultivate it? If we desire to have much of this joy, we must make the fact *sure*. We must be *certain* that our names are written in heaven, or else we cannot rejoice in it. Let your faith grow until it reaches the full assurance of faith, and then shall you rejoice that your names are written in heaven! "How am I to know it?" one asks. Well, friend, one thing is sure, if God has written you down among those who are saved, you can soon know it because you *are* saved! If you are forgiven, your name is written among the forgiven; if you are indeed quickened and made alive, your name is written among the living in Zion. I will not invite you to go further, and peer into that which is unrevealed, for if I did so, I would be as much out of my sphere as those are who pretend to bring men messages from the spirit world! The Lord gives not to any soul, dead in sin, the least right to believe that it is written among the living. Neither gives He to any ungodly man the liberty to hope that he is written among the elect of God. We must have *evidence*, not dreams and airy suppositions, and the evidence of our name being written in heaven is that we have been called by grace out of the world to follow Jesus! We see our election by our calling, and nothing else; we may know what is written about us in heaven by that which is written *within* us on earth! If grace has written upon your heart till you are "an epistle of Christ, known and read of all men," your name is in His secret book! If you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are His and the Lord knows those who are His. He has written them down in His own private tablets which He carries in His bosom. If your name is among true believers on earth, it is among the redeemed in heaven—you need not question that, for the declarations of Scripture put it beyond a doubt.

If you would rejoice in your name's being written in heaven, not only be assured of the fact, but meditate much upon it. Let this be frequently on your mind, "My name is written in heaven. Beneath the name of my

Lord, the Lamb, it is inscribed I am one of His redeemed, and He writes me down among His dearly purchased property. He knows me, looks upon me, and regards me as His treasure. I am not my own, I am bought with a price; I belong to Him." Go brothers and sisters, and exult in this, and let the sweet influence of it be daily seen upon your life—for this joy, dear friends, *will make all else on earth* pale in comparison with the fact your names are written in heaven! What if you are rich? Rejoice not in *this*, for riches take to themselves wings and fly away, but rather rejoice because your name is written in heaven! If you are a man of learning, thank God for your knowledge, and use it for His glory, but nevertheless rejoice not in *this*, for often what is earthly knowledge but learned ignorance? "Rather rejoice because your name is written in heaven." If you are a person of position in the church, thank God if you may glorify Him thereby; but rather *rejoice* because your name is written in heaven! Are you strong and in good health? Be grateful for the privilege, but rather rejoice because your name is written in heaven!

Turn this inspired text round another way, and if you have any sorrow, or if you mourn the absence of any earthly good, do not lament too bitterly—but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven! You are poor; well, be not despondent, for your name is written in heaven! You are despised and your name is cast out as evil—but rejoice none the less, for it is written in heaven! You have but few gifts and abilities, but your name is written in heaven! You could not stand up and edify a multitude, but your name is written in heaven! When you die your departure will make but a small gap in the church's ranks, but your name is written in heaven! Whatever you lack, or whatever you suffer, let this console you, and at the same time *let it strengthen you for service!* The joy of the Lord is your strength; you will feel able to go forward in God's work when you can boldly say "My name is written in heaven! I may well serve Him who has so graciously redeemed me; He has put me down among His people, why should I not therefore expect Him to be with me when I go upon His errands, and attempt to win Him honor? My name is written in heaven, and therefore I will live for Him to the utmost of my strength, and spend and be spent for His name." There seems to me to be such a wonderful moral and spiritual power about this joy in having one's name written in heaven, that it does not require me to explain why the Savior encourages you to indulge in it! It is a corrective to the other joy, but it also has about it independently of that so many admirable uses that we need not add a word by way of guarding it, or restraining it, but may on the contrary earnestly invite you to partake of it without stint! Eat the fat and drink the sweet; rejoice, yes, rejoice abundantly! Rejoice, and yet again rejoice, because your names are written in heaven!

**III.** Now, lastly, into this joy the Savior enters, and we have to look in the third place to THE JOY OF THE LORD IN SYMPATHY with it. And so we add to our text the first sentence of the 21<sup>st</sup> verse—"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit." Why did He rejoice? I think it was with a very same joy that He bids us cultivate as far as it related to Himself, for you see, He rejoiced because *grace was given*. He said, "I thank You, O Fa-

ther, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes.” It makes Christ’s heart glad to think that God has been gracious to the sons of men; to think that He has plucked some of the race out of the horrible pit, and lifted them up from the miry clay, and brought them out of darkness into His marvelous light. It makes His soul glad to see that sin has been overcome in many men, and that many have been renewed in the spirit of their minds by divine grace.

Jesus was also glad at *the Father’s choice*. He said, “I thank You, O Father.” He looks at these 70 babes out of whose mouths He had ordained strength, and He says, “I thank you, O Father, for having chosen these.” They looked a wretched regiment to conquer the world with, did they not? A company of fishermen and peasants, men of the lower order! If a man had to shake the world, he might naturally wish for choice spirits, the *elite*, the aristocracy of thought, at any rate, if not the aristocracy of gold and silver! He might wish to select the refined, the noble, and the educated for his great enterprise. But Jesus Christ is perfectly satisfied with His Father’s choice. It has given me intense joy sometimes to think that our dear Savior is perfectly satisfied to think that His Father should have chosen *me*. He is not like Hiram, who when King Solomon gave him certain cities was discontented with them, but our Lord has never spoken a word against any of the sheep His Father gave Him, nor has He despised any of the elect ones whom the Father has put into His hands! He is perfectly content with you, beloved, perfectly satisfied that you should be chosen, though you are not one of the wise and prudent, that you should be chosen, though you are like one of the “base things of this world.” Jesus rejoiced and thanked the Father because of the choice which His sovereign grace made.

Notice the spirit in which Jesus puts His thanksgiving—He is satisfied with the choice *because it is God’s choice*. “Even so, Father,” He said, “for so it seemed good in Your sight.” That is the true spirit of Christ, to be content with what God wills because God wills it—He has no questions, no judging, but shows an entire submission, no, an intense delight in the august will of God! Let us, also, delight ourselves this morning in the fact that our names are written in heaven because God willed them to be there. How satisfied we ought to be with that will, but how much more joyous may we be because Christ also is content with that will, by which we are given to Him that we may be His people. Then our Savior went on to rejoice *because the grace of God given to us has revealed to us Christ, and revealed to us the Father*, for He says, “no man knows who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.” Now, the grace of God has manifested itself to you and to me, beloved in Christ, by revealing the Father, whom we now inwardly and truly know. We can say in our very souls, “Our Father which are in heaven.” And we also know the Son; we cannot tell others all we know of Him, all the secret fellowships we have had, and into what deep communion we have entered, but we know Christ and are known of

Him, and this is our life's work to go on to know Him yet more and more, and to know the Father in Him.

Jesus exulted because *there was a fellowship about all this*, for He speaks of His knowing the Father and the Father knowing Him—and then of *our* knowing the Father because the Son has revealed Him to us—all of which implies a wondrous communication and communion with the Father and with the Son. Now, this, I take it, is the cream of joy, a joy in which Christ partakes as He has fellowship with the Father and with us, and of which we partake as we have fellowship with Him and with the Father. Now, mark, there is nothing of this in, “Lord, even the devils are subject to us.” There is nothing of this when we merely have success in soul-winning!

A man may work marvels, and yet have no fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and therefore he may lack that which is the essence, the center point, the focus of all true joy! But he who has his name written in heaven has had the Father revealed to him through the Son, and in this he may exceedingly rejoice, for the very news of this is what kings and prophets waited for and found not; this is that which even angels desire to look into. Therefore brethren rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say rejoice!

My last word is for those who know nothing about their names being written in heaven. I would like to turn the text upon you for a second or two, for it has a dark side to you, and I pray God that as you see it, you may tremble and fly to Christ! Whatever you have in this world, sinner, you have nothing worth rejoicing in, because you cannot say your name is written in heaven. Rejoice neither in your wealth, your health, your children, your prosperity, your position, your success—for if your name is not written in heaven, Ichabod is written over all your choicest possessions! As you look on all that you have gained, remember that God can make your souls to hunger and faint even in the midst of all these things! Listen to the thunder of that dreadful sentence, “I will curse your blessings.” “The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but He blesses the habitation of the righteous.” Oh that your names may be written in heaven for His mercy's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
LUKE 9:51-62; 10:1-24.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—219, 239, 719.**

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# REST FOR THE LABORING

## NO. 1322

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING,  
OCTOBER 22, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*[The Tabernacle was on this night thrown open to strangers,  
the entire regular congregation kindly vacating their seats.]*

***“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”***  
**Matthew 11:28-30.**

Our Lord had just been declaring the doctrine of election, thanking the heavenly Father that He had chosen babes, though He had passed by the wise and prudent. It is very instructive that, close upon the heels of that mysterious doctrine, should come the gracious invitation of my text—as much as if the Lord Jesus would say to His disciples, “Let no views of predestination ever keep you back from proclaiming fully My gospel to every creature.” And as if He would say to the unconverted, “Do not be discouraged by the doctrine of election. Never let it be a stumbling block in your way, for when My lips have said, ‘I thank You, O Father, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes,’ I also proceed to speak to you in the deepest sincerity of heart and say, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

I shall notice at the outset who it is that makes so large a promise and gives so free an invitation. There are many quack doctors in the world and each one of these cries up his own medicine. Who is this man who calls us so earnestly and promises rest so confidently? Is He an impostor, too? Will He play us false? Does He boast beyond His ability? Ah, it cannot be thought so, for this man, this marvelous man who promises rest to those who come to Him, is also God! He is the Son of the Highest as well as the son of Mary! He is Son of the Eternal as well as Son of man and He has power, because of His divine nature, to accomplish whatever He promises to perform! As a man, the Lord Jesus was noted for His truthfulness. From His lips there never fell an equivocation. He never boasted beyond His ability or led men to expect from Him what He could not render. Why should He deceive? He had no selfish end to serve or ambition to gratify. Did He not come to tell men the truths of God? It was His errand and He did it thoroughly. Believe Him, then! As you are persuaded of the truthfulness of His character, accept His teaching. And as you believe in His Deity—if you do believe, and I trust you do—believe in His ability to save and at once trust your soul in His hands! If He is a

mere pretender, do not come to Him. But if, indeed, you believe my Lord and Master to be faithful and true, I beseech you attend, at once, to His call!

Where is He now? He is not here, for He is risen. But since He spoke these words, He has lost no power to save, but in a certain sense has gained in ability—for since He uttered those words He has died the death of the cross by which He obtained power to put away the sins of men! He has also risen from the grave, no more to die, and He has gone up into glory with all power given unto Him in heaven and in earth. He is King of kings and Lord of lords! And it is in His name and by His authority that we proclaim to you the gospel of Christ, according to His words, recorded by the evangelist Mark—“All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth: go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

It is an enthroned Redeemer who tonight invites you! See that you refuse not Him that speaks. He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them. Therefore doubt not His power to save you, but come to Him at once and find rest unto your souls. Jesus being the speaker, and His authority and ability being both clear, we shall now come to dissect the words and may God grant that as we do so, the Spirit of God may use every syllable and press His truth home upon our hearts!

And, first, I notice here a character which, dear friends, I think *describes you as the laboring and the heavy laden*. Secondly, I notice *a blessing which invites you*—“I will give you rest.” Thirdly, I notice *a direction which will guide you*—“Come unto Me: take My yoke upon you: learn of Me.” And, fourthly, I notice *an argument which I trust may persuade you*—“I am meek and lowly in heart. My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”

**I.** First, then, here is a character which, no doubt, describes a considerable number of those here assembled—“ALL YOU THAT LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN.”

The words look as if there were a great many such persons—“*all you*,” and, indeed, so there are, for laboring and burden-bearing are the common lot of the sons of Adam. Laborers and loaded ones constitute the great mass of mankind—and the Lord Jesus invites them all without exception—high or low, learned or illiterate, moral or depraved, old or young—“all that labor and are heavy laden” are comprehended in His call. Some have ventured to say that this describes a certain *spiritual* character, but I fail to see any words to mark the spirituality of the persons. Certainly I see not a syllable to limit the text to that sense. Brothers and sisters, it is not our right either to add to or to take from the word of God knowingly, and as there is no indication, here, that these words are to be limited in their meaning, we shall not dare to invent a limit! Where God puts no bolt or bar, woe unto those who shall set up barriers of their own. We shall read our text in the broadest conceivable sense, for it is most like the spirit of the gospel to do so. It says—“*all you*

that labor,” and if you labor, it includes you! It says—“*all* you that are heavy laden,” and if you are heavy laden it includes you, and God forbid that we should shut you out! No, God be thanked that no man can shut you out if you are willing and obedient, and come to Christ accepting His invitation and obeying His command.

To you, then, do we speak, “all you that labor.” You who work so hard to earn a crust that your limbs are weary with your daily toil—come to Jesus! And if He gives you no rest for your bodies, yet to your souls He will! Yes, even for your physical toil, He is your best hope, for His righteous and loving teaching will yet alter the constitution of the body politic, till the day shall come when no man shall need to toil excessively to earn his share of the common food which the great Father gives for all His creatures! If ever rest from oppression and from excessive labor shall become the joyful lot of mankind, it will be found when the Son of David shall reign from pole to pole and from the river even to the ends of the earth!

And come, you that labor with mental labor—you that are straining your minds and exhausting your spirits—you who pine and pant after repose for your souls, but find it not! Perhaps you are laboring to enter into rest by formal religion—trying to save yourselves by rites and ceremonies—by attendance on this service and on that, making your life a pious slavery that you may find salvation by the outward ordinances of worship. There is no salvation there! You weary yourselves with searching for a shadow! You seek for the living among the dead! Why do you spend your labor for that which satisfies not? Turn your thoughts another way! If you come to Christ you shall cease from the bondage of an external and formal religion! You shall find a finished righteousness and a complete salvation ready to your hand!

O you that are trying, by your good works, to save yourselves and doing no good works all the while—for how can that be good which you do with the sole view of benefiting *yourselves*? That *selfish* virtue which only seeks its own—is that virtue? Can that commend itself to God? I know how you wear your fingers to the bone to spin a garment of your own righteousness, which, if it were spun, would be no more substantial than a spider’s web and no more lasting than the fading autumn leaves! Why do you not cease from this fruitless toil? O you that hope for salvation by the works of the law, it is to *you* that Jesus speaks! And He says, “Come to Me, and I will give you rest.” And He can do it, too! He can, at once, give you a spotless righteousness! He can array you from head to foot with the garments of salvation! On the spot He can give you both of these, and so give you rest, you laboring ones!

Some of you are laboring after *happiness*. You think to find it in gain—hoarding up your pence and your pounds and seeking for rest in the abundance of your beloved wealth. Ah, you will never have enough till you get Christ! And when you have Him, you will be full to the brim! Contentment is the peculiar jewel of the beloved of the Lord Jesus. All the Indies could not fill a human heart—the soul is insatiable till it finds

the Savior—and then it leans on His bosom and enters into perfect peace.

Perhaps, young man, you are laboring after *fame*. You despise gold, but you pant to obtain a great name! Alas, ambition's ways are very weary and he who climbs the loftiest peak of honor finds that it is a slippery place where rest is quite unknown. Young brother, take a friend's advice and care no longer for man's praise, for it is mere wind. If you would rise to a great name, become a Christian, for the name of Christ is the name above every name and it is bliss to be hidden beneath it, and overshadowed by it! Christ will not make you great among men, but He will make you so little in your own esteem that the lowest place at His table will more than satisfy you! He will give you rest from that delirious dream of ambition and yet fire you with a higher ambition than ever!

What is it you are laboring for? Is it after *knowledge*? I commend you. It is a good possession and a choice treasure. Search for it as for silver. But all the knowledge that is to be had from the zenith to the center of the earth will never satisfy your understanding till you know Christ and are found in Him! He can give rest to your soul in that respect by giving you the knowledge of God and a sense of His love. Whatever it is you labor after, come to Jesus, and He will give you rest.

But the text speaks of some as, "*heavy laden*." They are not merely struggling and striving, but they are burdened. They have a load to carry and it is to these that Jesus says, "I will give you rest." Some carry a load of sin. I mean not all of you. Some of you think, perhaps, that you have *no sin*. But there are others who know that they have sinned. In the memory of the past they are full of fear and looking, in the present, to their own condition and position. They feel uneasy and unhappy. Their grief has nothing to do with the house or with the barn—it is with their own selves that their burden begins and ends. "I have sinned," they say, "and how can I be forgiven?" This is the load they carry. Some carry a load of *sorrow* on the back of this load of sin—a daily fretting, worrying sorrow from which they cannot escape—to such Jesus beckons and He says, "I will take your sins from you, forgive you, and make you whiter than snow. I will take your sorrows from you, too, or, if the sorrow abides with you, I will make you so content to bear it that you shall thank God for the cross that you carry and glory in your infirmity because the power of Christ does rest upon you." Loaded, then, with sin or sorrow, come to Jesus and He will give you rest!

Or, possibly, the load may be that of *daily care*. You are continually crying, "What shall I eat? What shall I drink? With what shall I be clothed?" Oh what heavy hearts tread our streets! How many are scantily fed and scarcely clothed! What myriads go down Cheapside unhappy because they can see no provision for their most common needs! Even to these, Jesus says, "Come to Me, and I will give you rest." He teaches the sweet art of casting our cares on Him who cares for us. He shows us that, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live." He has a way of making us con-

tent with little, till a dinner of herbs, with His grace to season them, becomes a greater dainty than the stalled ox of the rich man! Come to Him, you poverty-stricken, and He will teach you the science of joying and rejoicing under all circumstances! Even in a cottage with scanty comfort, He will give you rest and true riches.

Or, the burden may happen to be one of *doubt*. You, perhaps, feel as if you can believe nothing and are uncertain about everything. This, also, is a crushing load to a thoughtful spirit. I, too, know what that means, for I have seen the firm mountains of my youth moved from their foundations and cast into a sea of questioning. I, too, have been loaded down with difficulties and skepticisms. From that burden I am delivered, for in that day in which I believed on Jesus—the man, the God—and cast myself at His dear feet to be His servant and believe His words and trust in Him, then did the reeling earth stand still and heaven no longer fled away! I saw Jesus and in Him I found the pole of faith, the basis of belief! Believe in Jesus and you will meet with a blessed rest of mind and thought such as earth cannot afford elsewhere—a rest that shall be the prelude to the everlasting rest in heaven where they know even as they are known!

So Jesus cries aloud tonight, to you who labor and to you who are loaded down with mighty burdens! He cries, and I beseech you have regard to the cry! Are you weary of life, young man? Christ will give you a *new* life and teach you how to rejoice in Him always! Are you disappointed? Has the world given you a slap in the face where you looked for a kiss? Come to my Lord! He will give new hopes that shall never be disappointed, for he that believes in Him shall not be ashamed, world without end! Are you vexed with everybody and most of all with yourself? Jesus can teach you love and put you at your ease again. Does someone fret and tease you from day to day? Come to my Master and the vexations of the world shall gall you no longer. You shall reckon that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in you! Do you despair? Are you ready to fling yourself away? Do you wish that there was no hereafter? And if you were sure there *is* none, would you speedily make your own quietus? Would you afford short shrift to your soul and end this mortal life at once? Ah, do not do it! There are brighter days before you, since Jesus has met you and new life will begin if you will come to my Master and sit at His feet! I will give you a hymn to sing, which shall grow sweeter every day you live—

***“Happy day, happy day,  
When Jesus washed my sins away!  
He taught me how to watch and pray,  
And live rejoicing every day,  
Happy day, happy day,  
When Jesus washed my sins away!”***

I have spoken enough upon the character, which, I think, comprehends many here—“All you that labor and are heavy laden.” I know how well it suited me once upon a time and how glad I was to answer to the call of the text.

**II.** Now, secondly, the text speaks of A BLESSING WHICH INVITES YOU. “Come unto Me,” says Jesus, “and I will give you rest.” “Rest! Rest! Rest!” I could keep on ringing that silver bell all the evening—“Rest! Rest! REST!” “You gentlemen of England who live at home at ease,” you scarcely know the music of that word! The sons of toil, the mariners tossed upon the sea, the warriors in the battle, the men who labor deep in the mines—these know, as you do not, how sweet this music sounds! Rest! Rest! Rest! Rest for the weary body is the outward emblem of that inward blessing which Jesus Christ holds up, tonight, before the eyes of all laboring and heavy-laden souls. Rest—rest which He will give, which He will give at once—rest to the *conscience*. The conscience, tossed to and fro under a sense of sin, has no peace. But when Jesus is revealed as bleeding and suffering in the sinner’s place, and making full atonement for human guilt, then the conscience grows quiet. As Noah’s dove lighted upon the ark, so conscience lights on Christ and rests there forever! No sin of yours shall trouble you when you have seen how it troubled Christ—how He took it on His shoulders and bore it up to the cross—and then flung it into the depths of the sea, never to be mentioned against you anymore forever!

Jesus gives rest to the *mind* as well as to the conscience. As I have said, the mind wanders to and fro, lost in endless mazes. It must believe *something*, but it knows not what. He who is the greatest unbeliever, generally believes the most—only he believes a lie. Incredulity and credulity are strangely near of kin, for he that believes not in God generally believes in himself, or believes in whatever his own dreams may shape. But he that takes Christ and rests upon Him, finds his mind no more disturbed—his thoughts rest, his judgment becomes satisfied, his brain is quiet.

Rest to the *heart*, too, is given by Jesus. Oh, there are choice and tender spirits in this world that need, above all things, something to love! These too often choose an earthly object and lean on that reed till it breaks or turns into a piercing spear. O hearts that pine for love, here is a Beloved for you whom you may love as much as you will or can—and yet never be guilty of idolatry, nor ever meet with treachery! O broken heart, He will heal you! O tender heart, He will delight you! The love of Jesus is the wine of heaven and he that drinks it is filled with bliss! Jesus can give rest to the palpitating heart. You sons of desolation, hasten here! Daughters of despondency, gather to this call!

He can give rest, too, to *your energies*. O you whose unabated strength seeks a worthy field of labor, do you enquire, “What shall we pursue?” You want to be up and *doing*, but you have not found an object worthy of you. Oh, but if you follow after Jesus and, in the love of God and in the love of man, cast aside selfishness, desiring only to be obedient to the great Father’s will and to bring your fellow men into a gracious state, then shall you find a noble and restful life! If you are willing to give up life, itself, for God’s glory as Jesus did—for you cannot well be His disciple if you do not—then shall you find perfect rest unto your souls.

As for your *fears and forecasts* which now are troubled—He will turn them into hopes of endless glory! Dark forebodings of a future, you know not what—the sound of an awful sea whose surf beats upon an invisible shore, and whose billows resound with sound of storm and everlasting tempest—from all this you shall be delivered! Jesus will give you rest from every fear. If you will come to Jesus you shall obtain rest in all ways—the rest of your entire manhood, rest such as shall unload you of your burdens and ease you of your labors—this is the rest which Jesus promises you!

“Alas,” cries one, “I wish I could attain rest. That is the one thing necessary to me. I should then become strong and happy. My mind would become clear and I should be able to fight the battle of life if I could but obtain rest.” Yes, but you cannot have it unless you come to Christ. Not heaven, itself, could give you peace apart from Christ, nor can the grave’s deep slumbers rest you unless you sleep in Him! Rest! Neither heaven nor earth, nor sea and hades—none of them can afford you any trace of it until you come to the incarnate God, Christ Jesus, and bow at His feet. Then you shall find rest to your souls, but not till then!

**III.** This brings me, next, to say that the text presents A DIRECTION TO GUIDE EVERY LABORING AND HEAVY-LADEN SOUL IN THE PURSUIT OF REST. I shall be sure to have your very deep attention to the directions which Jesus gives, for you all need to find rest. Oh, may the divine Spirit now lead you into the way of peace! If you follow our Lord’s directions and do not find rest, then His word is not true. But His word *is* true! I invite you to try it and urge you, at once, to accept His guidance and leadership.

The first direction is, “*Come unto Me.*” “Come unto Me,” He said, “and I will give you rest.” Mark, it is not coming to a *sacrament*. It is not coming to a church, or coming to a doctrine. It is coming to a *person* which is set before you—“*Come unto Me.*” You are to come to God in human flesh, the Deity, Himself, dwelling among us, and taking our nature upon Himself. You are to come to *Him*. He does not bid you *do* anything or *bring* anything! He does not command you to *prepare* yourself, or advise you to wait. He bids you come—come as you are—come now—come alone—come to Him and to Him, only! Nobody here needs me to say that we cannot go to Christ, as to *bodily* going, for in His own actual person He is in heaven and we are here below. The coming to Him is *mental* and *spiritual*. Just as we may come in spirit to some great poet whom we never saw, or approach some renowned teacher whose voice we have never heard, so may we come in thought, in meditation, to Jesus, whom our eyes have never beheld! We are to come to Him in some such fashion as the following words describe—I believe what God has revealed concerning You, O You wondrous person; I believe that You are God and man; I believe that You have died for human sin; I believe that You are able to save, and I think of You and meditate upon You daily. “I believe You to be the Savior, and I trust You to save me. I am troubled and You say, ‘I will give you rest.’ I trust You to give me peace and I mean to follow Your di-

rections till I find it. I ask You to give me Your Spirit that I may enter into Your rest. As much as lies in me I come to You! Oh, draw me while I come! Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief!”

Now, mark, it is not merely to His teaching, or to His commandments, or to His church that you are to approach—it is to HIM that you are to come! Not merely to reading the Scriptures or to offering prayer, for if you put your trust in reading the Bible, or in a prayer, you have stopped short of the true basis of salvation. It is to HIM—a real person—a man and yet God—One who died and yet ever lives that you must draw near. You are to trust Him! The more you know of Him by the reading of His word, the better you will be able to come. But, still, it is neither Bible reading, nor praying, nor chapel attendance, nor church attendance, nor anything else that you can do that will save you, unless you come to HIM! This you can do if you are on the sea where the Sabbath bell never sounds. This you can do in a desert where there are no meetings of God’s people. This you can do on the sick bed when you cannot stir a limb. You can go to Jesus by the help of His blessed Spirit and you can say, “Lord, I believe in You.”

That is the first thing, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.”

The next command is, “*Take My yoke upon you.*” “Come,” and then, “take.” That is to say, no man is saved by merely trusting himself with Christ, unless that trusting is of a living and practical kind. I sometimes explain this to my people as I will explain it to you. A celebrated doctor visits you, when you are very ill, and he says to you, “Do you trust me?” You reply, “Yes, sir, wholly.” “Well,” he says, “if you trust me completely and give your case over into my hands, I believe that I shall see you through this sickness.” You assure him of your implicit faith in him and then he begins to question you. “What do you eat?” He lifts up his hands in horror and he exclaims, “Why, my good man, you eat the very thing which feeds your sickness—you must not touch that anymore, however much you like it—you must have simpler food and a more harmless diet.” “Then,” he says, “I will send you a little medicine which you will take every three hours, according to the prescription. You are sure you trust me?” “Yes.” “Then all will be well.” He comes back in a few days and he says. “You seem worse, my friend. I fear that your disease has taken a stronger hold upon you than before. I do not understand how matters have taken this turn. Are you trusting me?” “Yes, doctor, trusting you entirely.” “Well, what have you been eating?” And then you tell him that you have been eating just what you used to eat and you have broken all his rules as to food. “Now,” he says, “I see why you are worse. You are not trusting me. Have you regularly taken my medicine?” He looks at the bottle upon the table. “Why, you have not taken a single dose!” “No, sir, I tasted it and I did not like it, and so I left it alone.” “How is this?” says the doctor, very much grieved. “My friend, you said that you trusted me implicitly.” “Yes, sir, so I do.” “But I say you do not,” he says, “and I will leave you. I insist upon it that I will not be responsible for your health if you mock me with such a pretended faith! If you believed me, you would

have done as I told you.” Now, Jesus Christ never sent me or any other minister to preach to you and say, “Only believe, and you may live as you like, and yet be saved.” Such preaching would be a lie! It is true that we say, “Only believe,” but that, “Only believe” must be such a believing that you do what Jesus bids you! Jesus has not promised to save you *in* your sins, but *from* your sins, just as a physician does not pretend to heal a man while he feeds his disease and refuses the remedy—he only promises that he will benefit him if the faith which he expects him to exercise shows itself to be a practical and real faith. Beware of a liar’s faith! And that is a liar’s faith which you pretend to get at revival meetings if you then go and live just as you did before—

***“Faith must obey her Maker’s will  
As well as trust His grace.  
A gracious God is jealous still,  
For His own holiness.”***

So Christ says, “Take My yoke.” That is, “If you will be saved by Me I must be your Master and you must be My servant. You cannot have Me for a Savior if you do not accept Me for a lawgiver and commander. If you will not do as I bid you, neither shall you find rest for your souls.”

Then there is a third direction and I pray you notice each one of these words, for failure about any one of them may cause you to miss peace. I remember when I was seeking the Lord, that before I came to peace, *I was made willing to be or to do anything the Lord Jesus chose to bid me do or be.* Are you in such a state? Then listen, for Jesus says, “*Learn of Me.*” That is to say, at first you do not know all His will and, perhaps, you will do wrong—but then that will be in ignorance—and He will graciously wink at your fault. But He says, “Be My disciple; be My scholar; come and learn at My feet.” Christ will not be your Savior if He is not to be your teacher. He will teach you very much, at first, and a great deal more as you go on. And it is essential to your salvation that you have a teachable spirit even as a little child. You must be willing to drink in what Christ pours out for you. The promise is to those who are willing to become *learners*. This is the gospel, but it is not often preached as it should be—“Go you into all the world, and *disciple* all nations,” or, “make disciples of all nations.” Now, what are disciples but *learners*? You must be willing to be a learner and say, “As I learn I will do, and as I am taught I will practice, trusting You, O Jesus, to save me all the while. Not trusting to my doing or my learning, but trusting alone to You. Yes, both doing and learning because I trust You, because You are all my hope, therefore will I do as You bid me, if you, O Lord, will help me.” Come, young men, I am glad to see so many of you present here, this evening. It is a good thing that you bear Christ’s yoke in your youth. You must have some master, you know, and you will either be your own master—and you cannot have a worse—or you will get the devil for your master, or you will get the world for a master, and either of these will make dreadful drudges of you! But if you take Christ for your Master, oh, then it is that you will find Him to be your Savior, and you shall enter at once into rest! And that rest will grow, for, if you notice, my text first says, “I will give you

rest,” and then it says, “You shall *find* rest.” That is to say, you shall find for yourselves a deeper and more profound enjoyment of life as you understand more fully the divine will and obtain more grace to put it into practice.

This is the sum and substance of the gospel. Yield, sinner! Yield! Yield to Jesus! O you proud sinners, come and bow before my Lord! Down with your weapons of rebellion! Lower the crest of your pride! Unbuckle the harness of your self-glorying and say, “Jesus, Master, only save me from the guilt and power of sin and I will bless You forever and ever, and rejoice to obey You as long as I live.” Now, what I have said is no fiction of mine! I have not altered my Master’s conditions, or imported anything into the text that is not there. There it stands. “Come unto Me: take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.”

**IV.** Now the last thing—and I will not detain you much longer, is THE ARGUMENT TO PERSUADE YOU TO DO SO. And that argument is this: First, *the Master you are to serve is “meek and lowly in heart.”* I confess there are some men whom I could not serve. They are proud, austere, domineering. One might sooner eat his flesh from the bone than serve such tyrants. There have been despots in the world whom to serve was degradation. But when you look at Jesus Christ, whose whole Being is love, gentleness, meekness, lowliness—oh, there are some of us who feel that His shoe laces we are not worthy to unloose! We would count it heaven to be permitted to kiss His feet, or wash them with our tears, for He is such a glorious One that His beauty attracts us to Him. He holds us spellbound by His wondrous character and we count it not slavery, but perfect liberty, to wear His yoke and carry His cross! Have you never heard how He has been served by His disciples? Why, they have gladly given up their lives for Him! Let Bonner’s Coalhole, and the Lollards’ Tower, and the stakes that stood at Smithfield tell how men have loved Him! They so loved Him that they sang in the dark dungeon and made it light with their joys! They clapped their hands in the fires, glad to be consumed that they might bear testimony for Him! Have you never heard of old Polycarp, when they bid him deny his Master, saying, “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me displeasure! How can I, now, blaspheme my King that saved me?” Oh, He has bred such enthusiasm in His followers that neither the gridiron of St. Lawrence nor the wild bulls of Blandina have been able to prevent the saints from glorying in His name! They would have gone through hell, itself, to serve Him, if it had been possible! His love has had such power over them—whatever we have to suffer for Him, He suffers with us! Alexander was a great master of men and one of the reasons why all his soldiers loved him so enthusiastically was that, if they were upon a long march, Alexander did not ride, but marched along in the heat and dust with the common soldiers. And when the day was hot and they brought his majesty water, he put it aside, and said, “The sick soldiers need it more than I. I will not drink till every soldier has a draught.” So is it with Christ! In all our afflictions, He is afflicted and He will not have joy until He gives joy to His people! Yes,

He has done more than Alexander, for He emptied Himself of all His glories and gave Himself to die upon the cross and consummated the redemption of His people by His own agonies. Who would not follow one whose footprints show that He was crucified for His followers? Who would not rally to His banner, when you see that His hand which upholds it was pierced with nails that He might redeem us from hell? On which of His disciples has He ever looked unkindly? Which of His redeemed has He ever cast away? To which of those that love Him has He ever been unjust or ungenerous? Therefore I charge you all—and all His saints speak in me while I speak—take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart.

