

THE DIVINE DISCIPLINE

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A SERMON

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“As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings: so the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.”
Deuteronomy 32:11, 12.

MOSES in this chapter is speaking concerning Israel in the wilderness. When the great host came out of Egypt, they were, through the debasing influences of slavery—which are not easily or quickly shaken off—not much better than a mere mob. They were not at all fitted to march at once to take possession of Canaan, nor to take part in the compacts of organized social life. Therefore God, instead of taking them by the short way along which they might have passed in a very few days, ordained it so in His providence that they should wander about for 40 years in the wilderness—partly, it is true, as a punishment for their unbelief, but also in order that the nation might be trained and educated for its future destiny—made as fit as it could be, to be the custodian of the oracles of the truths of God and to be the receiver of the revelation which God intended to give to men.

If you will read carefully over the history of the children of Israel in the wilderness, I think you will see that the practical training which God adopted was—if they had been right-minded men—splendidly adapted to bring them to the very highest state of spiritual life. In some respects it was weak through their flesh, but the method, itself, was superlatively excellent. Here was a people taken away from the multitude of gods which they had been known to see on every hand in Egypt and they were taught to reverence an unseen God for whom they had no symbol whatever for some time. And afterwards, when symbolical worship in some form was ordained, yet there was still so little of symbol that Moses could say, “They saw no similitude.” They were trained to worship a *spiritual* God—in spirit and in truth. They never saw Him, but every morning they had the best testimonies of His existence, for round about the camp lay the manna like hoarfrost, or dew, upon the ground! Their feet grew not weary, neither did their garments become old all those years, and thus about their very clothes on their bodies and before them on their tables, they had constant proofs of the great God existing and caring for the sons of men. The whole of their training, while it educated and developed their patience and their faith, had also the high purpose of

teaching them gratitude and to bind them by the cords of love and the bands of a man to the service of God. It was not because the training was not wise in the highest degree, but because they were children that were corrupters and, like ourselves, an evil and stiff-necked generation, that they did not learn even when God, Himself, became their teacher.

Now in drawing a parallel between the children of Israel and ourselves, we shall invite you to notice, first, in the text—*the divine instructor*, “the LORD alone did lead them.” And then *the method of instruction illustrated*—they were trained as an eagle trains the eaglet for their flight. First, then, we have—

I. A DIVINE INSTRUCTOR.

The Israelites had for their guide, instructor and tutor, in order to prepare them for Canaan, none other than Jehovah, Himself! He might employ Moses and Aaron and He did also make use of those marvelous picture books, if I may so call them, of sacrifice, type and metaphor, but still, God, Himself, was their guide and their instructor. And it is so with us. The Holy Spirit is the teacher of the Christian Church. Although He uses this Book, of which we can never speak too highly. Although He still uses the ministry of the Word, for which we are thankful as for a candlestick which we trust may never be taken out of its place, still, our true teacher is God the Holy Spirit. He instructs us in the truths of God and, meanwhile, it is also God, who, in the rulings and guiding of providence, is our instructor if we will but learn. He is teaching us, sometimes by sweet mercies and at other times by bitter afflictions, instructing us from our cradles to our graves if we will but open our eyes to see and our ears to hear the lessons which He writes and speaks. We, alas, are often as the horse and as the mule which have no understanding—and will not be taught by the providential teachings, but still we have God to be our teacher—and it is none other than our heavenly Father who is daily training us for the skies. If we are, indeed, His children and can say, “Our Father, which are in heaven,” we may also go to Him as our teacher, believing He will, notwithstanding all our folly, make us “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

The text speaks of “the LORD alone.” Brothers and sisters, it is well for us that in providence we are led by “the LORD alone.” There is an overruling hand after all, notwithstanding our follies and our willfulness, so that God’s purposes are ultimately fulfilled. But I wish this were truer to our consciousness—that we are led by “the LORD alone.” I mean that we waited upon Him at every step of life. I am persuaded that the holiest of characters take more matters to God than you and I are accustomed to do. I mean they not only consult Him, as we do, upon certain great and critical occasions, but those saints who live nearest to Christ, go to Him about little matters, thinking nothing to be too trifling to speak into the ear of Christ.

Some things about which they will not even consult their kindest and wisest human friends will be matters of consultation between them and their Savior. Oh, what mistakes we would escape, what disasters we would avoid, if “the LORD alone” did guide us! And if we watched the signs of His hands in guiding us, if our eyes were to Him as the eyes of the handmaidens are to their mistress, anxious to know the Lord’s will and always saying to our own self-love, “Down, down, busy will! Down proud spirit! What would *You* have me do, my Master, for Your will shall be my will and my heart shall always give up its fondest wish when once I understand what Your will is concerning me.” Beloved, I am afraid that some strange god is often with us, even with us who are the people of God! We are united to God and He will gladly teach us—and from Him, alone, should we learn! But oftentimes we harbor idolatrous thoughts in our heart. All selfishness is idolatry! All repining against the providence of God has in it the element of rebellion against the Most High! If I love my own will and if I desire my own way in preference to God’s way, I have made a god of my own wisdom, or my own affection—and I have not been true in my loyalty to the only living and true God, even Jehovah! Let us search, look and see if there is not some strange god with us. It may be hidden away, perhaps, and we may scarcely know it. It may be hidden, too, in that very part of us where our dearest affections dwell. Some Rachel may be sitting in the tent on the camel furniture under which the false gods are concealed! Let us, therefore, make a thorough search and then invite the great King, Himself, to aid us. “Search me, O God, try me, and know my ways, and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

The great truth of God which I want to bring forward, if I can, is this—that God in His providence and in grace, as far as we have been made willing to learn of Him, is educating us for something higher than this world! This world is the nature in which we dwell. Sometimes we who love the Lord mount up from it with wings as eagles, but we do not stay on the wing. We drop again—we cleave to earth. ‘Tis our mother and it seems as though we can never rise permanently above our kinship to it. Very powerful is it in its attraction over us. Down we go again. We have not yet learned to keep up yonder where the atmosphere is clear and where the smoke of the world’s cares will not reach us. But God is educating us for the skies! The meaning of these trials of ours, the interpretation of our sorrows is this—God is preparing us for another state, making us fit to dwell with angels and archangels and the spirits of the just made perfect! If this earth were all, then, your teachers at school, or your tutors when you passed through college, might have sufficed. But this world is but the vestibule to the next and if you know, as well as man can teach you, how to play your part here with a view only to secular advancement, you are not yet educated at all in the highest sense! God Himself must teach and train you, that you may be fit

to sit among the princes of the royal blood before His throne and to have communion with those celestial spirits who—

***“With songs and choral symphonies
Day without night circle His throne rejoicing.”***

God is teaching you! God alone can do it and He will do it—but take care that you put away all strange gods and give yourselves up wholly to His guidance, submitting your will and your affections and all parts of your spirit and nature to His teaching so that you may be found fully ready when He shall say, “Come up here to dwell with Me forever.” Now, passing from that, we shall notice very briefly, indeed—

II. THE METHODS OF THE DIVINE INSTRUCTION.

These methods of divine instruction are given to us under the very poetical picture of the eagle training its young ones for flight. God, to accommodate Himself to our poor understandings, sometimes compares Himself to a father with children. At other times to a mother with her little ones. Sometimes even to an animal. In this case, even to a bird of prey, so that we may but learn no depths of condescension are too great for the Great Teacher! He compares Himself here, then, to the eagle. I suppose that Moses was well acquainted with the eagle’s natural habits. He describes it, first of all, as *stirring up its nest*, as though the young birds were unwilling to stir from their pleasant home. Having from the time of their birth been quiet and happy there, they had no anxiety whatever to try the blue unfathomable oceans of the air! They had no wish to leave the rocky refuge where they had been reared. They feared, perhaps, lest they might fall over the precipices and be dashed in pieces. Therefore is it said, “The eagle stirs up her nest.” She makes it uncomfortable for the little ones so that they may be willing to leave it. And that which would have been obnoxious and burdensome to them, they may come even to desire, namely, to be out of the nest! Someone has quaintly said that the eagle puts thorns into the nest which prick the fledglings so that they are anxious to get away!

Certain it is that God does thus with those He would train for the skies. He stirs up their nest. Cannot some of you recollect times when your nests were stirred *by providential dealings* while you were in sin? All things went well with you for a season, but you forgot God. And His Son, Jesus, had no attractions for you. But suddenly the child sickened or the wife was smitten with death, or trade separated from you, or you, yourselves, were ill, or there was a famine in the land. Then it was, when you were in need, your nest being thoroughly stirred up, that you said, “I will arise and go unto my Father.” The land of Goshen was like a nest to the Israelites. They had no desire to come out of it, but God stirred them up by means of Pharaoh, who kept them in heavy bondage, put them to making bricks and then to making bricks without straw. And then he slew their male children. In all sorts of ways they were made to cry out under the bitter yoke. We know that they loved that nest, for they often longed to be back in it. They talked of the leeks, the garlic, the onions

and the cucumbers which they did eat when they were in Egypt, so that the nest seems to have been a tolerably downy one to them at one time! But God so stirred it up that they longed to be away—and even the howling wilderness seemed a paradise compared with the house of bondage. So was it with you! You found that the world was not what it seemed to be. Troubles increased, providential afflictions trod on each other's heels and then you turned to your God and remembered your sins. And so He stirred up your nest *by inward trouble under conviction of sin*. I know my soul's nest was once very soft. I thought I had done no great evil, that I had kept God's commandments from my youth up. But when conviction of sin came, then I discovered my heart to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! Then my sins, like so many daggers, were at my heart, my soul was torn in two—I could say with gracious George Herbert—

***“My thoughts are all a case of knives,
Wounding my heart.”***

There was no rest, no peace, no joy, and no comfort to be found. Well, that was God stirring up the nest! If there are any of you in that condition now—uneasy and troubled about sin, I am glad of it! Your nest is being stirred and God grant that you may fly from it and never come back to that nest again!

If all had gone smoothly with you; if sin had always been a sweet morsel to your tongue, we might despair of your ever being saved, but now you feel the smart of it; I trust it is, in order that you may be delivered from the guilt of it and led to find a Savior! Well, since that, dear friends, how many times we have had our nests stirred up! I do not know your history, but you do, and I ask you now to look it over. Oh, you planned, and planned, and planned, and said, “Now I shall live in this house for the next 20 or 30 years, I shall live here, certainly, as long as I live anywhere.” And now you find yourselves, perhaps, 50 or a hundred miles from it. You were in the service of a certain kind man and you felt very happy in it, but the firm has broken up and where are you now? There is that dear child you have set your heart upon. You have said, “What a mercy it will be to see him growing up! What a comfort he will be to me!” He is not a comfort to you, but just the very reverse, for he is your greatest sorrow! It is God stirring up your nest. Whereas a few years ago you were in good, sound health, now the eyes begin to fail, or the ears are giving way, or there is some internal complaint, or some constant pain. Whereas years ago you were a master, you are now a servant—whereas years ago everybody looked up to you, now everybody looks down upon you!