In the last place, *that which Jesus Christ asks you to do is no hard thing*. As He is not severe, Himself, so His commands are not hard, for He says, “My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” True, there are some things which you now delight in of which Christ will say, “Have no more to do with them,” but He will only forbid you those things which injure you, and He will put something better in their place. He may call you to duties which will try you, but, then, He will give you such consolations that they will cease to be trials. In fact, the difficulties of following Christ are delightful to His hearty followers! They love difficulties that they may show the sincerity of their confidence in their leader. Oh, my beloved friends, the service of the Lord Jesus Christ is no bondage! There are no chains to wear! There are no prisons to lie in, or, if there are any, they are not of His making but are the devices of His enemies. Christ’s ways are ways of pleasantness and all His paths are peace. He calls you to that which is right, true, honest, loving, tender, heavenly. Who would not be willing to be called to this? He asks you only to give up that which is evil and displeasing in His sight, degrading to your own mind, and which stops the channels of peace and happiness to your soul.

Above all, it is no hard thing, surely, to believe in Him. “Oh,” says one, “that is just the point. Sometimes I cannot feel that Christ could forgive me.” No, and do you know why? It is because you do not think enough of *HIM* and think too much of *yourself*. If you sit down and think of your sin, you will soon feel as if pardon were impossible but, when you turn and think of *Him*, you will see, at once, how readily He is able to forgive! There is a homely illustration which I often use, and I cannot think of a better, I must use it now. If you were to go, tomorrow, up and down London, right along from end to end, there would be quite a journey for you. Twelve, 14, 15, perhaps 20 miles you could go, and scarcely see a break in the houses. I would have you traverse the main roads and then go down the cross streets, lanes, alleys, and courts. After you had had a day of it you would say, “Dear, dear me, what a mass of people! How do they live?” And if you were nervous, you might very soon come to feel, “I am afraid, one of these days, London will be starved. Here are nearly four millions of people! Lebanon would not be sufficient to find them cattle, nor Carmel and Sharon to supply them with sheep for a single week! They will certainly be starved.” I can imagine your becoming seriously

apprehensive of a famine. Well, then, next Monday morning we will have a fast horse and we will go up to Copenhagen Fields and see the live cattle. And then we will drive to Smithfield, and see the carcasses. And next we will go round to the markets and see where the fish and the vegetables are sold. And when we have finished our tour of observation—which will take us at least two or three hours early in the morning—as you get out of the Hansom Cab, I know what you will say to me. You will change your tone and say, “I am no longer afraid of the people’s starving, but I am more afraid of the meat being wasted! I cannot think where all the people come from to eat all this! I am astonished to see such a mass of food! I should not wonder if tons of it should be spoiled. There cannot be people enough to eat it all.” Your mind has suffered that sudden change because you have changed your point of consideration!

So now, if you think of sin, sin will seem a monstrous thing that never can be put away. And when you have reached that point, it is time to think of the blood which cleanses us from it. Think of sin till it bows you down, but do not think of it so as to despair! Turn your eyes to Calvary’s bloody tree and see, there, the Son of God in agonies of body and soul, pouring out His life for sinners! May the Holy Spirit give you a quick eye for the sufferings of Jesus. Oh, I have sometimes looked at Christ in that way till I have said, “The sin of a *world* might readily be put away! Yes, Master, and if every star that decks the heavens were a world, and every world were as full of sinners as this earth is, yet, surely, no grander redemption for them all would be needed than your august Sacrifice, O mighty Son of God!” John Hyatt, when he lay dying, was asked by one of his friends, “Mr. Hyatt, can you trust Jesus with your soul now?” And the good man answered, “Trust Him with *one* soul? I could trust Him with a million souls, if I had them!” That is how I feel when I think of the death of my Lord Jesus, and it is what I want *you* who are troubled in spirit to feel. As you see Him wounded, bleeding, dying on the cursed tree, sinners, may you find your hearts believing that He suffered thus for *you*. And, as you do believe it, you will find rest unto your souls. May God give that rest to every one of you tonight, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
MATTHEW 11:15-30.**

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# AND WHY NOT? NO. 1323

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
NOVEMBER 12, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And He said unto the disciples, The days will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and you shall not see it”  
Luke 17:22.***

WHILE the Lord was yet on earth the days of the Son of man were but lightly esteemed. The Pharisees spoke of them with a sneer and demanded when the kingdom of God should come. As much as to say, “Is this the coming of your promised kingdom? Are these fishermen and peasants your courtiers? Are these the days for which prophets and kings waited so long?” “Yes,” Jesus tells them, “these are the very days. The kingdom of God is set up within men’s hearts and is among you even now. And the time will come when you will wish for these days back again. And even those who best appreciate them, shall, before long, confess that they thought too little of them, and sigh in their hearts for their return.” This suggests the remark that *we are bad judges of our present experiences*. Those days of which we think very little while they were passing over us come, by-and-by, to be remembered with great regret. Have you not found it so in your own lives? Has it not been so that the very experience which caused you anxiety while you were passing through it was, afterwards, appeared to be so excellent in your eyes that you have wished to have it back again? I have said unto my soul sometimes, “How heavy you are! How are you bowed down! How little do you rejoice in the Lord! It is sad that you should fall into this condition.” The period of heaviness has passed away and then I have chided my heart in another way, saying, “Soul, how careless and unfeeling you are! It were better for you if you were as heavy, now, as you were a little while ago, for then you were in earnest—then you were driven to mighty and prevailing prayer—but now you are steeped in lethargy! You have lost your fervency and are scarcely alive at all!” This stage has gone by and I have again had to look back and feel that when I thought myself insensible I was really very spiritual and sensitive—and that my fears of falling into carnal ease were sure proofs that I was carefully upon the watch. Thus are we delivered from carnal security by being made to see more beauty in past experiences than in those now passing over us. Holy anxiety, when it broods over us, is often mistaken for unbelief. Full assurance is suspected to be presumption and joy is doubted and stunted for fear it should be pride and self-deception! When our spiritual spring is with us, we are fearful of its March winds and April showers. But when it is gone and we are parched with summer heat, we wish we had the winds and

showers back again. So, too, when autumn comes, we mistake ripening for decaying and mournfully wish the roses of summer would return—while all through winter we are sighing for those summer hours we once enjoyed and those mellow autumn fruits which were so sweet to our taste. Thus, brothers and sisters, we continue, if we permit ourselves to do so, to judge each state in which we have been to be better than that in which we are, and to shed useless tears of regret over times and seasons which are gone past recall! While they are with us, we see their deficiencies. When they are gone, we remember only their excellences. It would be wiser if we took each time and season, and state and experience, while yet it was on the wing, turned it to the best account for God's glory and rejoiced in it! It will be time, enough, to mourn when it is gone from us. After all, each season has its fruits and it would be a pity to wither them with idle regrets. Let us turn to good account the old worldling's motto, and live while we live. Let us live one day at a time, enjoy the present good and leave yesterday with our pardoning God. The days of the Son of man, of which the apostles thought comparatively little, they afterwards sighed for. And these present days, of which we are complaining, may yet come to be regarded as among the choicest portions of our lives.

Our second remark is a very commonplace one, you have heard it a thousand times—we seldom value our mercies till we lose them. We best appreciate their excellence when we have to deplore their absence. This has been so often said that I wish it did not continue to be true, for it is an atrocious piece of folly that, after all, we should be obliged to lose our blessings in order to learn gratitude for them! Are we such dolts that we never shall know better than this? Such conduct is only worthy of the idiot or the insane! Can we not put away such childishness and thus remove one occasion for our sorrows? Would it not be well to resolve, in God's strength, to estimate the blessing while we have it, and so to use it that when it is gone we may remember that we turned it to the best account for our soul's profit, for the benefit of others, and for God's glory? We cannot call back the sun and lengthen out these shortening days, but we can, at least, so live that every flying hour shall carry with it, tidings of our zealous industry in our Master's cause. Come, dear brothers and sisters, whatever is our present condition is good, let us bless God for it now and use at once its peculiar opportunities and advantages, lest h

This morning, as the Holy Spirit may help me, I intend to use the text, first, by explaining *its immediate interpretation*; then, secondly, by giving *an interpretation adapted to believers at the present day*; and then, thirdly, by urging home *another interpretation*, much after the same import, *adapted to unbelievers at this time*.

**I.** First, let us consider THE IMMEDIATE INTERPRETATION of our text. The first meaning ought always to have the preference in every discourse. We must always mind the mind of the Spirit. Did not our Savior mean two things, first, that the day would come in which His disciples would look back regretfully upon the past, wishing that they could have

Him walking among them again? And, secondly, that they would anxiously look forward to the future, wishing that they might, if it were only for one day, behold Him in His glory, enthroned in power, as He shall be in the latter days, when He shall stand a second time upon the earth? Looking either backward or forward, the one thing they sighed for was to have their Lord personally and visibly with them.

First, then, I say, our Lord meant *that they would look back regretfully upon the days when He was with them*. In a short time His words were true enough, for sorrows came thick and threefold. At first they began to preach with uncommon vigor and the Spirit of God was upon them so that thousands were converted in a single day. Then they saw how expedient it was that their Lord should go and that the Spirit should be given. Persecution, however, soon arose and they were scattered abroad. And many of them, doubtless, mourned those quieter days when their Lord's presence shielded them. Still, in all their scattering, the power of the Spirit rested upon them and they increased and multiplied—and the joy of the Lord was their strength. But by-and-by the love of many waxed cold and their first zeal declined. Persecution increased in its intensity and the timid shrank away from them. Evildoers and evil teachers came into the church. Heresies and schisms began to divide the body of Christ and dark days of lukewarmness and half-heartedness covered them. In such circumstances many and many a time did the true servant of Christ say, "O for an hour with the Lord Jesus! O for one of the days of the Son of man, when the arm of the Lord was revealed among us! O that we might go to Him and tell Him all our problems and ask his guidance and entreat Him to put forth His power!" I can imagine that all the first generation, and the next, and the next, after our Lord had ascended, had often upon their lips the sigh, "Would to God we could see one of the days of the Son of man! Oh, where is He that trod the sea and made the waves of the lake of Galilee lie still at His feet? Oh, where is He that chased the demons and met our foes at every point?" They must often have felt a strong desire to see one of those grand days of miracles when even the devils were subject to them. It has often occurred to us to desire the same. Though it is now 1,800 years ago and more since the Lord went into His glory and though He has given us the blessed Spirit to abide with us in His place, yet we have fondly wished, but wished in vain, that we could, for one day, at least, see Him healing the sick and raising the dead! See here, the scoffers tell us that God is dead, or that if there is a God, He has no influence in this world, but has laid aside His powers and handed it over to certain rigid laws with which He has nothing to do. Oh, if we could have the Incarnate God among us but for a day to work His wonders of grace, to feed the hungry, to open blind eyes, to unstop deaf ears, to make the lame man leap like a rabbit and cause the tongue of the dumb to sing! Have you not desired it? Your desire will not be gratified. "You shall not see it." It would not be of much service if you *did* see it. It could only happen in *one* place upon any *one* day and you who already believe would be confirmed by what you saw, but not so unbeliev-

ers. We should only have to begin a new battle with infidels, who would as readily deny that which happened today as that which happened almost 2,000 years ago! Only those who saw the miracle would ever believe that it occurred and a large proportion of these would begin to say, "This was probably done by sleight of hand," or they would ascribe it to magnetism, or electricity, or some newly-discovered force. Miracles will not convince when men are resolved to disbelieve! Faith is not born of sight, nor can it be nourished by it. It is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit—and we err if we believe that even Christ's bodily presence and the repetition of His miracles would be of any value! He who believes not Moses and the prophets, neither would he believe though he were to be dazzled with miracles! The kind of faith which merely outward signs would produce would not be the faith of God's elect.

Then, too, we have been wearied with fierce disputing upon this doctrine and upon that, and one has said, "This is the Master's mind," and another has said, "No." One teacher has denounced his fellow and has been answered by an excommunication from his opponent. In these controversies have we not wished that we could go to Jesus with all questions and say, "Master, give us one infallible word, untie or cut these knots with one word of Your lips. Then will Your poor church be no longer disquieted with debates." Brothers and sisters, Jesus is not here! Instead of His presence, we have that of His Spirit, and though you may wish for His bodily presence, it would not be of much service to you in the matter for which you desire it, for, strange to say, if our Lord were to speak again, men would begin to dispute tomorrow about what He meant today, even as they now quarrel over His words of 1,800 years ago! His language in this Book is already so very plain that I do not know, if He were to speak again, that He could speak more clearly than He has done. At any rate, His hearers said of Him, in the days of His sojourn here, "Never man spoke like this man," and I suppose if He were to speak again, He would not improve upon what He has already spoken, nor would He teach us much more. For us to hear Him speaking, again, would only be to create a new opportunity for a fresh set of controversies—and we should have among us the Old School Christians, and the Christians of the later revelation, which would double the confusion and make bad worse! No, my brethren, we need the Holy Spirit to enlighten us as to what our Lord has already spoken, but it is idle to wish that He would teach among us again. We ignorantly desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, but divine providence kindly denies us our wish and tells us plainly, "You shall not see it."

"Ah," but you have said, "Only to see our blessed Lord once! Just to cast eyes upon His beloved person for a moment! To hear but once the tones of His heart-moving voice! Oh, if I might but once unloose His sandals or kiss His feet, how would my spirit feel confidence and joy all her days! How would faith grow if she could but have a little actual and intimate communion with the Well-beloved! I would gladly give all that I have for one glance of His eyes." I know you have indulged that thought,

for I have often had it myself, but dear brothers and sisters, if the Lord Jesus were to come upon earth, I am not sure that you could have much of His company, because there are so many of His people—and each one would wish to entertain Him. He could, as a man, be but in one place at one time, and you might get to see Him, perhaps, once in the year, but what would you do all the rest of the year, when you might not be able to hear His voice because He would be in America or in Australia? How much better off would you be? Surely none at all! It is far better for you to continue to say, “Whom not having seen we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” The fact is, brothers and sisters, the great battle of the Lord has to be fought out upon the lines of *faith* and, for us to see with our eyes would spoil it all. That sight of the eyes and hearing with the ears which we desire, just to break the monotony of the walk of faith, would, in fact, spoil it all, and amount to a virtual defeat. Our God is saying to us, “My Children, can you trust Me? Can you obtain the blessing of those who have not seen and yet have believed? Abraham trusted Me, but he heard Me speak with an audible voice. Moses trusted Me, but he saw My wonders in Egypt and in the wilderness. Can you trust Me without voice or miracle?” The Lord has spoken to us by His Son, who is better than all voices or wonders! Can we now believe Him? Is the spiritual life within us strong enough to believe the Lord without any further evidence? Can we honor Him by resting upon His sure word without seeing signs or wonders? We, upon whom the ends of the earth have come, are set to work out the great problem of defeating the powers of darkness and walking throughout an entire life by simple, undiluted faith—can we accomplish it? By the Spirit’s help we can! I beseech you, brothers and sisters, say unto the Lord, “Lord, increase our faith, and grant that we may so trust You that from now on we may neither ask for sight nor sound, nor anything else that would prevent our resting on Your bare word.” You have fallen into that mistaken condition and wished for one of the days of the Son of man, but you shall not have it, for your heavenly Father has reserved some better thing for you, that you, to the end, with simple, unalloyed faith in Him, should endure and conquer through the blood and the power of your unseen Redeemer, who is really with you, though you see Him not!

Our second reading of the text was that these disciples would *look forward, sometimes, with anxious expectation*. “If we cannot go back,” they would say, “Oh that He would hurry on and quickly bring us the predicted era of triumph and joy! Oh for just one day of the glory of the Son of man!” They would gladly have a drop of the glory before the shower of the millennium. They would hear one blast of His trumpet before it shall sound to raise the dead and see one flash of the eternal morning before whose dawning the shadows shall forever flee. Have you not, sometimes, desired the same? I know when I stood at the foot of the so-called Holy Staircase at Rome and saw the poor deluded creatures crawling up and down the steps, in hopes of obtaining remission of sins by

their prayers, I wished the Lord would flash forth His power a moment upon those horrible priests who had degraded their people by such superstition! One of the days of the Son of man with the scourge of small cords would effect a great change in the Church of Rome, but one of the days of the Son of man with the iron rod would be better, for there are plenty of potter's vessels around the Vatican that need dashing to shivers! Our indignation would anticipate the judgment and put a speedy end to antichrist. We long to see the millstone dashed into the flood from the angel's hand, never to rise again! In all this indignant impatience there is much that needs repressing. Our Lord says to us, "My Children, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come." We know not what spirit we are of, for in reality we are wanting to give up the battle on the present lines and see it fought out in another way! Or, in other words, we consent to a defeat, so far as faith goes, and would console ourselves with victory obtained in another manner.

Suppose we wish for one of the days of the Son of man to break down the idols of the heathen and the images of the Papists—to overthrow all systems of error and to establish straight away, by force of omnipotence the kingdom of Christ? Now, if our wish could be granted, what would it all amount to? It would only manifest what is clear enough, already, namely, the power of God in the world of *matter*! But it would not prove His greatness in the moral and the *spiritual* worlds. If you will think of it, awhile, you will see that the omnipotence of God is not the question. It is clear that any act of power can be performed by the Lord at once. He could, beyond all doubt, in a moment, confound His enemies and utterly destroy their errors by crushing the advocates of them. But that is not the point. The question is—can the force of love and truth by the gospel of Jesus win men's hearts? Can Christ, in His people, conquer sin, falsehood and hatred by purely *spiritual* means? Can sinful creatures, such as we are, continue faithful to God under temptation and allurements? Will God, by the feeble instrumentality of men and women living and teaching the gospel of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, which is a purely *spiritual* power, be able to break down the works of Satan, abolish the false gods, scatter infidelity and antichrist—and establish the kingdom of grace, peace and righteousness? Do you not see, brothers and sisters, that to invoke the interference of mere power is to spoil the experiment? The glory of the latter days befits the period of triumph, but not the time of conflict! To snatch from the future a day of its splendors would be to alter the conditions of the great fight and so to accept a defeat! The result is safe enough! The battle is the Lord's and He will win, and therefore, do not let us give way to these misplaced pipedreams and longings.

"Ah," says one, "I wish He would come, now, and divide the sheep from the goats." Why? Are not the sinners better among the saints for a while, that the gospel may the more easily reach them? Remember, also, that the farmer would not have the tares divided from the wheat till the harvest came. "Oh, but we wish the Lord would come and put an end to

sin.” Is it not better that His long-suffering should patiently wait, calling men to repentance and culling out His elect from the sons of men throughout many a generation? The waiting is dreary to *you*, but it is not long nor dreary to His infinite patience. “Oh, but this delay is tedious, and infidels are demanding, ‘Where is the promise of His coming?’” brothers and sisters, of what consequence is it what unbelievers say? Are heaven’s affairs to be arranged to meet their foolishness? “He that sits in the heavens does laugh; the Lord does have them in derision.” Would it not be better for you, also, to scorn their scorning? Who are they that we should be afraid of their reviling? “Ah,” you say, “but error has so long prevailed and it grows worse and worse.” What if it does? It shall still be overruled for the Lord’s glory! God is still on the throne. He is in no hurry. Remember the infinite leisure of the Eternal! What would a million, million ages be to Him? Truly He comes *quickly*, but you must not read that, “quickly,” after *your* rendering, for, “quickly,” with Him may be slowly enough for us. We cannot measure the paces of the Infinite, for the whole history of man is but a pin’s point to His eternity! Our judgments of Jehovah’s going forth are sure to err—He *walks*, we are told, upon the wings of the wind—He is only walking when He moves as swiftly as the tempest! We may as readily err upon the other side and think Him slow, when in reality, He rides upon a cherub and does fly! A thousand years to Him are as one day, and one day with Him is as a thousand years! No, we will not beseech the Lord, as yet, to divide the sinners from the saints by His infallible voice—we will not expect Him, yet, to say, “Depart, you cursed,” and, “Come, you blessed.” We will not beg Him to display at once His great power and to put down all the principalities of evil with His rod of iron. We will wait and fear not! Faith is now the watchword and the order of the day. Sight is for unbelievers, but patient trust is for the saints. This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith. This it is which glorifies God and overthrows the powers of evil! Believe, and so shall you wax valiant in fight and put to flight the armies of the aliens. Believe, and so shall you be established. Ask not to see, for sight is wisely denied you. Heaven will be the brighter and eternity the more glorious because we hope for what we see not, and do with patience wait for it.

**II.** Secondly, I am going to give, with much solemn earnestness, AN ADAPTED INTERPRETATION SUITABLE TO BELIEVERS AT THIS PRESENT MOMENT. “The days will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and you shall not see it.” That is to say, first, I call our *days of holy fellowship with Jesus* days of the Son of man. And these may pass away to our deep sorrow. We have known days when our faith in Christ has been strong and real and our hearts have drawn very near to Him. Our ears have not heard Him speak and yet He has spoken into our soul. Our eyes have not seen Him and yet our heart has been ravished with His beauties! Oh, the delights, the heavenly joys which we have, then, experienced! Perhaps I speak to some who are experiencing all that bliss at this present time and this has lasted with them for

months, perhaps for years. Happy brothers! Happy sisters! To abide in such a state of mind as this! But cast not aside my word of jealous counsel this morning, for I speak in purest love. Take heed lest the day come when you shall desire to have one of these days, again, and not see it! While the beloved is with you, hold Him and do not let Him go. "I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up nor awake my love until He pleases." Remember, the Lord Jesus is a jealous Savior. He will depart if He finds you love any earthly thing more than Himself. He will hide Himself if you begin to pride yourself upon your gifts and think that, surely, you must be someone or else your Lord would not so sweetly reveal Himself to you. He will up and away, also, if you grow cold and negligent, if you despise the means of grace and especially if you decline in private prayer and if His word shall become a dry bone to you. Ah, when the Lord is gone, what a vacuum remains in the soul! It is the best thing I can say for it—I hope that the dreary vacuum will be mourned over and lamented. I hope that the heart will never rest till Jesus returns, but mourn and lament—

***"Where is the blessedness I knew  
In union with my Lord?  
Where is my heart's refreshing view  
Of Jesus and His word?"***

But, beloved, the Lord Jesus need not go and you need not depart! He will abide with you even as He did with the disciples at Emmaus when they constrained Him, if you are but eager for His company. He will pitch His tent with you and be no more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home! Only take heed that you grieve Him not by sin and He will remain with you till the day breaks and the shadows flee away! And you shall evermore abide in His love and your soul be filled with His joy. But take the kindly warning of this morning, for if you walk loosely, carnally, carelessly, proudly, forgetfully, the days shall come when you shall wish for one of the days of the Son of man and you shall not see it.

Turn the text another way, and learn again. Beloved friends, we have enjoyed days of delightful *fellowship with one another* as well as with our Lord. In the days of the Son of man the disciples were so united in heart that when He had ascended, "they were all with one accord in one place." Now, it is a great joy for believers when we are all knit together in love and when Christian brotherhood is a matter of fact and not of mere talk. Those are blessed days when the family circle is gracious, when husband and wife and children can speak together of the things of God and there is no division or coldness at home. Those are happy times when your bosom friends are Christ's bosom friends! When those with whom you talk familiarly hold converse with God, it is no small bliss to go up to the house of God in company with those who keep holy day and to feel that they are of one mind with us in the things of God. Happy is it, also, for us when in the church there is undivided fellowship in prayer, when everybody seems to be in a praying frame of mind—when there is fellowship in praise and eyes glance joy to eyes with a delight that is common because of the Lord's blessing—when there is fellowship and agreement,

one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one Spirit is in all and upon all. Those are, indeed, the days of the Son of man! Something like this we have known for years—by His grace these days have been common with us. Brothers and sisters, I hope we shall never know the loss of them, but we easily may. The church may soon allow her fellowship to be broken. And how? Why, some do a world of mischief in this matter by denying that there is any fellowship at all and asserting that love and zeal have died out. Did I hear a brother say that there is very little Christian love nowadays? You are a very good judge of *yourself*, brother, for remember you are speaking for yourself! Another says, “Oh, Christian fellowship. I never see any.” Very likely, brother; again I say you are speaking for yourself and you are the gentleman who is likely to put an end to anything like fellowship in others by your acid spirit and bitter talk. In other ways, also, joyful fellowship may be wounded. Let there be a lack of holy walking, a lack of zeal, or an absence of humility. Let there arise in the church the desire in each one to be the greatest, and let there be small care about the glory of God. Let every man become proud and lifted up and there will soon be an end of Christian fellowship! Do you, dear brother, neglect *private* prayer and become as cold as an iceberg? Wherever you go you will chill other people—and there will be frosts wherever you are found. It is one of the easiest things in the world, when the devil and a knot of prejudiced people agree about it, to spoil the fellowship of the saints! But if we labor that love may be promoted and increased, we shall not have to sigh for the days of the Son of man without finding them, but they shall be continued to us all our lives.

Again, certain times may be aptly called the days of the Son of man when there is *abundant life and power present in the church of God*. We know what this means in this church. I wish we knew it more fully. And we know what the contrast means by having observed many dead and decaying churches. What wretched communities some churches are, where the soul of religion is absent! There is a company of people called a Christian church and a man called a minister who gives them a pious essay every Sunday morning. And they go in and out and go home—and there is an end of the whole thing! Meanwhile their neighbors are perishing for lack of knowledge, but they care nothing. The heathen are dying without Christ, but they heed it not. So much is given to the cause of God as must be paid out of sheer necessity for the maintenance of outward ordinances, but there is no zeal, no consecration, no fervor of love. May we never come down to this! O my beloved, I long to see among us yet more and more abundantly, the spirit of divine life, energetic life, fervent, self-denying life—life which consumes everything to achieve God’s glory! Beloved, you have this and may have more of it, but you may also lose it. Life and power may soon depart! Pastor and people may, alike, sleep in spiritual sloth! And then, at such times, the power, having gone from the church, its energy is no longer felt among the unconverted. A living church grasps with a hundred hands all that comes near to it! It is a mighty soul-saving institution, which, with its far-reaching nets, draws

thousands from the sea of death! A living church attracts even the Sabbath-breaker and awakens the infidel. It startles those whom it does not save. When the church is in this state, her converts are plenteous! Then her teaching and preaching are with power and the truth of God pushes down its adversaries. I have been in my inmost soul bowed before the Lord with awful dread lest these days of the Son of man which we have enjoyed in great measure so long should be taken away from us. I tremble lest we should go to sleep and do nothing! I am alarmed lest there should be no conversions and nobody caring that there should be any and yet, everything seeming to be prosperous. I know that people may be growing more respectable and appearing to be more pious than ever they were, and yet everything may be going backwards! God forbid that the dry rot of indifference should seize upon the heart of the church while she yet appears to be sound and strong! Before that occurs may God be pleased to take me home! Many of you wish the same for yourselves, and well you may, for I trust that we have lived too long in the atmosphere of zeal to be able to endure the cold, frigid condition of a careless church! Yet it would soon be our lot if the Spirit of God were withdrawn. O Holy Spirit, do not depart from us! While His power is with us, brothers and sisters, let us be all at it and always at it, with our whole souls serving the Lord Jesus, and so the cloud of blessing shall be long detained.

Again, "The days will come, when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man." This may be true with regard to a *powerful ministry*, for in the days of the Son of man the gospel was faithfully preached by Christ and His apostles and evangelists. It is not for me to exalt my office, if by that I am supposed to imply any exaltation of myself. But still, I believe that to any church and people, an earnest, plain, simple, faithful ministry is a blessing of untold value. Yet the Lord may readily take it away from His church, or He may paralyze its power so that it may no longer be a blessing. This you well know. The Lord may in anger take the candlestick out of its place and then what would happen? Death may silence the earnest tongue and there will be mourning. He who was a spiritual nursing father and a leader in Israel may be removed, and what then? Are we sufficiently thankful for ministers and pastors while we have them? Are not many of the faithful taken away because they have never been valued as they ought to have been? God's servants are precious in His sight and He would not have us despise them.

It may be that in this land of ours, in years to come, gospel ministers will become scarce enough. If the popery which now abounds in the Church of England is to go on increasing, the day may come when the voice of Christian ministry will be silenced by law and persecution allowed to rage, for, be not deceived, Rome has not changed her views! Just let her once get power, again, and all the penal laws will be re-enacted and you Protestants who are today flinging away your liberties as dirt cheap, will rue the day in which you allowed the old chains to be fitted upon your wrists. Popery fettered and slew our sires and yet we are making it the national religion! Or if it should never come to be a matter

of law that ministries should be silenced, yet they may become fewer and fewer, till a little child may number them. We have none too many faithful ministers of Christ even now, but even these may be called away. The Lord may say to this guilty people, "You did not hear them while you had them. Behold, I will call back My prophets and my messengers. You did not regard them when they cried morning and noon and night unto you, and bade you lay hold on Jesus Christ and be saved and, therefore, behold, I will remove your teachers and take them away from you, and you shall not see their faces anymore." Are you prepared for this? What are Sabbaths to some Christians I know of but days of bitter disappointment? They go to their places of worship as a matter of duty, but they are not fed, nor comforted, nor stirred up! They gather no divine encouragement! They find no influences in the ministry to help them on their way. Are there not hundreds of unedifying preachers and hundreds of congregations where the Sunday service is a weariness and a misery? God grant you may never have to mourn and lament the happy days in which the gospel was preached among you in simplicity and earnestness! But remember, if they are not valued, they may speedily come to an end. Infirmities of body and frequent sicknesses are not only admonitions to the preacher but to his hearers, also.

**III.** My last promise was to give A MEANING ADAPTED TO THE UN-CONVERTED. To them let me say these two or three things. To some of you, now present, who have heard the gospel for years and yet have rejected it, my text will, one day, become solemnly true. "The days will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and you shall not see it." Perhaps you will emigrate. You will wander into the backwoods of America or into the bush of Australia where the sound of church bells will never again reach you—where ministers and sermons and services will be unfamiliar things. Then it may be you will say, "Would to God I had used my Sabbaths while I had them, and that I had constantly heard the gospel when I might." Or if you should remain in England, yet in a certain time, shorter or longer, you will lie upon the bed of sickness. And it will become clear to all around that it is your last bed and your last sickness. And then you will begin to say, "O God, are there no more Sabbaths for me? No more preaching of the gospel for me? Oh, that I had them over again!" Will you not, then, be willing to give all that you possess to be able, once again, to hear the voice of God's minister proclaiming pardon through the blood of Jesus? You know you will! At such a time it may be there will be an end to the emotions which you now occasionally feel, for oftentimes God's arrows stick fast in your conscience and you are wounded. There will be no arrows to wound you, then, with tender wounds of hopeful penitence, but remorse will tear you with poisoned fangs! You will be going down to hell filled with hardness of heart! Emotions, which you aforetime quenched, will not come back. You resisted the Spirit and He will leave you to yourself. And yet there will be enough, perhaps, of conscience left to make you wish that you were again at some of those earnest meetings—that you could, again, feel

as once you felt when you were almost persuaded to be a Christian! At such times, it may be, you will look back upon your mother's entreaties with great remorse and wish she could be at your bedside to love you again and weep over her dying child. "Ah," you will say, "would God mother could speak to me about Jesus as she once did, but she is gone." And sisters and friends that once, you said, worried you about religion, you will wish for them, also, but they are gone. They will never worry you anymore with their psalm singing! You will never again be tired, and wearied, and bored with their entreaties! You may be sure about that, for they are in heaven, and you are dying without hope! You are going down to the grave, now, and will never again have to complain of dull Sundays and prosy ministers! You will not be annoyed with street preachers and missionaries. No more warnings, no more entreaties, no more prayers, no more revival services! You are now passing into another region. I wonder whether you will be of a different mind towards these things from what you are now? Will you, then, remember my warnings and call yourselves fools for rejecting them?

I am but giving you an outline of what I wanted to have said, and said with much more earnestness, but I do beseech you think over these things, yourself, in the quiet of your room this afternoon. Within a short time there will be an end to all the opportunities and means of grace you now enjoy. Within a short time, at the very longest, there will be an end of all exhortations, invitations, warnings, entreaties and, it may be when they come to an end you will wish to have them back again. Would it not be far better that you should use them *now*? Escape and find life in Christ, for the lamp of life shall never be kindled, again, to give you a second opportunity! While yet mercy's gate stands open, enter in and find eternal life, for if it is once shut, it will never move upon its hinges again, and you shall be shut out, world without end! God grant His blessing upon these feeble words, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
LUKE 17:20-37; 18:1-14.**

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136, 914, 972.**

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# UNWILLINGNESS TO COME TO CHRIST NO. 1324

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING,  
NOVEMBER 2, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And you will not come to Me, that you might have life.”  
John 5:40.***

OUR Lord was addressing Himself to the unbelieving Jews. He told them that they had received abundant evidence of His being the sent one of God, but yet they had rejected Him, and He solemnly charged this home upon their consciences. If you read the passage at home you will see that in the 36<sup>th</sup> verse He reminded them that He had received the witness of John, and all men believed John to be a prophet. He had come as the herald of Christ, the promised Elijah, and he had borne witness, saying, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” Yet this clear testimony they had despised and trod under foot.

Next, our Lord claimed that His miracles and lifework were a sufficient witness to His Messiahship. “The works which the Father has given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.” There is, perhaps, no better evidence of the truth of our Savior’s mission than His character, life and miracles. The truths which He revealed, the perfections which He displayed and the wonders which He worked all went to show that He was, indeed, anointed of God and sent to be the Savior of men.

Further, our Lord informs them that there was more testimony, still, though in that evidence many of them had not shared. He says, “The Father Himself, which has sent Me, has borne witness of Me.” Three times out of the excellent glory the Father had said, “This is My beloved Son, hear you Him.” This was good evidence, whether they had heard it or not, and though He tells them that they had neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape, yet others had heard that voice and seen the descent of the Spirit like a dove—and their testimony ought to have had weight with them. To you, dear friends, assembled here tonight, this is a very important piece of evidence. We rejoice as we hear that God has actually spoken by *audible* sounds out of heaven and borne testimony to His Son that He is the Christ!

Then our Lord goes on to say that there was yet more evidence in which the Jews had not shared—the unbelieving ones—and that is, the *internal* evidence which, to those who have it, is the very best in all the world! Internal evidence—the evidence of a renewed heart, the evidence of joy and peace, the evidence of conscious pardon, the evidence of sanctification—this is the most convincing of all evidence to those who possess it! It is clear as the sun in the heavens, but they had not shared in it

and, therefore, felt it not. “You have not His word abiding in you; for whom He has sent, Him you believe not.”

And then the Master reminds them that there was yet a fifth mode of evidence which demonstrated Him to be the Christ, and that was the Scriptures, of which He says, (if I may read the text in the indicative and I think it must be so read)—“You search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me.” Therefore, if we will now forget the unbelieving Jews and only think of unbelieving *Gentiles*, there are to us, tonight, evidences concerning the Lord Jesus of the most convincing character. There are John’s witness, the witness of the miracles, the witness of the voice of the Father out of heaven, the inner witness which many of our friends and kindred tell us of, and then the witness of the Holy Spirit in sacred Scripture. All these show that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Redeemer of man that He is the appointed Mediator of the covenant of grace and that through Him there is immediate salvation for all who will believe on Him.

The worst point about the whole conduct of the Jews was that, with all this witness in His favor, which they could not overturn, they would not come to Him that they might have eternal life! At this moment there are many such unbelievers upon the face of the earth and, what is more to the point, I fear that at this hour, in this congregation, there are some who will not come to Jesus that they may have life. There are persons in this great assembly, consisting, as it does, of individuals who have enough thought about religion to come out on a weeknight to hear a sermon about it, who, nevertheless, will not come to Christ! Some of these persons are often here, familiar with these courts and familiar with this voice—perhaps so familiar that they have grown accustomed to it and it has but little power with them. And yet, though they will come to *us*, they will not come to Christ! However, it is to them that I shall speak tonight and I ask God’s people to pray that while I am speaking, the Spirit of God may apply the word to the heart and to the conscience. I speak in great weakness and bodily pain and, therefore, I hope to be aided and assisted by a double portion of the divine strength, and, if it is so, God’s glory will come of it.

Now, we shall notice, first of all, *the great plan of salvation*. Let us look at it—it is coming to Christ that we might have life. Secondly, I shall look and ask you to look at *your position towards it*—“You will not come to Me that you might have life.” Then, thirdly, I shall dwell, for a few minutes, upon what will certainly be *the result of such conduct as this*. And, fourthly, before we have done, let us hope for *a change in your state of mind*, so that before you sleep tonight it shall cease to be true of you that you will not come—and a joyful fact that you *have* come and found eternal life! Your immediate conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ shall be the great object of our discourse and of the prayers which will go with it from the Lord’s people here assembled.

**I.** First, then, the text very briefly sets forth THE PLAN OF SALVATION. Christ speaks of it thus, “Come to Me that you might have life.”

The way to be saved is to come to Christ! Christ is a person, a living person, full of power to save! He has not placed His salvation in sacraments, or books, or priests, but He has kept it in Himself, and if you want to have it, you must come to Him! He is still the one source and fountain of eternal mercy. There is no getting it by going round about Him, or only going near Him—you must come *to Him*, actually to *Him*, and there must be a personal contact established between the Lord Jesus and your spirit. Of course it cannot be a *natural* contact, for His body is in the heavens and we are here. It must be a *spiritual* contact, by which your mind, heart, thoughts shall come to Christ, and faith, like a hand, shall touch Him spiritually, grasp Him by believing upon Him and receive life and grace from His divine power. Just as when the woman of old touched His garment's hem, the virtue went out of Him to her and she was healed, so now, though He is yonder, faith's long hand can touch His divine and human person, by confiding, trusting and resting in Him. And so, virtue will flow from Him into our soul and our mind shall be healed of whatever disease it has.

Think, then, at this very moment, of Jesus Christ, who was once nailed to the cross and died as the sacrifice for sin. Think of Him as sitting, now, at the right hand of God, even the Father, clothed with infinite majesty and might. And if you are enabled, now, to repose your heart upon Him, to believe that He is able to save you and, by an act of faith, to commit your soul into His keeping that He may save it, you have done what He bids you do—you have come to Him and He will not cast you out—the blessings of His salvation shall be yours! This is the coming which He sets before you—the drawing near of the mind, the heart, the soul to Jesus, so as to trust in Him—to trust in Him at once for all that your soul needs.

The text, when it says, “Come to Me that you might have life,” implies that we are to come to Jesus Christ for everything, for *life* includes all that is absolutely necessary for salvation, yes, salvation itself! It is the lowest stage of grace, and yet the term comprehends the very highest condition of the soul, even when it enters into glory and enjoys life at the right hand of God. O sinner, by nature you are dead in sin! You must be made alive or you cannot dwell with God, for He is not the God of the dead but of the living! To be quickened, you must come into contact with Him who is “the life,” even Jesus. And if you come to Him, you have begun to live! You are also condemned to die on account of your breaches of the law. You are condemned already, for you have sinned against the most high God. If you come to Christ, the Mediator, the sentence against you shall be removed. You shall live, for, “there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” As soon as the soul comes to Christ, it receives pardon and justification. These two remove from us the guilt which brought us under condemnation and put upon us a righteousness which entitles us to stand before the most high God without fear, for, “who is He that condemns? It is Christ that died.”

Coming to Christ gives us actual spiritual life and gives us, also, *judicial* life, so that we need not fear the axe of Justice. Those cannot be condemned who are accepted in the Beloved and all are thus accepted who have come to Christ! I will read you two verses, as they certainly may be translated without the slightest violation of the original language. The text runs thus—"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me; but you will not *come to Me* that you might have life"—as if to show you that there are many persons who seek life and even think that they have it, and yet have not found it because they stop short of Christ. They search the Scriptures, but they will not come to Jesus. Is it not, therefore, a good thing to search the Scriptures? Yes, that it is, and the more you search them the better. But it is not *the* thing—it is not the saving work. You may be Bible readers and yet perish! But this can never happen if you come to Jesus by faith. I may put the same truth of God in another shape. You pray. Some of you pray earnestly, but yet you will not come to Christ that you might have life! Is it not a good thing to pray? Yes, indeed, a blessed thing to pray, but still it is not *the* thing—it is not the subject of the great saving *command*. The gospel precept is not, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that searches the Scriptures and prays shall be saved." No, but the gospel runs thus—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." There stands the healing touch—the act which brings us life—faith in the heart and confession with the mouth! To these the promise is made, and of those who neglect these our Lord says, "You will not come to Me, that you might have life."

Now, observe that this way of coming to Christ, which is indicated in the text, *is the only way*. There are other preachings, but there is only one true ministry, and the true ministry bears witness concerning Christ. There are other supposed ways of salvation, but they shall be accursed that preach them! And woe unto them in the last great day who have deluded men's souls with their "other gospels," for, "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid—Jesus Christ the righteous." "Believe and live" is the one unchanging oracle and He that has regard to it, shall find eternal life! But take heed that you despise not him that speaks this wondrous word from heaven, "for there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby you must be saved." Come to Christ! Come to the anointed Savior! Come to the Son of God! Come to Him who is both God and man! Come to the Mediator! Come to the Redeemer! Come to the Great Substitute for sinners! Come and trust Him and you shall live! I have no other message for you. Do not reject it, for if you do you must perish without hope.

And this way, as it is the only one, blessed be God, is *a sure way and an open way*. Sure, for none ever tried it and failed. There lives not on earth, there lives not in hell—one soul that trusted in Christ and yet was not saved—

***"There is life in a look at the Crucified One.  
There is life at this moment for you."***

life in every instance. There has never yet been one that did confide, alone, in Jesus, that found faith to be useless, for faith is a living thing and works by love. It purifies the soul and saves the man through Jesus Christ.

And it is an open way as well as a sure one—open to you tonight, dear friend. “Say not in your heart, who shall ascend into heaven to bring Christ down? Or who shall descend into the deep to bring Him up again from the dead? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart.” If you will, with your heart believe in the Lord Jesus, and with your mouth make confession of Him, you shall be saved, even you! The latter days have fallen upon us! The shades of the evening of the world and the damps of its autumn are all around us! But still there sounds forth the cry, “Whoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.” Still is the fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness—

**“Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood  
Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransomed church of God  
Is saved to sin no more.”**

Thus have I put, as plainly as I can, the plan of salvation. That is it and that is all of it—it is to come to Christ! If I talked much longer I might darken, but I could scarcely make clearer, the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus. It is to come to Christ, to trust Him, to obey Him, to yield yourself to Him, to love Him! So, to come to Him is to come to Him on earth and be with Him forever and ever in heaven!

**II.** Now, secondly, and very solemnly, I want to speak to you unconverted ones, who have heard the gospel a long time, about YOUR POSITION IN REFERENCE TO THIS PLAN OF SALVATION. “You will not come to Me that you might have life.”

That describes your position and I earnestly beseech you to look it in the face. I would have you get by yourself and say to yourself aloud and deliberately, “*I will not* come to Him, that I might have life.” But you reply, “That would be an awful thing to say!” I know it would be, but it is a more awful thing, to my mind, not to dare to say it and yet practically to be doing it! Are you ashamed to *say* it and yet *not* ashamed to do it? I know there is a curious feeling about some men that if the preacher openly rebukes a vice which they practice they find fault with him for even speaking of it. They say that he ought not to allude to such vile things, yet they live in these very sins from day to day! This is the hypocrisy and cant of sinners and it is detestable! And so men will live in unbelief, but if you ask them to say decidedly, “I do not believe,” or to assert openly, “I will not come to Christ that I may have life,” they think we must be as wicked as they are to ask them to say such a thing! Now, what you dare do, you will surely dare say, or else you are a coward and a liar to your soul! If it is a right thing to *do*, it must be right thing to *say*. I do not ask you to go and proclaim it to others—to infect them with your disease—but I ask you to say it *to yourself*. I ask you to label yourself what you are and let it be distinctly understood by your own soul

what you mean and where your position is. I pray you act honestly and openly with your own heart. It surely cannot be wise to cheat yourself.

You will not come to Jesus that you might have life—we know this to be true of many of you because you have not come. If you say it is not true that you will not come, and then I reply, “How is it that you have not come?” If you have come, how readily do I withdraw the charge! With what joy and happiness do I bless the Lord that you have been led to His dear Son! But, if you have not come, dear friend—and you know, yourself, whether you have or not—then I cannot retract a syllable of the accusation, but I repeat the charge—you will not come to Him that you might have life. I know that you would rather put it another way and you would say softly, “I cannot come.” But this is clattering language! Do you know what, “cannot,” in such a case means in Scripture? It means the same thing as, “will not.” If you have the will, you have the power, for, wherever there is the will, God has it, and He does not give the will without giving the power! Though sometimes we have to cry out that, “to will is present with us,” but, “how to perform that which we would, we find not,” yet that lasts not long. When the Lord gives the will, He soon gives the way. His grace does not divide the two gifts—the power comes with the will. And if you have the will tonight you have the power. That you cannot is true, but it is only true because you *will* not—your will is the seat of the weakness. I may say of a man that he cannot be chaste. Why? Because he will not be chaste! That is the *only* reason! I may say of another man that he cannot speak the truth. What do I mean by that? I mean that he is such a liar that he *will* not speak the truth. He could if he would, but there is the point—he will not. Our weakness to do good lies in the fact that our will, itself, is opposed to the right. “You *will* not come that you might have life” is the true English of that excuse of yours that you cannot! If you would, you could. It is because you *will* not that you cannot!

But one of you will say, “It is not that I will not, but that I *dare* not come to Jesus.” Ah, my dear friend, but if you say, “I dare not,” I have to ask you on what grounds you support that remarkable fear. Dare not be saved? Dare not come to the Son of God whose very person is love? Dare not do what God commands you? “This is His commandment that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent.” Turn that, “dare not,” round the other way—it were much better used so—“I dare not *refuse* to come! I dare not tarry any longer! I dare not disbelieve! I dare not distrust! I dare not keep my sin and let my Savior go.” That is the true kind of, “dare not,” but the other is an idle excuse. How idle it must be for a man to say, “I dare not obey my God and trust in His Son,” I leave your own consciences to judge. The truth is, “You will not come to Christ, that you might have life.”

Let me hold you, now, and ask you to think for a few minutes of what you are doing. Think of *the life* which you are spurning! There is no life for you anywhere but in Christ—and if you will not come to Him you will never have life! That is to say, you will not have that without which this

poor existence of yours is only a lingering death. The grace which enables you to overcome sin, the joy which enables us to master trouble, the light which helps us to look into divine mysteries, the inward spiritual principle given in regeneration, by which we have fellowship with God and with His Son Jesus Christ—these are main ingredients in the life which you need. O my dear friend, life—the life of God in the soul—is to me the one thing necessary, the one thing without which all the world were not worth having! It would be better to be poor and hungry and naked than to be without this inner life. It is true life in this world to live by faith upon the Son of God—and that you are missing and despising! This is the life which made your mother what she was. You remember her holy living and you cannot forget her triumphant dying! The life which makes men holy, happy, safe and blessed is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” and this it is that you need. Will you reject it? O be not so foolish!

Remember that this life which you spurn is eternal life! It is the life with which you are to live in another world, the life which shall qualify you to dwell with cherubim and seraphim and join their songs; the life which will enable you to stand before the throne of God and cast your crown at His feet in ecstasy of grateful joy! It is this that you do not care to have, for you will not come to Christ that you might have life. Do not continue to spurn the best of God’s gift!

Let me tell you, the day will come when you will wring your hands in anguish to think that you despised that life. It may be that it will be so in the throes of death, but it is certain that it will be so amid the terrors of judgment, when there shall open wide before you the gates of hell, and before you shall blaze the lake that burns with fire and brimstone which is the second death. They who are not born twice will have to die twice! And he that has not life through faith in Jesus must die the second death and endure its pangs forever and forever. See, then, the life you spurn, dear friend, and ask yourself whether this is wise.

Next, think—and I wish I could speak to you as I would—think of the person whom you reject. “You will not come to ME,” says Christ. I have been thinking of this all day—how it is that any man can be so base as not to come to my Lord Jesus Christ. Look at Him! Let me portray Him to you as He completed your redemption. He hangs upon His cross—His face is all stained with the bruises and the spit of the rough soldiers. And down it trickles the red drops that have been started from His temples by the crown of thorns. His eyes are red with weeping and with watching, and His visage is more marred than that of any man. You can see all His bones. His body is emaciated and worn with anguish. His hands—the cruel nails have dragged and torn till you see the wide gaping wounds from which the blood flows. His feet are the same—they are both fountains of blood. And then His side! Behold His side—from which gushed blood and water from the deep wound made by the spear. It is He who thus redeemed mankind! The Lord of glory hangs there! The only-begotten Son of the Highest, the Prince of the kings of the earth has given Himself up to bleed and to die a felon’s death for you! And what is

your attitude towards Him? You turn your backs upon Him! Is it nothing to you? “Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?” Do you mean that it is nothing to you that Jesus should bleed to redeem men? Do you mean to refuse a share in that redemption? Do you utterly reject the bloody ransom price He paid upon the cross? If it is so, then put it down in plain English—put it down in black and white and sign your name to it—“I refuse Christ’s blood.” To write it down is the very best thing you can do if it is, indeed, so! Because, perhaps, when you have read the dreadful lines, your conscience may be lashed into something like life and you may begin to look at Him whom you have pierced, and mourn because of Him. Think about this, you that will not come to Him that you might have life.

But, lo, I see Him yet again! He is in heaven now. Quite another picture may we set before you. There He is at the right hand of God, even the Father, clothed with a snow-white garment down to His feet, and girt about with a golden sash, distributing crowns and thrones! He is worshipped by ten thousand times ten thousand blood-washed spirits and angels in all their ranks! Now you can be sure of this, that He it is to whom you will not come! From His glory as well as from His shame you turn away! It is well for Me that I do not feel, just now, about it as I did before I entered this pulpit, for if I did I could only stand here and burst into tears, and could not dare to say what I am uttering now. This is so unkind to Jesus! So ungenerous to Jesus! I cannot bear it! It is at the price of your *souls* that you reject Him! Will you sooner be damned than have Him? Do you mean that? What strange hate is this, that to show your hatred of Jesus you will destroy yourselves? O foolish sinners! Foolish sinners! What mad freak of sin is this, that you will bear your sins and dare the death they bring sooner than have Christ to be your Savior? Yet it is so, so long as it is true that you will not come to Him that you might have life.

Now, think, again, what it is you are doing. What is *this which you refuse to do*? What is the action you refuse? You refuse *to come to Him*. If it were to come to Sinai, where the trumpet waxes exceedingly loud and long, and where the flaming lightning flashes forth amidst tremendous thunder, I could understand your reluctance. But the deed you refuse to do is to come to Calvary, to come to Jesus where nothing sounds but love and mercy! You will not *come to Him*. That means, with some of you, that you will not even *think* about Christ. He may die, but you cannot trouble to think His redemption is over. He may rise and thus may justify His people, but you have something else to think about. And that something else, with some of you, is earning your daily bread. With others of you it is only how you may pass the hours and go from one amusement to another. Salvation is worth Christ dying for, but not worth your thinking about! Alas, how the mass of people in London think of *anything* except Christ and their souls! The papers ring with some fresh thing and the news is on everybody’s tongue. But my Lord’s death for sinners—oh, it is a bore, is it not? It is a weariness to hear about it and, “sermons are very

dull,” they say. It is because men’s hearts are dead that sermons are dull! Jesus is not endured because men will not come to Him and live! O blessed Spirit, turn their hard hearts and stubborn wills, and turn them now! While some will condescend to think a little, yet they utterly refuse to come to the point and believe. Now, surely, the very least thing that the Lord Jesus Christ can claim of us is that we believe Him! When has He ever been false? What is there about His character that is untrue? It is due to truth to render to it our confidence and our trust—and when we know that this faith, this believing Him, this trusting Him, which is His due, is, nevertheless, simple as it is, the highest and most saving act of the mind—it is strange that we should still refuse to believe! What Jesus claims is that we so believe Him as to obey Him. Now, if He were a tyrant, we might very well be reluctant to obey. But He is so gracious, His yoke is so easy and His burden is so light that it is foolish as well as wicked to not obey! All His followers tell us that there never was such a Master and that they wish they could altogether obey His every will and wish, for obedience to Him is bliss to them—and yet you refuse to yield obedience to such a Master? Is this wise or right? He asks your love—the love of your heart. What a heart that must be which cannot and will not love Him! How foul, how vile, how dead, how black, how stony is the heart that cannot love Him who gave His heart’s blood to redeem us! O soul, soul, soul, if you perish, it is not because the gospel was hard and exacting and its terms severe, or because the saving act was impossible to you and out of your reach—you perish because you will not come to Him that you might have life!

I desire you, still, to keep your eyes fixed on that fact, my friend, that you are acting as if you had said, “I will not come to Christ that I might have life.” *Think of why you will not come.* Can you give me some good reason why you will not come? Perhaps you answer that you hope to find salvation somewhere else. These Jews fancied so. They thought that they would find it in the Scriptures. “In them you think you have eternal life.” Hence a personal Christ was rejected, that they might go on searching into the original text, counting the letters and disputing over knotty points. They were, however, mistaken—the Bible cannot save! Perhaps you feel that you can get more good by trying to understand doctrine than by coming to Christ. You will be bitterly mistaken! However excellent the Scriptures are, if you put Scripture in the place of Christ, you have made a choice and you have set your choice in opposition to God’s choice, which is this—“that you believe on Him whom He has sent.” It is not on “*it*”—that you are to believe, but on “*Him* whom He has sent.” That is the great saving point, the person, the very person of the Lord Jesus Christ! O beloved, I wish you could see this—that Jesus Christ gathers up in His person all the teaching of Scripture—that in His blessed person is all the efficacy of His redemptive work for men and that what is to be done is *to come to Him*. When you do not believe in Jesus, you refuse to honor the Son of God. And He has said, “He that refuses Me, refuses Him that sent Me.” You refuse God when you refuse His Christ!

Possibly, dear friend, the reason why you will not come is that you indulge some secret sin which you cannot give up. O that secret sin! That secret sin! That worm at the root of the soul! I know not what it is, my friend, but God knows and you know. Is it your pride? Can you not stoop to be saved by mercy, through the grace of God? Or is it a fleshly lust from which you cannot separate yourself? Is it dear to you as your right hand? Off with it, man! "It is better for you to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire." Is sin holding you back from Christ, from life, from heaven? Dear as this Barabbas may be, do not prefer him to your Lord! Away with the sin, it is a viper! Away with it, or else God will say, "Away with *you*."

I fear, in some cases, that the chain which holds men back from Christ is sheer frivolity. It is so with a great many young people—and there are some old people who are quite as trifling—they have gray hair on the outside of their heads, but none within. Their minds are none the riper for being old. They are silly, frivolous, and superficial, trifling with everything, never serious upon any theme—and above all others they need to be sharply rebuked. Ah, sirs, if you must play, I wish you would play with something cheaper than the blood of Christ! If you must trifle, trifle with something that will cost you less than your souls! It seems a dreadful thing for a man to stake his whole estate on the running of a horse, as some have done. But it is less foolish than to stake your endless destiny upon the possibility of your living another week, or another day! Yet you are doing this—you know you are! May God awaken you, dear friend! May He speedily awaken you from such folly as this.

Now, I want you, dear hearer, to come back to the point and look at the fact that you will not come to Christ. You will do anything else, but you will not come to Christ. You will come out to our special meetings, but why do you come? What do you come to these meetings for if you do not need Christ? And you will pray from mere habit—you would not like to go to sleep without praying after a fashion—but what do you pray for if you will not have the best gift which God can give you, even Jesus Christ? What is there worth praying for if you refuse Christ? Yes, you will search the Scriptures, but, in the name of reason, for what? Why do men go into the harvest fields if they need no grain? Why do they dig in the mines if they do not need to find metals? The Scriptures (with all reverence of them do we speak) are but the mine—Christ is the treasure! They are the fields, but He is the harvest! Take Christ out of the Bible and what is it? He is the sum and the substance of it all! And when you search the Scriptures you should search them that you may find *Him*, or else you misuse and abuse them; but why this strange reluctance? "Oh, I need to feel," says one. Yes, I know. You would like to feel deep convictions. You would like *anything* rather than to come to Christ. "But," says one, "I must have time to think." I know—you want to be saved by your *thinking*—anything is more desirable to you than coming to Christ. Come to Christ just as you are, just as you are *now*, while now His Spirit

pleads with you! Ah, you will not do this, some of you will not, and therefore I must leave you. Let us pass on to the third point very briefly.

**III.** Let us consider thoughtfully WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF THIS. I will put myself in your place, now, and speak for you.

“I will not come to Christ that I might have life.” When I have said that, what does it involve? It means that any good feelings which I may have had through hearing the preaching of the gospel, or through listening to the addresses of earnest Christian men, are as the morning cloud and as the early dew. They are all to end in nothing and to pass away. They cannot do me any good. I have heard sermons in vain. I have read the Scriptures in vain. I have attended prayer meetings in vain. If I will not come to Christ all these things are in vain! But what next? Why, then, I may expect that the feelings I now have (for I am conscious of some measure of holy desire) will pass away. I shall grow harder and harder, and harder in heart, and more indifferent, and more callous as time rolls on. And what will happen to me, then? Why, this—I never shall come to Christ at all!

I suppose that some of you, though you will not come now, think you will come to Jesus one day. Oh, if it were told you, to a dead certainty, that you never would come, you would stand aghast. “Ah, me!” you would say, “Must I, then, be lost forever? Shall I never come to Christ?” My dear friend, it looks very likely that you never will be saved. If you are to come to Jesus, why not now; *why not now?* Every day adds to the chances, if I may use such an expression, adds to the deadly “odds” against you, that you will never come to Christ! Ah, it is a prediction which might be terribly accurate if we were to say that some of you who have oftentimes been awakened and yet have gone to sleep again, will sleep forever and will never lift up your eyes till you awake in the flames of hell! Ah, God, in Your mercy, prevent this! But this is the last result of all. If I will not come to Christ that I might have life, then I must die eternally and be driven forever from the presence of God and from the glory of His power! And, O my soul, what will that be? What will that be? Ask those who know what it is. Ask Dives while he begs Abraham to send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue! Ask those whose perpetual reply is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth! But I will not pause to give you their answers—it would be too dreadful! Look at your future! If you will not come to Jesus that you might have life, you shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides in you!

**IV.** And now, last of all, LET US HOPE THAT THERE WILL BE CHANGE, and a change tonight! I felt, while I was speaking, that some of you were saying, “No, I dare not say that I will not come.” Well, then, there is only one other word to say—“*I will come.*” O that you would say, “I will come,” and then carry out the resolve at once! “He is worthy of my trust. I will trust Him. He is worthy of my obedience. If He will help me, I will obey Him. He is worthy of my love. By His rich grace I will love Him—I will, I will.” Thank God, dear friend, if you have said that, though it has been with trembling lips, for you may come. He bids you. His own words

are, “Come to Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” You may come. His church invites you and His Spirit invites you, for, “the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.” We who have, ourselves, come, would all invite you, for it is written, “Let him that hears, say, Come. And whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” Do you feel a softness of soul coming over you? Does something whisper, “Now is mercy’s hour”? Then, I beseech you, quench not the Spirit, and tarry no longer! No, tarry not even to leave that pew and find your little chamber and fall on your knees, but *here and now* yield yourself to Him! It will be the best moment you have ever lived—the beginning of days to you! As the night when Israel came out of Egypt shall this night be to your spirit if you yield yourself—

***“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Christ’s kind arms I fall.  
He is my strength and righteousness—  
My Jesus, and my all.”***

What He bids you do is two-fold, believe and *be baptized*. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” First, with the *heart*, man believes, and next with his mouth he makes confession of Jesus. Baptism is the way to make confession according to Christ’s own rule, to which I charge you to be obedient—and may He accept you, and bless you this night, for His name’s sake. We shall sing this one verse, and I ask nobody to sing it who does not mean it—

***“‘Tis done—the great transaction’s done!  
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine!  
He drew me, and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess the voice divine.”***

Now, for once do not stand up, but sit still and sing it just as you are—those who can sing it. As for the rest of you, the Lord have mercy upon you. Amen.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 5:24-27.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—486, 515.**

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# CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW

## NO. 1325

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
NOVEMBER 19, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”  
Romans 10:4.*

YOU remember we spoke last Sunday morning of “the days of the Son of man.” Oh that every Sunday might be a day of that kind in the most spiritual sense! I hope that we shall endeavor to make each Lord’s Day, as it comes round, a day of the Lord, by thinking much of Jesus, by rejoicing much in Him, by laboring for Him and by our growingly importunate prayer that to Him may the gathering of the people be. We may not have very many Sabbaths together—death may soon part us—but while we are able to meet as a Christian assembly, let us never forget that Christ’s presence is our main necessity. And let us pray for it and entreat the Lord to grant that presence always in displays of light, life and love! I become increasingly earnest that every preaching time should be a soul-saving time. I can deeply sympathize with Paul when he said, “My heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.” We have had so much preaching, but, comparatively speaking, so little believing in Jesus. And if there is no believing in Him, neither the law nor the gospel has answered its end and our labor has been utterly in vain. Some of you have heard, and heard, and heard again, but you have not believed in Jesus! If the gospel had not come to your hearing, you could not have been guilty of refusing it. “Have they not heard?” says the apostle. “Yes, verily,” but still, “they have not all obeyed the gospel.” Up to this very moment there has been no hearing with the inner ear and no work of faith in the heart in the case of many whom we love. Dear friends, is it always to be so? How long is it to be so? Shall there not, soon, come an end of this reception of the outward means and rejection of the inward grace? Will not your soul, soon, close in with Christ for present salvation? Break! Break, O heavenly day, upon the benighted ones, for our hearts are breaking over them!

The reason why many do not come to Christ is not because they are not earnest, after a fashion, and thoughtful and desirous to be saved, but because they cannot stand God’s way of salvation!

“They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” We get them by our exhortation so far on the way that they become desirous to obtain eternal life, but, “they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.” Mark, “submitted themselves,” for it needs submis-

sion! Proud man wants to save *himself!* He believes he can do it and he will not give over the task till he finds out his own helplessness by unhappy failures. Salvation by grace, to be sued for in *forma pauperis*—to be asked for as an undeserved blessing from free, unmerited grace—this it is which the carnal mind will not come to as long as it can help it! I beseech the Lord so to work that some of you may not be able to help it. And oh, I have been praying that, while this morning I am trying to set forth Christ as the end of the law, God may bless it to some hearts that they may see what *Christ* did, and may perceive it to be a great deal better than anything *they* can do! May they see what Christ finished and become weary of what they, themselves, have labored at so long and have not well commenced at this day. Perhaps it may please the Lord to enchant them with the perfection of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. As Bunyan would say, “It may, perhaps, set their mouths a watering after it,” and when a sacred appetite begins, it will not be long before the feast is enjoyed! It may be that when they see the raiment of worked gold which Jesus so freely bestows on naked souls, they will throw away their filthy rags which now they hug so closely.

I am going to speak about two things, this morning, as the Spirit of God shall help me. The first is, *Christ in connection with the law*—He is “the end of the law for righteousness.” And secondly, *ourselves in connection with Christ*—to everyone that believes Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.”