It is all the stirring up of the nest because you have no abiding city here—because you were too prone to say, “My mountain stands firm. I shall never be moved!” Therefore God has stirred up your nest and He will do it yet again and again! Between now and heaven how many times will the nest of ours be stirred? Oh, blessed be God for it! “Moab is

settled upon his lees: he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel”—and then comes a curse upon him! Sometimes these long periods of prosperity, rest and ease are very unhealthy for us poor unworthy and sinful beings. If we were more like Jesus; if we were more pure and heavenly, we could bear prosperity, but because we are so sinful, I question if any of us can bear it long. If the Master shall give some of us outward prosperity, He will have to whip us behind the door in private to keep us right! We must have some thorn in the flesh, some secret grief—there must be some skeleton in the cupboard, some specter in some chamber of the house, or else we shall say, “Soul, take your ease, you have much goods laid up for many years”—and when we do this, we shall be modern fools like the great fool of old! But the gracious Lord will not let His people get into that state. Again and again, and yet again, against their wishes, and contrary to their expectations, He will stir their nest and they shall cry out against it. But if they did but only know the meaning of it, or could read the whole of it in the light of eternity, they would bless the hand which tears away their comforts, seeing divine wisdom and infinite affection in it all! That, then, is the first thing—God instructs His people to mount aloft by stirring up their nests.

The next picture is *the eagle fluttering over her young*. What is that for? She wants them to mount, my brothers and sisters! Well, then, in order to teach them to mount, she first mounts herself—“she flutters over her young.” She moves her wings to teach them that thus they must move their wings that thus they must mount! There is no teaching like teaching by example. We always learn a great deal more through our eyes and ears than we do merely through our ears. Those of us who cannot preach with our mouths would do well to preach with our lives—which is the very best kind of preaching. So God preaches to us. If He would have us holy, how holy He is Himself! “Be you holy for I am holy.” Would He have us generous? How generous is He! “He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all.” Would He have us forgive our enemies? How He delights in mercy, Himself! If we need a picture of perfection, where can we get it but in God? “Be you perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” God shows us His law in His holy actions, He being, Himself, the very mirror and paragon of everything that is absolutely pure and right. Above all, the Lord has been pleased to set us an example of mounting above the world in the person and life of His own dear Son! Oh, how the eagle flutters when I look upon the Savior!—

***“Such was Your truth and such Your zeal,
Such deference to Your Father’s will,
Such love and meekness so divine
I would transcribe and make them mine!
Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of Your prayer—
The desert Your temptations knew,
Your conflict and Your victory, too.*”**

***Be You my pattern—make me bear
More of Your gracious image here!
Then God the judge shall own my name
Among the followers of the Lamb.”***

Beloved, see how our Lord Jesus this day mounts to heaven! There He is—He has gone there that our hearts may follow Him! He fluttered to the skies that we might also follow and might rise above the world, setting our affections no longer upon the things of earth, but upon things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God! What way could there be of teaching us tenderness like the tenderness of the Savior? What method of teaching us love, like the display of the love of God in Christ Jesus? Brothers and sisters, I commend you to the picture of the eagle fluttering and thus setting an example to its little ones. You may also see before your eyes the great incarnate God teaching you how to mount above the trials and temptations of this mortal life and living, even on earth, a celestial life!

This, however, is not all the eagle does. We read in our text that she then *spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings*. I suppose this means just this, that spreading her wings she entices her young ones to get between her wings upon her back and then she mounts and flies towards the sun. It may be fable or not, I do not know, that she flies towards the sun to teach her eaglets to bear its blaze. Then, when she has mounted to a good height, she suddenly shifts her wings and throws the young eaglets off—and there they are on their own wings! They begin to descend to earth, not able to keep themselves up, but compelled to fly—but before they fall on the rocks, she makes a swoop and comes under them and catches them on her wings again, gives them a little rest, bears them up once more, and then throws them off again, so that they must fly. But she takes care that these early trials, for which they are scarcely able, shall not end in their destruction, for again she makes another swoop and catches them between her wings once again.

This is the picture of what God does to us again. We must speak of Him after the metaphor which He, Himself, uses—He takes us up between those mighty wings and bears us as high as we dare go—and only pauses because He knows we cannot now bear more. Then, when we have had full fellowship and looked the sun in the face, and have had bright enjoyment of heaven, as far as we could bear, He suddenly throws us off and makes us try our own wings, and alas, they are very feeble and weak, indeed. We then discover our own impotence and we think we shall fall like stars and be dashed in pieces! But lo, He comes, and underneath us are the everlasting wings—and just when we thought we should surely come to destruction, we find ourselves safely sheltered between the mighty pinions of the eternal God! Up, again, we mount, and before long we are thrown off again—cast away, as it were, for a time. His face is hidden from us, or else by some outward trial of providence we are made to try our wings again to see whether our faith will keep us up! And

by degrees it comes to pass that we learn to fly till we love flying, and are not satisfied to come back to earth anymore, loving to fly, and often sighing and longing for the day when we shall be permitted to—

**“Stretch our wings and fly
Straight to yonder worlds of joy!”**

Do you not sometimes feel as if your wing feathers were come, my brothers and sisters? Surely you must sometimes feel as though your faith were growing stronger and your communion with Christ getting clearer—as though you anticipated and felt that the time must be drawing near when you could mount to dwell where Jesus is! I am thankful if such is your experience, but I should not wonder if you find that all the wing feathers which you have got will be all too few for you, for you may yet be made to have another descent from between the almighty wings and be made once again to see how great your weakness is. One other thought, however, occurs to us. There is no doubt that the idea of *security* as well as of teaching is here because when the eagle bears her young ones on her wings, if the archer, or in these modern days the hunter with his rifle should seek to destroy the eaglets, it is plain there is no reaching them without first killing the mother bird. So there is no destroying possible to the true people of God. “Greater is He that is for us, than all that can be against us.” God puts Himself between His people and the danger which threatens them—and unless the foe should be mightier than God, Himself—which is inconceivable, there is no soul that trusts in Him which shall know eternal hurt!

Oh, how glorious a thing it is to feel, when the light air is all around me and I know that if I fall I would perish, that yet I cannot fall, for God’s wings bear me up! And to feel that though there are hosts of enemies able to destroy me if they can get at me, yet they cannot, for they must first get through God, Himself, before they can get to the weak soul who hangs upon Jesus and rests alone in Him! Well did David say, “In the time of trouble He will hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me: He shall set me up upon a rock.” You know the threefold figure. The “pavilion” stood in the middle of the camp and all the armed men kept watch around the royal tent. There was no slaying the man who was hidden in the royal pavilion unless the king himself were destroyed! And unless divine sovereignty is overthrown, not one of the elect can perish! Then, again, there was “the secret of the tabernacle.” That was the most holy place into which no one entered but the high priest once a year! And there God said He would put His child, so that they must first break through and dare the very Shekinah and come before the brightness, the destroying brightness, of Jehovah’s face, before they can reach the soul that trusts in the mercy seat on which the blood was sprinkled! Then there is the third figure—“He shall set me up upon a rock”—so that the rock, itself, must shake—the immutability of God, itself, must cease to be, and God’s everlastingness must die before it shall be possible for a soul to perish that rests in Him! The eagle takes

up the eaglets on her wings, and bears them—and so in this way does God lead, and train, and guide us for the skies!

Dear brothers and sisters, I shall not detain you longer, except to say that if God is training you for the skies—oh, *let your hearts go up*. Grovel not below—

***“Go up, go up, my heart,
Dwell with your God above!
For here you cannot rest,
Nor here give out your love
Go up, go up, my heart,
Be not a trifler here—
Ascend above these clouds,
Dwell in a higher sphere!
Let not your love flow out
To things so soiled and dim—
Go up to heaven and God,
Take up your love to Him!
Waste not your precious stores
On creature-love below—
To God that wealth belongs,
On Him that wealth bestow.”***

You are a stranger here. If you are God’s child, then you are a citizen of another country! Are there any bands to bind you here? I thought He had broken them. Have you never said—

***“The bands that bind my soul to earth
Are broken by His hand—
Before His cross I find myself
A stranger in the land.”***

Are there loved ones to bind you here?—

***“Your best-beloved keeps His throne
On hills of light in worlds unknown.”***

All the love you dare to give to all below, if you are true to Christ, can be as nothing compared with the love which you give to Him! Do you not feel your soul now drawn towards Him? At least if you cannot fly on the wings of confidence, fly on the wings of desire! A sigh will mount to Him, or He will come down to it! Only be not fond of this world. Do not let this thick clay cleave to you. You are not earth-born now—you are born from above! This corruptible world must not claim you, for you are born-again of incorruptible seed! You are not this world’s property. You are bought with a price by Him who prays for you that you may be with Him where He is and behold His glory. I am ashamed of myself that I who talk thus with you should so often grovel here. But this one thing I must say—I am never happy except when my soul is up with my Lord. I know enough of this to acknowledge that it is my misery to feed upon the ashes of this world, to lie among the pots, to serve the brick-kilns of this Egypt! There can be no peace between my soul and this world. Oh, I know this, for this painted Jezebel has mocked me too often and she has become so ugly in my esteem that I cannot endure her! But yet—what shall we say

of our nature!—we go back again to the Marah, which was bitter for us to drink and try to drink from it again! And the broken cisterns which held no water before, we fly to again and again! Oh, for more wisdom! The Master has taught us and He has been so long a time with us, but we have not known Him. Yet may He have patience with us until He has taught us to mount above the world and dwell where He is!

Ah, dear friends, there are some of you to whom I cannot talk in this fashion because you cannot mount. You have nowhere to mount to! Oh, may the Master stir up your nests! I pray that He may put the thorns of conscience into your pillows tonight. May you recollect those sins which God hates and which God will punish—and if you do remember them, and feel bowed down under their weight—then remember that there is one who can help you and who *will* help you, even the Lord Jesus Christ! Look to Him in the hour of trouble and He will be your deliverer! May the Lord bless these thoughts to all our souls for Jesus' sake.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
DEUTERONOMY 29:1-21.**

Verse 1. *These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.* That is the preamble, just as in legal documents there is usually some statement of the purport and intent of the indenture before the matter is proceeded with. These covenants with God are solemn things and, therefore, they are given in a formal manner to strike attention and command our serious thoughts.

2-4. *And Moses called unto all Israel and said unto them, You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: yet the LORD has not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.* You saw all that and yet did not see it—you saw the external work, but the internal lesson you did not perceive. A very mournful statement to make, but God's servants are not sent to flatter man but to speak the truth—however painful the speaking of it may be.

5, 6. *And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes have not worn out upon you, and your shoe did not wear out upon your foot. You have not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine or strong drink: that you might know that I am the LORD your God.* Either there had been means of frequent renewal of their garments, or else by a miracle these garments had never worn out! And the very shoes that they put upon their feet on the Passover night were still on their feet—if not the same, yet still they were shod, though they trod the weary wilderness which well might have worn them till they were bare. “You have not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine or strong drink”—a nation of total

abstainers for forty years! There was no bread in the wilderness for them and there was no wine. It may have been obtained as a great luxury, as it probably was, for we have reason to believe that Nadab and Abihu were slain by fire before the Lord because they were drunk when they offered strange fire—but taking the whole people around, anything like wine had not crossed their lips for forty years, yet there they were, strong and healthy! “That you may know that I am Jehovah your God.”

7. *And when you came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, came out against us unto battle, and we smote them.* People not used to war, either, and feeble folk! Yet they smote the great kings and slew mighty kings, for the Lord was with them!

8, 9. *And we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh. Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.* This, then, was the covenant made with the nation—that God would be their God and He would prosper them. As He had done, so would He do—He would be their protector, defender, strength and crown and joy.