**I.** First, then, CHRIST IN CONNECTION WITH THE LAW. The law is that which, as sinners, we have, above all things, cause to dread, for the sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. Towards us the law darts forth devouring flames, for it condemns us and in solemn terms appoints us a place among the accursed, as it is written, “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” Yet, strange infatuation! Like the fascination which attracts the gnat to the candle which burns its wings, men, by nature, fly to the law for salvation and cannot be driven from it! The law can do nothing else but reveal sin and pronounce condemnation upon the sinner. And yet we cannot get men away from it, even though we show them how sweetly Jesus stands between them and it. They are so enamored of legal hope that they cling to it when there is nothing to cling to—they prefer Sinai to Calvary, though Sinai has nothing for them but thunder and trumpet warnings of coming judgment! O that for awhile you would listen anxiously while I set forth Jesus, my Lord, that you may see the law in Him!

Now, what has our Lord to do with the law? He has *everything* to do with it, for He is its end for the noblest object, namely, for righteousness! He is the “end of the law.” What does this mean? I think it signifies three things.

First, that Christ is *the purpose and object of the law*. Secondly, that He is *the fulfillment of it*, and, thirdly, He is *the termination of it*. First,

then, *our Lord Jesus Christ is the purpose and object of the law*. It was given to lead us to Him. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, or rather our attendant to conduct us to the school of Jesus. The law is the great net in which the fish are enclosed that they may be drawn out of the element of sin. The law is the stormy wind which drives souls into the harbor of refuge. The law is the sheriff's officer to shut men up in prison for their sin, concluding them all under condemnation in order that they may look to the free grace of God, alone, for deliverance! This is the object of the law—it empties, that grace may fill—and wounds that Mercy may heal. It has never been God's intention towards us, as fallen men, that the law should be regarded as a way to salvation for us, for a way of salvation it can never be. Had man never fallen; had His nature remained as God made it, the law would have been most helpful to Him to show Him the way in which He should walk. And by keeping it He would have lived, for, "He that does these things shall live in them." But ever since man has fallen, the Lord has not proposed to him a way of salvation by works, for He knows it to be impossible to a sinful creature. The law is already broken and whatever man can do, he cannot repair the damage he has already done. Therefore he is out of court as to the hope of merit. The law demands perfection, but man has already fallen short of it and, therefore, let him do his best; he cannot accomplish what is absolutely essential. The law is meant to lead the sinner to faith in Christ by showing the *impossibility* of any other way! It is the black dog to fetch the sheep to the shepherd. It is the burning heat which drives the traveler to the shadow of the great rock in a weary land.

Look how the law is adapted to this, for, first of all, it shows man his sin. Read the ten commandments and tremble as you read them! Who can lay his own character down, side by side, with the two tablets of divine precepts without at once being convinced that he has fallen far short of the standard? When the law comes home to the soul, it is like light in a dark room revealing the dust and the dirt which otherwise had been unperceived. It is the test which detects the presence of the poison of sin in the soul. "I was alive without the law, once," said the apostle, "but when the commandments came, sin revived and I died." Our comeliness utterly fades away when the law blows upon it. Look at the commandments, I say, and remember how sweeping they are, how spiritual, how far-reaching! They do not merely touch the outward acts, but dive into the inner motives and deal with the heart, the mind, the soul! There is a deeper meaning in the commandments than appears upon their surface. Gaze into their depths, and see how terrible the holiness which they require is! As you understand what the law demands, you will perceive how far you are from fulfilling it and how sin abounds where you thought there was little or none of it. You thought yourself rich and increased in goods and in no need of anything, but when the broken law visits you, your spiritual bankruptcy and utter penury stare you in the face. A true

balance discovers short weight and such is the first effect of the law upon the conscience of man.

The law also shows *the result and mischief of sin*. Look at the types of the old Mosaic dispensation and see how they were intended to lead men to Christ by making them see their unclean condition and their need of such cleansing as only He can give. Every type pointed to our Lord Jesus Christ! If men were set apart because of disease or uncleanness, they were made to see how sin separated them from God and from His people. And when they were brought back and purified with mystic rites in which were scarlet wool and hyssop and the like, they were made to see how they could only be restored by Jesus Christ, the great High Priest. When the bird was killed that the leper might be clean, the need of purification by the sacrifice of a life was set forth. Every morning and evening a lamb died to tell of daily need of pardon, if God is to dwell with us. We sometimes have been accused of speaking too much about the *blood*, yet under the Old Testament, the blood seemed to be everything and was not only spoken of, but actually *presented* to the eyes. What does the apostle tell us in Hebrews? "Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, this is the blood of the testament which God has enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." The blood was on the veil and on the altar, on the hangings and on the floor of the tabernacle! No one could avoid seeing it. I resolve to make my ministry of the same character and more and more sprinkle it with the blood of atonement. Now the abundance of the blood of old was meant to show clearly that sin has so polluted us, that without an atonement, God is not to be approached. We must come by the way of sacrifice or not at all. We are so unacceptable in ourselves, that unless the Lord sees us with the blood of Jesus upon us He must put us away. The old law, with its emblems and figures, set forth many truths as to men's selves and the coming Savior, intending, by all of them, to preach Christ. If any stopped short of Him, they missed the intent and design of the law. Moses leads up to Joshua and the law ends at Jesus.

Turning our thoughts back to the moral, rather than the ceremonial, law, it was intended to teach men *their utter helplessness*. It shows them how they fall short of what they ought to be and it also shows them, when they look at it carefully, how utterly impossible it is for them to come up to the standard. Such holiness as the law demands no man can reach of himself. "Your commandments are exceedingly broad." If a man says that he can keep the law, it is because he does not know what the law is. If he fancies that he can ever climb to heaven up the quivering sides of Sinai, surely He can never have seen that burning mountain at

all. Keep the law? Ah, my brethren, while we are yet talking about it, we are breaking it! While we are pretending that we can fulfill its letter, we are violating its spirit, for pride as much breaks the law as lust or murder. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” “How can he be clean that is born of a woman?” No, soul, you cannot help yourself in this thing, for since only by perfection you can live by the law, and since that perfection is impossible, you cannot find help in the covenant of works. In grace there is hope, but as a matter of debt there is none, for we do not *merit* anything but wrath! The law tells us this and the sooner we know it to be so, the better, for the sooner, then, we shall fly to Christ.

The law also shows us *our great need*—our need of cleansing, cleansing with the water and with the blood. It shows us our filthiness and this, naturally, leads us to feel that we must be washed from it if we are ever to draw near to God. So the law drives us to accept Christ as the only person who can cleanse us and make us fit to stand within the veil in the presence of the Most High. The law is the surgeon’s knife which cuts out the proud flesh so that the wound may heal. The law, by itself, only sweeps and raises the dust—but the gospel sprinkles clean water upon the dust—and all is well in the chamber of the soul. The law kills, the gospel makes alive! The law strips and then Jesus Christ comes in and robes the soul in beauty and glory. All the commandments and all the types direct us to Christ, if we will but heed their evident intent. They wean us from self. They put us off from the false basis of self-righteousness and bring us to know that only in Christ can our help be found. So, first of all, Christ is the end of the law, in that He is its great purpose.

And now, secondly, He is *the law’s fulfillment*. It is impossible for any of us to be saved without righteousness; the God of heaven and earth, by immutable necessity, demands righteousness of all His creatures. Now, Christ has come to give to us the righteousness which the law demands, but which it never bestows. In the chapter before us we read of “the righteousness which is of faith,” which is also called, “God’s righteousness.” And we read of those who “shall not be ashamed” because they are righteous by believing, “for with the heart man believes unto righteousness.” What the law could not do Jesus has done! He provides the righteousness which the law asks for, but cannot produce! What an amazing righteousness it must be which is as broad and deep and long and high as the law itself! The commandments are exceedingly broad, but the righteousness of Christ is as broad as the commandments and goes to the end of them. Christ did not come to make the law milder, or to render it possible for our cracked and battered obedience to be accepted as a sort of compromise. The law is not compelled to lower its terms, as though it had originally asked too much. It is holy, just, and good; and ought not to be altered in one jot or tittle—nor can it be. Our Lord gives the law all it requires, not a part—for that would be an admission that it

might justly have been content with less at first. The law claims complete obedience without one spot or speck, failure, or flaw. And Christ has brought in such righteousness as that, and gives it to His people. The law demands that the righteousness should be without omission of duty and without commission of sin—and the righteousness which Christ has brought in is just such an one that for its sake the great God accepts His people and counts them to be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The law will not be content without spiritual obedience—mere outward compliances will not satisfy. But our Lord's obedience was as deep as it was broad, for His zeal to do the will of Him that sent Him consumed Him. He says Himself, "I delight to do Your will, O My God, yes, Your law is within My heart." Such righteousness He puts upon all believers. "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Righteous to the fullest—perfect in Christ! We rejoice to wear the costly robe of fair white linen which Jesus has prepared and we feel that we may stand arrayed in it before the majesty of heaven without a trembling thought! This is something to dwell upon, dear friends. Only as righteous ones can we be saved, but Jesus Christ makes us righteous, and therefore we are saved! He is righteous who believes on Him, even as Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," because they are made righteous in Christ. Yes, the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of Paul challenges all men, angels, and devils, to lay anything to the charge of God's elect, since Christ has died. O law, when you demand of me a perfect righteousness, I, being a believer, present it to you, or through Christ Jesus, faith is accounted unto me for righteousness. The righteousness of Christ is mine, for I am one with Him by faith and this is the name with which He shall be called—"The Lord our righteousness."

Jesus has thus fulfilled the original demands of the law, but you know, brothers and sisters, that since we have broken the law there are other demands. For the remission of past sins something more is asked, now, than present and future obedience. Upon us, on account of our sins, the curse has been pronounced and a penalty has been incurred. It is written that He, "will by no means clear the guilty," but every transgression and iniquity shall have its just punishment and reward. Here, then, let us admire that the Lord Jesus Christ is the end of the law as to penalty! That curse and penalty are awful things to think about, but Christ has ended all their evil and thus discharged us from all the consequences of sin! As far as every believer is concerned, the law demands no penalty and utters no curse. The believer can point to the Great Surety on the tree of Calvary, and say, "See there, oh law, *there* is the vindication of divine justice which I offer to you! Jesus pouring out His heart's blood from His wounds and dying on my behalf is my answer to your claims! And I know that I shall be delivered from wrath through Him." The claims of the law, both as broken and unbroken, Christ has met—both the positive and the penal demands are satisfied in Him. This was a

labor worthy of a God and lo, the incarnate God has achieved it! He has finished the transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness! All glory be to His name!

Moreover, not only has the penalty been paid, but Christ has put great and special honor upon the law in so doing. I venture to say that if the whole human race had kept the law of God and not one of them had violated it, the law would not stand in so splendid a position of honor as it does today when the man, Christ Jesus, who is also the Son of God, has paid obeisance to it. God, Himself, Incarnate, has in His life and yet more in His death, revealed the supremacy of the law—He has shown that not even love nor sovereignty can set aside justice. Who shall say a word against the law to which the lawgiver, Himself, submits? Who shall now say that it is too severe when He who made it submits Himself to its penalties? Because He was found in fashion as a man and was our representative, the Lord demanded from His own Son perfect obedience to the law, and the Son voluntarily bowed Himself to it without a single word, taking no exception to His task. “Yes, Your law is My delight,” He said, and He proved it to be so by paying homage to it even to the fullest! Oh wondrous law under which even Emmanuel serves! Oh matchless law whose yoke even the Son of God does not disdain to bear, but being resolved to save His chosen, was made under the law, lived under it and died under it, “obedient to death, even the death of the cross!”

The law’s stability has also been secured by Christ. That, alone, can remain which is proved to be just, and Jesus has proved the law to be so, magnifying it and making it honorable. He says, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all is fulfilled.” I shall have to show you how He has made an *end* of the law in another sense, but as to the settlement of the eternal principles of right and wrong, Christ’s life and death have achieved this forever. “Yes, we establish the law,” said Paul, “we do not make void the law through faith.” The law is proved to be holy and just by the very gospel of faith, for the gospel which faith believes in does not alter or lower the law, but teaches us how it was to be fulfilled the uttermost! Now the law shall stand fast forever and ever, since even to save elect man, God will not alter it. He had a people, chosen, beloved and ordained to life—yet He would not save them at the expense of one principle of right! They were sinful and how could they be justified unless the law was suspended or changed? Was, then, the law changed? It seemed as if it must be so if man was to be saved, but Jesus Christ came and showed us how the law could stand firm as a rock and yet the redeemed could be justly saved by infinite mercy! In Christ we see both mercy and justice shining full orbed, and yet neither of them in any degree eclipsing the other. The law has all it ever asked, as it ought to have—and yet the Father of all mercies sees all His chosen saved as He

determined they should be through the death of His Son! Thus I have tried to show you how Christ is the fulfillment of the law to its utmost end. May the Holy Spirit bless the teaching.

And now, thirdly, He is the end of the law in the sense that He is *the termination of it*. He has terminated it in two senses. First of all, His people are not under it as a covenant of life. "We are not under the law, but under grace." The old covenant, as it stood with father Adam was, "This do and you shall live." Its command he did not keep and, consequently, he did not live, nor do we live in him, since in Adam all died. The old covenant was broken and we became condemned, but now, having suffered death in Christ, we are no more under it, but are dead to it. Brothers and sisters, at this present moment, although we rejoice to do good works, we are not seeking life through them! We are not hoping to obtain divine favor by our own goodness, nor even to keep ourselves in the love of God by any merit of our own. Chosen, not for our works, but according "to the eternal will and good pleasure of God," we are called, not of works, but by the Spirit of God. We desire to continue in this grace and return no more to the bondage of the old covenant. Since we have put our trust in an atonement provided and applied by grace through Christ Jesus, we are no longer slaves but children, not working to be saved, but saved already, and working *because we are saved!* Neither that which we do, nor even that which the Spirit of God works in us, is, to us, the ground and basis of the love of God toward us since He loved us from the first because He would love us, unworthy though we were. And He loves us, still, in Christ and looks upon us not as we are in ourselves, but as we are in Him, washed in His blood and covered in His righteousness. You are not under the law, Christ has taken you from the servile bondage of a condemning covenant and made you to receive the adoption of children, so that now you cry, Abba, Father!

Again, Christ is the terminator of the law, for we are no longer under its curse. The law cannot curse a believer, it does not know how to do it. It blesses him, yes, and he shall be blessed, for as the law demands righteousness and looks at the believer in Christ—and sees that Jesus has given him all the righteousness it demands—the law is bound to pronounce him blessed. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Oh, the joy of being redeemed from the curse of the law by Christ, who was "made a curse for us," as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." Do you, my brothers and sisters, understand the sweet mystery of salvation? Have you ever seen Jesus standing in your place that you may stand in His place? Christ accused and Christ condemned! Christ led out to die and Christ smitten of the Father, even to the death! And then *you* cleared, justified, delivered from the curse because the curse has spent itself on your Redeemer! You are admitted to enjoy the blessing because the righteousness which was His is now transferred to you that you may

be blessed of the Lord, world without end! Let us triumph and rejoice in this forevermore! Why shouldn't we? And yet some of God's people get under the law as to their feelings and begin to fear that because they are conscious of sin they are not saved, whereas it is written, "He justifies the ungodly." For myself, I love to live near a sinner's Savior. If my standing before the Lord depended upon what I am in myself and what good works and righteousness I could bring, surely I would have to condemn myself a thousand times a day! But to get away from that and to say, "I have believed in Jesus Christ and therefore righteousness is mine," this is peace, rest, joy and the beginning of heaven! When one attains to this experience, His love to Jesus Christ begins to flame up and he feeds that if the Redeemer has delivered him from the curse of the law, he will not continue in sin, but he will endeavor to live in newness of life! We are not our own, we are bought with a price and we would, therefore, glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are the Lord's. Thus much upon Christ in connection with the law.

**II.** Now, secondly, OURSELVES IN CONNECTION WITH CHRIST—for, "Christ is the end of the law to everyone that believes." Now see the point—"to everyone that believes"—there the stress lies. Come, man, woman, do you believe? No weightier question can be asked under heaven! "Do you believe on the Son of God?" And what is it to believe? It is not merely to accept a set of doctrines and to say that such-and-such a creed is yours and then and there to put it on the shelf and forget it. To believe is to trust, to confide, to depend upon, to rest upon, to rest in. Do you believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead? Do you believe that He stood in the sinner's place and suffered, the Just for the unjust? Do you believe that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him? And do you, therefore, lay the whole weight and stress of your soul's salvation upon Him, yes, upon Him alone? Ah then, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to you and you are righteous! In the righteousness of God you are clothed if you believe! It is of no use to bring forward anything else if you are not believing, for nothing will do. If faith is absent, the essential thing is lacking—sacraments, prayers, Bible reading, hearing of the gospel—you may heap them together as high as the stars, into a mountain as high Olympus, but they are all mere chaff if faith is not there! It is your *believing* or *not* believing which must settle the matter! Do you look away from yourself to Jesus for righteousness? If you do, He is the end of the law to you.

Now observe that there is no question raised about your previous character, for it is written, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes." But, Lord, this man, before He believed, was a persecutor and injurious! He raged and raved against the saints and hauled them to prison and sought their blood! Yes, beloved friend, and that is the very man who wrote these words by the Holy Spirit, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes." So if I address one here, this morning, whose life has been defiled with every sin

and stained with every transgression we can conceive of, yet I say unto such, remember, “all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, your iniquities are blotted out, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses us from *all sin*! This is the glory of the gospel, that it is a sinner’s gospel—good news of blessing, not for those without sin, but for those who confess and forsake it! Jesus came into the world, not to reward the sinless, but to seek and to save that which was lost. And he, being lost and being far from God, who comes near to God by Christ and believes in Him, will find that He is able to bestow righteousness upon the guilty. He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes and, therefore, to the poor harlot that believes, to the drunk of many years standing that believes, to the thief, the liar and the scoffer who believes! Jesus is the end of the law to those who have, before, rioted in sin but now turn from it to trust in Him. But I do not know that I need mention such cases as these. To me the most wonderful fact is that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to *me*, for I believe in Him. I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day.

Another thought arises from the text, and that is that there is nothing said by way of qualification as to the strength of the faith. Jesus is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes, whether He is Little Faith or Greatheart. Jesus protects the rear rank as well as the vanguard. There is no difference between one believer and another as to justification. So long as there is a connection between you and Christ, the righteousness of God is yours! The link may be like a film, a spider’s line of trembling faith, but, if it runs all the way from the heart to Christ, divine grace can and will flow along the most slender thread! It is marvelous how fine the wire may be that will carry the electric flash. We may need a cable to carry a message across the sea, but that is for the protection of the wire. The wire which actually carries the message is a slender thing. If your faith is of the mustard-seed kind; if it is only such as tremblingly touches the hem of the Savior’s garment; if you can only say, “Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief”; if it is but the faith of sinking Peter, or weeping Mary, yet if it is faith in *Christ*, He will be the end of the law for righteousness to you as well as to the chief of the apostles!

If this is so, then, beloved friends, all of us who believe are righteous. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have obtained the righteousness which those who follow the works of the law know nothing of. We are not completely sanctified—would God we were! We are not rid of sin in our members, though we hate it, but still, for all that, in the sight of God, we are truly righteous! And being qualified by faith, we have peace with God. Come, look up, you believers that are burdened with a sense of sin! While you chasten yourselves and mourn your sin, do not doubt your Savior, nor question His righteousness! You are black, but do not stop there, go on to say as the spouse did, “I am black, but comely.”—

***“Though in ourselves deformed we are,  
And black as Kedar’s tents appear,  
Yet, when we put Your beauties on,  
Fair as the courts of Solomon.”***

Now, mark that the connection of our text assures us that being righteous we are saved, for what does it say here? “If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be *saved*.” He who is justified is saved, or what were the benefit of justification? Over you, believer, God has pronounced the verdict, “saved,” and none shall reverse it! You are saved from sin and death and Hell—you are saved even now, with a present salvation—“He has saved us and called us with a holy calling.” Feel the beauty of it at this hour. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God!”

And now I have done when I have said just this. If anyone here thinks He can save himself and that his own righteousness will suffice before God, I would affectionately beg him not to insult his Savior. If your righteousness suffices, why did Christ come here to work one out? Will you, for a moment, compare *your* righteousness with the righteousness of Jesus Christ? What likeness is there between you and Him? As much as between an ant and an archangel! No, not so much as that—as much as between night and day, hell and heaven! Oh, if I had a righteousness of my own that no one could find fault with, I would voluntarily fling it away to have the righteousness of Christ! But as I have none of my own, I rejoice the more to have my Lord’s. When Mr. Whitefield first preached at Kingswood, near Bristol, to the coal miners, he could see when their hearts began to be touched by the gutters of white made by the tears as they ran down their black cheeks. He saw they were receiving the gospel and he wrote in his diary, “as these poor men had no righteousness of their own, they, therefore, gloried in Him who came to save publicans and sinners.” Well, Mr. Whitefield, that is true of the coal miners, but it is equally true of many of us, here, who may not have had black faces, but we had black hearts! We can truly say that we, also, rejoice to cast away our own righteousness, and count it dross and dung that we may win Christ and be found in Him! In Him is our sole hope and only trust!

Last of all, for any of you to reject the righteousness of Christ must be to perish everlastingly, because it cannot be that God will accept you or your pretended righteousness when you have refused the real and divine righteousness which He sets before you in His Son! If you could go up to the gates of heaven, and an angel were to say to you, “What title have you to entrance here?” And if you were to reply, “I have a righteousness of my own,” then for you to be admitted would be to decide that your righteousness was on a par with that of Immanuel, Himself! Can that ever be? Do you think that God will ever allow such a lie to be sanctioned? Will He let a poor wretched sinner’s counterfeit righteousness pass current, side by side with the fine gold of Christ’s perfection? Why was the fountain filled with blood if you need no washing? Is Christ a superfluity?

Oh, it cannot be! You must have Christ's righteousness or be unrighteous—and being unrighteous you will be unsaved—and being unsaved you must remain lost forever and ever!

What? Has it all come to this, then, that I am to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness and to be made just through faith? Yes, that is it! That is the whole of it. "What? Trust Christ, alone, and then live as I like?" You cannot live in sin after you have trusted Jesus, for the act of faith brings with it a change of nature, and a renewal of your soul. The Spirit of God, who leads you to believe, will also change your heart. You spoke of, "living as you like." You will like to live very differently from what you do now. The things you loved before your conversion, you will hate when you believe—and the things you hated you will love. Now you are trying to be good and you have great failures because your heart is alienated from God. But when once you have received salvation through the blood of Christ, your heart will love God—and then you will keep His commandments and they will be no longer grievous to you. A change of heart is what you need but you will never get it except through the covenant of grace. There is not a word about conversion in the old covenant—we must look to the new covenant for that! And here it is—"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean. From all your filthiness and from all your idols, I will cleanse you. A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them." This is one of the greatest covenant promises—and the Holy Spirit performs it in the chosen! Oh, that the Lord would sweetly persuade you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—and that promise and the other entire covenant engagements shall be fulfilled to your soul! The Lord bless you! Spirit of God, send Your blessing on these poor words of mine for Jesus' sake. Amen.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 10.**

### **HYMNS FROM "OWN HYMN BOOK"—231, 535, 647.**

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# CHRIST THE CONQUEROR OF SATAN

## NO. 1326

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
NOVEMBER 26, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”***  
**Genesis 3:15.**

THIS is the first gospel sermon that was ever delivered upon the surface of this earth! It was a memorable discourse, indeed, with Jehovah, Himself, for the preacher and the whole human race and the prince of darkness for the audience. It must be worthy of our heartiest attention.

Is it not remarkable that this great gospel promise should have been delivered so soon after the transgression? As yet no sentence had been pronounced upon either of the two human offenders, but the promise was given under the form of a sentence pronounced upon the *serpent*. Not yet had the woman been condemned to painful travail, or the man to exhausting labor, or even the soil to the curse of thorn and thistle. Truly “mercy rejoices against judgment.” Before the Lord had said, “Dust you are, and unto dust you shall return,” He was pleased to say that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head! Let us rejoice, then, in the swift mercy of God, which in the early watches of the night of sin came with comfortable words to us.

These words were not directly spoken to Adam and Eve, but they were directed distinctly to the serpent, himself, and that by way of punishment to him for what he had done. It was a day of cruel triumph to him—such joy as his dark mind is capable of had filled him, for he had indulged his malice and gratified his spite. He had, in the worst sense, destroyed a part of God’s works. He had introduced sin into the new world. He had stamped the human race with his own image and gained new forces to promote rebellion and to multiply transgression and, therefore, he felt that sort of gladness which a fiend can know who bears a hell within himself. But now God comes in, takes up the quarrel personally, and causes him to be disgraced on the very battlefield upon which he had gained a temporary success. He tells the dragon that He will undertake to deal with him—this quarrel shall not be between the serpent and man, but between God and the serpent! God said, in solemn words, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed,” and He promises that there shall rise, in fullness of time a champion, who, though He suffers, shall smite in a vital part the power of evil and bruise the serpent’s head. This was all the more, it seems to me, a comfortable message of mercy to Adam and Eve, because they would feel sure that the tempter would be punished. Perhaps, however, by thus obliquely giving the promise, the Lord meant to say, “Not for your sakes do I do this, O fallen man and woman, nor for the sake of your descendants, but for My own name and honor’s sake, that it be not pro-

faned and blasphemed among the fallen spirits. I undertake to repair the mischief which has been caused by the tempter, that My name and My glory may not be diminished among the immortal spirits who look down upon the scene." All this would be very humbling, but yet consolatory to our parents if they thought of it, seeing that mercy given for God's sake is always, to our troubled apprehension, more sure than any favor which could be promised to *us* for our own sakes. Divine sovereignty and glory afford us a stronger foundation of hope than merit, even if merit can be supposed to exist.

Now we must note concerning this first gospel sermon that on it the earliest believers stayed themselves. This was all that Adam had by way of revelation, and all that Abel had received. This one lone star shone in Abel's sky. He looked up to it and he believed. By its light he spelt out, "sacrifice," and therefore he brought of the firstlings of his flock and laid them upon the altar. He proved, in his own person how the seed of the serpent hated the seed of the woman, for his brother slew him for his testimony. Although Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied concerning the second advent, yet he does not appear to have uttered anything new concerning the *first* coming, so that, still this *one promise* remained as man's sole word of hope. The torch which flamed within the gates of Eden, just before man was driven forth, lit up the world to all believers until the Lord was pleased to give more light and to renew and enlarge the revelation of His covenant, when He spoke to His servant, Noah. Those hoary fathers who lived before the flood rejoiced in the mysterious language of our text and resting on it, they died in faith. Nor, brothers and sisters, must you think it a slender revelation, for, if you attentively consider, it is wonderfully full of meaning. If it had been on my heart to handle it *doctrinally*, this morning, I think I could have shown you that it contains *all* the gospel. There lies within it, as an oak lies within an acorn, all the great truths of God which make up the gospel of Christ. Observe that here is the grand mystery of the incarnation. Christ is that seed of the woman who is here spoken of and there is a hint, not darkly, given as to how that incarnation would be effected. Jesus was not born after the ordinary manner of the sons of men. Mary was overshadowed of the Holy Spirit and, "the holy thing," which was born of her, was, as to His humanity, the seed of the woman. As it is written, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel." The promise plainly teaches that the deliverer would be born of a woman and, carefully viewed, it also foreshadows the divine method of the Redeemer's conception and birth. So, also, is the doctrine of the two seeds plainly taught here—"I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed." There was evidently to be in the world a seed of the woman on God's side against the serpent, and a seed of the serpent that should always be upon the evil side even as it is to this day. The church of God and the synagogue of Satan both exist. We see an Abel and a Cain, an Isaac and an Ishmael, a Jacob and an Esau. Those that are born after the flesh, being the children of their father, the devil, for his works they do, but those that are born again—being born after the Spirit, after the power of the life of Christ—are thus in Christ Jesus the seed of the woman and contend earnestly against the dragon and his

seed. Here, too, the great fact of the sufferings of Christ is clearly foretold—"You shall bruise His heel." Within the compass of those words we find the whole story of our Lord's sorrows from Bethlehem to Calvary. "He shall bruise your head"—there is the breaking of Satan's regal power! There is the clearing away of sin. There is the destruction of death by resurrection. There is the leading of captivity captive in the ascension. There is the victory of truth in the world through the descent of the Spirit. And there is the latter-day glory in which Satan shall be bound. And there is, lastly, the casting of the evil one and all his followers into the lake of fire. The conflict and the conquest are both in the compass of these few fruitful words. They may not have been fully understood by those who first heard them, but to us they are now full of light. The text, at first, looks like a flint, hard and cold. But sparks fly from it plentifully, for hidden fires of infinite love and grace lie concealed within. Over this promise of a gracious God we ought to exceedingly rejoice.

We do not know what our first parents understood by it, but we may be certain that they gathered a great amount of comfort from it. They must have understood that they were not, then and there, to be destroyed, because the Lord had spoken of a "seed." They would argue that it must be necessary that Eve should live if there should be a seed from her. They understood, too, that if that seed was to overcome the serpent and bruise his head, it must promise good to themselves. They could not fail to see that there was some great, some mysterious benefit to be conferred upon them by the victory which their seed would achieve over the instigator of their ruin. They went on in faith upon this, and were comforted in travail and in toil—and I doubt not both Adam and his wife, in the faith thereof—entered into everlasting rest.

This morning I intend to handle this text in three ways. First, we shall notice *its facts*; secondly, we shall consider *the experience within the heart of each believer which tallies to those facts*; and then, thirdly, *the encouragement* which the text and its connection, as a whole, afford to us.

**I. THE FACTS.** The facts are four and I call your earnest attention to them. The first is *enmity was excited*. The text begins, "I will put enmity between you and the woman." They had been very friendly. The woman and the serpent had conversed together. She thought, at the time, that the serpent was her friend, and she was so much his friend that she took his advice in the teeth of God's precept and was willing to believe bad things of the great Creator because this wicked, crafty serpent insinuated the same! Now, at the moment when God spoke, that friendship between the woman and the serpent had already, in a measure, come to an end for she had accused the serpent to God, and said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." So far, so good. The friendship of sinners does not last long. They have already begun to quarrel and now the Lord comes in and graciously takes advantage of the quarrel which had commenced, and says, "I will carry this disagreement a great deal further, I will put enmity between you and the woman." Satan counted on man's descendants being his confederates, but God would break up this covenant with hell, and raise up a seed which should war against the Satanic power! Thus we have, here, God's first declaration that He will set up a rival kingdom

to oppose the tyranny of sin and Satan. That He will create in the hearts of a chosen seed an enmity against evil so that they shall fight against it and, with many a struggle and pain, shall overcome the prince of darkness. The divine Spirit has abundantly achieved this plan and purpose of the Lord, combating the fallen angel by a glorious man—making man to be Satan's foe and conqueror. Henceforth the woman was to hate the evil one and, I do not doubt but what she did so. She had abundant cause for so doing and as often as she thought of him, it would be with infinite regret that she could have listened to his malicious and deceitful talk. The woman's seed has also evermore had enmity against the evil one. I mean not the carnal seed, for Paul tells us, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." The carnal seed of the man and the woman are not meant, but the *spiritual* seed, even Christ Jesus, and those who are in Him. Wherever you meet these, they hate the serpent with a perfect hatred. We would, if we could, destroy from our souls every work of Satan, and out of this poor afflicted world of ours we would root up every evil which he has planted. That seed of the woman, that *glorious One*—for He speaks not of seeds as of many but of seed that is one—you know how He abhorred the devil and all his devices. There was enmity between Christ and Satan, for He came to destroy the works of the devil and to deliver those who are under bondage to him. For that purpose was He born! For that purpose did He live! For that purpose did He die! For that purpose He has gone into glory, and for that purpose, He will come again, that everywhere He may find out His adversary and utterly destroy him and his works from among the sons of men. This putting of the enmity between the two seeds was the commencement of the plan of mercy, the first act in the program of grace. Of the woman's seed it was from now on said, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows."