10, 11. *You stand this day, all of you, before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and your stranger that is in your camp, from the hewer of your wood unto the drawer of your water.* This national covenant embraced all the great men, the captains, the wise men, all that were in authority, “your elders, and your officers.” It took in all their children, for it was a covenant according to the flesh—and their children according to the flesh are included. “Your wives,” too, for in this matter there was no sex. “The stranger also.” Here we poor Gentiles get a glimpse of comfort, even though from that old covenant we seem to be shut out. “Your stranger that is in your camp” is included. And the poorest and those that performed the most menial service were all to be made partakers of this covenant, “from the hewer of your wood unto the drawer of your water.”

12-15. *That you should enter into covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath, which the LORD your God makes with you this day: that He may establish you today for a people unto Himself, and that He may be unto you a God, as He has said unto you, and as He has sworn unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that stands here with us this day before the LORD our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day.* With the sick that were at home, with the generations that were not yet born, for this was intended to be a national covenant in perpetuity to their children and their children’s children to the end of time. Had they kept it so would it have stood!

16, 17. *(For you know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt and how we came through the nations which you passed by, and you have*

seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them). Now you have seen how they worshiped idols. You have seen what you must avoid—you have beheld their folly that you may escape from it.

18. *Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood.* For the worship of false gods is the cause of untold mischief and evil—wherever it is found it is a root that bears gall and wormwood—and God would not have it in a single individual, man nor woman, no, not in a single family or tribe!

19. *And so it may not happen, when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.* For there were some who so hardened themselves against God that they said, “We shall have peace! Let us do what we like—let us worship these idol gods more and more and more—let us add drunkenness and idolatry to our thirst.”

20. *The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him.* Not light upon him, but lie upon him—rest there and stay there!

20, 21. *And the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel.* As a huntsman separates a stag from the herd that he may hunt it all day, so shall God with any idolater that should come among His people with whom He made a covenant that day. Oh, how God hates that anything should be worshiped by us but Himself! How indignant is He if anywhere, anything takes the supreme place in the human heart which ought to be occupied by God alone!

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BEAUTY FOR ASHES

NO. 3336

A SERMON
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*“To give unto them [who mourn in Zion] beauty for ashes.”
Isaiah 61:3.*

I WOULD remind you that the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ related to mourners in Zion. He did not come into the world to exalt those who are high, to give greater power to the strong, or to clothe those who are already clad in their own righteousness. No! The Spirit of God was upon Him that He might preach good tidings to the meek that broken hearts should be bound up, captives redeemed and prisoners released. He came with blessings for the poor, not with luxuries for the rich. This ought to be a very great subject of thanksgiving to those who are heavy of heart. Is it not sweet to think that the anointed of the Lord came for your sakes that you of the rueful countenance whose eyelids are fringed with beaded tears, you whose songs are dirges, you who dwell at death's door may be brought forth into the sunlight? Most men choose cheerful company whereby they may be entertained, but the Lord Jesus evidently selects mourners and delights in those whom He may encourage and cheer. Blessed be His name! How meek and lowly is He in all His ways! How forgetful of self, and how thoughtful towards His poor servants; He looks upon them with pitying eyes and makes untold blessings their portion!

Notice with pleasure that in dealing with mourners, according to the text before us, the Lord acts upon terms of exchange or barter. He gives them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. It is a gracious exchange, but it is tantamount to everything being a free gift. “To give unto them beauty for ashes” is a free gift because what He takes away is of no value and they are glad to be rid of it. In condescending compassion He took our ashes upon Himself. Ah, how they once covered His sacred head and marred His beauty! He took our mourning. Alas, how it made Him the Man of Sorrows in the day of His humiliation! He took our spirit of heaviness and as He lay prostrate in the garden beneath the load, He was exceedingly heavy and sorrowful even unto death! He took a loss to give us a gain and so it is a barter in which there is a double profit upon our side—we lose a loss and the gain is pure gain! From our Lord the blessings of love are all of free grace and, therefore, let Him have all the

praise! I am sure that no mourner would hesitate to deal with Jesus on these special terms, of which only divine love could have thought. If you have ashes, will you not be glad to exchange them for beauty? If you are mourning, will you not willingly cease from weeping to be anointed with the oil of joy? And if the spirit of heaviness presses upon you like a nightmare, will you not be glad to be set free and to be arrayed in the glittering garments of praise? Yes, there could not be better terms than those which grace has invented—we accept them with delight! Poor mourner, they are especially ordained for you, that by a twofold grace in removing evil and bestowing good, you might be doubly enriched and comforted!

In our present meditation I shall call attention, first, to *the lamentable condition* in which many of the Lord's mourners are found—they sit in ashes, expressive of deep sorrow. Secondly, we shall observe *the divine interposition* on their behalf, for the ashes are removed and, thirdly, we shall notice *the sacred gift*—"Beauty for ashes." Let us begin with—

I. THE MOURNER'S CONDITION—He is covered with ashes as the emblem of his sad estate. Let us now, like Cinderella, sit down among the cinders for a while in order that we may come forth from the ashes with something better than glass slippers, adorned with a beauty which shall befit the king's courts! The fairy fable which has often made our childhood smile shall now be actually realized in our own souls—yes, we shall see how far the truth of God outshines romance! How much grander are the facts of God than the fictions of men!

It seems, from the text, that *the righteous are sometimes covered with grief*. Orientals were always excessive in the use of symbols and, therefore, if they were in sorrow, they endeavored to make their outward appearance describe their inward misery. They took off all their soft garments and put on sackcloth—and this they rent and tore into rags! And then upon their heads, instead of perfumed oil which they were so fond of using, they threw ashes—and so disfigured themselves and made themselves objects of pity. Ashes were of old, signs of mourning, and they continued to be so down to Popish times of which we have a trace in the day called, Ash Wednesday, which was the commencement of the time of fasting known as Lent. It was supposed that those who commenced to fast sat in ashes to begin with. Such symbols we leave to those who believe in the bodily exercises and outward rites of will-worship. However, God's servants have their spiritual fasts and their heads are metaphorically covered with ashes. I will not stop to read you the list of the occasions in which the princes of the royal blood of heaven are found sitting in the place of humiliation and distress.

Suffice it to say that *they began their new life among the ashes*. Like Jabez who was more honorable than his brethren, they were born in sorrow. Some of us will never forget our grief for sin—it was a bitterness with which no stranger could intermeddle. We shall never forget the

anguish of our soul and our deep humiliation which no ashes could sufficiently symbolize. Like the patriarch of old, we cried, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Repentance since then has always had a large degree of mourning connected with it. Sorrow has salted all our penitential tears. It is right it should be so and it is equally right that we should never leave off repenting. Repentance and faith are two inseparable companions—they flourish or decay together like the two arms of the human body. If faith could enter heaven, repentance would certainly pass the gate at the same time. That they will not both enter there, or something near akin to them, I will not venture to assert quite so confidently as some have done. Whether in eternity I shall regret that I have sinned and shall still believe in Jesus and find my everlasting safety in so doing, I will not positively say—but if I so asserted, who could refute the statement? Assuredly we shall mourn for sin as long as we are upon the earth and we do not desire to do otherwise. Grief for sin and love to Jesus will endure through life—there will never come a time when we shall refuse to bathe with tears the pierced feet and kiss them with warmest love—

***"Sorrow and love go side by side;
Nor height nor depth can ever divide
Their heaven-appointed bands.
Those dear associates still are one,
Nor till the race of life is run
Disjoin their wedded hands."***

We have to mourn bitterly when we have fallen upon times of strong temptation and, alas, of surprising sin. We grieve to confess the fact, but it is sadly true that faults have overtaken us. Who among God's chosen sheep has not gone astray? In consequence of such sin we have had to return to the sackcloth and the ashes—and our heart has sunk within us. By reason of our old nature we have transgressed like David and then, by reason of our new nature, we have wept like David and mourned our broken bones. If a foul spot has defiled our garments, we have been led by the Holy Spirit to go at once to Jesus and, while He has washed it out with His blood, we have lamented our offense. Whenever believers permit the fires of sin to burn, they are made, before long, to cast the ashes of repentance upon their heads and shrink into the dust.

Beloved friends, we have also covered our heads with ashes *on account of the sins of others*. Parents have been compelled to sorrow very grievously for their sons and daughters. The wail of David is no unusual sound. "O Absalom, my son, my son! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Many a woman sits in ashes half her life because of her ungodly husband who makes her life bitter to her. Many a loving sister pines inwardly because of a profligate brother who persists in ruining himself. The crimes of the world are the burdens of the saints. We cannot make the ungodly mourn for their guilt, but we can and do

deeply mourn over their insensibility. How can we bear to see our fellow men choosing everlasting destruction, rejecting their own mercies and plunging themselves into eternal misery? If Hagar said, “Let me not see the death of the child,” and if the prophet’s eyes ran with ceaseless tears over the slain of his people, shall not we mourn in dust and ashes the willful soul-suicide of our neighbors who perish before our very eyes with mercy at their doors?

Moreover, we pity the Christian who does not frequently mourn over the depravity of the times in which he lives. Infidelity has in these last days stolen the garb of religion so that now we frequently meet with volumes in which the fundamentals of the faith are denied, written by ministers of churches whose professed creed is orthodox. Our grandfathers would have shuddered at reading from a disciple of Tom Paine sentiments which pretended ministers of the gospel have given forth to the world! Things have reached a painful pass when those who are called to office on purpose to proclaim the gospel are allowed to use their position to sow doubts about it and sap and undermine all belief in it. Such conduct is meanness, itself, and it is amazing that the churches tolerate it! Only Satan, himself, could have put it into a man’s heart to become a salaried preacher of the gospel in order to deny its fundamental truths! He who does this is *Judas Redivivus* (living again) Iscariot the second! God save us from all complicity with such practical falsehood and fraud! But when the child of God sees this and sees besides this, ritualism and latitudinarianism spreading on all sides, he feels a sympathy with Mordecai of whom we read that “when he perceived all that was done, he rent his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and cried with a loud and bitter cry.” It would be a happy omen if there were more of this—and especially if many could be found to imitate Daniel, who said, “I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.” We should soon behold the dawn of better days if such ashes were commonly found upon saintly heads!

Yes, the best of God’s people must sometimes sit down among the ashes and cry, “Woe is me!” When the saints mourn, it will sometimes happen that they cannot help showing their sorrow—it is too great to be controlled or concealed. Usually a spiritual man tries to conceal his soul’s distress and he has his Master’s command for so doing, for Jesus said, “You, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face that you appear not unto men to fast.” In personal trouble we would rather bear our burden alone than load others with it and, therefore, we endeavor to maintain a cheerful manner even when our heart is sinking like a millstone in the flood. As to spiritual depressions, we cannot show these to men who know nothing about them—and in the presence of the ungodly we are dumb upon such topics. But there are sorrows which will have a tongue, concerning which we may even be bidden to speak, as

says the prophet, “O daughter of my people, gird you with sackcloth, and wallow yourself in ashes.” At such times we must express our inward grief and then the men of the world begin to ask, “What ails him?” and jeeringly cry, “He is crazy! Religion has turned his brain.” Note that mourning young woman—her mother said only the other night, “What makes Jane so sorrowful?” She did not know that her girl was under a sense of sin. Your workmates asked you, my good friend, the other morning, “What makes you so dull?” They did not comprehend that their vile language had helped to vex your heart, and had wounded you so that your heart was bleeding inwardly. As we have joys that worldlings cannot share, so have we sorrows which they cannot comprehend—and yet we are obliged, now and then, to let them see that we are cast down—even though this brings us new reproach! The ashes must sometimes be upon our head and we must cry, “They have heard that I sigh. All my enemies have heard of my trouble.” Do not, therefore, beloved friends, when you see a mournful believer, condemn him, nor even depreciate him, for his sorrow may be a necessity of nature. Yes it may even be a direct result of his eminence in divine grace. He may, perhaps, love the souls of men more than you think. He may have a more tender sense of the sinfulness of sin than you have. And, perhaps, if you knew his family trials and if you knew the jealousy of his walk with God, or if you knew how the Lord has hidden His face from him, you would not wonder at his rueful countenance. You might even marvel that he was not more cast down and you might be ready to give him your pity and even your admiration, instead of your cold censure. Be sure of this, that some of the holiest of men have mourned as David did—“I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping.”

Next let us note that *such grief disfigures them*. I gather that from the contrast intended by the words of our text—“Beauty for ashes.” Ashes are not beautifiers and mournful faces are seldom attractive. A believer, when he is in a mourning frame of mind wears a marred countenance. He is disfigured before his friends—he makes bad company for them and they are apt to see his weak points. He is disfigured before his fellow Christians—they delight to see a brother rejoicing in the Lord, for this is a manifest token of favor—but sorrow of heart is often contagious and, therefore, it is not admired. The mourning Christian is especially disfigured in his own esteem. When he looks in the mirror and sees his rueful visage, he cries to himself, “Why are you cast down, O my soul? Can all be right within? If it is so, why am I thus?” He questions, upbraids and condemns himself. If his eyes were not so weakened by tears, he might see a beauty in his sorrow, yet just now he cannot, but views himself as a mass of uncomeliness! Nor is he altogether in error, for generally with spiritual mourning there is a measure of real disfigurement. Unbelief, for instance, is a terrible blot upon any man’s

beauty. Distrust of God is a horrible blotch. Discontent exceedingly injures mental and spiritual loveliness. We are not lovely when we are unbelieving, petulant, envious, or discontented. We are not beautiful when we are distrustful and suspicious, self-willed and rebellious! Yet these evils often go with soul-sorrow and we may truthfully say that some Christians are not only at times very sorrowful, but their beauty is marred by their misery.

The grief of good men's hearts *is often a very expressive one*, as the language before us suggests. When sorrow puts ashes on its head, what does it say? It makes the man eloquently declare that he feels himself to be as worthless as the dust and ashes of his house. "I cover my head," he says, "with ashes to show that the very noblest part of me, my head, my intellect, is a poor fallen earthly thing of which I dare not boast. I count the best thing there is in me to be but dust and ashes fit only to be cast away." You mourners often thus despise yourselves. Well, if it is any consolation to you to know it, I know a minister of Christ who the longer he lives, thinks less and less of himself, and utterly abhors himself before God. It is a wonder of divine grace that the Lord should ever have loved us at all, for there is nothing in our nature that is lovely. Through our fall there is everything in us to be hated by His pure and holy mind, but nothing to esteem—and the best of the best, when they are at their best, are poor creatures. "Lord, what is man that You are mindful of him?" If the righteous judge had swept the whole race away at the first with the besom of destruction, He would still have been as great, glorious and blessed as He is—He only spares us because He is infinite in mercy! When Abraham said, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, I that am but dust and ashes," he had not too lowly an opinion of himself, for even the Father of the faithful, though a prince among men, was nothing in himself but a son of fallen Adam! And nothing but undeserved mercy made him to differ from the idolatrous race out of which he was chosen and called. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes," is our last memorial—and all along we are tending that way by nature, for we are of the earth, earthy. When we put ashes on our head, we do but confess ourselves to be what we really are!

The use of ashes would seem to indicate that the fire is out. Men would not place burning coals upon their heads, but when they cast ashes there, they mean to say, "These ashes from which all fire is gone are like ourselves—we, too, are spent, our fire of hope has burned out, our joy, our confidence, our strength have all departed from us and left us only the black ashes of despair." Is not this suggestive of a state of feeling common enough to truly humbled men? Let me ask my brothers and sisters—Have you never felt as if your coal were quenched in Israel? Have you not admitted that, apart from any salvation which might come to you from your dear Lord and Savior, you had no hope whatever? Have you not felt as if every spark of faith, love, gratitude and all that was

good, was gone out in darkness? Some of you young Christians have never yet stumbled into that slough, and I hope you never will, but if you ever do, it may console you if I let you know that older saints have been there before you—and have had to cry to the strong for strength or they would have perished! Some of us know what it is to feel as if we had not even a spark of grace left. We cry—

***“If anything is felt
’Tis only pain to find we cannot feel.”***

At such times we have felt that if there was any prayer in us it was only a prayer to be helped to pray, or to be helped to mourn that we could not pray, for our stock was lying dead and our poor husbandry yielded us no increase for lack of dew from above. Our soul has been in a state of drought! The rain from heaven has been withheld and the earth has broken and chapped beneath our feet, devouring rather than nourishing the seed. God’s children have their droughts and famines—and then dust and ashes are fit emblems of their dry and dead condition.

Ashes, too, as the symbol of sorrow, might also indicate having passed through the fire of trial, even as these ashes have been burned. Truly, some of God’s best servants have been most often through the furnace and have been so long in the heat that strength fails them and hope well-near expires. They cry to God for patience to endure all His holy will, but they feel that their own power is as much spent as if they were burnt to nothing but ash and there was nothing more left of them upon which the fire could kindle. Is it not a mercy that the Lord looks upon such as these—the utterly spent ones who are ready to be blown away and to perish, even as smoke and dry ashes are borne away by the wind and lost? You who are at ease in Zion know little about these terrible feelings, but you should be grateful to God and sympathize with those who are more exposed to tribulation. Join with them in magnifying the Lord because He promises beauty instead of these ashes of the furnace!

Ashes, also, as you know, are the emblem of death. The Romans placed in sepulchral urns the ashes of the dead. We say, “Dust to dust, ashes to ashes,” when we bury the departed. It is not an uncommon thing for tried saints to complain that they are brought into the dust of death by a faintness of mind which renders life a difficulty. We come to look upon the grave as a refuge and a relief. “Ah,” cries one, “they may as well bury me, for I am more dead than alive. Well may I heap ashes on my head.” Like Elijah, they say, “Let me die, for I am no better than my fathers.” To such depths of grief the best of men have sometimes descended. Many of the most peaceful and joyous spirits have joined in David’s description of himself—“I am as a man that has no strength: free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom You remember no more: and they are cut off from Your hand.”

But enough of this dolorous ditty, let us now change the subject. We have shown you the believer in the ashes, let us now rejoice that some better thing is in store for him! Secondly, there is—

II. A DIVINE INTERPOSITION. The Lord Himself breaks in upon the mourner's misery and makes the most gracious arrangements for his consolation. When a man is in sore trouble, he naturally begins to look this way and that way for deliverance and, thereby, much of the man's mind and heart are made manifest. You may readily judge whether you are a child of God or a hypocrite by seeing in what direction your soul turns in seasons of severe trial. The hypocrite flies to the world and finds a sort of comfort there, but the child of God runs to his Father and expects consolation only from the Lord's hand! True grace abides with God and submits itself to His will. This is always good for us. Brothers and sisters, if the Lord makes you sick, remain sick till the Lord restores you, for it is dangerous to call in any other physician to your soul but your Lord. If the Lord frowns, do not ask others to smile, for you can derive no joy from that source. If it is God's wrath that breaks you, let God's love mend you, or else remain broken—

***“I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me,”***

is a sweet resolve of a truly penitent soul, for has not the Lord said, “I kill and I make alive; I wound, and I heal. I the Lord do all these things”? Will you take the healing and the making alive out of Jehovah's hand? God forbid! Where you have received your smart, there get your sweet. Where you do drink the gall of sorrow, there drink the wine of joy, for in the Lord's hand there is abundant mercy to be found—and He will end your misery!

According to the text, the way in which believers rise out of their mourning is through *the coming of Jesus*. Read the chapter again. What does the Lord say? “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me.” Yes, beloved, our hope lies in the mission of Christ, in the person of Christ, in the work of Christ, in the application of the blood of Christ to our hearts! We turn our eyes evermore towards the hills from where comes our help! Look, O sinner, always to the brazen serpent whatever serpent bites you! Whether it is the old serpent himself, or some smaller serpent of the same brood, which lurks in the way and bites at the horse's heels, still look to the one appointed cure. Never speculate in healing drugs, but keep to the one antidote which never fails! Jesus is the consolation of Israel and let not Israel place her hope elsewhere!

And, mark you, it is Jesus coming *in the gospel* which is the mourner's hope—for this coming of the Lord is to preach good tidings to the meek and so to bind up the brokenhearted. I have little confidence in those persons who speak of having received direct revelations from the Lord, as though He appeared otherwise than by and through the gospel. His Word

is so full, so perfect, that for God to make any fresh revelation to you or me is quite needless. To do so would be to put a dishonor upon the perfection of that Word! In the “surest word of testimony” there is a release from every difficulty, a plaster for every sore, a medicine for every disease! My dear sorrowing friend, it is very dangerous to look for consolation from dreams, or from the opening of the Bible upon certain texts, or from fancied voices, or from any other of those foolish superstitions in which weak-minded persons seek for comfort! Go you to what God has said in the Scriptures—and when you find your character described and promises made to such a character as your own, then take them home, for they are plainly spoken to you! Go not about to look for comfort in the cloud-land of fancy or the moonshine of superstition, but believe in the Lord Jesus who comes to bless broken hearts in no other way than by preaching to them the glad tidings of His grace!

You are not to expect the Lord Jesus to speak with you in any other way than by the written word applied to the soul by the Holy Spirit. Look for no new revelation! Drive out the very idea as deceptive! If an angel were to come to my chamber and inform me that he brought a message from God which would tell me more than is written in the Scriptures of truth, I would not listen to him for a moment, but say, “Get you behind me, Satan. The end of these manifestations has come! The stars no more appear, for the sun has risen.” Our heavenly Father has already sent the Lord Jesus and it is written, “Last of all He sent His Son.” In Christ Jesus there is such a fullness of truth and grace that all the angels combined could not increase it. He who looks for more revelation should beware lest he receive the curse with which the Bible concludes—which will certainly come upon any who either add to, or take from, the inspired words of God! The sum of the matter is this—if there is any comfort to be received, it is in Christ. And if there are any ashes to be taken away and any beauty to be given, it will be through the Lord Jesus in the preaching and reading of the Word! This much by way of protest against the superstitions of weak minds.