Then comes the second prophecy, which has also turned into a fact, namely *the coming of the champion*. The seed of the woman by promise is to champion the cause and oppose the dragon. That seed is the Lord Jesus Christ! The prophet Micah said, "But you, Bethlehem Ephratah; though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will He give them up, until the time that she which travails has brought forth." To none other than the babe which was born in Bethlehem of the blessed Virgin can the words of prophecy refer! She it was who did conceive and bear a son, and it is concerning her son that we sing, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." On the memorable night at Bethlehem, when angels sang in heaven, the seed of the woman appeared! And as soon as ever He saw the light the old serpent, the devil, entered into the heart of Herod, if possible to slay Him, but the Father preserved Him, and allowed none to lay hands on Him. As soon as He publicly came forward upon the stage of action, 30 years later, Satan met Him face to face. You know the story of the temptation in the wilder-

ness, and how, there, the woman's seed fought with him who was a liar from the beginning. The devil assailed Him thrice with all the artillery of flattery, malice, craft and falsehood—but the peerless champion stood unwounded and chased His foe from the field. Then our Lord set up His kingdom and called one and another unto Him, and carried the war into the enemy's country. In many places He cast out devils; He spoke to the wicked and unclean spirits, and said, "I charge you come out of him," and the demon was expelled. Legions of devils flew before Him—they sought to hide themselves in swine to escape from the terror of His presence. "Are You come to torment us before our time?" was their cry when the wonder-working Christ dislodged them from the bodies which they tormented! Yes, and He made His own disciples mighty against the evil one, for in His name they cast out devils, till Jesus said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Then there came a second personal conflict, for I take it that Gethsemane's sorrows were, to a great degree, caused by a personal assault of Satan, for our Master said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." He said, also, "The Prince of this world comes." What a struggle it was! Though Satan had nothing in Christ, yet did he seek, if possible, to lead Him away from completing His great sacrifice, and there did our Master sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground in the agony which it cost Him to contend with the fiend! Then it was that our Champion began the last fight of all, and won it to the bruising of the serpent's head. Nor did He end till He had spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly—

***"Now is the hour of darkness past,  
Christ has assumed  
His reigning power.  
Behold the great accuser cast  
Down from his seat to reign no more."***

Our glorious Lord continues the conflict in His seed. We preach Christ crucified, and every sermon shakes the gates of hell! We bring sinners to Jesus by the Spirit's power and every convert is a stone torn down from the wall of Satan's mighty castle! Yes, and the day shall come when the evil one shall be overcome everywhere, and the words of John in revelation shall be fulfilled—"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation; and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Thus did the Lord God, in the words of our text, promise a champion who should be the seed of the woman, between whom and Satan there should be war forever and ever—that champion has come, the man-child has been born, and though the dragon is angry with the woman, and makes war with the remnant of her seed which keep the testimony of Jesus Christ, yet the battle is the Lord's, and the victory falls unto Him whose name is Faithful and True, who in righteousness does judge and make war.

The third fact which comes out in the text, though not quite in that order, is that *our Champion's heel should be bruised*. Do you need that I

explain this? You know how all His life long His heel, that is, His lower part, His human nature, was perpetually being made to suffer. He carried our sicknesses and sorrows. But the bruising came mainly when both in body and in mind His whole human nature was made to agonize; when His soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death, and His enemies pierced His hands and His feet—and He endured the shame and pain of death by crucifixion. Look at your Master and your King upon the cross, all stained with blood and dust! There was His heel most cruelly bruised! When they take down that precious body, and wrap it in fair white linen and in spices, and lay it in Joseph's tomb, they weep as they handle that casket in which the Deity had dwelt, for there, again, Satan had bruised His heel. It was not merely that God had bruised Him, "though it pleased the Father to bruise Him." But the devil had let loose Herod, Pilate, Caiaphas, the Jews and the Romans, all of them his tools, upon Him whom he knew to be the Christ, so that He was bruised of the old serpent. That is all, however! It is only His heel, not His head which is bruised! For lo, the Champion rises again! The bruise was not mortal nor continual. Though He dies, yet so brief is the interval in which He slumbers in the tomb that His holy body does not see corruption, and He comes forth perfect and lovely in His manhood, rising from His grave as from a refreshing sleep after a long day of toil! Oh the triumph of that hour! As Jacob only halted on his thigh when he overcame the angel, so did Jesus only retain a scar on His heel, and that He bears to the skies as His glory and beauty! Before the throne He looks like a lamb that has been slain, but in the power of an endless life, He lives unto God.

Then comes the fourth fact, namely, that while His heel was being bruised, *He was to bruise the serpent's head*. The figure represents the dragon as inflicting an injury upon the champion's heel, but at the same moment the champion, Himself, with that heel, *crushes the head* of the serpent with fatal effect. By His sufferings, Christ has overthrown Satan; by the heel that was bruised, He has trod upon the head which devised the bruising—

***"Lo, by the sons of hell He dies;  
But as He hangs 'twixt earth and skies,  
He gives their prince a fatal blow,  
And triumphs o'er the powers below!"***

Though Satan is not dead, my brothers and sisters—I was about to say, would God He were—and though he is not converted, and never will be, nor will the malice of his heart ever be driven from him, yet Christ has so far broken his head that he has missed his mark altogether! He intended to make the human race the captives of his power, but they are redeemed from his iron yoke. God has delivered many of them, and the day shall come when He will cleanse the whole earth from the serpent's slimy trail, so that the entire world shall be full of the praises of God. Satan thought that this world would be the arena of his victory over God and good—instead of which it is already the grandest theater of divine wisdom, love, grace, and power! Even heaven itself is not so resplendent with mercy as the earth is, for here it is the Savior poured out His blood, which cannot be said even of the courts of paradise above! Moreover Satan thought, no doubt, that when he had led our race astray and brought

death upon them, he had effectually marred the Lord's work. He rejoiced that they would all pass under the cold seal of death, and that their bodies would rot in the sepulcher. Had he not spoiled the handiwork of his great Lord? God may make man as a curious creature with intertwined veins and blood, nerves, sinews and muscles, and He may put into his nostrils the breath of life, but, "Ah," said Satan, "I have infused a poison into him which will make him return to the dust from which he was taken." But now, behold, our Champion, whose heel was bruised, has risen from the dead, and given us a pledge that all His followers shall rise from the dead also! Thus is Satan foiled, for death shall not retain a bone, nor a piece of a bone, of one of those who belonged to the woman's seed! At the trump of the archangel, from the earth and from the sea they shall arise, and this shall be their shout, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" Satan, knowing this, feels already that by the resurrection, his head is broken. Glory be to the Christ of God for this!

In multitudes of other ways the devil has been vanquished by our Lord Jesus, and so shall he ever be till he shall be cast into the lake of fire.

**II.** Let us now view OUR EXPERIENCE AS IT TALLIES WITH THESE FACTS. Now, brothers and sisters, we were by nature, as many of us as have been saved, the heirs of wrath even as others. It does not matter how godly our parents were—the first birth brought us no spiritual life for the promise is not to them which are born of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man—but only to those who are born of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." You cannot make it anything else and there it abides—the flesh, or carnal mind, abides in death. "It is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can be." He who is born into this world but once, and knows nothing of the new birth, must place himself among the seed of the serpent, for only by *regeneration* can we know ourselves to be the true seed. How does God deal with us who are His called and chosen ones? He means to save us, and how does He work to that end?

The first thing He does is, He comes to us in mercy and *puts enmity between us and the serpent*. That is the very first work of grace. There was peace between us and Satan once—when he tempted, we yielded—whatever he taught us we believed. We were his willing slaves. But perhaps you, my brethren, can remember when first of all you begin to feel uneasy and dissatisfied. The world's pleasures no longer pleased you. All the juice seemed to have been taken out of the apple and you had nothing left but the hard core which you could not feed upon at all. Then you suddenly perceived that you were living in sin and you were miserable about it! And though you could not get rid of sin, yet you hated it and sighed over it. And you cried and groaned. In your heart of hearts you remained no longer on the side of evil, for you began to cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" You were already, from of old, in the covenant of grace ordained to be the woman's seed—and now the decree began to manifest itself in life bestowed upon you and working in you. The Lord, in infinite mercy, dropped the divine life into your soul. You did not know it, but there it was, a spark of the celestial fire, the living and incorruptible seed which

abides forever! You began to hate sin, and you groaned under it as under a “tilling yoke.” More and more it burdened you; you could not bear it; you hated the very thought of it! So it was with you—is it so now? Is there still enmity between you and the serpent? Indeed, you are more and more the sworn enemies of evil, and you willingly acknowledge it!

*Then came the champion*—that is to say, “Christ was formed in you the hope of glory.” You heard of Him, and you understood the truth about Him. And it seemed a wonderful thing that He should be your substitute, and stand in your place, and bear your sin and all its curse and punishment. It seemed unbelievable that He should give His righteousness, yes, and His very self to you that you might be saved! Ah, then you saw how sin could be overthrown, did you not? As soon as your heart understood Christ, then you saw that what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, Christ was able to accomplish—and that the power of sin and Satan under which you had been in bondage and which you now loathed—could and would be broken and destroyed because Christ had come into the world to overcome it.

Next, do you remember how you were led to see *the bruising of Christ’s heel* and to stand in wonder and observe what the enmity of the serpent had worked in Him? Did you not begin to feel the bruised heel, yourself? Did not sin torment you? Did not the very thought of it vex you? Did not your own heart become a plague to you? Did not Satan begin to tempt you? Did he not inject blasphemous thoughts and urge you on to desperate measures? Did he not teach you to doubt the existence of God and the mercy of God, and the possibility of your salvation, and so on? This was his nibbling at your heel! He is still at his old tricks. He worries whom he can’t devour with a malicious joy. Did not your worldly friends begin to annoy you? Did they not give you the cold shoulder because they saw something about you so strange and foreign to their tastes? Did they not impute your conduct to fanaticism, pride, obstinacy, bigotry and the like? Ah, this persecution is the serpent’s seed beginning to discover the woman’s seed and to carry on the old war! What does Paul say? “But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted Him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.” True godliness is an unnatural and strange thing to them and they cannot stand it! Though there are no stakes in Smithfield, nor racks in the Tower, yet the enmity of the human heart towards Christ and His seed is just the same, and very often shows itself in “trials of cruel mocking” which to tender hearts are very hard to bear. Well, this is your heel being bruised in sympathy with the bruising of the heel of the glorious seed of the woman!

But, brothers and sisters, do you know something of the other fact, namely, that *we conquer, for the serpent’s head is broken in us*? How say you? Is not the power and dominion of sin broken in you? Do you not feel that you cannot sin because you are born of God? Isn’t it so that some sins which were masters of you, once, do not trouble you, now? I have known a man guilty of profane swearing, but from the moment of his conversion he has never had any difficulty in the matter. We have known a man snatched from drunkenness and the cure, by divine grace, has been very wonderful and complete. We have known persons delivered from unclean living and they have at once become chaste and pure be-

cause Christ has smitten the old dragon such blows that he could not have power over them in that respect. The chosen seed will sin and mourn it, but they are not *slaves* to sin—their heart goes not after it. They have to say, sometimes, “the thing I would not, that I do,” but they are wretched when it is so. They consent with their heart to the law of God, that it is good, and they sigh and cry that they may be helped to obey it, for they are no longer under the slavery of sin—the serpent’s reigning power and dominion is broken in them.

It is broken, next, in this way, that the *guilt* of sin is gone. The great power of the serpent lies in unpardoned sin. He cries, “I have made you guilty! I brought you under the curse.” “No,” we say, “we are delivered from the curse and are now blessed, for it is written, ‘Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.’ We are no longer guilty, for who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Since Christ has justified, who is he that condemns?” Here is a swinging blow for the old dragon’s head, from such he will never recover!

Oftentimes the Lord also grants us to know what it is to overcome temptation and so to break the head of the fiend. Satan allures us with many baits; he has studied our points well; he knows the weakness of the flesh, but many and many a time, blessed be God, we have foiled him completely to his eternal shame! The devil must have felt himself useless that day when he tried to overthrow Job. He dragged him down to a dunghill, robbed him of everything, covered him with sores and yet could not make him yield! Job conquered when he cried, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” A feeble man had vanquished a devil who could raise the wind and blow down a house! He was allowed to destroy a family who were feasting in it. Devil as he is, and crowned prince of the power of the air, yet the poor bereaved patriarch, sitting on the dunghill and covered with sores, being one of the woman’s seed and through the strength of the inner life won the victory over him!—

***“You sons of God oppose his rage,  
Resist, and he’ll be gone!  
Thus did our dearest Lord engage  
And vanquish him alone.”***

Moreover, dear brothers and sisters, we have this hope that the very stain of sin in us will be destroyed. The day will come when we shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—and we shall stand before the throne of God, having suffered no injury whatever from the fall and from all the machinations of Satan, for, “they are without fault before the throne of God.” What triumph that will be! “The Lord will tread Satan under your feet shortly.” When He has made you perfect and free from all sin, as He will do, you will have bruised the serpent’s head, indeed!

And your resurrection, too, when Satan shall see you come up from the grave like one that has been perfumed in a bath of spices—when he shall see you arise in the image of Christ, with the same body which was sown in corruption and weakness raised in incorruption and power—then will he feel an infinite chagrin and know that his head is bruised by the woman’s seed!

I ought to add that every time any one of us is made useful in saving souls we do, as it were, repeat the bruising of the serpent’s head. When

you go, dear sister, among those poor children and pick them up from the gutters, where they are Satan's prey—where he finds the raw material for thieves and criminals—and when, through your means, by the grace of God, the little wanderers become children of the living God, then you, in your measure bruise the old serpent's head! I pray you do not spare him! When we, by preaching the gospel, turn sinners from the error of their ways, so that they escape from the power of darkness, again we bruise the serpent's head! Whenever, in any shape or form, you are blessed to the aiding of the cause of truth and righteousness in the world, you, too, who were once beneath his power and even now have sometimes to suffer from his nibbling at your heel, you tread upon his head! In all deliverances and victories you overcome and prove the promise true—"You shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet. Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he has known My name."

**III.** Let us speak awhile upon THE ENCOURAGEMENT which our text and the context yields to us, for it seems to me, to abound.

I want you, brethren, to exercise faith in the promise and be comforted. The text evidently encouraged Adam very much. I do not think we have attached enough importance to the conduct of Adam after the Lord had spoken to him. Notice the simple but conclusive proof which he gave of his faith. Sometimes an action may be very small and unimportant, and yet, as a straw shows which way the wind blows, it may display at once, if it is thought over, the whole state of the man's mind. Adam acted in faith upon what God said, for we read, "And Adam called his wife's name Eve (or Life) because she was the mother of all living" (Gen 3:20). She was not a mother at all, but as the life was to come through her by virtue of the promised seed, Adam marks his full conviction of the truth of the promise, though at the time, the woman had borne no children! There stood Adam, fresh from the awful presence of God, what more could He say? He might have said with the prophet, "My flesh trembles for the fear of You," but even then he turns round to his fellow culprit as she stands there trembling, too, and he calls her Eve, mother of the life that is yet to be! It was grandly spoken by father Adam! It makes him rise in our esteem. Had he been left to himself, he would have murmured, or at least despaired, but no, his faith in the new promise gave him hope! He uttered no word of repining against the condemnation to till with toil the unthankful ground, nor on Eve's part was there a word of repining over the appointed sorrows of motherhood—they each accepted the well-deserved sentence with the silence which denotes the perfection of their resignation—their only word is full of simple faith. There was no child on whom to set their hopes, nor would the true seed be born for many an age. Still Eve is to be the mother of all living and Adam calls her so. Exercise like faith, my brothers and sisters, on the far wider revelation which God has given to you and always extract the utmost comfort from it! Make a point, whenever you receive a promise from God, to get all you can out of it. If you carry out that rule, it is wonderful what comfort you will gain! Some go on the principle of getting as little as possible out of God's word. I believe that such a plan is the proper way with a *man's*

word—always understand it at the minimum, because that is what he means—but *God's* word is to be understood at the maximum, for He will do exceedingly abundantly above what you ask or even think!

Notice by way of further encouragement that we may regard our reception of Christ's righteousness as an installment of the final overthrow of the devil. The 21<sup>st</sup> verse says, "Unto Adam, also, and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them." A very condescending, thoughtful and instructive deed of divine love! God heard what Adam said to his wife, and so He comes and gives Him the type of the perfect righteousness, which is the believer's portion—He covered him with lasting raiment. No more fig leaves, which were a mere mockery, but a close-fitting garment which had been procured through the death of a *victim*. The Lord brings that and puts it on him and Adam could no more say, "I am naked." How could he, for God had clothed him! Now, beloved, let us take out of the promise that is given us concerning our Lord's conquest over the devil this one item and rejoice in it! Christ has delivered us from the power of the serpent, who opened our eyes and told us we were naked, by covering us from head to foot with a righteousness which adorns and protects us so that we are comfortable in heart, beautiful in the sight of God and are no more ashamed!

Next, by way of encouragement in pursuing the Christian life, I would say to young people—expect to be assailed. If you have fallen into trouble through being a Christian, be encouraged by it! Do not at all regret or fear it, but rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for this is the constant token of the covenant! There is still enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—and if you did not experience any of it, you might begin to fear that you were on the wrong side! Now that you smart under the sneer of sarcasm and oppression, rejoice and triumph, for now are you partakers with the glorious seed of the woman in the bruising of His heel.

Still further encouragement comes from this. Your suffering as a Christian is not brought upon you for your own sake—you are partners with the great seed of the woman! You are confederates with Christ! You must not think the devil cares much about *you*—the battle is against Christ *in* you. Why, if you were not in Christ, the devil would never trouble you! When you were without Christ in the world you might have sinned as you like. Your relatives and work-mates would not have been at all grieved with you—they would rather have joined you in it! But now the serpent's seed hates Christ in you. This exalts the sufferings of persecution to a position which is far above all common afflictions! I have heard of a woman who was condemned to death, in the Marian days, and before her time came to be burned, a child was born to her, and she cried out in her sorrow. A wicked adversary, who stood by, said, "How will you bear to die for your religion if you make such ado?" "Ah," she said, "Now I suffer in my own person as a woman, but *then* I shall not suffer, but *Christ in me*." Nor were these idle words, for she bore her martyrdom with exemplary patience, and rose in her chariot of fire in holy triumph to heaven! If Christ is in you, nothing will dismay you, but you will overcome the world, the flesh and the devil by faith.

Last of all, let us always resist the devil with this belief, that he has received a broken head. I am inclined to think that Luther's way of laughing at the devil was a very good one, for Satan is worthy of shame and everlasting contempt. Luther once threw an inkstand at his head when he was tempting him very sorely, and though the act, itself, appears absurd enough, yet it was a true type of what that great Reformer was all his life long, for the books he wrote were truly a flinging of the inkstand at the head of the fiend! That is what we have to do—we are to resist him by all means. Let us do this bravely and tell him to his teeth that we are not afraid of him. Tell him to remember his bruised head, which he tries to cover with a crown of pride, or with a popish hood, or with an infidel doctor's hood. We know him and see the deadly wound he bears. His power is gone! He is fighting a lost battle! He is contending against omnipotence! He has set himself against the oath of the Father, against the blood of the incarnate Son; he dares to set himself against the eternal power and Godhead of the blessed Spirit, all of which are engaged in the defense of the seed of the woman in the day of battle! Therefore, brothers and sisters, be steadfast in resisting the evil one, being strong in faith, giving glory to God—

*“Tis by Your blood, immortal Lamb,  
Your armies tread the tempter down!  
‘Tis by Your word and powerful name  
They gain the battle and renown.  
Rejoice you heavens! Let every star  
Shine with new glories round the sky:  
Saints, while you sing the heavenly war,  
Raise your Deliverer's name on high!”*

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—GENESIS 3.**

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—335, 477, 322.**

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# CHRIST THE OVERCOMER OF THE WORLD

## NO. 1327

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING,  
DECEMBER 3, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.**

***"Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."  
John 16:33.***

WHEN these words were spoken, our Savior was about to leave His disciples to go to His death for their sakes. His great anxiety was that they might not be too much cast down by the trials which would come upon them. He desired to prepare their minds for the heavy sorrows which awaited them, while the powers of darkness and the men of the world worked their will upon Him. Now observe, beloved, that our Lord Jesus, in whom dwells infinite wisdom, knew all the secret springs of comfort and all the hallowed sources of consolation in heaven and under heaven, and yet in order to console His disciples He spoke not of heavenly mysteries nor of secrets hidden in the breast of God, but He spoke concerning Himself. Does He not teach us, then, that there is no balm for the heart like Himself, no consolation of Israel comparable to His person and His work? If even such a divine Barnabas, such a first-born son of consolation as the Lord, Himself, must point to what He, Himself, has done, so He can make His followers be of good cheer, then how wise it must be in ministers to preach much of Jesus by way of encouragement to the Lord's afflicted and how prudent it is for mourners to look to Him for the comfort they need. "Be of good cheer," He said, "I"—something about Himself—"I have overcome the world." So then, beloved, in all times of depression of spirit hasten away to the Lord Jesus Christ! Whenever the cares of this life burden you and your way seems hard for your weary feet, fly to your Lord! There may be other sources of consolation, but they will not, at *all* times, serve your turn. But in Him there dwells such a fullness of comfort that whether it is in summer or in winter, the streams of comfort are always flowing! In your high estate or in your low estate and from whatever quarter your trouble may arise, you can resort at once to Him and you shall find that He strengthens the hands that hang down and confirms the feeble knees.

A further remark suggests itself that the Lord Jesus must be more than man from the tone which He assumed. There are certain persons who deny the Godhead of our Lord and yet think well of Jesus as a man. Indeed, they have uttered many highly complimentary things with regard to His character. But I wonder why it does not strike them that there is a great deal of assumption, presumption, pride, egotism and all that style of folly in this man if He is nothing more than a man! For what good man whom you would wish to imitate would say to others, "Be of good cheer: I

have overcome the world”? This is altogether too much for a mere man to say! The Lord Jesus Christ frequently spoke about Himself, and about what He had done, and commended Himself to His disciples as one could never have done who was only a man and of a lowly mind. The Lord was certainly meek and lowly in heart, but no man of that character would have told others so. There is an inconsistency here which none can account for but those who believe Him to be the Son of God! Understand Him to be divine—put Him in His true position as speaking down out of the excellency of His Deity to His disciples—and then you can comprehend His so speaking, Yes, it becomes infinitely seemly and beautiful! Deny His Godhead and I, for one, am quite unable to understand how the words before us, and others like them, could ever have fallen from His lips—for none will dare to say that He was boastful! Blessed are You, O, Son of man, You are also Son of God, and therefore you not only speak to us with the sympathizing tenderness of a brother man, but with the majestic authority of the Only Begotten of the Father! Divinely condescending are Your words, “I have overcome the world.”

If you look at this claim of Jesus without the eyes of faith, does it not wear an extraordinary appearance? How could the betrayed man of Nazareth say, “I have overcome the world”? We can imagine Napoleon speaking thus when he had crushed the nations beneath his feet and shaped the map of Europe to his will. We can imagine Alexander speaking thus when he had rifled the palaces of Persia and led her ancient monarchs captive, but who is this that speaks this way? It is a Galilean who wears a *peasant’s* garment, and consorts with the poor and the fallen! He has neither wealth nor worldly rank nor honor among men and yet speaks of having overcome the *world!* He is about to be betrayed by His own base follower into the hands of His enemies and to be led out to judgment and to death, and yet He says, “I have overcome the world.” He is casting an eye to His cross with all its shame and to the death which ensued from it, and yet He says, “I have overcome the world.” He had not where to lay His head. He had not a disciple that would stand up for Him, for He had just said, “You shall be scattered, every man to His own, and shall leave Me alone.” He was to be charged with blasphemy and sedition and brought before the judge, and find no man to declare His generation. He was to be given up to brutal soldiers to be mocked and despitely used and spat upon! His hands and feet were to be nailed to the cross that He might die a felon’s death—and yet He said, “I have overcome the world.” How marvelous and yet how true! He spoke not after the manner of the flesh, nor after the sight of the eyes. We must use faith’s optics here and look within the veil—then we shall see not only the despised bodily person of the Son of man, but the indwelling, noble, all-conquering soul which transformed shame into honor and death into glory! May God the Holy Spirit enable us to look through the external to the internal and see how marvelously the ignominious death was the rough garment which concealed the matchless victory from the purblind eyes of carnal man!

During the last two Sabbath mornings I have spoken of our Lord Jesus Christ—first, as the end of the law, and secondly, as the conqueror over the old serpent. Now we come to speak of Him as *the overcomer of the world*—addressing His disciples He said, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

Now, *what is this world that He speaks about? And how has He overcome it? And what good cheer is there in the fact for us?*

**I. WHAT IS THIS WORLD TO WHICH HE IS REFERRING?** I scarcely know a word which is used with so many senses as this word, “world.” If you will turn to your Bibles you will find the word, “world,” used in widely different ways, for there is a world which Christ made, “He was in the world and the world was made by Him”—that is, the *physical* world. There is a world which God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him might not perish. There are several forms of this favorable use. Then there is a world, the world *here* meant, which “lies in the wicked one”—a world which knows not Christ but which is ever more opposed to Him—a world for which He says that He does not pray and a world which He would not have us love—“Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world.” Without going into these various meanings and shades of meaning, which are very abundant, let us just say that we scarcely know how to define what is meant here in so many words, though we know well enough what is meant. Scripture does not give us definitions, but uses language in a popular manner, since it speaks to common people. “The world” is very much the equivalent of the “seed of the serpent,” of which we spoke last Sunday. The world here means the visible embodiment of that spirit of evil which was in the serpent and which now works in the children of disobedience. It is the human form of the same evil force with which our Lord contended when He overcame the devil. It means the power of evil in the unregenerate mass of mankind, the energy and power of sin as it dwells in that portion of the world which abides in death and lies in the wicked one. The devil is the god of this world and the prince of this world, and therefore he who is the friend of this world is the enemy of God! The world is the opposite of the church. There is a church which Christ has redeemed and chosen out of the world and separated unto Himself from among men. And of these as renewed by the power of divine grace, He says, “You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” And again, “Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” Now, the rest of mankind not comprehended among the chosen, the redeemed, the called, the saved, are called the *world*. Of these our Lord said, “O, righteous Father, the world has not known You.” And John said, “The world knows us not because it knew Him not.” This is the power which displays a deadly enmity against Christ and against His chosen—therefore it is called, “this present evil world,” while the kingdom of grace is spoken of as, “the world to come.” This is the world of which it is said, “He that is born of God overcomes the world.”

You will see that “the world” includes the ungodly themselves, as well as the force of evil in them. But it marks them out not as creatures nor even as men who have sinned, but as unregenerate, carnal and rebellious and, therefore, as the *living* embodiments of an evil power which works against God—and so we read of “the world of the ungodly.”

Perhaps I ought to add that there has grown up out of the existence of unconverted men and the prevalence of sin in them, certain customs, fashions, maxims, rules, modes, manners, forces—all of which go to make up what is called, “the world,” and there are also certain principles, desires, lusts, governments and powers, which also make up a part of the evil thing called, “the world.” Jesus says, “My kingdom is not of this world.” James speaks of keeping ourselves “unspotted from the world.” John says, “The world passes away and the lust thereof.” And Paul says, “Be not conformed to this world, but be you transformed.”

Moreover, I may say that the present constitution and arrangement of all things in this fallen state may be comprehended in the term, “world,” for everything has come under vanity by reason of sin and things are not, today, according to the original plan of the Most High as designed for man in His innocence. Behold there are trials and troubles springing out of our very existence in this life of which it is said, “in the world you shall have tribulation.” To many a child of God there have befallen hunger and disease and suffering—and unkindness and various forms of evil which belong not to the world to come, nor to the kingdom which Christ has set up—but which come to them because they are in this present evil world which has become so because the race of men have fallen under the curse and consequence of sin.

Now the world is all these matters put together—this great conglomeration of mischief among men, this evil which dwells here and there and everywhere men are scattered—this is the thing which we call the world. Every one of us know what it is better than we can tell to anybody else and, perhaps, while I am explaining, I am rather confusing than expounding. You know just what the world is to some of you—it is not more than your own little family, as to outward form, but much more as to *influence*. Your actual world may be confined to your own house, but the same principles enter into the domestic circle which pervades kingdoms and states. To others the world takes a wide sweep as they necessarily meet with ungodly men in business and this we must do unless we are to go altogether out of the world, which is no part of our Lord’s plan, for He says, “I pray not that You should take them out of the world.” To some who look at the whole mass of mankind and are called, thoughtfully, to consider them all because they have to be God’s messengers to them, the tendencies and outgoings of the human mind towards that which is evil, and the spirit of men’s actions as done against God in all nations and ages—all these go to make up to them, “the world.” But be it what it may, it is a thing out of which tribulation will be sure to come to us. Christ tells us so. It may come in the form of temporal trial of some shape or other. It may come in the form of temptation which will alight upon us

from our fellow men. It may come in the form of persecution to a greater or less extent according to our position, but it will come! "In the world you shall have tribulation." We are sojourners in an enemy's country and the people of the land where we tarry are not our friends and will not help us on our pilgrimage to heaven. All spiritual men in the world are our friends, but then, like ourselves, they are in the world but they are not of it. From the kingdom of this world of which Satan is lord, we must expect fierce opposition against which we must contend even unto victory if we are to enter into everlasting rest.

**II.** Now this brings me to the more interesting topic in the second place, of HOW HAS CHRIST OVERCOME THE WORLD? And we answer, first He did so *in His life*, then *in His death*, and then *in His rising and His reigning*.

First, Christ *overcame the world in His life*. This is a wonderful study, the overcoming of the world in the life of Christ! I reckon that those first 30 years of which we know so little were a wonderful preparation for His conflict with the world and that though only in the carpenter's shop, obscure and unknown to the great outside world, yet in fact He was not merely preparing for the battle, but He was, then, beginning to overcome it. In the patience which made Him bide His time we see the dawn of the victory. When we are intent upon doing good and we see mischief and sin triumphant everywhere, we are eager to begin. But suppose it were not the great Father's will that we should be immediately engaged in the fray? How strongly would the world, then, tempt us to go forward before our time? A transgression of discipline may be caused by too much zeal and this as much breaks through the law of obedience as dullness or sloth would do! The Roman soldier was accounted guilty who, when the army was left with the orders that no man should strike a blow in the leader's absence, nevertheless stepped forward and slew a Gaul. The act was one of valor, but it was contrary to military discipline and might have had most baleful results—and so it was condemned. Thus is it, sometimes, with us. Before we are ready, before we have received our commission, we are in a hurry to step forward and smite the foe. That temptation must have come to Christ from the world—many a time—as He heard what was going on in the reign of error and hypocrisy. His benevolent impulses might have suggested to Him to be up and doing, had it not been that He was incapable of wrong desires. Doubtless He was willing to be healing the sick. Was not the land full of sufferers? He would gladly be saving souls—were they not going down to the pit by thousands? He would gladly have confuted error, for falsehood was doing deadly work—but His hour was not yet come. Our Lord and Master had nothing to say till His Father bade Him speak. We know He was under a strong impulse to be at work, for when He went up to the temple, He said, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" That utterance revealed the fire that burned within His soul, and yet He was not preaching nor healing, nor disputing, but still remained in obscurity all those 30 years because God would have it so. When the Lord would

have us quiet, we are doing His will best by being quiet. But yet to be still and calm for so long a time was a wonderful instance of how all His surroundings could not master Him—not even when they seemed to work with His philanthropy—He still remained obedient to God and thus proved Himself the overcomer of the world.

When He appears upon the scene of public action you know how He overcomes the world in many ways. First, *by remaining always faithful to His testimony*; He never modified it, not even by so much as a solitary word to please the sons of men. From the first day in which He began to preach, even to the closing sentence which He uttered, it was all the truth of God and nothing but the truth of God! It was the truth of God uncolored by prevailing sentiment, untainted by popular error. He did not, after the manner of the Jesuit, disguise His doctrine by so shaping it, that men would hardly know but what it was the very error in which they had been brought up! Jesus came out with plain speaking and set Himself in opposition to all the powers which ruled the thought and creed of the age. He was no guarder of truth. He allowed truth to fight her own battles in her own way. And you know how she bares her breast to her antagonist's darts and finds in her own immutable, immortal, and invulnerable life her shield and her spear. His speech was confident, for He knew that truth would conquer in the long run and, therefore, He gave forth His doctrine without respect to the age or its prejudices. I do not think that you can say that of anybody else's ministry, not even of the best and bravest of His servants. We can see, in looking at Luther, great and glorious Luther, how Romanism tinged all that he did, more or less. And the darkness of the age cast some gloom, even over the serene and steadfast soul of Calvin. Of each one of the reformers we must say the same—bright stars as all of these were—yet they kept not themselves untarnished by the sphere in which they shone. Every man is more or less affected by his age and we are obliged, as we read history, to make continual allowances, for we all admit that it would not be fair to judge the men of former times by the standard of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But, sirs, you may test Christ Jesus, if you will, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century light, if light it is! You may judge Him by any century; yes, you may try Him by the bright light of the throne of God! His teaching is pure truth of God without any mixture. It will stand the test of time and of eternity! His teaching was not affected by the fact of His being born a Jew, nor by the prevalence of the Rabbinical traditions, nor by the growth of the Greek philosophy, nor by any other of the peculiar influences which were then abroad. His teaching was in the world, but it was not of it, nor tinged by it! It was the truth of God as He had received it from the Father—and the world could not make Him add to it, or take from it, or change it in the least degree and, therefore—in this respect He overcame the world.