But now I want you to notice a something which does not appear in our English version, but is clear in the Hebrew. It is that *the Lord very easily makes a change in His people’s condition*, for the word in the Hebrew for ashes is *epher*, and the word for beauty is *peer*. The change is very slight in the original. Some idea of the similarity of the words may be given you in English if I quote from Master Trapp. “The Lord promises to turn all their sighing into singing, all their musing into music, all their sadness into gladness and all their tears into triumph.” Perhaps I may myself give you a closer imitation, still, and more after the Hebrew model, by saying He turns our mourning into morning. In the case before us we might say, “He gives us splendors for cinders,” beauty for ashes. Now, as readily as we change a word by a single letter, so easily does the God of

all comfort alter the state of His own people! With Him nothing is hard, much less impossible. From the cross to the crown, from the thorn to the throne, from misery to majesty, is but a hand's turn with the Lord! Often does He call His people like Mordecai from sitting at the gate to riding upon the king's horse, like Joseph from lying in the dungeon to ruling in the land, like Job from the dunghill to double wealth, like David from the caves of Engedi to the palace in Jerusalem. This He does both suddenly and easily, as when a man lights a candle and the darkness departs at once! How charming and astonishing the change to pass in a moment from winter into summer, from midnight into noon, from storm into profound calm! This is the finger of God and it is often seen.

When you are at your lowest do not conclude that it will be months before you can rise. Not so. From the lowest point to the highest you will spring at a single leap when the almighty helper girds you with power! David in the psalms describes the Lord coming to his rescue in haste most marvelous. Out of the depths was he snatched by the flash of Jehovah's power!—

***“On cherub and on cherubim
Right royally He rode,
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad!
And so delivered He my soul—
Who is a rock but He?
He lives—Blessed be my Rock!
My God exalted be!”***

How joyously he sings! And well he may after so special a rescue. There is no slow traveling with God when His people are in sorrow. Before they have time to call, He answers them! While they are yet speaking, He hears their requests! He hears them chanting “*de profundis*,” (out of the depths) and He lifts them to sing aloud, “*Gloria in Excelsis*.” From “out of the depths” their tune changes to, “Glory in the highest.” Nor are there slow pauses of weary hope, but the Lord works a world of wonders in the twinkling of an eye!

Thus we see how our Lord gives beauty for ashes. We now turn to the last point, which is—

III. WHAT HE BESTOWS INSTEAD OF THE ASHES—beauty. All disfigurement is removed. The ashes had made the person to be defiled, uncomely to others and unpleasant to himself, but all this is removed. Beauty is given and his countenance is not marred with dust and grime. His face is bright with joy and beaming with hope. No more unpleasant to the eyes, the person has even become attractive and delightful! The original Hebrew implies that occasions for joy and emblems of joy are also given, for it might be read, “A chaplet for ashes.” The ashes were on the head and now a crown is placed there. The allusion is to the nuptial tiara which men wore on their marriage day. The Lord's mourners are to be decked with crowns of delight instead of being disfigured with ashes of

grief. When does that happen to us? Do you recollect when you first obtained a sense of forgiveness? How gloriously were you then arrayed! When the father said of His prodigal son, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet,” that was a high day! And so was it with us when we were delivered from our filthy rags and clothed in divine righteousness! Our ashes were gone, then, and a crown adorned our heads. Forgiven! It was a joy of joys! Even now as we look back upon it we begin to sing again—

**“Happy day! Happy day!
When Jesus washed my sins away!”**

We went a little farther on in spiritual life and then we discovered that we were the children of God! We did not at first know our adoption, but it burst gloriously upon us like a newly kindled sun! Do you recollect when you first learned the meaning of the word and perceived that adoption secured eternal salvation? For the heavenly Father does not cast His children away, nor can they cease to be the objects of His love! How can any child be unchilded? And if still a child, he must still be beloved and still an heir! When you once drank consolation from that doctrine, did you not receive a tiara for ashes? How lovely a thing it is to be a child of God! “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!”

We lived a little longer, and we began to understand the doctrine of vital union with Christ. We had not dreamed of it at first. We then discovered that there is a vital, actual union between us and Christ—that we are married to Him! It is a great mystery, but yet it is a great truth of God. It is all but inconceivable that we should be members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones—and yet it is even so. That was a heavenly day wherein we perceived that we were one with Jesus—“by eternal union, one.” Then we rejoiced as wearers of a marriage crown and we sang

“My Beloved is mine and I am His.”

Since then we have learned other truths and on each occasion of being thus taught of the Lord we have again obtained a crown for ashes! Another and yet another chaplet has adorned our brow. We have felt ourselves to be made priests and kings unto God and the beauty of the Lord our God has rested upon us! All glory be to His name!

Let us remark that the contrast of our text is peculiarly suggestive because it is not quite what we might expect. The Lord takes away our ashes, but what does He give in exchange? The natural contrast would be *joy*, but the Lord bestows that which is better, namely, *beauty*, because that is not only joy to ourselves but to others. “A thing of beauty,” as we say, “is a joy forever.” A beautiful person gives pleasure to all around. Now, child of God, you are not only to have those ashes taken away which have disfigured you, but you are actually to become the

source of joy to others! How pleasant that will be for you who have so long touched the mournful string that you have distressed your family.

Yes, young friend, you are to make your mother rejoice by telling her that you have found peace with God! You are yet to cheer your father's heart, young woman, when you shall say to him, "Father, I have found Him in whom you trust and I am trusting in Him, too." Yes, poor mourner, you will yourself be comforting other mourners one of these days! You who have been in Giant Despair's castle shall help in pulling down the monster's den! You can hardly believe it, but so it shall be!

In the sense of being a joy to others, many of the Lord's people are very beautiful, indeed. You cannot help being charmed with them, especially with those of deep experience. Good men are glad of the company of those to whom the Lord has given the beauty of divine grace. Even the ungodly, though they do not confess it, have a respect for the majesty of holy characters. There is a charm about beauty which makes her ride as on a lion through the midst of her foes—every man's hand is bound to defend her—and none dare to injure her! The beauty which the Lord gives to His people is as a queen among all beauties and sways a potent scepter!

Yes, and when the Lord makes His people beautiful they are a delight even to God, Himself, for the Lord rejoices in His works and His works of grace are the noblest labor of His hands and, as being fullest of divine grace, are most graceful! The Lord delights in His people! We read of the Lord Jesus that His delights were with the sons of men, and even now, though angelic harps ring out His praises, He loves to be here in our churches and to commune with us as a man speaks with his friend. Beloved, cultivate His society! Abide with Him and if He can find any cause of delight in you, which is a wonder of wonders, put all your delight in Him!

Let us have this gracious beauty about us, and even our heavenly bridegroom will have to say, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me. You have ravished My heart with one of your eyes." May we be kept from marring this beauty, and be forever so fair that even our Lord Himself may look and love! Amen.

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EARS BORED TO THE DOORPOST

NO. 3337

A SERMON

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1866.**

***“And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife,
and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall
bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to
the door, or unto the doorpost; and his master shall
bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.”
Exodus 21:5, 6.***

THE Jewish people had lived in Egypt and had been themselves slaves. They had, doubtless, learned much of art and science in Egypt, but they also learned many sinful manners and customs—and among the rest they learned the habit of slavery. When God found them and led them out into the wilderness to make a nation of them, He did not give them a code of laws such as He would give to us in the light of this dispensation, but He gave them laws as Jesus Christ, Himself, says, “according to the hardness of their heart.” He gave them a law suitable to the state in which they were. Their ceremonial laws, their political and economic laws, were very far from being perfect and were never intended to be regarded as perfect. They were not meant for a nation of men as much as for a nation of children. The nation was then in its infancy and statutes and ordinances were very much in accordance with the infancy of the people. Slavery, for instance, was not forbidden. It was not even forbidden for a Hebrew to hold his brother Hebrew in bondage! But, though it was not forbidden, yet it was so hedged about and limited with many regulations and conditions that it must have become very difficult, if not almost impossible.

In the first place, every Hebrew who held his brother in bondage was compelled to treat him as he treated himself. There was a law that his food and his raiment should be precisely similar to that of his master. Then, again, at the end of six full years, the man must go free; whatever might be the price at which he was purchased for six years. And when he went free, he was not to go out empty, but his master was required to give him something out of his barn, out of the winepress and out of the flock. In fact, it was a sort of apprenticeship of one man to another, with the condition that the servant should be treated as one of the family and was to be set up in business when he left. So much did the Jews feel that

this was not a very profitable kind of thing, that it got to be a proverb that, “A Hebrew who buys a Hebrew servant, does not buy a servant, but he buys a master.” So the thing became very seldom practiced at all and this, perhaps, was the best way of dealing with the evil. They would have kicked against a law which forbade slavery altogether, but they submitted to this one which regulated it—and so the thing was kept in such check that it must of necessity fall. That, however, again, was not at all a rule for you or for me. It was like the putting away of a wife with a writing of divorcement, of which the Savior said that “Moses allowed it because of the hardness of their hearts.” It was not right in itself, but it was simply endured because of the low moral state of the people when they came as a herd of slaves from Egypt’s brick kilns, not having been trained and educated to understand the value of liberty as you and I happily have been in these later times for these many years.

But observe that sometimes the Hebrew servant, although free to go where he liked at the end of six years, would not go. He had married one of his master’s female servants. He had children and, besides, was so attached to his master and his family that he preferred to stay with him. Now, as God did not wish the people to love slavery, but would teach them the nobility of liberty, He made this ordinance that a man’s wish to remain in servitude should be attested by a somewhat painful rite—and He made it a law that this rite should be administered to him in public before the judges.

Lest a master should say the servant wished to be with him and then bored his ears by force—and so ensured his perpetual service—it was commanded that this boring of the ears should always be done in public before witnesses and the judges. An awl was taken and the man’s ears were fastened to the doorpost—and then after he must forever remain, though he might change his mind, since he had once deliberately chosen to serve his master.

Leaving, however, this outline of the meaning of this picturesque ceremony, I now want to use the passage in its spiritual meaning.

First, I shall have to remind you that in Psalm 40 *our Savior speaks of Himself as having had His ears bored*. Did you notice the expression in the 40th Psalm, “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire: *My ears have You opened*.” The Hebrew says, “*My ears have You dug*.” Christ’s ears, then, were pierced so that He might from His own voluntary choice be the servant of God forevermore. When I have spoken a little upon that, I want to speak of *some professed servants of God who have never had their ears bored*. And then, in the third place, *I want to go into this business of boring some of your ears*—and I have no doubt there are many here who have had their ears bored in days gone by and who will be glad to renew the rite afresh tonight by consecrating themselves again unto their Master. First, we have to speak—

I. OF THE SAVIOR HAVING HAD HIS EARS BORED.

One would not have dared to apply this to Him if He had not instructed His servant David, by the Holy Spirit, to apply it to Himself. "My ears," says He, "have You opened." Oh, wonder of wonders! That the King of kings should thus come to be the servant of servants—that He who is "God over all, blessed forever" and who thinks it not robbery to be equal with God—should take upon Himself the form of a servant and be made in the likeness of sinful flesh and, being found in fashion as a Man, should become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! Our Savior's first appearance, here, was in the servant's place! He was the son of a carpenter, and He was laid in a manger; when He comes forward to begin His active life at thirty—that life is one continual service. They would have made Him a king, but He preferred to remain the servant of all. You see this from the first to the last of His earthly life, for even in view of the cross, He took a towel and girded Himself, and then a basin and, showing He was still a servant, He washed His disciples' feet. He was still a servant when He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. And as the last act of obedience that was possible, He bows His head and says, "Not My will, but Yours be done," and He yielded up the ghost. Our blessed Lord might have broken free from the servitude whenever He pleased. He claims this for Himself, that He was voluntarily a servant and especially that His obedience and sacrifice unto death were His absolutely willing offering. He says of His life, "No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself: I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it up again." He could have gone out free if He would. That host that came to seize Him in the garden would have been no more able to take Him than the Philistines were able to take Samson when he snapped the green withes. He did but speak to them and they fell backwards—and this proved how powerful He was to have delivered Himself. And when He was before Pilate, He might even then have escaped. Did He not say, "You could have had no power against Me if it had not been given you from above"? And even on the cross when they said, "If He is the Son of God, let Him come down from the cross," He might have leaped in one tremendous stride into the midst of His foes and smitten them with lightning flashes from those fearful eyes! He might have shaken the earth and removed heaven rather than have died, if so it had been His will. But He had given His ears to be bored and He remained His Father's servant even unto death! Willingly, without a struggle, this victim was laid upon the altar. Like the passive lamb, which starts not even when the knife is thrust into it, the Savior gave Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the people—and to the fullest extent was the servant of His Father!

This is very delightful for us to think upon, especially when we remember that *our Savior still wears the print of the opened ear*. Still is He in heaven and there—

***“Looks like a Lamb that has been slain
And wears His priesthood still.”***

For your sake He does not hold His peace and for Jerusalem’s sake He does not rest, but still continues to accomplish His Father’s good pleasure, still interceding for His saints and waiting until the time shall come when He shall take His great power and reign and the number of His elect shall be accomplished. Still is He the servant of God and the friend of man—His opened hands, His side and feet bearing the marks that like the scars in the ears of the Jewish slave made Him to be recognized as a slave forever!

So is He our friend and His Father’s servant eternally. Brothers and sisters, there is this to be said which ought to endear the Savior to you and to me—that *His only motive for so having His ears bored, or dug, was His love*. What says the servant in the text? “I love my master: I love my wife: I love my children.” This is what our Servant-Savior said. He loved His God—never man loved God as Christ did! As God, He loved infinitely Him who is one with Him, even His Father. And as perfect man, He loved God with all His heart, soul and strength. He had voluntarily become a servant and He loved His Master. And He also loved His spouse. Oh, there was little in her to love, but He thought much of her and does think much of her now! The Church is His bride and He sees her—

***“Not as she stood in Adam’s fall,
When sin and ruin covered all,
But as she’ll stand another day—
Fairer than sun’s meridian ray.”***

He saw His character reflected in her. He saw her as what she is to be when she is perfect through the Spirit and He loved her, oh, with such a perfect, all-constraining love, and said—

***“For her I’ll go
Through all the depths of sin and woe,
And on the cross will even dare
The dreadful weight of wrath to bear.”***

He found His spouse in the mire. He brought her up out of it. He found her in poverty and He became poor for her sake. He found her in rags and He stripped Himself to clothe her. He found her condemned and He was condemned for her acquittal. He found her on earth—He came from heaven to bring her up from earth that she might be with Him where He is in heaven forever. Then I love the last word, “I love my children.” That may be laid hold of by each one of us, for as He is “The everlasting Father,” every believer may regard himself or herself as His child! And He loves each one. He could die, but He could not deny His people! He could leave heaven, but could never abandon us! He could not be content to be

glorified unless His people were, too! He dared not be satisfied to sit upon a throne while they might be cast into hell, but He could come down and bring them near to Himself by stooping as low as they had become! Let us bless Him! Let us, tonight, extol this blessed servant of God in our hearts, who though King of kings had His ears opened because He loved His master, He loved His spouse, and He loved His children—and has, therefore, become their servant forever!

Now I thought, when I was turning over this in my mind, that perhaps some troubled conscience here might get comfort out of it, that perhaps someone might say, “Oh, well, if Jesus Christ has so given Himself up to be the Savior of sinners that He will never give up the work, and then perhaps He will save me.” You know what is meant by nailing the flag to the mast. It means that the man means to fight it out. Jesus Christ has, so to speak, nailed the flag of mercy to the masthead and He will fight it out with the devil! Yes, He will save the meanest of His people! He has given Himself up, heart and soul, to be the Savior of sinners! It is His business and He will never give it up. So long as there is an unsaved sinner, Christ will be seeking him! So long as this world has sinners in it, it will be a hunting ground for this glorious Nimrod, this “mighty hunter before the Lord,” who has come to seek out poor wondering souls and bring them to Himself. “He is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for us.” His ears being bored for this work, the work of intercession will be His as long as He lives! We will now pass from that to remark, in the second place—

II. THAT EVERY GENUINE SERVANT OF GOD IS ONE WHO WOULD NOT ACCEPT HIS LIBERTY, OR LEAVE OFF BEING THE SERVANT OF GOD, IF HE COULD.

He has had his ears bored and he means to be, and must be, a servant of God as long as he lives. There are, however, a great many professors of whom we are going to speak to you and a great many other men in the world, too, who have never had their ears bored to be God’s servants at all. There are some, in the first place, who hate the very thought of being God’s *servant*. “Serve God!” says one, “who is He? Who is Jehovah that I should obey Him?” The mass of men are of Pharaoh’s mind—they are not going to obey God—they think they are their own masters. I do not believe there ever was a man who was his own master, but that every man has a master of some kind or other. How many men whose master is money, and if money orders them to do anything, however outrageous, they would at once do it to obtain the money. No matter how dirty the trick might be, there are some men who would do it if it promised profit to them and they would not be found out. No matter though they were to half starve themselves and lose comfort in their

houses, how many there are who would suffer much if they might but gain gold! Mammon is their master. Some take *pleasure* to be their master—and pleasure is a very hard master, indeed, for the pleasures of sin, though they seem to be cheap, are always dearly bought. A man never gets his penny's worth for his penny when he goes into the lusts of the flesh. There whatever he gets he has to pay back again—in his own flesh and bones shall he have to pay back every drachma of joy that he wins by unhallowed lust! But, oh, how men will bend their necks to many gods and many lords rather than serve Jehovah! As for the God that made them, many never think of Him and many never think of Him but to mention His name in ribald jest or oath, or to despise His authority. Ah, sinner, God knows how to deal with such as you are, for if you sin with Pharaoh, you shall perish with Pharaoh! If you say, "I will not serve God," God will take care to make you a monument of His justice, if you will not be a trophy of His grace. "For this purpose," said He to Pharaoh, "have I raised you up, that I might show My power in you," and if God does not show His love in you, He will show His power by bringing you down one of these days, till you shall loathe the things you once loved and curse the day in which you dared to think yourselves wiser than God! When a creature is out at elbows with its creator; depend upon it, it is also out at elbows with itself. Things can never go along well when the wheel of our hearts does not cog with the wheel of God's heart. We must come down to God's will if we would rise up to happiness and peace!

But there are many who profess to be the servants of God who have not had their ears bored—and this is proved by the fact that some of them go out from us after a time. Oh, it is a thing the most vexatious beneath the skies—it is the plague of the Church and it is the minister's nightmare and specter—that there should be so many hollow professors who, nevertheless, are able to maintain a whitewashed profession for so many years! Truly, it is but a poor test of Christianity to walk uprightly in appearance for 10 or even 20 years, for there are inventions nowadays by which counterfeits may be brought to such perfection that you can scarcely tell them from the pure gold!

Through many a crucible will the false thing go and not betray its falseness until at last there comes a discovering hour—and then woe to the Church of God, but, most of all, woe to the man who duped that Church and misled those who trusted him! I am inclined to say to every one of you, "Do not be too sure—search yourself." I am inclined, most of all, to say it to myself. I do so like to read a sermon sometimes—for I do not often *hear* one—that seems to give me a ring down upon the counter. You know I am often afraid of the jingle, whether it will sound like true gold or not, but it is a good thing to get a ring. A preacher with a soft and mealy mouth is but of little service to a Christian, but the man who sets

forth plain and unpalatable truths of God often comforts him because he is able to say, "Well, I can stand this searching truth," and then he goes away satisfied that things are right with God. Try yourselves, dear friends! Try yourselves constantly and ask the Lord to search you, and come afresh to the blood of Jesus lest you should be mistaken! There was an apostle who turned out to be a Judas—many a minister has been a deceiver! Many a church member, and many a church officer, too, has been nothing but a whitewashed sepulcher full of bones and rottenness! Take care, dear hearer, lest your lot should be the same!

Then there are others who make a very fine profession, who are even worse, if possible, than these, for *they are religious and irreligious, too*. I know some of you can carry a hymnbook in your pockets and a songbook, too. You can come here, I daresay, on Sunday evenings and drop in on a weeknight, but there are some other places of very doubtful reputation which know you, too! Oh, yes, I know some who have said, "Well, I must give up my seat there because I cannot give up the other, for the preacher does give it to me so severely."

Ah, how the preacher wishes he could give it to you still more severely, for of all classes of men that should excite our sorrow and our pity, it is the men who are able to stand the gospel and yet go on in their sins! Why, I have known professors in the country who would stand up in the singing pew, or sit near, who did not know what time of night they came home on Saturday from market! And we know there are not a few people who can drink the cup of the Lord and deep draughts of the cup of the devil, too, who will sing well when they are here, but will also sing a roaring good song at a public dinner. Jolly fellows! They are not very particular, but they had better be, or else they will find their lot at last particularly severe, for surely none shall so deserve the wrath of God as those who knew better! As I heard a poor soul say the other day, "Ah, sir, I sinned in the light," and said it, I hope, with a broken heart, too. I thought, "What a thing to be forced to say!" Some of you, I hope, will be forced to say it. You have sinned knowing that you were sinning—sinned knowing the penalty of sin, sinned knowing something about better things, too! Yet have you gone like a dog to his vomit—vomited on Sunday, but have gone back to it on Monday—and like the sow that was washed on the Sabbath have gone back to wallow in the mire for six days! God have mercy upon some of you! I would that in His mercy He would come and make you keep close to what you profess—and to be no longer halting between two opinions, but have your ears bored to be the servants of God forever—and not the slaves of sin!

I think I might make out a pretty long list of people of this sort, but I shall only mention one class. There is a great number of young men and a greater number of young women who attend this place and we are

delighted to see you, dear friends. May your numbers never grow less; for we love you and we desire to bless God that so many of you have been converted! But I am always fearful about some of you young people, lest your religion should in any way depend upon any sort of excitement, or your happening to be connected with a really quickened and living church, or happening to be in such an earnest class, as some of our classes are, or because you attend upon the ministry in this place. I do know some who, when they get away into the country, where perhaps the minister is not much more than half alive, they grow cold and, by-and-by, and especially if they happen to get married, then the zeal which once fired them quite subsides. Now remember that the religion that depends upon any man, whoever he may be, or upon any woman, or that rests at all upon the company you have to keep, is not genuine religion at all! For our religion ought to maintain and will maintain its vitality, at least, if not its constant health, be you cast into whatever circumstances you may be. Some of you young women, perhaps, are going out to service where there are ungodly masters. Now you will know whether your grace is real or not. Some of you young men are apprenticed, or obliged to go into situations where you are constantly in the midst of those who chaff you and jeer you—now we shall know what stuff you are made of! Now we shall see whether you are only stony-ground hearers, or whether there is real depth of earth in you, for if there is no depth of earth, you will soon wither away! But if your conversion was a genuine one, we defy all the wicked men on earth and all the devils in hell to destroy it, for what God has done, none can undo! But what comes from man and not from the Spirit of God, depend upon it, will be of no use to you in the day of judgment.