Observe Him next in *the deep calm which pervaded His spirit at times when He received the approbation of men*. Our Lord was popular to a very high degree at certain times. How the people thronged around Him as His benevolent hands scattered healing on all sides! How they approved

of Him when He fed them! But how clearly He saw through that selfish approbation and said, "You seek Me because of the loaves and fishes." He never lost His self-possession. You never find Him elated by the multitudes following Him. There is not an expression that He ever used which even contains a suspicion of self-glorification. Amid their hosannas His mind is quietly reposing in God. He leaves their acclamations and applause to refresh Himself by prayer upon the cold mountains, in the midnight air. He communed with God, and so lived above the praises of men. He walked among them holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners—even when they would have taken Him by force and made Him a king! Once He rides in triumph, as He might often have done if He had pleased, but then it was in such humble style that His pomp was far other than that of kings! It was a manifestation of lowliness rather than a display of majesty. Amid the willing hosannas of little children, and of those whom He had blessed, He rides along, but you can see that He indulges none of the thoughts of a worldly conqueror, none of the proud ideas of the warrior who returns from the battle stained with blood. No, He is still as meek and as gentle and as kindly as ever He was! His triumph has not a grain of self-exaltation in it. He had overcome the world. What could the world give Him, brothers and sisters? An imperial nature like His, in which the manhood held such close communion with Deity is not readily to be imagined! What was there, here below, to cause pride in Him? If the trumpet of fame had sounded out its loudest note, what could it have been compared with the songs of cherubim and seraphim to which His ear had been accustomed throughout all ages? No, allied with His Deity, His manhood was superior to all the arts of flattery and to all the honors which mankind could offer Him. He overcame the world.

He was the same when the world tried the other plan upon Him. It frowned at Him but He was still calm. He had scarcely commenced to preach before they would have cast Him headlong from the brow of the hill! Do you not expect, as they are hurrying Him to the precipice, to see Him turn round upon them and denounce them at least with burning words such as Elijah used? But no, He speaks not an angry word! He slips away and is gone out of their midst. In the synagogue they often gnashed their teeth at Him in their malice, but if ever He was moved to indignation it was not because of anything directed against Himself. He always bore all and scarcely ever spoke a word by way of reply to merely personal attacks. If calumnies were heaped upon Him, He went on as calmly as if they had not abused Him, nor desired to slay Him. When He is brought before His judges, what a difference there is between the Master and His servant, Paul. He is smitten, but He does not say like Paul, "God shall smite you, you white-washed wall!" No, but like a lamb before her shearers, He is dumb and opens not His mouth. If they could have made Him angry, they would have overcome Him—but He was still loving; He was gentle, quiet, patient—however much they provoked Him! Point me to an impatient word—there is not even a *tradition* of an angry look that He gave on account of any offense rendered to Himself. They

could not drive Him from His purposes of love, nor could they make Him say anything or do anything that was contrary to perfect love! He calls down no fire from heaven—no she bears come out of the woods to devour those who have mocked Him. No, He can say, “I have overcome the world,” for whether it smiles or whether it frowns, in the perfect peace and quiet of His spirit, in the delicious calm of communion with God, the man of Sorrows holds on His conquering way!

His victory will be seen in another form. He overcame the world as to the *unselfishness of His aims*. When men find themselves in a world like this they generally say, “What is our market? What can we make out of it?” This is how they are trained from childhood. “Boy, you have to fight your own way! Mind you look to your own interests and rise in the world.” The book which is commended to the young man shows him how to make the best use of all things for himself. He must take care of, “number one,” and mind the main chance. The boy is told by his wise instructors, “you must look to yourself or nobody else will look to you. And whatever you may do for others, be doubly sure to guard your own interests.” That is the world’s prudence, the essence of all her politics, the basis of her political economy—every man and every nation must take care of themselves. If you wish for any other politics or economics you will be considered to be foolish theorists and probably a little touched in the head! Self is the man! The world’s law of self-preservation is the sovereign rule and nothing can go on rightly if you interfere with the gospel of selfishness—so the commercial and political Solomons assure us. Now, look at the Lord Jesus Christ when He was in the world and you will learn nothing of such principles except their condemnation! The world could not overcome Him by leading Him into a selfish mode of action. Did it ever enter into His soul, even for a moment, what He could do for Himself? There were riches, but He had not where to lay His head. The little store He had, He committed to the trust of Judas—and as long as there were any poor in the land they were sure to share in what was in the bag. He set so little account by estate, stock and funds that no mention is made of such things by either of His four biographers! He had wholly and altogether risen above the world in that respect, for with whatever evil the most spiteful infidels have ever charged our Lord, they have never, to my knowledge, accused Him of avarice, greed, or selfishness in any form. He had overcome the world.

Then, again, the Master overcame the world in that *He did not stoop to use its power*. He did not use that form of power which is peculiar to the world even for unselfish purposes. I can conceive a man, even apart from the Spirit of God, rising superior to riches and desiring only the promotion of some great principle which has possessed his heart. But you will usually notice that when men have done so, they have been ready to promote good by evil, or at least they have judged that great principles might be pushed on by force of arms, or bribes, or policy. Mahomet had grasped a grand truth when he said, “There is no God but God.” The unity of the Godhead is a truth of the utmost value—but then here comes

the means to be used for the propagation of this grand truth—the scimitar! “Off with the infidels’ heads! If they have false gods, or will not acknowledge the unity of the Godhead, they are not fit to live.” Can you imagine our Lord Jesus Christ doing this? Why, then the world would have conquered *Him*. But He conquered the world in that He would not employ, in the slightest degree, this form of power. He might have gathered troops about Him—and His heroic example, together with His miraculous powers— must soon have swept away the Roman empire and converted the Jew! And then across Europe and Asia and Africa His victorious legions might have gone trampling down all manner of evil. And with the cross for His banner and the sword for His weapon, the idols would have fallen and the whole world must have been made to bow at His feet! But no, when Peter takes out the sword, He says, “Put up your sword into its sheath. They that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” Well did He say, “My kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight.”

And He might, if He had pleased, have allied His church with the State, as His mistaken friends have done in these degenerate times—and then there might have been penal laws against those who dared dissent—and there might have been forced contributions for the support of His church and such like things. You have read, I dare say, of such things being done, but not in the Gospels, nor in the Acts of the Apostles! These things are done by those who forget the Christ of God, for He uses no instrument but love, no sword but the truth, no power but the Eternal Spirit, and in the very fact that He put all the worldly forces aside, He overcame the world!

So, brothers and sisters, He overcame the world by *His fearlessness of the world’s elite*, for many a man who has braved the frowns of the multitude cannot bear the criticism of the few who think they have monopolized all wisdom! But Christ meets the Pharisee and pays no honor to his phylactery. He confronts the Sadducee and yields not to his cold philosophy. Neither does He conceal the difficulties of the faith to escape his sneer. And He braves, also, the Herodian, who is the worldly politician, and He gives him an unanswerable reply. He is the same before them all! He is Master in all positions, overcoming the world’s wisdom and supposed intelligence by His own simple testimony to the truth of God!

And He overcame the world in His life, best of all, *by the constancy of His love*. He loved the most unlovely men. He loved those who hated Him. He loved those who despised Him. You and I are readily turned aside from loving when we receive ungrateful treatment and thus we are conquered by the world. But He kept to His great objective—“He saved others, Himself He could not save.” And He died with this prayer on His lips, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Not soured in the least, blessed Savior, You are, at the last, just as tender as at the first! We have seen fine spirits, full of generosity, who have had to deal with a crooked and perverse generation until they have, at last, grown hard and cold. Nero, who weeps when he signs the first death warrant of a crimi-

nal, at last comes to gloat in the blood of his subjects! Thus do sweet flowers wither into noxious corruption! As for You, precious Savior, You are always fragrant with love! No spot comes upon Your lovely character, though You traverse a miry road. You are as kind to men at Your departure as You were at Your coming, for You have overcome the world!

I can only say on the next point that *Christ, by His death, overcame the world* because, by a wondrous act of self-sacrifice, the Son of God smote to the heart the principle of selfishness which is the very soul and lifeblood of the world. There, too, by redeeming fallen man, He lifted man up from the power which the world exercises over him, for He taught men that they are redeemed, that they are no longer their own but bought with a price, and thus *redemption* became the note of liberty from the bondage of self-love and the hammer which breaks the fetters of the world and its lusts.

By reconciling men unto God through His great atonement, He also has removed them from the despair which otherwise had kept them down in sin and made them the willing slaves of the world. Now are they pardoned, and being justified, they are made to be the friends of God! And being the friends of God they become enemies to God's enemies and are separated from the world—and so the world, by Christ's death, is overcome.

But chiefly has He overcome *by His rising and His reigning*, for when He rose He bruised the serpent's head and that serpent is the prince of this world and has dominion over it. Christ has conquered the world's prince and led him in chains—and now has Christ assumed the sovereignty over all things here below. God has put all things under His feet. At His belt are the keys of providence. He rules among the multitude and in the council chambers of kings. As Joseph governed Egypt for the good of Israel, so does Jehovah Jesus govern all things for the good of His people. Now the world can go no further in persecuting His people than He permits! Not a martyr can burn, nor a confessor be imprisoned without the permit of Jesus Christ who is the Lord of all! The government is upon His shoulders and His kingdom rules over all. Brothers and sisters, this is a great joy to us, to think of the reigning power of Christ as having overcome the world!

There is yet this other thought that He has overcome the world *by the gift of the Holy Spirit*. That gift was practically the world's conquest. Jesus has set up a rival kingdom now—a kingdom of love and righteousness! Already the world feels its power by the Spirit. I do not believe that there is a dark place in the center of Africa which is not, to some extent, improved by the influence of Christianity. Even the wilderness rejoices and is glad for Him. No barbarous power dares to do what once it did, or if it does, there is such a clamor raised against its cruelty that very soon it has to say *peccavi*, and confess its faults. This moment the stone cut out of the mountain without hands has begun to smite old Dagon! It is breaking his head and breaking his hands. And the very stump of him shall yet be dashed in pieces! There is no power in this world so vital, so

potent as the power of Christ at this day! I say nothing just now of heavenly or spiritual things. I speak only of temporal and moral influences—even in these, the cross is to the front! He of whom Voltaire said that He lived in the twilight of His day, is going from strength to strength! It was true it was the twilight, but it was the twilight of the morning and the full noon is coming! Every year the name of Jesus brings more light to this poor world! Every year hastens on the time when the cross which is the lighthouse of humanity—the world's lighthouse amid the storm—shall shine forth more and more brightly over the troubled waters till the great calm shall come! The words shall become more and more universally true, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Thus has He overcome the world!

**III.** Now, lastly, WHAT CHEER IS THERE HERE FOR US? Why, first, that if the man, Christ Jesus, has overcome the world at its worst, we, who are in Him, shall overcome the world, too, through the same power which dwelt in Him! He has put His life into His people! He has given His Spirit to dwell in them, and they shall be more than conquerors! He overcame the world when it attacked Him in the worst possible shape, for He was poorer than any of you! He was more sick and sad than any of you! He was more despised and persecuted than any of you! And He was deprived of certain divine consolations which God has promised never to take away from His saints—and yet, with all possible disadvantages—Christ overcame the world! Therefore be assured *we* shall conquer, also, in His strength.

Besides, He overcame the world when nobody else had overcome it. It was as it were a young lion which had never been defeated in fight. It roared upon Him out of the thicket and leaped upon Him in the fullness of its strength. Now, if our greater Samson did tear this young lion as though it were a kid, and fling it down as a vanquished thing, you may depend upon it that now it is an old lion—and gray and covered with the wounds which He gave it of old—we, having the Lord's life and power in us, will overcome it, too! Blessed be His name! What good cheer there is in His victory! He does as good as say to us, "I have overcome the world, and you, in whom I dwell, who are clothed with My Spirit, must overcome it, too."

But then, next, remember He overcame the world as our Head and representative, and it may truly be said that if the members do not overcome, then the head has not perfectly gained the victory. If it were possible for the members to be defeated, why then, the head, itself, could not claim a complete victory, since it is one with the members. So Jesus Christ, our covenant Head and representative, in whose loins lay all the spiritual seed, conquered the world for us, and we conquered the world *in* Him! He is our Adam and what was done by Him was actually done *for* us and virtually done *by* us! Have courage then, for you must conquer! It must happen to you as unto your head—where the head is, shall the members be—and as the head is, so must the members be!

And now, brothers and sisters, I ask you whether you have not found it so? Is it not true, at this moment that the world is overcome in you? Does self govern you? Are you working to acquire wealth for your own aggrandizement? Are you living to win honor and fame among men? Are you afraid of men's frowns? Are you the slave of popular opinion? Do you do things because it is the custom to do them? Are you the slaves of fashion? If you are, you know nothing about this victory! But if you are true Christians, I know what you say—"Lord, I am Your servant; You have loosed my bonds! From now on the world has no dominion over me, and though it tempts me, and frightens me, and flatters me, yet still I rise superior to it by the power of Your Spirit, for the love of Christ constrains me, and I live not unto myself and unto things that are seen, but unto Christ and to things invisible." If it is so, who has done this for you? Who but Christ the Overcomer, who is formed in you the hope of Glory? Be of good cheer, for you have overcome the world by virtue of His dwelling in you!

So, brothers and sisters let us go back to the world and its tribulations without fear! Its trials cannot hurt us! In the process we shall get good, as the wheat does out of the threshing. Let us go forth to combat the world, for it cannot overcome us! There was never a man, yet, with the life of God in his soul, whom the whole world could subdue! No, all the world and hell together cannot conquer the smallest baby in the family of the Lord Jesus Christ! Lo, you are harnessed with salvation! You are covered with omnipotence! Your heads are covered with the protection of the atonement, and Christ, Himself, the Son of God, is your captain! Take up your battle cry with courage and fear not, for more is He that is for you than all they that are against you! It is said of the glorified saints, "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb"; "and this is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith." Be steadfast even to the end, for you shall be more than conquerors through Him that has loved you. Amen.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 16:1-33.**

### **HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—326, 633, 739.**

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# CHRIST THE MAKER OF ALL THINGS NEW

## NO. 1328

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
DECEMBER 10, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.***  
**2 Corinthians, 5:17.**

WE shall try to preach, this morning, of Christ as the Author of the new creation and may we be enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak to His glory. To create all things new is one of His most famous achievements! May we not only gaze upon it but be partakers in it.

What says Solomon in the Book of Ecclesiastes? Does he not tell us, there, that “the thing that has been shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun”? No doubt Solomon was correct in this declaration, but he wrote of this world and not of the world to come of which we speak; for behold, in the world to come, that is to say, in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, all things are new! To the wisest mind, if unrenewed, there is *nothing* new, but to the humblest of the regenerated ones, all things have become new.

The word, “new,” seems to harmonize sweetly with the name and work of our Lord Jesus, inasmuch as He comes in after the old system had failed, and begins anew with us as the father and head of a chosen race. He is the Mediator of the new covenant and has come to place us in a new relationship towards God. As the second Adam, He has delivered us from the old broken covenant of Works wherein we lay under the curse and He has placed us under the new infallible covenant of grace wherein we are established by His merit. The blood of Jesus Christ is said to be “the blood of the new covenant”—there is thus a connection with newness even in the most vital point of our dear Redeemer’s person. The blood is to Him the life, thereof, and apart from that blood He can bestow no remission of sin. Thus there is newness about that essential life-flood, for when He gives us to drink of His cup of remembrance, He says, “this is My blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” “Now has He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much, also, He is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” The old covenant, the old ceremonial law, the old spirit of bondage and the whole of the old leaven, Jesus has purged out of the house. He has admitted to a new dispensation wherein grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

When our Lord Jesus came into the world, His birth of a virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit was a new thing, for thus had the prophet Jeremiah said of old in the name of the Lord, “How long will you go about, O you backsliding daughter? For the Lord has created a new thing in the

earth, a woman shall compass a man.” Unto us a child is born who is the virgin’s son, in whom we do rejoice because He comes into the world without taint of original sin, after a new fashion, as never man was born before! Coming thus into the old world, He publishes new doctrine, for His doctrine is called gospel, or good news. It is the freshest news that an anxious heart can hear! It is the most novel music by which a troubled breast can be soothed! Jesus Christ’s teaching is still the best news of these days, as it was centuries ago. Though the world has had nearly 1900 years of the glad tidings, the gospel has the dew of its youth upon it and when men hear it they still ask, as the Greeks did of old, “What new doctrine is this?” Our Lord Jesus has come to set up, by the preaching and teaching of the gospel, a new kingdom, a kingdom having new laws, new customs, a new charter and new riches. It is a kingdom which is not of this world—a kingdom founded upon better principles and bringing infinitely better results to its subjects than any other dominion that has ever been. Into that kingdom He introduces only new men, who are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, who therefore love His new commandments and serve Him in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Moreover, Christ has opened for us an entrance into the kingdom of heaven above, for now we come to God “by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.” When, in days to come, we shall meet Him again, there will still be novelty, for He has said, “I will not drink from now on of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” Indeed, concerning our Lord and Master, everything is new and was it not so prophesied? For did not Isaiah say, in the 43<sup>rd</sup> chapter, 18<sup>th</sup> verse, “Remember you not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it?” And to the same effect was his prophecy in the 65<sup>th</sup> chapter, 17<sup>th</sup> verse: “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.” This newness of everything was to be a leading feature in Messiah’s reign and it has already been so, but far more shall this be seen in the latter days. Does not John in Revelation 21:5, say, “He who sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new”? Foretold in former ages as the Creator of new heavens and a new earth, our Lord shall, at last, in the summing up, be plainly seen to be the Maker of all things new. Do you wonder, beloved, that if a man is in Christ he is a new creature? If everything that Christ touches is made new, if He refreshes and revives, if He re-establishes and re-edifies and new-creates wherever He goes, are you at all astonished that those who live nearest to His heart—no, are in vital *union* with His blessed person—should also be made new? It would be very astonishing if it were *not* so!

Let us direct our attention, then, to the teaching of the text, “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature.”

**I.** We shall first consider with brevity THE GROUND OF THE NOVELTY which is here spoken of. It is, “If any man is in *Christ*, he is a new

creature,” not otherwise. No man comes to be a new creature by any process apart from Christ. “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature,” but if any man is *not* in Christ, he is *not* a new creature, nor can he become so except by connection with Him of whom it is written that He is “the beginning of the creation of God.” As in the old creation, “without Him was not anything made that was made,” so is it in the new! He makes all things new, but the things that are apart from Him have waxed old and are ready to perish—neither can they renew their youth. As well might the face of the earth hope to be renewed with spring apart from the sun, as for a soul to hope for spiritual renewal apart from Jesus! The wonderful newness produced by regeneration and new creation is the work of the Holy Spirit and His operations are all in union with the Lord Jesus and aimed at His glory. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and He that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

But how comes it that a man is, indeed, a new creature if he is in Christ? I answer, first, it comes necessarily from *the representative character of Christ* towards those who are in Him. If you wanted a man to be made a new creature, and were Omnipotent, what process would suggest itself to you? I think a double one. To make an old creature into a new creature, there must first be the stroke which ends him and then the touch which begins him anew. To put it more plainly, there must be *death* and then *life*. Now, has that taken place upon those who are in Christ? Of course it has, if it has taken place upon Christ, Himself, because He is the Head and represents the members! As Adam acted for the seed in him, so Christ has acted for the seed in Him. See, then, beloved, Christ has died. He came before the judgment seat with our sins upon Him, the representative of those of whom He is the Head. And in Him, death, which was the penalty of sin, was fulfilled to the letter—its most bitter dregs being drunk up. Jesus died. We are certain that He died, for the executioners broke not His legs because they saw that He was already dead. So one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and there came out blood and water. We know that He died, for the jealous eyes of His enemies would not have permitted Him to have been taken down from the cross unless the life had assuredly departed. He was laid in the grave, assuredly dead, under the dominion of death for the time being, and you and I who are in Him, at that time died in Him. “If one died for all, then all died”; such is the proper translation of that passage. We died, for He died in our name. Our sin was punished in Him by the death which He endured. You see, then, brothers and sisters, we are dead—dead by virtue of our federal union with Jesus Christ. I mean not all of you, unless you are all in Christ Jesus. Judge whether it is so with you or not, but I mean as many as the Father gave to Christ! As many as Christ, in His intent, did specially redeem by becoming their substitute—these were in Him and in Him they died—being crucified with Him. In Him, also, all His people rose again when He rose! On the third day He burst the bonds of death and left the grave on our behalf! See how the Holy Spirit, by His servant Paul, identifies us with all this. “Now if we are

dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more. Death has no more dominion over Him, for in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God. Likewise reckon you, also, yourselves, to be dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." As far as He was our representative, He was a new man when He rose. The law had no claims upon Him—He had been dead and so had passed out of its jurisdiction. The law never had any claim upon the risen Christ—it had a claim upon Him when He came under the law, but when He had satisfied it to the last jot and tittle, by death—He was completely clear! Has the law of our country any claim upon a man after he is dead? If a dead man can be raised again, all his past offenses are done with—he begins a new life and is not under the old law. And so with Christ and so with us, for here is the point of union—we are risen with Him by faith of the resurrection of Christ. We have been dead and buried, and now we are risen, and thus this, which is the very best and surest process for making a person a new creature, has been undergone by all God's elect, by reason of the representative and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and His glorious representative resurrection on their behalf!

But, beloved, there is another meaning. *We are made new creatures by an actual process* as well as by the legal process which I have described, and here, also, the same thing is done. We are made vitally one with Jesus Christ when we believe in Him—and then do we spiritually die and are made to live again. Our faith apprehends the dying of Christ and we feel, at the same time, the sentence of death in ourselves. We see how we deserve to die for sin and we accept the sentence, confessing our guiltiness before the Most High, and there is proclaimed throughout the powers and passions of the soul, a decree from God that the flesh shall die with all its lusts. We write down sin as from now on dead to us and ourselves as dead to it! We labor to mortify all our evil desires and the lusts of the flesh and all that comes of the flesh! When we believe in Jesus, a sword goes through the very loins of sin and the arrows of the Lord stick fast in the hearts of the King's enemies that lurk within our spirit. There also comes a new life into us as we behold Jesus risen from the dead. When we believe in Jesus we receive from God a new vital principle of superior and heavenly character, akin to Deity—there drops into our soul a sacred seed from the hand of the eternal Spirit, living and incorruptible, which abides forever—and forever brings forth fruit after its kind. As we believe in Christ living, we live in Christ and live after the fashion of Christ—and the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead dwells in our mortal bodies, making us to live in newness of life!

Now, beloved, do you know anything about this? Have you been made new creatures by death and resurrection? If you have been baptized, you have professed that so it has been with you. "Know you not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we, also, should walk in newness of life, for if we have been planted to-

gether in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." In the ordinance of baptism, by burial in the water and rising up from it, there is a setting forth as in a type and figure of our Lord's burial and resurrection, and at the same time, it is an emblem of the process by which we become new creatures in Him. But is it *really* so in your souls? Are you from now on dead to the world, and dead to sin, and quickened into the life of Christ? If you are so, then the text will bear to you a third and practical meaning, for it will not merely be true that your old man is condemned to die and a new nature is bestowed, but *in your common actions you will try to show this by newness of actual conversation*. Evils which tempted you at one time will be unable to beguile you, now, because you are dead to them! The charms of the painted face of the world will no longer attract your attention, for your eyes are blind to such deceitful beauties! You have obtained a new life which can only be satisfied by new delights, which can only be excited by new objects and constrained by new principles suitable to its own nature! This you will continually show. The life of God within you will make your actions pregnant with holiness and the end, thereof, shall be everlasting life! Your faith in Christ clearly evinces you to be a new creature, for it kills your old confidences and makes you build upon a new basis. Your love to Christ also shows your newness, for it has slain your old actions and captured your heart for Jesus only. And your hope, which is also a gift of the blessed Spirit, is set upon new things altogether, while your old hopes are things of which you are now ashamed.

Thus it is that first, by the headship of Christ, you are legally dead and alive, again. Next, by your vital union with Christ, you are dead and alive, again, as a matter of experience. And now it is practically proven in your life, from day to day, that you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. In all these three ways you are new creatures by the double process of dying and quickening. You are under a new Adam and so start life afresh as new creatures. You are under a new covenant and commence to act under different principles and so are new creatures. You are quickened by a new Spirit and so in thought and word and deed are seen to be new creatures. But all this is *in Christ*, and if you are *not* in Christ you are still in the old world which must shortly be destroyed. As "by the Word of God were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth," so have you been created by Jesus, the Eternal Word, and quickened by His Spirit or else you still abide in death. If your faith has never laid her hand upon Christ's sacrifice for sin, then your soul has never felt the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit! And all the baptismal regeneration and all else of human invention that may now comfort you is but a vain deceit. You *must* be born again, but it can only be in Christ Jesus, for to "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." "He that has the Son has life; and He that has not the Son of God has not life." O that we may all believe in Him, and enter into the new life—

***"Author of the new creation,***

***Come with all Your Spirit's power!  
Make our hearts Your habitation,  
On our souls Your graces shower."***

II. I shall, in the second place, lead you to consider the ESSENCE OF THIS NOVELTY. "If any man is in Christ, He is *a new creature*." Read, and the reading will be accurate, "He is a *new creation*." This is a very sweeping statement. A man in Christ is not the old man *purified*, nor the old man *improved*, nor the old man in a *better humor*, nor the old man with additions and subtractions! Nor is he the old man dressed in gorgeous robes! No, he is a *new creature* altogether! As for the old man, what is to be done with him? Can he not be sobered, reformed and made to do us useful service? No, he is crucified with Christ and bound to die by a lingering but certain death! The capital sentence is passed upon him, for he cannot be mended and, therefore, must be ended. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be." You cannot change the old nature! It is immutably bad and the sooner it is put away as a filthy and unclean thing, the better for us! The believer, so far as he is in Christ, is a new creation! He is not the old stuff put into a new fashion, or the old material worked up into an improved form, but absolutely a new creation! To create is to make out of nothing and that is precisely how the newborn life came into us. It is not a development, or an outgrowth, but a *creation*—a heavenly something called into being by a power from above. The new man in us is made out of nothing that was in us before, for nature does not assist grace but is opposed to it. Christ has not found light stored away in our darkness, nor life amid the corruption of our spiritual death! The new birth is from above and the life produced thereby is a new creation and not the goodness of nature educated till it becomes grace! They are getting up a notion, in certain quarters, that the children of pious parents, if not of all mankind, are the children of God by their first birth and only need certain training and influences to be brought to bear upon them and then they will develop into Christians as they grow up into manhood and womanhood. One divine says that our children ought not to need conversion! This theory is false throughout, for the best of children are, by nature, heirs of wrath even as others! The grace of God in the soul is a new creation and not the natural development of a pious education and training working upon the innate goodness of men! Indeed there is no such goodness there at all! It is altogether a dream! The new man in Christ is not the old creature washed and put out to school and elevated by "modern thought and culture." No, the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor can the leopard his spots—do what you will with them—they will still be an Ethiopian and a leopard! But the new man in Christ is another creature altogether.

Mark you, it is not said that the man has something new *about* him, but he, himself, is new! It is not merely that in a *spiritual* sense he has new eyes, new hands and new feet—but he, he, he, he, himself, is a new creation! Mark that! Do you not see, then, that salvation is the work of God? You cannot create yourself and you cannot create anything at all!

Try and create a fly, first, and then you may dream of being able to create a new heart and a right spirit in another *person!* But even then it would be quite another matter to new create *yourself*. Is not the very idea an absurdity? Shall nothing create something? Shall darkness create light? Shall sin create holiness? Shall death create life? Shall the devil create God? None of these questions are more absurd than the idea of the sinner's being able to new create himself.

No, beloved, regeneration is an extraordinary work, demanding omnipotence to accomplish it! It is, in fact, a divine work, for it is the supreme prerogative of God to create—

**“Know that the Lord is God alone,  
He can create, and He destroy.”**

If any man is in Christ, it is not only said that he is a creation, but a *new* creation, and the word here translated, “new,” as has been well observed, does not signify *recent*, but something altogether different from that which previously existed! A book may be new and yet it may be only a fresh copy of some old work. But that is not the case in this instance. The creature is not a new specimen of the same kind as the old, but another and different creation! We might almost read the text as if it said, “If any man is in Christ, he is a fresh creation, a new kind of creature altogether.” The new creation differs essentially from the old, although the first is an instructive emblem of the second. The first creation was the work of physical power, the second a work of *spiritual* power—the first created, for the most part, materialism in its various forms—but the new creation deals with spiritual things and manifests the most sublime attributes of the divine character. God, in nature, is glorious, but in grace He is all-glorious! The second is a creation nearer to the heart of God than the first creation was, for when He made the world He simply said it was good. But when He makes the new creation, it is written, “He shall rest in his love; He shall rejoice over you with singing.” So gladdening to His heart is the sight of the new creature which His grace has made, that He sings a joyful hymn!

Furthermore, we must note that if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature and the creation of him bears some resemblance to the creation of the world. I have at other times gone through that wonderful first chapter of the Book of Genesis, which is a Bible in miniature, and I have shown you how it sets forth the spiritual creation. Behold, by nature we lie like chaos—a mass of disorder, confusion and darkness. As in the old creation, so in the new; the Spirit of God broods over us and moves upon the face of all things. Then the word of the Lord comes and says within us, as before in chaos and old night, “Let there be light,” and there is light. After light there comes a division of the light from the darkness and we learn to call them by their names. The light is, “day,” and the darkness is, “night.” So to us there is a knowing and a naming of things, and a discerning of differences in matters which before we were ashamed when we put light for darkness, and after a while there comes forth in us the lower forms of spiritual life. As in the earth there came grasses and herbs, so in us there come desire, hope and sorrow for sin. By-and-by

there appeared on the globe fowl, fish, beasts and living things—and life beyond all count. So, also, in the new creation, from having life we go on to have it more abundantly. God, by degrees, created all His works till at last He had finished all the host of them. And even so He works on till He completes in us the *new creation* and looks upon us with rejoicing! Then He brings to us a day of rest, blessing us and causing us to enter into His rest because of His finished work. We could draw a very beautiful parallel if we had time, but you can think it out for yourselves.

Now, notice very carefully that if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, and this certifies that a new creation has taken place upon every man who is in Christ, whether by nature he was a Jew or Gentile, a moralist or a rake, a philosopher or a fool! When a man is converted and brought to Christ, he has invariably become a new creature. If he has believed in Jesus only three minutes, yet he is a new creature! And if he has known the Lord 70 years he can be no more. A new creation is a new creature and in this matter there is no difference between the babe in grace and the father in Israel!

As this creation is common to all the saints, so is it *immediate and present*. “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature.” It is not spoken of as a something that is *to* happen to him in the last article of death, wherein some seem to hope that many wonderful changes will be worked in them! But he who is in Christ is a new creature *now*. “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creature.” And that new creature is now possessed and, I may add, *consciously* possessed, too, for although there may arise occasional doubts upon this question, yet in a man’s inmost self he finds cause to know that there has passed upon him a marvelous change which only God, Himself, could have worked.

This change is *universal in the man*. The new man is not full grown in every part, nor in fact, in *any* part, and yet in all the portions of his regenerated nature he is a new creature. I mean this—if any man is in Christ, it is not merely his mental eye that is a new creation, but he, himself, is a new creation! He has a new heart according to the promise, “A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” He has new ears, hearing what he refused to hear before. He has a new tongue and can pray with it as he never prayed before! He has new feet and these delight to run in the ways of God’s Commandments. I refer, of course, only to His inner man, that is altogether new, and not any one part of it, only. If a man is merely enlightened in understanding, what is that? It is good, but it is not salvation! A new brain is not all that is needed to make a new man. A new man is spiritually new-created from head to foot. Though but a babe in grace and not fully developed in any one part, yet he is new, “created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

Thus have I tried to show you the essence of the novelty.

**III.** Let us next consider THE EXTENT OF THE NOVELTY. “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: *old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” It seems, then, that not only is the man a new

creature, but he has entered into a new creation. He has opened his eyes in a new world! Imagine Adam falling asleep at the gates of Paradise just under the cherubim's flaming sword, with the thorns and thistles springing up before him, and the serpent's trail behind him! And then further picture him lying there in a deep sleep till the Lord touches him, makes him open his eyes and causes him to find himself in a better paradise than the one he had lost! It was not so in reality, but can you imagine such a thing? If so, it may serve as a symbol of what the Lord has done for us. We are made new and find ourselves in a new world!

What about *the old things*? The text says they have passed away. The Greek word gives the idea of their having passed away spontaneously. I cannot liken it to anything that I know of better than the snow which melts in the sun. You wake up one morning and all the trees are festooned with snowy wreaths, while down below upon the ground the snow lies in a white sheet over everything. Lo, the sun has risen, its beams shed genial warmth, and in a few hours, where is the snow? It has passed away! Had you hired a thousand carts and horses and machines to sweep it away it could not have been more effectually removed. It has passed away. That is what the Lord does in the new creation—His love shines on the soul, His grace renews us and the old things pass away as a matter of course. Where are your old views about which you used to be so positive? Where are those old opinions for which you could freely have knocked a man down? Where are those old sneers against God's people? Where are those old pleasures which you took so much delight in? Where are those old engrossing pursuits? Had you a hard tug to get away from these bonds? Where are those old joys, those old hopes, those old trusts, those old confidences? Was it difficult to shake them off? Ah, no! Beneath the power of the Holy Spirit they have passed away! You hardly know how it is, but they have gone and gone completely. As a dream, when one awakes, you have despised their image and your heart knows them no more. It is marvelous, in this new creation, how the Lord makes confusion and old night to fly! You may call for them and say, "Chaos, where are you?" But no answer comes back, for old things are passed away! Our Lord Jesus Christ causes all this! Where His blessed face beams with grace and truth, as the sun with warmth and light, He dissolves the bands of sin's long frost and brings on the spring of grace with newness of buds and flowers.

But when you remove the old what is to take its place? Do you not observe that *new things have come*? "Behold, all things are become new." Now the man has new views, new notions, new ambitions, new convictions, new desires, new hopes, new dreads, new aims, new principles and new affections! He is led by a new spirit and follows a new course of life! Everything about him, in fact, is as if he had come fresh from the hand of God! Even as with the cleansed leper, as his flesh came, again, to him as the flesh of a little child and he was clean, so it is with the heart renewed by grace!

Beloved, it is delightful to read in the Book of Revelation and anticipate the things which are to be hereafter. How full that book is of novel-

ties which illustrate our subject, for there you read of a *new name* which the Lord bestows upon those who overcome. Perhaps some of you used to be known by some nickname or vulgar epithet while you lived in the world and were a lover of it. Now, in all probability, you are called by quite a different name among your Christian friends. Saul the persecutor is called Paul when he becomes an apostle. Moreover, there is a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name, which no man knows, saving he that receives it. You have been named with the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and you wear, from now on, that name by which the whole family in heaven and earth is named. Grace also has taught you a *new song*, "He has put a new song into my mouth and established my goings." You are rehearsing the music of that glorious band of whom it is written, "They sung a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof." Now are you a citizen of a *new city*, the new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from God, which shall be established among the sons of men in the last days as the world's metropolis, concerning which they shall say, "The temple of God is with men and He does dwell among them."

Beloved, each one of you has now become part of *one new man*. Do you know what I mean by that? There were once the Jews and the Gentiles, but now, said Paul, Christ "has broken down the middle wall of partition; for to make in Himself of two, one new man, so making peace." The mystical body of Christ is the one new man and we are members of that body! From now on we have communion with all saints and to us "there is neither Greek nor Jew, bound nor free, but Christ is all, and in all." Even now we have commenced to live in a new heaven and walk upon a new earth—and we are anticipating the time when literally, on this very earth where we have struggled, there shall be set up a new condition of things, for the first heaven and the first earth shall have passed away and there shall be no more sea. Rolled up like a scroll shall yon blue heavens be, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth to which, in expectation, we are always drawing near and pressing forward with inward yearning, for already in Christ Jesus we are a part of that new creation which is more fully to be revealed.

**IV.** Fourthly let us consider THE RESULT OF THIS NOVELTY. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." Well, the result of this novelty is, first, that the man is already a great wonder to himself. You know the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls—the soul passing, first, into one body and then into another—and so existing under different conditions. We do not believe that fiction for a moment, but if it had been true, the memories of such souls must have been stored with varied information, surpassingly strange to hear. Ours is another transformation. It is death and resurrection—the old passing away and the new being created—and how remarkable are the experiences of the men who have been so transformed! Here is a man who is a new creature and he has a very distinct recollection of the time when he was something far other than he is now! What a change he has undergone! Suppose a swine

could suddenly be turned into a man and yet remember what it did when it was one of the herd! What an experience it would have to tell! If you could take a hog from the trough and turn it into an emperor, that would not be half so great a change as is accomplished when an unregenerated sinner becomes a saint! I guarantee you the emperor would not find much cause for glorifying in his former swinish state! He would be silent and ashamed when others mentioned it. If he alluded to that state, it would always be with the blushes of humiliation and the tears of gratitude. If anybody began to talk about it and he knew that there might be others about him that might be helped by hearing what the Lord had done, he would begin to tell, in a gentle, modest way, how the Lord transformed him from a swine into a monarch. But he would never, never boast—how could he? In such a case the poor swine would have no responsibility and could not be blamed for wallowing in the mire. But this cannot be said of *us*, for when we acted as swine we knew better and sinned willfully. Still, what a change it is! How I wonder at myself! How I marvel at the goodness of my God! How I adore that sacred power which has made me the child of two births, the subject of two creations! He first made me in the fashion of a man and then made me in the image of the man, Christ Jesus! I was first born to die, and then born to live eternally! Let us bless God and be full of lowly wonder this morning!

The next result of this new creation is, however, that the man does not feel at home in this present evil world, for this is the old creation. The new man, the twice-born man, feels as if he were out of his element and not in a congenial country. He dwells in a body which is nothing better than a frail, uncomfortable, easily removed tent in which he groans, earnestly desiring to enter his own house at home, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Wherever he goes, things seem out of order with the rule which is set up in his soul. He loves not the world, neither the things in the world. The world's glories do not charm him and its treasures do not enchant him. Earth's music grates upon his refined ears, which are tuned to heavenly harmony! Its dainties do not delight the taste which has learned to enjoy the Bread of heaven. The new creatures pine to be in the new creation! And beloved, while we are pining we are preparing! The Spirit of God is working us to this same thing and filling us with groans and pangs of strong desires which indicate that we are becoming more and more fit to be partakers with the saints in light—they who see the face of the beloved without a veil and drink in ever new delights!

Mark, once more, while the new creature is thus watching and waiting for the new creation, he is, meanwhile, extending an influence, more or less unconscious, over the old world in which he dwells. Just as our Lord has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us, so we, His people, are stopping here to prepare a place for Him. We are, by His grace, winning men from the world to Christ! We are raising the tone of morals, we are spreading light and truth on all sides by the power of the Spirit and so we are helping to make the world more ready to receive the great King. We are seeking out His jewels. We are bringing His rebellious subjects to

His feet. The life that is in us seems out of place in this mortal frame, for the body is dead because of sin and, therefore, we groan, being burdened. As for the world itself, it is not our rest, for it is polluted. It seems a dreadful thing for the living Spirit to be dwelling in this graveyard of a world, but it is necessary for us to be here. We are linked with a creation made subject to vanity, because it was thus subjected, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope that the creation, itself, “shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” We are here as links between the spiritual and the material and we are working out divine purposes for the fuller display of the divine glory! We comfort one another with these words and as new creatures in Jesus Christ we look for the new heavens and the new earth and for the coming of your Lord and Savior! Know you not that when He shall appear, then shall *you*, also, appear with Him in glory? Let us, even now, bow before Him and salute Him with the language of our hymn—

*“To You the world its treasure brings!  
To You its mighty bow!  
To You the church exulting springs  
Her sovereign, Savior!  
Beneath Your touch, beneath Your smile,  
New heavens and earth appear,  
No sin their beauty to defile,  
Nor dim them with a tear.”*

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
2 CORINTHIANS 4:17, 18; 5.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—907, 391, 474.**

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# CHRIST THE DESTROYER OF DEATH

## NO. 1329

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING,  
DECEMBER 17, 1876,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."  
1 Corinthians 15:26.***

DURING four previous Sabbaths we have been following our Lord and Master through His great achievements. We have seen Him as the end of the law, as the conqueror of Satan, as the overcomer of the world, as the Creator of all things new. And now we behold Him as the destroyer of death. In this and in all His other glorious deeds, let us worship Him with all our hearts!

May the Spirit of God lead us into the full meaning of this, which is one of the Redeemer's grandest characters.

How wonderfully is our Lord Jesus *one with man*! For when the psalmist David had considered "the heavens, the work of God's fingers," He said, "Lord, what is man—that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him?" He was speaking of Christ. You would have thought he was thinking of man in his humblest estate, and that he was wondering that God should be pleased to honor so frail a being as the poor fallen son of Adam. You would never have dreamed that the glorious gospel lay hid within those words of grateful adoration! Yet, in the course of that meditation David went on to say, "You made Him to have dominion over all the works of Your hands, You have put all things under His feet." Now, had it not been for the interpretation of the Holy Spirit, we would still have considered that he was speaking of men in general, and of man's natural dominion over the brute creation, but behold, while that is true, there is another and a far more important truth of God concealed within it, for David, as a prophet, was all the while chiefly speaking of the man of men, the model man, the second Adam, the head of the new race of men! It was of Jesus, the Son of man, as honored of the Father, that the psalmist sang, "He has put all things under His feet." Strange, was it not, that when he spoke of man, he must of necessity speak also of our Lord? And yet, when we consider the thing, it is but natural and according to truth. It is only remarkable to us because in our minds we too often consider Jesus and man as far removed and too little regard Him as truly one with man.

Now, see how the apostle infers from the psalm the necessity of the resurrection, for if all things must be put under the feet of the man, Christ Jesus, then every form of evil must be conquered by Him and death among the rest. "He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet." It must be so and, therefore, death itself must ultimately be overcome. Thus out of that simple sentence in the psalm, which we

would have read far otherwise without the light of the Holy Spirit, the apostle gathers the doctrine of the resurrection. The Holy Spirit taught His servant, Paul, how, by a subtle chemistry, he could distil from simple words a precious fragrant essence which the common reader never suspected to be there. Texts have their secret drawers, their box within a box, their hidden souls which lie asleep till He who placed them on their secret couches awakens them that they may speak to the hearts of His chosen. Could you ever have guessed resurrection from the eighth psalm? No, nor could you have believed, had it not been told you, that there is fire in the flint, oil in the rock and bread in the earth we tread upon! Man's books have usually far less in them than we expect, but the book of the Lord is full of surprises! It is a mass of light, a mountain of priceless revelations. We little know what yet lies hidden within the Scriptures. We know the form of sound words as the Lord has taught us and by it we will abide—but there are inner store houses into which we have not peered—chambers of revelation lit up with bright lamps, perhaps too bright for our eyes at this present time. If Paul, when the Spirit of God rested upon Him, could see so much in the songs of David, the day may come when we, also, shall see still more in the epistles of Paul and wonder at ourselves that we did not understand better the things which the Holy Spirit has so freely spoken to us by the apostle. May we at this time be enabled to look deep and far and behold the sublime glories of our risen Lord!

To the text, itself, then—*death is an enemy; death is an enemy to be destroyed; death is an enemy to be destroyed last*—“the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

**I. DEATH AN ENEMY.** *It was so born*, even as Haman the Agagite was the enemy of Israel by his descent. Death is the child of our direst foe, for, “sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.” “Sin entered into the world and death by sin.” Now, that which is distinctly the fruit of transgression cannot be other than an enemy of man. Death was introduced into the world on that gloomy day which saw our fall and he that had the power of it is our arch enemy and betrayer, the devil—from both of which facts we must regard death as the manifest enemy of man. Death is an alien in this world. It did not enter into the original design of the unfallen creation, but its intrusion mars and spoils the whole. It is no part of the Great Shepherd's flock, but it is a wolf which comes to kill and to destroy. Geology tells us that there was death among the various forms of life from the first ages of the globe's history, even when as yet the world was not fitted up as the dwelling of man. This I can believe and still regard death as the result of sin. If it can be proved that there is such an organic unity between man and the lower animals that they would not have died if Adam had not sinned, then I see in those deaths before Adam the antecedent consequences of a sin which was then uncommitted. If by the merits of Jesus there was salvation *before* He had offered His atoning sacrifice, I do not find it hard to conceive that the foreseen demerits of sin may have cast the shadow of death over the long ages which came before man's transgression. Of that we know little, nor is it im-

portant that we should, but certain is it that as far as this present creation is concerned, death is not God's invited guest but an intruder whose presence mars the feast. Man, in his folly, welcomed Satan and sin when they forced their way into the high festival of Paradise, but he never welcomed death. Even his blind eyes could see in that skeleton form a cruel foe! As the lion to the herds of the plain, as the scythe to the sowers of the field, as the wind to the sere leaves of the forest, such is death to the sons of men. They fear him by an inward instinct because their conscience tells them that he is the child of their sin.

Death is well called an enemy for *it does an enemy's work* towards us. For what purpose does an enemy come but to root up and to pull down and to destroy? Death tears in pieces that comely handiwork of God, the fabric of the human body, so marvelously worked by the fingers of divine skill. Casting this rich embroidery into the grave among the armies of the worms, to its fierce soldiery, death divides "to everyone a prey of many colors, of many colors of needlework"—and they ruthlessly tear in pieces the spoil! This building of our manhood is a house fair to look upon, but death, the destroyer, darkens its windows, shakes its pillars, closes its doors and causes the sound of the grinding to cease. Then the daughters of music are brought low and the strong men bow themselves. This vandal spares no work of life, however full of wisdom or beauty, for it looses the silver cord and breaks the golden bowl. Lo, at the fountain, the costly pitcher is utterly broken and at the cistern the well-worked wheel is dashed in pieces! Death is a fierce invader of the realms of life, and where he goes he fells every good tree, stops all wells of water and mars every good piece of land with stones. See a man when death has worked his will upon him—what a ruin he is! How is his beauty turned to ashes and his comeliness to corruption! Surely an enemy has done this!

Look, my brothers and sisters, at the course of death throughout all ages and in all lands. What field is there without its grave? What city without its cemetery? Where can we go to find no sepulchers? As the sandy shore is covered with the traces of the worm, so are you, O earth, covered with those grass-grown hillocks beneath which sleep the departed generations of men! And you, O sea, even you are not without your dead! As if the earth were all too full of corpses and they jostled each other in their crowded sepulchers, even into your caverns, O mighty main, the bodies of the dead are cast! Your waves must become defiled with the carcasses of men, and on your floor must lie the bones of the slain! Our enemy, death, has marched, as it were, with sword and fire ravaging the human race. Neither Goth, nor Hun, nor Tartar could have slain so universally all that breathed, for death has allowed none to escape! Everywhere he has withered household joys and created sorrow and sighs! In all lands where the sun is seen, he has blinded men's eyes with weeping. The tear of the bereaved, the wail of the widow and the moan of the orphan—these have been death's music of war and he has found, therein, a song of victory!

The greatest conquerors have only been death's executioners, journeymen butchers working in his shambles. War is nothing better than

death holding carnival and devouring his prey a little more in haste than is his common way. *Death has done the work of an enemy to those of us who have as yet escaped his arrows.* Those who have lately stood around a new grave and buried half their hearts can tell you what an enemy death is. It takes the friend from our side and the child from our bosom, neither does it care for our crying. He has fallen who was the pillar of the household. She has been snatched away who was the brightness of the hearth! The little one is torn out of its mother's bosom though its loss almost breaks her heartstrings—and the blooming youth is taken from his father's side though the parent's fondest hopes are thereby crushed. Death has no pity for the young and no mercy for the old! He pays no regard to the good or to the beautiful! His scythe cuts down sweet flowers and noxious weeds with equal readiness! He comes into our garden, tramples down our lilies and scatters our roses on the ground! Yes, even the most modest flowers planted in the corner, and hiding their beauty beneath the leaves that they may blush unseen—death spies out even these! He cares nothing for their fragrance, but withers them with his burning breath. He is your enemy, indeed, you fatherless child, left for the pitiless storm of a cruel world to beat upon with none to shelter you! He is your enemy, O widow, for the light of your life is gone and the desire of your eyes has been removed with a stroke. He is your enemy, husband, for your house is desolate and your little children cry for their mother of whom death has robbed you.

He is the enemy of us all, for what head of a family among us has not had to say to him, "You have bereaved me again and again!" Especially is death an enemy to the living when he invades God's house and causes the prophet and the priest to be numbered with the dead. The Church mourns when her most useful ministers are struck down, when the watchful eye is closed in darkness and the instructive tongue is mute. Yet how often does death thus war against us! The earnest, the active, the indefatigable are taken away; those mightiest in prayer; those most affectionate in heart. Those most exemplary in life—these are cut down in the midst of their labors, leaving behind them a church which needs them more than tongue can tell. If the Lord does but threaten to permit death to seize a beloved pastor, the souls of his people are full of grief, and they view death as their worst foe, while they plead with the Lord and entreat Him to bid their minister live.

Even *those who die* may well count death to be their enemy—I mean not *now* that they have risen to their seats and, as disembodied spirits, behold the King in His beauty—but earlier while death was approaching them. He seemed to their trembling flesh to be a foe, for it is not in nature, except in moments of extreme pain or aberration of mind, or of excessive expectation of glory, for us to be in love with death. It was wise of our Creator so to constitute us that the soul loves the body and the body loves the soul, and they desire to dwell together as long as they may, else had there been no care for self-preservation and suicide would have destroyed the race—

***"For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,***

***The oppressor's wrong, the proud men's contumely,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare knife?"***

It is a first law of our nature that skin for skin, yes, all that a man has, will he give for his life, and thus we are nerved to struggle for existence and to avoid that which would destroy us. This useful instinct renders death an enemy, but it also aids in keeping us from that crime of all crimes—the surest of damnation if a man commits it willfully and in his sound mind! I mean the crime of self-murder.

When death comes, even to the good man, he comes as an enemy, for he is attended by such terrible heralds and grim outriders as do greatly scare us—

***"Fever with brow of fire.  
Consumption with palsy,  
Half-warmed with life,  
And half a clay-cold lump;  
Joint-torturing gout,  
And ever-gnawing rheum;  
Convulsion wild;  
Swollen dropsy; panting asthma;  
Apoplexy full gorged."***

None of these add a particle of beauty to the aspect of death. He comes with pains and griefs. He comes with sighs and tears. Clouds and darkness are round about him. An atmosphere laden with dust oppresses those whom he approaches and a cold wind chills them even to the marrow. He rides on the pale horse and where his steed sets its foot the land becomes a desert. By the footstep of that terrible steed, the worm is awakened to gnaw the slain! When we forget other grand truths of God and only remember these dreadful things, death is the king of terrors to us. Hearts are sickened, and reins are loosened because of him.

But, indeed, he is an enemy, for what does he come to do to our body? I know he does that which ultimately leads to its betterness, but still, it is that which, in itself, and for the present, is not joyous, but grievous. He comes to take the light from the eyes, the hearing from the ears, the speech from the tongue, the activity from the hand and the thought from the brain. He comes to transform a living man into a mass of putrefaction—to degrade the beloved form of brother and friend to such a condition of corruption that Affection, itself, cries out, "Bury my dead out of my sight." Death, you child of sin, Christ has transformed you marvelously, but in yourself you are an enemy before whom flesh and blood tremble, for they know that you are the murderer of all born of woman, whose thirst for human prey the blood of nations cannot slake!

If you think for a few moments of this enemy, you will observe some of his points of character. He is the common foe of all God's people and the enemy of all men—for however some have been persuaded that they should not die—yet is there no discharge in this war. And if in this conscription a man escapes the ballot many and many a year till his gray beard seems to defy the winter's hardest frost, yet the man of iron yields at last! It is appointed unto all men once to die. The strongest man has no elixir of eternal life to renew his youth amid the decays of age. Nor has

the wealthiest prince a price with which to bribe destruction. To the grave must you descend, O crowned monarch, for scepters and shovels are akin! To the sepulcher must you go down, O mighty man of valor, for sword and spade are of like metal! The prince is brother to the worm, and must dwell in the same house. Of our whole race it is true, "Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return."

Death is also a *subtle* foe, lurking everywhere, even in the most harmless things. Who can tell where death has not prepared his ambush? He meets us both at home and abroad. At the table he assails men in their food, and at the fountain he poisons their drink. He waylays us in the streets and he seizes us in our beds. He rides on the storm at sea and he walks with us when we are on our way upon solid land. Where can we fly to escape from you, O death, for from the summit of the Alps men have fallen to their graves and in the deep places of the earth where the miner goes down to find the precious ore, there have you sacrificed many a hecatomb of precious lives! Death is a subtle foe and with noiseless footsteps follows close at our heels when least we think of him.

He is an enemy whom *none of us will be able to avoid*, take what by-paths we may, nor can we escape from him when our hour is come. Into this fowler's nets, like the birds, we shall all fly! In his great seine must all the fishes of the great sea of life be taken when their day is come. As surely as the sun sets, or as the midnight stars at length descend beneath the horizon, or as the waves sink back into the sea, or as the bubble bursts, so must we all, sooner or later, come to our end and disappear from earth to be known no more among the living.

*Sudden*, too, full often, are the assaults of this enemy—

***"Leaves have their time to fall,  
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,  
And stars to set—but all,  
You have all seasons for your own, O death!"***

Such things have happened as for men to die without an instant's notice. With a psalm upon their lips they have passed away! Or engaged in their daily business, they have been summoned to give in their account. We have heard of one who, when the morning paper brought him news that a friend in business had died, was drawing on his boots to go to his counting-house and observed with a laugh that as far as he was concerned, he was so busy he had no time to die. Yet, before the words were finished, he fell forward and was a corpse. Sudden deaths are not so uncommon as to be marvels if we dwell in the center of a large circle of mankind. This is death—a foe not to be despised or trifled with! Let us remember all his characteristics and we shall not be inclined to think lightly of the grim enemy whom our glorious Redeemer has destroyed.

**II.** Secondly, let us remember that death is AN ENEMY TO BE DESTROYED. Remember that our Lord Jesus Christ has already worked a great victory upon death so that He has delivered us from lifelong bondage through its fear. He has not yet *destroyed death*, but He has gone very near to it, for we are told that He has "abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." This surely must come very near to having destroyed death altogether.

In the first place, our Lord has subdued death in the very worst sense by having delivered His people from spiritual death. "And you has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Once you had no divine life whatever, but the death of original depravity remained upon you and so you were dead to all divine and spiritual things. But now, beloved, the Spirit of God, even He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, has raised *you* up into newness of life, and you have become new creatures in Christ Jesus! In this sense death has been subdued.

Our Lord, in His lifetime, also conquered death by restoring certain individuals to life. There were three memorable cases in which, at His bidding, the last enemy resigned his prey. Our Lord went into the ruler's house and saw the little girl who had lately fallen asleep in death, around whom they wept and lamented. He heard their scornful laughter when He said, "She is not dead but sleeps," and He put them all out and said to her, "Maid, arise!" Then was the spoiler spoiled and the dungeon door set open! He stopped the funeral procession at the gates of Nain, from where they were carrying forth a young man, "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow," and He said "Young man, I say unto you, arise." When that young man sat up, and our Lord delivered him to his mother, then, again, was the prey taken from the mighty! Chief of all, when Lazarus had laid in the grave so long that his sister said, "Lord, by this time He stinks," when, in obedience to the word, "Lazarus come forth!" forth came the raised one with his grave clothes still about him, but yet really quickened, then was death seen to be subservient to the Son of man! "Loose him and let him go," said the conquering Christ, and death's bonds were removed, for the lawful captive was delivered! When at the Redeemer's resurrection many of the saints arose and came out of their graves into the holy city, then was the crucified Lord proclaimed to be victorious over death and the grave.

Still, brothers and sisters, these were but preliminary skirmishes and mere foreshadows of the grand victory by which death was overthrown. The real triumph was achieved upon the cross—

***"He hell in hell laid low  
Made sin, He sin overthrew:  
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,  
And death, by dying, slew."***

When Christ died He suffered the penalty of death on the behalf of all His people and, therefore, no believer now dies by way of punishment for sin, since we cannot dream that a righteous God would twice exact the penalty for one offense! Death, since Jesus died, is not a penal infliction upon the children of God! As such He has abolished it and it can never be enforced. Why do the saints die, then? Why, because their bodies must be changed before they can enter heaven. "Flesh and blood," as they are, "cannot inherit the kingdom of God." A divine change must take place upon the body before it will be fit for incorruption and glory! And death and the grave are, as it were, the refining pot and the furnace by means of which the body is made ready for its future bliss. Death, it is true you are not yet destroyed, but our living Redeemer has so changed you that you are no longer death, but something other than your name!

Saints do not die now, but they are dissolved and depart. Death is the loosing of the cable that the boat may freely sail to the fair havens! Death is the fiery chariot in which we ascend to God! It is the gentle voice of the Great King who comes into His banqueting hall, and says, "Friend, come up higher." Behold, on eagle's wings we mount! We fly, far from this land of mist and clouds, into the eternal serenity and brilliance of God's own house above! Yes, our Lord has abolished death! The sting of death is sin and our great Substitute has taken that sting away by His great sacrifice! Death without a sting abides among the people of God, and it so little harms them, that to them, "it is not death to die."

Further, Christ vanquished death and thoroughly overcame him when He rose. What a temptation one has to paint a picture of the resurrection, but I will not be led aside to attempt more than a few touches. When our great Champion awoke from His brief sleep of death and found Himself in the withdrawing room of the grave, He quietly proceeded to put off the garments of the tomb. How leisurely He proceeded! He folded up the napkin and placed it by itself, that those who lose their friends might wipe their eyes. And then He took off the winding sheet and laid the grave clothes by themselves that they might be there when His saints come there, so that the chamber might be well furnished and the bed ready sheeted and prepared for their rest. The sepulcher is no longer an empty vault, a dreary morgue, but a chamber of rest, a dormitory furnished and prepared, hung with the drapes which Christ, Himself has bequeathed! It is now no more, a damp, dark, dreary prison—Jesus has changed all that—

***"'Tis now a cell where angels use,  
To come and go with heavenly news."***

The angel from heaven rolled away the stone from our Lord's sepulcher and let in the fresh air and light again upon our Lord—and He stepped out more than a conqueror! Death had fled. The grave had capitulated—

***"Lives again our glorious King!  
Where, O death, is now your sting?  
Once He died our souls to save;  
Where's your victory, boasting grave?"***

Well, brothers and sisters, as surely as Christ rose, so did He guarantee an absolute certainty the resurrection of all His saints into a glorious life for their bodies, the life of their souls never having paused even for a moment! In this He conquered death! And since that memorable victory, every day Christ is overcoming death, for He gives His Spirit to His saints and having that Spirit within them they meet the last enemy without alarm. Often they confront him with songs. Perhaps more frequently they face him with calm countenance and fall asleep with peace. I will not fear you, death, why should I? You look like a dragon, but your sting is gone! Your teeth are broken, oh old lion, why should I fear you? I know you are no more able to destroy me, but you are sent as a messenger to conduct me to the golden gate wherein I shall enter and see my Savior's unveiled face forever! Expiring saints have often said that their last beds have been the best they have ever slept upon. Many of them have inquired—

**“Tell me, my soul, can this be death?”**

To die has been so different a thing from what they expected it to be, so easy and so joyous! They have been so unloaded of all care, have felt so relieved instead of burdened, that they have wondered whether this could be the monster they had been so afraid of all their days! They find it a pin's prick, whereas they feared it would prove a sword thrust! It is the shutting of the eyes on earth and the opening of them in heaven, whereas they thought it would have been a stretching upon the rack, or a dreary passage through a dismal region of gloom and dread! Beloved, our exalted Lord has overcome death in all these ways.

But now, observe, that this is not the text—the text speaks of something yet *to be done*. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, so that death, in the sense meant by the text, is not destroyed yet. He is to be destroyed, and how will that be?

Well, I take it he will be destroyed in the sense, first, that at the coming of Christ, those who are alive and remain shall not see death! They shall be changed—there must be a change, even to the living, before they can inherit eternal life, but they shall not actually die. Do not envy them, for they will have no preference beyond those that sleep. Rather do I think theirs to be the inferior lot of the two in some respects. But they will not know death—the multitude of the Lord's own who are alive at His coming will pass into glory without needing to die. Thus death, as far as they are concerned, will be destroyed.

But the sleeping ones, the myriads who have left their flesh and bones to mold back to earth, death shall be destroyed even as to them, for when the trumpet sounds they shall rise from the tomb! The resurrection is like destruction of death! We never taught, nor believed, nor thought that every particle of every body that was put into the grave would come to its fellow and that the absolutely identical *material* would rise—but we do say that the identical *body* will be raised and that as surely as there comes out of the ground the seed that was put into it, though in very different guise, for it comes not forth as a seed but as a flower—so surely shall the same body rise again! The same material is not necessary, but there shall come out of the grave, yes, come out of the earth if it never saw a grave, or come out of the sea if devoured by monsters—that same body for true identity which was inhabited by the soul while here below. Was it not so with our Lord? Then so shall it be with His people! And then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting! O grave where is your victory!”

There will be this feature in our Lord's victory, that death will be fully destroyed because those who rise will not be one whit the worse for having died! I believe, concerning those new bodies, that there will be no trace upon them of the feebleness of old age. None of the mark of long and wearying sickness, none of the scars of martyrdom! death shall not have left his mark upon them at all, except it is some glory mark which shall be to their honor, like the scars in the flesh of the Well-beloved which are His chief beauty, even now, in the eyes of those for whom His

hands and feet were pierced! In this sense death shall be destroyed because he shall have done no damage to the saints at all—the very trace of decay shall have been swept away from the redeemed.

And then, finally, there shall, after this trumpet of the Lord, be no *more death*, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things will have passed away. “Christ, being raised from the dead dies no more, death has no more dominion over Him.” And so the quickened ones, His own redeemed, they, too, shall die no more. Oh dreadful, dreadful supposition, that they should ever have to undergo temptation or pain or death a second time! It cannot be. “Because I live,” says Christ, “they shall live, also.” Yet the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul, having been given up by some, certain of them have felt obliged to give up with the eternity of future punishment the eternity of future bliss—and assuredly, as far as some great proof texts are concerned, they stand or fall together! “These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.” If the one state is short, so must the other be! Whatever the adjective means in the one case it means in the other! To us, the word means endless duration in both cases—and we look forward to a bliss which shall never know end or duration! Then in the tearless, sorrowless, graveless country, death shall be utterly destroyed.

**III.** And now last of all, and the word, “last,” sounds fitly in this case, DEATH IS TO BE DESTROYED LAST. Because he came in last, he must go out last. Death was not the first of our foes. First came the devil, then sin, then death. Death is not the worst of enemies. Death is an enemy, but he is much to be preferred to our other adversaries. It would be better to die a thousand times than to sin. To be tried by death is nothing compared with being tempted by the Satan! The mere physical pains connected with dissolution are comparative trifles compared with the hideous grief which is caused by sin and the burden which a sense of guilt causes to the soul. No, death is but a secondary mischief compared with the defilement of sin. Let the great enemies go down first! Smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. Let sin and Satan, the lord of all these evils, be smitten first and death may well be left to the last.