Thus there are many servants in God's house who are only there a little while, and who go out at the end of their six years. But now I am going to talk to—

III. THOSE WHO HAVE HAD THEIR EARS BORED.

First, *I shall bring out the awls.* Genuine Christians have had their ears bored; that is to say, they are such Christians that they could not be anything else. And when they have their choice—and they do have it every day, for temptation gives them many an opportunity—they will not go out, but are obliged to remain the servants of God. I am now going to tell you some of the awls with which God has bored their ears. Christian, you have had your ears bored. What was one of the things that did it? I think it was *past mercies*. Forsake the Lord Jesus Christ? How can I? He loved me! He bought me—

***“He saw me ruined in the fall,
He loved me, notwithstanding all.”***

Some of us were in great distress and Christ gave us peace—we were ready to destroy ourselves and He gave us joy and liberty—and since that

day He has led us into green pastures and beside still waters and we have been a happy people! He has supplied us night and day! We cannot leave Him! We cannot leave Him!

He has bored our ears, His infinite mercy in the past has fastened us to His doorpost. We dare not leave Him—we would not if we could! Do not many of you feel that the verse of the hymn is the real truth—

**“A very wretch, Lord, I should prove,
Had I no love to Thee”?**

We owe our gracious Master so much that our ears are bored and we cannot leave Him. Imagine you see Ignatius standing up in the amphitheater when he is told that if he will curse Christ, he shall escape, and he says, “How can I curse Him? He has never done me a displeasure!” So with us! He has never done us ill. We cannot but speak well of His name and cling to Him!

But I think our ears are bored, also, *by a sense of our present helplessness*. You say, “Leave Him? Ah, but where to?” We cannot do without Him! You tell us to do without Christ? As well tell the helpless baby that is hanging on its mother’s breast to leave its mother! And we are more helpless than that infant—there is nothing but death lying before us if we leave Him. Brothers and sisters, what could you and I do the next hour if we had no Savior to depend upon, none of His grace to keep us from sin, and none of His love to comfort us in affliction? We would be utterly ruined! Leave Him? Ask the young husband to forsake his spouse! Ask the man who has hunted after gold and won it to throw away his treasure! But as for us, we cannot leave our spouse, nor forsake our divine treasure. Now have we found contentment! Now have we got all that our souls can wish for! Never, Jesus, never can we leave You! What could we do without You?—

**“To whom or where could we go
If we should turn from Thee?”**

That is the second awl with which to bore our ears.

Then there is a third awl. Leave Him? How can we, *when we think about the future?* We expect between now and getting to heaven a great many storms—and what could we do without the captain and pilot of souls? We know there are many giants to fight and dragons to kill—and what could we do without our soul’s Great Heart to be our champion and protector? There are many arrows flying and what could we do without our shield? We could not leave our castle and high tower, or, if we did, what might not happen to us? Every ill certainly would, if we forsook Him. The past, the present, and the future are all like sharp awls to bore right through our ears and fasten us to Christ!

Leave Him? Why, *the joy He gives us, the satisfaction, the delight*, make it impossible for us to leave Him! Can a bride forget her ornaments? Can it be possible for a nation to put away its gods? Can a mother forget her

child? All these things might be, but we cannot forget Him who is all-in-all to us! Once get the flavor of Christ in your mouth and you will never be satisfied with anything short of Him! Drink water from the well of Bethlehem and you will be like David—you will say of it again and again—“Oh, that one would give me a drink of the water of the well.” “My heart is fixed,” said David, “my heart is fixed.” Some people’s hearts are flying about like feathers in the air. Whichever way the wind blows, they blow, but “my heart is fixed.” Christ has driven four nails right through it and fastened it to His Cross! The spear has gone through my inmost soul—I have no other love but He—and I must love Him as long as I live.” Thus can the Christian speak! The joy which Jesus gives him is the awl that has pierced his ears!

And then, dear friends, is there not another reason, and a very strong one, namely, *our hope forever*? Leave Christ? Why, then we would have to leave heaven and its happiness! We have great expectations. We sometimes hear of people who have “great expectations.” Yes, believers have great expectations. We are not watching for dead men’s shoes, but we are looking for the golden sandals that they wear in the land of the living! We are not expecting the legacies of earthly relatives, but we are expecting the blessed legacy which Christ has left to all His people—to be with Him where He is! Yes, the son of poverty is expecting one of the many mansions! The child of tribulation is expecting to have every tear wiped away from his eyes! We are expecting to hear it said, “Well done, good and faithful servant—enter you into the joy of your Lord.” Give up Christ? No, the thought of heaven bores our ears yet again. We cannot give Him up! We must still cling to Him because “we have respect unto the recompense of the reward.” Now all of these awls are sharp ones, but I do not suppose they have pierced some of you. If, however, any of you have ever felt them piercing your ears, I am sure you felt very happy while the boring was going on—and may you be pierced by them yet again and again!

Thus, then, I have shown you the awls, but I cannot pierce your ears. The text forbids me, for it says, “*the master was to pierce the servant’s ear.*” Yes, there is no man can bind a soul to Christ, but Christ Himself must do it. There is such a struggle in men’s hearts against Christ that only the High Priest who knows how to bind the sacrifice, can ever cast the cords of love around us and to His altar bind us fast. If, dear friends, you are afraid of backsliding. If you are afraid you should grow cold and turn aside from your Master, bore your ears again tonight! Ask Him to open the scars afresh and let you feel it until you can have no doubt that it is there! That sweet sermon by Mr. Lewis some of you have never forgotten—on the text—“I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” May you feel that you have had the Master boring your ears.

Now, just one word upon what is to be bored, namely, *the ear*. The boring of the ear was the emblem of obedience, for it is with the ear that the servant hears. The Christian, then, will be mainly God's servant through his ears. We hear God's will and, therefore, do it. Some of you have ears that need a little opening, for you know some things to be your duty and you profess to be God's servant, but you do not attend to them. Your ears, I hope, are bored, but you seem to have taken cold in them and you cannot hear the Master's voice! Some of you, for instance, know that as believers you ought to be baptized but yet you shrink from it. Others of you know you ought to be united with a Christian church. "They gave themselves first to the Lord, and afterwards to the saints by the word of God." "He that has ears to hear, let him hear." The obedient servant only has to hear his Master's voice and he runs at once to do His bidding. "Oh," you say, "but it is not essential, sir." No, I know it is not. But still, if you have a servant, you do not expect her to say that what you tell her to do is "not essential." Try your servant Mary tonight. Tell her to do something. She does not do it. You tell her again. She does not do it and she says to you, "But, sir, remember it is not essential!" You say to her, "I do not keep servants to argue points with me! If they will not do my bidding they must find another master."

Mind the Lord does not say this to you: for if a thing is His will, all that you have to do is to do it, asking no questions! I never heard of an angel in heaven asking God why he was ordered to do such-and-such a thing. They serve Him there without questioning—and so may His will be done by us on earth after the same fashion, "as it is done in heaven."

May you be like the high priests whose thumbs and toes were touched with blood to show that their active powers were given to the service of God; and may you also be like those whose ears were touched with blood to show that you hear the Master's will, and that your thoughtful faculties are given to the attentive observation of what His mind is, so that the hands and the feet may be guided as to what you should do!

Lastly, I want you to notice that when the ear was bored, it was *bored to the doorpost in the presence of the judges*. It was *not* done in *secret* in some back room! It was done in public with witnesses present. If this man is going to devote himself to his master, he must be brought right out to the doorpost. "Now then, your ear, sir; the awl must be driven right through it in the presence of spectators." And I think consecration to Christ is not a thing to be done in secret. You who love the Lord Jesus Christ—acknowledge it! If you are His servants, wear His livery. If you are His servants, come out and profess to be so! Have your ears bored to the very doorpost, publicly, and openly avow yourselves to be on the Lord's side. He asks it and it is no more than He deserves! "He that confesses

Me before men,” He says, “Him also will I confess before My Father who is in heaven.”

I think this man might say, “My master’s house is to be my dwelling place forever.” I know some of us seem to have had our ears bored even to the posts of this very house of prayer! Some of you are never absent, whatever service there may be. If it were to rain, I do not know how much, I do not think it would thin this congregation much, for you love to come up to the house of God. Well, the assembling of yourselves together will always, I hope, be a means of profit to you—it is always a manifest indication of your retaining your service under the good Master! May you thus always keep close to the posts of His door and when He comes, may He find you like servants waiting at the door for their lord!

Now, are there any here tonight who would like to have their ears bored with the awls which I have mentioned? If so, I would say to them, “If your heart is right with God and you are trusting in Jesus, only, instead of making a resolution, offer a prayer and let this be the prayer—‘Lord, while I live and till I die, I desire to be Your servant to the utmost of my power. I desire to do Your will or to allow it. I give myself up without reserve or limitation. All that I am, all that I have, I give up to You. Take me from this night forth and let me not offer this prayer as a mere matter of form or hypocrisy, but may I offer it heartily and from my inmost soul. Enable me to say I *am* Your servant. Oh, God! Sanctify me, spirit, soul, and body, for Your name’s sake. Amen.’”

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

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THE WITNESS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

NO. 3338

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 1913,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup,
you do show the Lord's death till He comes.”
1 Corinthians 11:26.*

THE center of our holy religion is the cross. The central thought of the whole of Christianity is Christ and the great point in Christ's history is His crucifixion. We preach Christ—but more—we preach Him crucified! Beloved, this, which is the keystone or the whole arch of our religion, should be more constantly in our minds than it is. It should more frequently occupy our meditations. It should engage more incessantly our tongues—we should sing of it more often, we should pray more in the shadow of it and we should live more under the control of the impulses its suggests. In the cross of Christ let each one of us glory and, like the apostle, say, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In order to keep in our mind's eye what, alas, we so easily forget—the death of our blessed Lord—He has been pleased to institute the supper which we are about to celebrate. Beneath yon fair white linen cloth we have memorials of His passion, full of instruction to those who rightly view them. If any in this place should ask, “What mean you by this service?” our ready answer shall be according as it is written—“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He comes” (1 Cor 11:26). We eat bread and drink wine, not out of any foolish superstition that these can be transmuted into the very flesh and blood of Jesus Christ—a superstition which would be a disgrace to a Bushman—a superstition which is a disgrace to those who hold it in this enlightened land, and not a disgrace only, but a vast sin—a black delusion which is given to them that they may believe a lie—whereby they involve themselves in the doom of hell! We hold no such folly. Because we are rational and because we are spiritual, both our reason and our spiritual nature revolt against anything so atrocious as to believe that the body of Christ—the absolute flesh and blood—can be eaten and drank, or that if it could be done, it ought to be done, or that it could confer any spiritual benefit upon those who could perform so cannibal and revolting an act! We believe in the real presence, but not in the corporeal presence. We believe that Jesus Christ comes to us *spiritually* and refreshes us, and in that sense we both eat His flesh and drink His blood. But as to any such literal feast as some believe in, we reject the thought with horror and with contempt!