Notice that death is the last enemy to each individual Christian and the last to be destroyed. Well now, if the word of God says he is the last, I need to remind you of a little piece of practical wisdom—leave him to be the last. Brother, do not dispute the appointed order, but let the last be last! I have known a brother wanting to vanquish death long before he died. But, brother, you do not need dying grace till dying moments! What would be the good of dying grace while you are yet alive? A boat will only be necessary when you reach a river. Ask for *living* grace, and glorify Christ and *then* you shall have dying grace when dying time comes! Your enemy is going to be destroyed, but not today. There is a great host of enemies to be fought today—and you may be content to let this one alone for a while! This enemy will be destroyed, but of the times and the seasons we are in ignorance—our wisdom is to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ as the duty of every day requires. Take your trials as they come, brother! As the enemies march up, slay them, rank upon rank! But if you

fail, in the name of God, to smite the front ranks, and say, "No, I am only afraid of the rear rank," then you are playing the fool! Leave the final shock of arms till the last adversary advances! Meanwhile, hold your place in the conflict. God will, in due time, help you to overcome your last enemy, but meanwhile see to it that you overcome the world, the flesh and the devil! If you live well, you will die well. That same Covenant in which the Lord Jesus gave you life contains, also the grant of death, for, "All things are yours, whether things present or things to come, or life or death, all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Why is death left to the last? Well, I think it is because Christ can make much use of him. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, because death is of great service before he is destroyed. Oh, what lessons some of us have learned from death! "Our dying friends come o'er us like a cloud to dampen our brainless ardors," to make us feel that these poor fleeting toys are not worth living for! They remind us that as others pass away so must we, also, be gone—and thus they help to make us let loose of this world and urge us to take wing and mount towards the world to come! There are, perhaps, no sermons like the deaths which have happened in our households—the departure of our beloved friends have been to us solemn discourses of divine Wisdom which our heart could not help hearing. So Christ has spared death to make him a preacher to His saints.

And you know, brothers and sisters, that if there had been no death, the saints of God would not have had the opportunity to exhibit the highest ardor of their love. Where has love to Christ triumphed most? Why, in the death of the martyrs at the stake and on the rack! O Christ, You never had such garlands woven for You by human hands as they have brought You who have come up to heaven from the forests of persecution, having waded through streams of blood! By death for Christ the saints have glorified Him the most.

So is it in their measure, with saints who die from ordinary deaths—they would have had no such test for faith and work for patience as they now have if there had been no death! Part of the reason of the continuance of this dispensation is that the Christ of God may be glorified, but if believers never died, the supreme consummation of faith's victory must have been unknown. Brothers and sisters, if I may die as I have seen some of our church members die, I court the grand occasion! I would not wish to escape death by some by-road if I may sing as they sang! If I may have such hosannas and hallelujahs beaming in my very eyes as I have seen, as well as heard, from them, it would be a blessed thing to die! Yes, as a supreme test of love and faith, death is well respited awhile to let the saints glorify their Master!

Besides, brethren, without death we should not be so conformed to Christ as we shall be if we fall asleep in Him. If there could be any jealousies in heaven among the saints, I think that any saint who does not die, but is changed when Christ comes, could almost meet me and you, who probably will die, and say "My brother, there is one thing I have missed. I never lay in the grave. I never had the chill hands of death laid

on me, and so in that I was not conformed to my Lord. But you know what it is to have fellowship with Him, even in His death.” Did I not well say that they that were alive and remain should have no preference over them that are asleep? I think the preference, if anything, shall belong to us who sleep in Jesus and wake up in His likeness!

Death, dear friends, is not yet destroyed, because he brings the saints home! He does but come to them and whisper his message and in a moment they are supremely blessed!—

***“Have done with sin and care and woe,  
And with the Savior rest.”***

And so death is not destroyed yet, for he answers useful purposes.

But, beloved, he *is* going to be destroyed! He is the last enemy of the church collectively. The church, as a body, has had a mass of foes to contend with, but after the resurrection we shall say, “This is the last enemy. Not another foe is left!” Eternity shall roll on in ceaseless bliss! There may be changes, bringing new delights, perhaps. In the eternity to come there may be eras and ages of yet more amazing bliss and still more superlative ecstasy! But there shall be—

***“No rude alarm of raging foes,  
No cares to break the last repose.”***

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death and if the *last* is slain there can be no future foe! The battle is fought and the victory is won forever! And who has won it? Who but the Lamb that sits on the throne, to whom let us all ascribe honor, glory, majesty, power, dominion and might forever and ever! The Lord help us in our solemn adoration! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-34.**

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—909, 843, 841.**

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# THE GREAT BIRTHDAY

## NO. 1330

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
DECEMBER 24, 1876.  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you  
good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”  
Luke 2:10.***

THERE is no reason upon earth, beyond that of ecclesiastical custom, why the 25<sup>th</sup> of December should be regarded as the birthday of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ anymore than any other day from the first of January to the last day of the year. And yet some persons regard Christmas with far deeper reverence than the Lord's-day. You will often hear it asserted that, “The Bible and the Bible, alone, is the religion of Protestants,” but it is not so! There are Protestants who have absorbed a great deal beside the Bible into their religion and among other things they have accepted the authority of what they call, “the Church,” and by that door all sorts of superstitions have entered. There is no authority whatever, in the word of God, for the keeping of Christmas at all! And there is certainly no reason for keeping it just now except that the most superstitious section of Christendom has made a rule that December 25<sup>th</sup> shall be observed as the birthday of the Lord and the church, established by law in this land, has agreed to follow in the same track. You are under no bondage, whatever, to regard the regulation. We owe no allegiance to the ecclesiastical powers which have made a decree on this matter, for we belong to an old-fashioned church which does not dare to *make* laws, but is content to *obey* them. At the same time, the day is no worse than another, and if you choose to observe it and observe it unto the Lord, I doubt not that He will accept your devotion. But, if you do not observe it, but unto the Lord observe it not for fear of encouraging superstition and will-worship, I doubt not but what you shall be as accepted in the non-observance as you could have been in the observance of it! Still, as the thoughts of a great many Christian people will run, at this time, towards the birth of Christ—and as this cannot be wrong—I judged it meet to use ourselves of the prevailing current and float down the stream of thought. Our minds will run that way because so many around us are following customs suggestive of it. Therefore let us get what good we can out of the occasion. There can be no reason why we should not, and it may be helpful that we should, now, consider the birth of our Lord Jesus. We will do that voluntarily which we would refuse to do as a matter of obligation—we will do that simply for convenience sake which we should not think of doing because enjoined by authority or demanded by superstition!

The shepherds were keeping their flocks by night. Probably a calm, peaceful night, wherein they felt the usual difficulty of keeping their weary eyelids open as sleep demanded its due of them. All of a sudden, to their amazement, a mighty blaze lit up the heavens and turned midnight into midday! The glory of the Lord, by which, according to the idiom of the language, is meant the greatest conceivable glory as well as a divine glory, surrounded and alarmed them! And in the midst of it they saw a shining spirit, a form, the like of which they had never beheld before, but of which they had heard their fathers speak, and of which they had read in the books of the prophets so that they knew it to be an angel. It was, indeed, no common messenger from heaven, but "the angel of the Lord," that choice presence angel, whose privilege it is to stand nearest the heavenly majesty, "mid the bright ones doubly bright," and to be employed on weightiest errands from the eternal throne of God. "The angel of the Lord came upon them." Are you astonished that at first they were afraid? Would you not be alarmed if such a thing should happen to you? The stillness of the night, the suddenness of the apparition, the extraordinary splendor of the light, the supernatural appearance of the angel—all would tend to astound them and to put them into a quiver of reverential alarm—for I doubt not there was a mixture both of reverence and of fear in that feeling which is described as being "sorely afraid." They would have fallen on their faces to the ground in fright had there not dropped out of that, "glory of the Lord," a gentle voice, which said, "Fear not." They were calmed by that sweet comfort and enabled to listen to the announcement which followed. Then that voice, in accents sweet as the notes of a silver bell, proceeded to say, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." They were bid to shake off all thoughts of fear and to give themselves up to joy! Doubtless they did so and, among all mankind, there were none so happy at that dead of night as were these shepherds who had seen an amazing sight! They would never forget that night and now were consulting whether they should not hasten away to gaze upon a sight which would be more delightful still, namely, the Babe of which the angel spoke!

May great joy be upon us, also, while our thought shall be that *the birth of Christ is the cause of supreme joy*. When we have spoken upon this we shall have to enquire, *to whom does that joy belong?* And thirdly, we shall consider *how they shall express that joy* while they possess it. May the Holy Spirit now reveal the Lord Jesus to us and prepare us to rejoice in Him.

**I. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST SHOULD BE THE SUBJECT OF SUPREME JOY.** Rightly so. We have the angelic guarantee for rejoicing because Christ is born! It is a truth of God so full of joy that it caused the angel who came to announce it, to be filled with gladness! He had little to do with the fact, for Christ took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham. But I suppose that the very thought that the Creator should be linked with the creature—that the great Invisible and Omnipotent should

come into alliance with that which He, Himself, had made—caused the angel, as a creature, to feel that all creatureship was elevated and this made him glad. Besides, there was a sweet benevolence of spirit in the angel's bosom which made him happy because he had such gladsome tidings to bring to the fallen sons of men! Although they are not our brethren, yet do angels take a loving concern in all our affairs. They rejoice over us when we repent! They are ministering spirits when we are saved and they bear us aloft when we depart! And we are sure that they can never be unwilling servants to their Lord, or tardy helpers of His beloved ones. They are friends of the Bridegroom and rejoice in His joy! They are household servants of the family of love and they wait upon us with an eager diligence which betokens the tenderness of feeling which they have towards the King's sons. Therefore the angel delivered his message cheerfully, as became the place from which he came, the theme which brought him down and his own interest therein. He said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy," and we are sure he spoke in accents of delight. Yes, so glad were angels at this gospel that when the discourse was over, one angel, having evangelized and given out the gospel for the day, there suddenly appeared a band of choristers and sang an anthem loud and sweet that there might be a full service at the first propounding of the glad tidings of great joy! A multitude of the heavenly host had heard that a chosen messenger had been sent to proclaim the new-born King and, filled with holy joy and adoration, they gathered up their strength to pursue him, for they could not let him go to earth alone on such an errand! They overtook him just as he had reached the last word of his discourse and then they broke forth in that famous chorale, the only one sung of angels that was ever heard by human ears here below, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Thus, I say, they had a full service—there was gospel ministry in rich discourse concerning Christ—and there was hearty and devout praise from a multitude all filled with heavenly joy! It was so glad a message that they could not let it be simply spoken by a solitary voice, though that were an angel's, but they must pour forth a glad chorus of praise, singing unto the Lord a new song! Brothers and sisters, if the birth of Jesus was so gladsome to our cousins, the angels, what should it be to us? If it made our neighbors, who had comparatively so small a share in it, sing, how should it make us leap for joy? Oh, if it brought heaven down to earth, should not our songs go up to heaven? If heaven's gate of pearl was set open at its widest and a stream of shining ones came running downward to the lower skies to anticipate the time when they shall all descend in solemn pomp at the glorious advent of the great King. If it emptied heaven for a while to make earth so glad, ought not our thoughts and praises and all our loves to go pouring up to the eternal gate, leaving earth, awhile, that we may crowd heaven with the songs of mortal men? Yes, verily, so let it be!—

***"Glory to the new-born King!  
Let us all the anthem sing  
'Peace on earth, and mercy mild;***

***God and sinners reconciled.”***

For, first, *the birth of Christ was the incarnation of God*—it was God taking upon Himself human nature—a mystery, a wondrous mystery, to be believed in rather than to be defined! Yet so it was that in the manger lay an infant who was also infinite! A feeble child who was also the Creator of heaven and earth! How this could be we do not know but that it was so we assuredly believe, and therein do we rejoice! If God thus takes upon Himself human nature, then manhood is not abandoned nor given up as hopeless! When manhood had broken the bonds of the covenant and snatched from the one reserved tree the forbidden fruit, God might have said, “I give you up, O Adam, and cast off your race. Even as I gave up Lucifer and his entire host, so I abandon you to follow your own chosen course of rebellion!” But we have now no fear that the Lord has done this, for God has espoused manhood and taken it into union with Himself! Now manhood is not put aside by the Lord as an utterly accursed thing, to be an abomination unto Him forever, for Jesus, the Well-beloved, is born of a virgin! God would not have taken manhood into union with Himself if He had not said, “Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it.” I know the curse has fallen upon men because they have sinned, but evidently not on *manhood* in the abstract, for else had not Christ come to take upon Himself the form of man, and to be born of woman! The word made flesh means hope for manhood, notwithstanding the fall! The race is not to be outlawed and marked with the brand of death and hell, or to be utterly abandoned to destruction, for, lo, the Lord has married into the race and the Son of God has become the Son of man! This is enough to make all that is within us sing for joy!

Then, too, if God has taken manhood into union with Himself, He loves man and means man’s good. Behold what manner of love God has bestowed upon us that He should espouse our nature! For God had never so united Himself with any creature before. His tender mercy had ever been over all His works, but they were still so distinct from Himself that a great gulf was fixed between the Creator and the created, so far as existence and relationship are concerned. The Lord had made many noble intelligences, principalities and powers of whom we know little. We do not even know what those four living creatures may be who are nearest the eternal presence—but God had never taken up the nature of any of them, nor allied Himself with them by any actual union with His person. But, lo, He has allied Himself with man, that creature a little lower than the angels, that creature who is made to suffer death by reason of his sin! God has come into union with man and, therefore, full sure He loves him unutterably well and has great thoughts of good towards him. If a king’s son does marry a rebel, then for that rebel race there are prospects of reconciliation, pardon and restoration! There must be in the great heart of the Divine One wondrous thoughts of pity and condescending love if He deigns to take human nature into union with Himself! Joy, joy forever! Let us sound the fond cymbals of delight for the incarnation bodes good to our race!

If God has taken manhood into union with Himself, then God will feel for man! He will have pity upon him! He will remember that he is dust. He will have compassion upon his infirmities and sicknesses. You know, beloved, how graciously it is so, for that same Jesus who was born of a woman at Bethlehem is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, having been tempted in all points like we are! Such intimate practical sympathy would not have belonged to our great High Priest if He had not become man! Not even though He is divine could He have been perfect in sympathy with us if He had not, also, become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. The Captain of our salvation could only be made perfect through suffering—it is necessary that since the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He, Himself, also should take part of the same. For this, again, we may ring the silver bells, since the Son of God now intimately sympathizes with man because He is made in all points like unto His brethren!

Further, it is clear that if God condescends to be so intimately allied with manhood, He intends to deliver man and to bless him. Incarnation prophesies salvation. Oh, believing soul, your God cannot mean to curse you! Look at God incarnate! What do you see there but salvation? God in human flesh must mean that God intends to set man above all the works of His hands and to give him dominion, according to His first intent, over all sheep and oxen and all that pass through the paths of the sea and the air! Yes, it must mean that there is to be a man beneath whose feet all things shall be placed, so that even death, itself, shall be subject unto Him. When God stoops down to man it must mean that man is to be lifted up to God! What joy there is in this! Oh that our hearts were but half alive to the incarnation! Oh that we did but know a thousandth part of the unutterable delight which is hidden in this thought, that the Son of God was born a man at Bethlehem! Thus you see that there is overflowing cause for joy in the birth of Christ because it was the incarnation of the Deity.

But further, the angel explained our cause for joy by saying that *He, who was born, was unto us a Savior*. “Unto you is born this day a Savior.” brothers and sisters, I know who will be most glad, today, to think that Christ was born a Savior. It will be those who are most conscious of their sinnership! If you would draw music out of that ten-stringed harp—the word, “Savior”—pass it over to a sinner. “Savior” is the harp, but “sinner” is the finger that must touch the strings and bring forth the melody. If you know yourself lost by nature and lost by practice; if you feel sin like a plague at your heart; if evil wearies and worries you; if you have known the burden and the shame of iniquity, then will it be bliss to you even to *hear* of that Savior whom the Lord has provided! Even as a babe, Jesus, the Savior, will be precious to you! But most of all because He has now finished all the work of your salvation! You will look to the commencement of that work and then survey it even to its close and bless and magnify the name of the Lord. Unto you, O you who are the chief of sinners, even unto *you*, you consciously guilty ones, is born a

Savior! He is a Savior by birth—for this purpose is He born! To save sinners is His birthright and office! It is from now on an institution of the divine dominion and an office of the divine nature to save the lost! Henceforth God has laid help upon One that is mighty, and exalted One chosen out of the people, that He may seek and save that which was lost. Is there not joy in this? Where else is joy if not here?

Next, the angel tells us that *this Savior is Christ the Lord* and there is much gladness in that fact. “Christ,” signified *anointed*. Now when we know that the Lord Jesus Christ came to save, it is most pleasant to perceive, in addition, that the Father does not let Him enter upon His mission without the necessary qualifications. He is anointed of the Highest that He may carry out the offices which He has undertaken—the Spirit of the Lord rested upon Him without measure! Our Lord is anointed in a threefold sense, as prophet, priest and king. It has been well observed that this anointing, in its threefold power, never rested upon any other man. There have been kingly prophets, David to wit. There was one kingly priest, even Melchisedec. And there have also been priestly prophets such as Samuel. Thus it has come to pass that two of the offices have been united in one man, but the whole three—prophet, priest and king—never met in one thrice-anointed being until Jesus came. We have the fullest anointing conceivable in Christ, who is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. And as the Messiah, the Sent One of God, Jesus Christ is completely prepared and qualified for all the work of our salvation. Let our hearts be glad! We have not a nominal Savior, but a Savior fully equipped! He is one who in all points is like ourselves, for He is man, but in all points fit to help the feebleness which He has espoused, for He is the *anointed* man. See what an intimate mingling of the divine and human is found in the angel’s song. They sing of Him as “a Savior,” and a Savior must of necessity be divine in order to save from death and hell. And yet the title is drawn from His dealings with humanity! Then they sing of Him as, “Christ,” and that must be human, for only man can be anointed, yet that unction comes from the Godhead! Sound forth the jubilee trumpets for this marvelously Anointed One, and rejoice in Him who is your priest to cleanse you, your prophet to instruct you, and King to deliver you! The angels sang of Him as Lord, and yet as *born*. So here, again, the godlike in dominion is joined with the human in birth. How well did the words and the sense agree!

The angel further went on to give these shepherds cause for joy by telling them that while their Savior was born to be the Lord, yet He was so *born in lowliness* that they would find Him a babe, wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. Is there cause of joy there? I say, yes, indeed, there is, for it is the *terror* of the Godhead which keeps the sinner, oftentimes, away from reconciliation! But see how the Godhead has graciously concealed itself in a babe, a little babe—a babe that needed to be wrapped in swaddling bands like any other new-born child! Who fears to approach Him? Who ever heard of trembling in the presence of a babe? Yet is the Godhead there! My soul, when you cannot, for very amaze-

ment, stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire; when the divine glory is like a consuming fire to your spirit, and the sacred majesty of heaven is altogether overpowering to you, then come to this babe, and say, "Yet God is here, and here can I meet Him in the person of His dear Son, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Oh, what bliss there is in incarnation if we remember that herein God's omnipotence comes down to man's feebleness and infinite majesty stoops to man's infirmity!

Now mark, the shepherds were not to find this babe wrapped in Tyrian purple, nor swathed in choicest fabrics fetched from afar—

***"No crown bedecks His forehead fair,  
No pearl, nor gem, nor silk is there."***

Nor would they discover Him in the marble halls of princes, nor guarded by praetorian legionaries, nor pampered by vassal sovereigns. They would find Him the babe of a peasant woman, of princely lineage it is true, but of a family whose stock was dry and forgotten in Israel. The child was reputed to be the son of a carpenter. If you looked on the humble father and mother, and at the poor bed they had made up, where earlier oxen had come to feed, you would say, "This is condescension, indeed." O you poor, be glad, for Jesus is born in poverty and cradled in a manger! O you sons of toil, rejoice, for the Savior is born of a lowly virgin, and a carpenter is His foster father. O you people, oftentimes despised and downtrodden, the Prince of the Democracy is born—one chosen out of the people is exalted to the throne! O you who call yourselves the aristocracy, behold the Prince of the kings of the earth, whose lineage is divine, and yet there is no room for Him in the inn! Behold, O men, the Son of God, who is bone of your bone, intimate with all your griefs, who in His life was hungry as you are hungry, was weary as you are weary, and wore humble garments like your own! Yes, He suffered worse poverty than you, for He was without a place where to lay His head! Let the heavens and the earth be glad since God has so fully, so truly, come down to man!

Nor is this all. The angel called for joy, and I ask for it, too, on this ground, that *the birth of this child was to bring glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men.* The birth of Christ has given such glory to God as I know not that He could ever have had here by any other means! We must always speak in accents soft and low when we talk of God's glory. In itself it must always be infinite and not to be conceived by us. And yet may we not venture to say that all the works of God's hands do not glorify Him so much as the gift of His dear Son—that all creation and all providence do not so well display the heart of Deity as when He gives His Only-Begotten and sends Him into the world that men may live through Him? What wisdom is manifested in the plan of redemption of which the incarnate God is the center! What love is there revealed! What power is that which brought the Divine One down from glory to a *manger*? Only omnipotence could have worked so great a marvel! What faithfulness to ancient promises! What truthfulness in keeping covenant! What grace and yet what justice! For it was in the person of that newborn Child that the law must be fulfilled, and in His precious body must

vengeance find recompense for injuries done to divine righteousness! All the attributes of God were in that little child most marvelously displayed and veiled. Conceive the whole sun to be focused to a single point, and yet so softly revealed as to be endurable by the tenderest eyes—even thus the glorious God is brought down for man to see Him born of a woman! Think of it! The express image of God in mortal flesh! The heir of all things cradled in a manger! Marvelous is this! Glory to God in the highest! He has never revealed Himself before as He now manifests Himself in Jesus!

It is through our Lord Jesus being born that there is already a measure of peace on earth, and boundless peace yet to come. Already the teeth of war have been somewhat broken and a testimony is borne by the faithful against this great crime. The religion of Christ holds up its shield over the oppressed and declares tyranny and cruelty to be loathsome before God. Whatever abuse and scorn may be heaped upon Christ's true minister, he will never be silent while there are downtrodden nationalities and races needing his advocacy. Nor will God's servants anywhere, if faithful to the Prince of Peace, ever cease to maintain peace among men to the utmost of their power. The day comes when this growing testimony shall prevail and nations shall learn war no more. The Prince of Peace shall snap the spear of war across His knee. He, the Lord of all, shall break the arrows of the bow, the sword and the shield and the battle—and He shall do it in His own dwelling place, even in Zion, which is more glorious and excellent than all the mountains of prey! As surely as Christ was born at Bethlehem, He will yet make all men brothers, and establish a universal monarchy of peace, of which there shall be no end! So let us sing if we value the glory of God, for the new-born child reveals it! And let us sing if we value peace on earth, for He is come to bring it! Yes, and if we love the link which binds glorified heaven with pacified earth—the good will towards men which the Eternal herein manifests—let us give a third note to our hallelujah, and bless and magnify Immanuel, God with us, who has accomplished all this by His birth among us. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

I think I have shown you that there was room enough for joy for the shepherds, but you and I, who live in later days, when we understand the whole business of salvation, ought to be even more glad than they were, though they glorified and praised God for all the things that they had heard and seen. Come, my brothers and sisters, let us at least do as much as these simple shepherds and exult with our whole souls!

**II.** Secondly, let us consider TO WHOM THIS JOY BELONGS. I was very heavy yesterday in spirit, for this dreary weather tends greatly to depress the mind—

**“No lark could pipe to skies so dull and gray.”**

But a thought struck me and filled me with intense joy. I tell it to you, not because it will seem anything to *you*, but as having gladdened myself. It is a bit all for myself to be placed in a parenthesis! It is this, that the joy of the birth of Christ in part *belongs to those who tell of it*, for the

angels who proclaimed it were exceedingly glad, as glad as glad could be! I thought of this and whispered to my heart, "As I shall tell of Jesus born on earth for men, I will take license to be glad also; glad if for nothing else that I have such a message to bring to them." The tears stood in my eyes and stand there even now, to think that I should be privileged to say to my fellow men, "God has condescended to assume your nature that He might save you." These are as glad and as grand words as he of the golden mouth could have spoken. As for Cicero and Demosthenes, those eloquent orators had no such theme to dwell upon! Oh, joy, joy, joy! There was born into this world a man who is also God! My heart dances as David danced before the ark of God!

This joy was meant, not for the tellers of the news alone, *but for all who heard it*. The glad tidings "shall be unto all people." Read, "All the people," if you like, for so, perhaps, the letter of the original might demand. Well, then, it meant that it was joy to all the nation of the Jews—but assuredly our version is truer to the inner spirit of the text—it is joy to all people upon the face of the earth that Christ is born! There is not a nation under heaven but what has a right to be glad because God has come down among men! Sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem! Take up the strain, O you dwellers in the wilderness, and let the multitude of the isles be glad! You, who beneath the frigid zone feel in your very marrow all the force of God's north wind, let your hearts burn within you at this happy truth! And you whose faces are scorched by the heat of the torrid sun, let this be as a well of water unto you! Exult and magnify Jehovah that His Son, His Only-Begotten, is also brother to mankind!—

***"O wake our hearts, in gladness sing!  
And hail each one the newborn King,  
Till living song from loving souls  
Like sound of mighty waters rolls."***

But, brothers and sisters, they do not all rejoice, not even all of those who know this glorious truth of God. Nor does it stir the hearts of half of mankind. To whom, then, is it a joy? I answer, to all who *believe* it, and especially to all who believe it as the shepherds did—with that faith which staggers not through unbelief. The shepherds never had a doubt! The light, the angels and the song were enough for them. They accepted the glad tidings without a single question. In this the shepherds were both happy and wise, yes, wiser than the would-be wise whose wisdom can only manifest itself in quibbling. This present age despises the simplicity of a childlike faith, but how wonderfully God is rebuking its self-conceit. He is taking the wise in their own craftiness. I could not but notice in the late discovery of the famous Greek cities and the sepulchers of the heroes, the powerful rebuke which the spirit of skepticism has received! These wise doubters have been taken on their own ground and put to confusion! Of course they told us that old Homer was himself a myth, and the poem called by his name was a mere collection of unfounded legends and mere tales. Some ancient songster did but weave his dreams into poetry and foist them upon us as the blind minstrel's song—there was no fact in it they said, nor, indeed, in any current histo-

ry—everything was mere legend. Long ago these gentlemen told us that there was no King Arthur, no William Tell, no anybody! Even as they questioned all sacred records, so have they cast suspicion upon all else that common men believe. But lo, the ancient cities speak! The heroes are found in their tombs! The child's faith is vindicated! They have disinterred the king of men and this and other matters speak in tones of thunder to the unbelieving ear, and say, "You fools! The simpletons believed and were wiser than your 'culture' made you. Your endless doubts have led you into falsehood and not into truth."

The shepherds believed and were glad as glad could be, but if Professor \_\_\_\_\_ (never mind his name) had been there on that memorable night, he would certainly have debated with the angel and denied that a Savior was needed at all! He would coolly have taken notes for a lecture upon the nature of light and have commenced a disquisition upon the cause of certain remarkable nocturnal phenomena which had been seen in the fields near Bethlehem. Above all, he would have assured the shepherds of the absolute non-existence of anything superhuman! Have not the learned men of our age proved that impossibility, scores of times, with sufficient arguments to convince a wooden post? They have made it as plain as three times two are 18 that there is no God, nor angel, nor spirit! They have proven beyond all doubt, as far as their own dogmatism is concerned, that everything is to be doubted which is most sure and that nothing is to be believed at all except the infallibility of pretenders to science! But these men find no comfort. Neither are they so weak as to need any, so they say. Their teaching is not glad tidings but a wretched negation, a killing frost which nips all noble hopes in the bud and in the name of reason steals away from man his truest bliss! Be it ours to be as philosophical as the shepherds, for they did not believe too much, but simply believed what was well attested—and this they found to be true upon personal investigation! In faith lies joy! If our faith can realize, we shall be happy. I want, this morning, to feel as if I saw the glory of the Lord still shining in the heavens, for it was there, though I did not see it. I wish I could see that angel, and hear him speak but, failing this, I know he *did* speak, though I did not hear him. I am certain that those shepherds told no lies, nor did the Holy Spirit deceive us when He bade His servant, Luke, write this record! Let us forget the long interval between, and only remember that it was really so. Realize that which was indeed matter of fact, and you may almost hear the angelic choir up in yonder sky still singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." At any rate, our hearts rehearse the anthem and we feel the joy of it by simply believing, even as the shepherds did.

Mark well that believing what they did, these simple-minded shepherds *desired to approach nearer* the marvelous babe. What did they do but consult together and say, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass"? O beloved, if you want to get the joy of Christ, come near to Him! Whatever you hear about Him from His own book, believe it! But then say, "I will go and find Him." When you hear

the voice of the Lord from Sinai, draw not near unto the flaming mountain—the law condemns you, the justice of God overwhelms you. Bow at a humble distance and adore with solemn awe. But when you hear of God in Christ, hasten there! Hasten there with all confidence, for you are not come unto the mountain that might not be touched, and that burned with fire—you are come unto the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel! Come near, come nearer, nearer still! “Come,” is His own word to those who labor and are heavy laden, and that same word He will address to you at the last—“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.” If you want joy in Christ, come and find it in His bosom, or at His feet! There John and Mary found it long ago.

And then, my brothers and sisters do what the shepherds did when they came near. They rejoiced to see the babe of whom they had been told! You cannot see with the physical eye, but you must meditate—and so see with the *mental* eyes this great, grand and glorious truth of God that the word was made flesh and dwelt among us! This is the way to have joy today, joy such as fitly descends from heaven with the descent of heaven’s King! Believe! Draw near! And then fixedly gaze upon Him, and so be blest!—

***“Hark, how all the vault of heaven rings  
Glory to the King of kings!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
Hail the incarnate Deity,  
Pleased as man with men to appear,  
Jesus our Immanuel here.”***

**III.** My time has fled, else I desired to have shown, in the third place, HOW THAT JOY SHOULD BE MANIFESTED. I will only give a hint or two. The way in which many believers in Christmas keep the feast we know too well. This is a Christian country, is it not? I have been told so, so often, that I suppose it must be true. It is a Christian country! But the Christianity is of a remarkable kind! It is not only that in the olden times, “Christmas broached the mightiest ale,” but nowadays Christmas keepers must get drunk upon it! I slander not our countrymen when I say that drunkenness seems to be one of the principal items of their Christmastide delight! If Bacchus were born at this time, I do think England keeps the birthday of that detestable deity most appropriately, but tell me not that it is the birth of the holy child Jesus that they thus celebrate! Is He not crucified afresh by such blasphemy? Surely to the wicked, Jesus says, “What have you to do to keep My birthday, and mention My name in connection with your gluttony and drunkenness?” Shame that there should be any cause for such words! Tenfold shame that there should be so much!

You may keep His birthday all the year round, for it were better to say He was born every day of the year than on any one, for truly in a *spiritual* sense He is born every day of every year in some men’s hearts! And that,

to us, is a far weightier point than the observation of holy days! Express your joy, first, as the angels did, by public ministry. Some of us are called to speak to the many. Let us, in the clearest and most earnest tones proclaim the Savior and His power to rescue man. Others of you cannot preach, but you can *sing*. Sing, then, your anthems and praise God with all your hearts! Do not be slack in the devout use of your tongues, which are the glory of your frames, but again and again and again lift up your joyful hymns unto the new-born King! Others of you can neither preach nor sing. Well, then, you must do what the shepherds did, and what did they do? You are told twice that they *spread the news*. As soon as they had seen the babe, they made known abroad the saying that was told them, and as they went home they glorified God. This is one of the most practical ways of showing your joy. Holy conversation is as acceptable as sermons and anthems! There was also one who said little, but thought the more—"Mary pondered all these things in her heart." Quiet, happy spirit, weigh in your heart the grand truth of God that Jesus was born at Bethlehem. Immanuel, God with us—weigh it if you can! Look at it again and again! Examine the varied facets of this priceless brilliant diamond, and bless, and adore, and love, and wonder, and yet adore again this matchless miracle of love!

Lastly, *go and do good to others*. Like the wise men, bring your offerings and offer to the newborn King your heart's best gold of love, frankincense of praise, and myrrh of penitence. Bring *everything* of your heart's best, and something of your substance also, for this is a day of good tidings, and it were unseemly to appear before the Lord empty. Come and worship God manifest in the flesh, and be filled with His light and sweetness by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 2:1-21.  
HYMN FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—249, 260, 256.**

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**END OF VOLUME 22**