The great meaning of “the Lord’s Supper,” as we call it, is that we show the Lord’s death till He comes. We *show it to ourselves* and *we show it, or represent it, to others—to unbelievers who may chance to look on*. The former of these is, perhaps, the more important. In coming to eat of the bread and drink of the wine at this supper—

I. WE SHOW THE LORD’S DEATH TO OURSELVES.

Not, indeed, that this is the exclusive manner of exhibiting the passion which our dear Savior endured, or the decess which He accomplished, for there are, it must be admitted, other methods of showing the Lord’s death. *One is by this book*, this inspired volume which contains the record of His crucifixion—which explains it—which enforces upon men the duty of putting their trust in the merit of Him who died. Wherever this Bible is opened there is a showing of Christ’s death! Why, the whole book is full of it! There is a crimson line of atoning sacrifice running from Genesis to Revelation—

**“Here I behold my Savior’s face
Almost in every page.”**

Every distinct book of inspiration is like a mirror reflecting the image of Jesus—“as in a glass, darkly,” it is true, but still sufficiently clear even for these dim eyes of ours. All the Scriptures are the swaddling bands of the child, Christ Jesus, as said Augustine of old—If you would see Jesus, you must search for Him in Holy Scripture, and by the light of the Holy Spirit, you will not go far until you find Him!

The Lord Jesus Christ’s death is also shown forth *in public ministry*. There are some who are so fond of painted windows because, they say, they preach by painting. Brothers and sisters, we paint by preaching! That is the only difference and to paint by *preaching* is an infinitely better thing than to preach by painting! All the methods that are adopted to show forth Christ’s death throughout the entire world are utter vanity compared with the ministration of the gospel. It is not possible for the preacher too much to magnify His office. It is God’s predestinated channel of grace to the sons of men. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”—and as we speak, God helping us—Christ is set forth, manifestly crucified among you! How many in this place have seen Jesus by what they have heard spoken of Him? The eye of the mind has seen Him; ‘Twere of little use for the eyes of sense to do so. Thousands saw Christ with their natural eyes and perished in their sins! But to see Him with the eyes of the spirit—this it is that saves. The preaching of the gospel paints Christ to the mind’s eyes, not to the natural eyes, so it is the best way of depicting Him, for it exactly meets the vision that it is intended to impress!

Still, over and above the showing of Christ’s death in the printed Word and the Word preached, there comes in this emblematical supper in which we show Christ’s death after a manner I will try to explain. We show to ourselves as we come here that Christ was really incarnate and so could die. My soul, as you take that bread into your fingers, remember that it is a thing to be handled and to be touched—a material substance. And so, God, the infinite, took into union with Himself actual flesh and

blood, such as you have in your own body! A strange thing that a pure Spirit should condescend to tabernacle in flesh—and yet it is so written—“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Oh, matchless mystery! He who fills all things became an infant of a span long! He who is eternal and omnipotent became a humble working man, putting on the garment without seam, suffering, toiling and at last yielding up His life! As each drop of wine shall pass your lips and you recognize it as a *material substance*, you show to yourself, O believer, that Jesus Christ became incarnate. Think of this! Take care that you do not make a God out of the manhood, nor a man out of the Godhead. Rest assured that as certainly as Christ was God, without diminution of His splendor, so certainly He was also man, pure man with a manhood like your own, even as He, Himself, said—“Handle Me and see; a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have.” See, then, brothers and sisters, your next of kin—a sufferer like yourselves—and let the bread and wine remind you of Him!

Then next, the Supper *reminds you of your Lord's sufferings*. There is the bread broken. The wine, the juice of the grape, crushed out with pain and labor—poured out. Now remember that Jesus Christ, though not a bone of Him could be broken, was broken in spirit—“Reproach has broken My heart; I am full of heaviness”—He poured out His soul unto death. Let the bread and the wine remind you of the bloody sweat in the garden—of the anguish unto death which He endured in dark Gethsemane among the olive trees. Let them bring to your recollection, beloved in the Lord, the scourging at the hands of Pilate and of Herod. Imagine you see Him standing patiently there, giving up His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair—hiding not His face from shame and spitting. That bread broken and that wine poured out should remind you of the journey along the *Via Dolorosa*, as He went fainting beneath the burden of His cross. They must remind you of the cross and the nails, the grief of being forsaken, the anguish of thirst, and the bitterness of scorn, the torment of fever and, at last, death itself. I do not say that, perhaps you will be able to make the whole scene pass before your minds, but I bid you try to do so. Drive away every other thought as Christ drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Charge your soul to stand with His virgin mother at the foot of the cross and pray that His blood may fall upon you, drop by drop, that you may be so enchanted by what you see, withal so dreadful, but yet so full of bliss, that you may not dare for a moment to let a stray thought come in! This and this only, think of! Think of Jesus incarnate and of Jesus suffering!

But the bread and the wine show more than this. What do I see? Bread the flesh; wine the life, the blood. Flesh and blood, then, when separated, are both dead so that the cup and the bread together distinctly signify the actual death of our Lord. There is no such thing as a Lord's Supper with the bread, alone, nor with the cup, alone, nor with the bread and wine mingled! They must both be distinct. Without

shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. And until the blood has been poured forth, the flesh still remains and retains its life. But put the two, distinctly, and you get the idea of death as clearly as you can have it. Now, beloved, I want you to come close up to this truth of God, that the Lord of glory actually died. For our Savior there was no passing into heaven by a chariot of fire. It is not said of Him, as of Enoch, that "He was not, for God took Him." He must die! You dread death. You look forward to it frequently with trepidation. But Christ passed absolutely through it and the human soul and the human body of our Savior were torn from each other. He actually descended into the abodes of the dead! He bowed His head to the great enemy and yielded up the ghost. Had He not so died, there had been no ransom paid for you, for God's law demanded a life. The sentence was, "The soul that sins, it shall die." Christ has actually died—and let this Supper bring home the thought most sweetly to yourselves that Jesus died!

We have not yet shown Christ's death wholly to ourselves. The spreading of that bread and wine on yonder table is a showing to ourselves *that God has made a provision for human needs*. A hungry man coming to that table thinks at once of eating and drinking. He perceives that if it is placed there, it is placed there for use. Bread and wine in the cupboard may be stored, but bread and wine on the table are evidently for use. Now, child of God, catch that thought and hold it. Jesus Christ has come into the world, not to withhold, but to give! Not to reserve, but to distribute! Not to keep to Himself any good thing, but to bestow all that He has upon His people! Come, then, with all your great necessities—come to the Savior, for He freely presents Himself to all believers! Great sinner, do you need great pardon? Jesus will give it to you! He puts on the table the cup. Do you need, Christian, great comfort? Come and take it—it is put on the table! Jesus keeps open house for all comers who come by faith to Him. Have you the faith to come and trust Him? Then all that Jesus is and has you may be and have! Especially you that are His friends, you that have leaned upon His bosom—do not stint yourselves, for He does not stint you. You are not straitened in Him—if straitened at all, it is in yourselves. Jesus puts upon the table for us, Himself, and, being put there, it is as good as an open invitation by a loud voice, saying, "O, you hungry, come and feed! O, you thirsty, come and drink!" There is nothing in Christ which He will deny to His people! Christ has nothing in heaven or on earth which He will keep back from the believer that dares to come and ask for it! Come, then! Come boldly! The Lord give you access unto this grace!

And do we not show the Lord's death a little further when, *after having spread the Supper, we come to eat it?* Then we say to ourselves, "Just as I must eat this bread, or it will not nourish me, so must I take Jesus Christ, personally, by a distinct act of faith and take Him to be mine. And as this bread, after I have taken it, incorporates itself with me so that there is no distinction between this bread and my body, but it helps to build up the structure of my body, so when I take Christ and trust Him,

He becomes one with me and I become one with Him and my life is hid with Him. And He says that because He lives I shall live also." Now, is not that a wonderful lesson to teach by so simple an action? You eat, you drink, and the food becomes assimilated into yourselves. You come to Jesus, you trust Him and Christ becomes one with you and you become one with Him, so that henceforth you can say, "It is no more I that lives, but Christ that lives in me" and, as for Jesus, He calls you a member of His body! He calls you a branch from His stem! He calls you the spouse and He, Himself, your bridegroom! Oh, sacred union effected by the act of reception which is the act of faith!

And now, beloved believer, as you first lived by receiving grace, you can only grow in that life by still receiving it! Do not come to this table and say, "What can I bring?" No, but come and say, "What can I take away?" Do not say, "Am I worthy?" That question never ought to be asked. You are not worthy! But come, unworthy as you are, and take what Jesus has provided for unworthy sinners! "Well," says someone, "but we are to take heed lest we eat and drink being unworthy." No, you are not! There is no such text in the entire Bible! You see, you have left out a syllable. What it does say is about eating and drinking *unworthily*—and that is with respect to the way of eating it. If you come to this table lightly—if you come to it irreligiously, profanely—if you come as they did at Corinth, to merely drink. If you come to get money by it, as some did in years gone by, to qualify themselves for office or to obtain charity—that would be to eat and drink unworthily! But, unworthy as you are, if your—

***"Hope is fixed on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness,"***

then come, for such as you the table is spread!

And when you do come, I do pray you yet once more, *do not let unbelief keep you back from enjoying all that is to be enjoyed*. You know a very hungry man does not stand on many manners. If he is told to eat everything that is set before him, then his hunger does not permit him to stand on niceties, but he eats all he can get. And so may you. Yes, and you may carry away what you will, too, with you. You may come and get a feast tonight and the sweet remembrance of it in days to come will be permitted to you. Believe that Christ does not refuse you anything. When you pray, do not ask as if you were getting something out of a hard-hearted being, but come to One whose delight it is to give—whose very glory it is to scatter His mercies among His beloved ones—

***"Come, make your needs, your burdens known;
He will present them at the throne;
And angel bands are waiting there,
His messages of love to bear."***

Thus, you see, in the bread and the wine, in the bread and wine separated, in the bread broken and the wine poured out, in the two emblems put on a table—and in these two being so partaken of that they become united with the fabric of our body—we set forth the whole

mystery of the death of Jesus Christ to ourselves. May the Spirit of God help us to truly do this!

Observe now that—

II. WE ARE TO SHOW CHRIST'S DEATH TO OTHERS.

As often as we eat this bread and drink of this cup, we do this. We *show to others the fact that Jesus died*. I think historians have taken it as one of the best proofs of a fact when some rite has been instituted to commemorate it. A pillar with an inscription is not always a certain index to truth. Our own monument, for instance, had a record on it that London was burned down by the Catholics—who had no more to do with it, certainly, than the Muslims did! The inscription in that case was not a record of fact! Yes, and a pillar might be erected to record an event which never occurred at all. But, as a general rule, large bodies of men will not agree together to continually celebrate events which never occurred. Nobody doubts, I suppose, the siege of Londonderry, when the prentice boys meet every year to make a noise and disturbance. They at least bring before the historian's mind the certainty that such an event did occur, for it is still thus recorded. Now, our Lord gave us this simple method of breaking bread and drinking wine to be our way of setting up our pillar—our mode of keeping up a great historical fact—that there was a man who lived in Judea, who professed to be the Son of God, who was the King of the Jews, who lived a humble life and died a marvelous death! There is no fact in history so well attested as this! So that those who have given up the inspiration of Scripture have seldom touched either the life or the death of Jesus, but have conceded both to be facts. And now this very night, perhaps, in fifty thousand places, at this moment, this commemorative act of eating bread and drinking wine is about to be performed in this one country of England. Now that is something by way of record, and by this act we help to perpetuate to all generations the fact that Jesus died!

But we do a great deal more than this to others. We assert by coming here, tonight, and eating this bread and drinking of this cup, *that we believe that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Son of God and the Savior of men, and that we go in with Him for everything that is involved in the story of His life and death*. That is to say, if it is a shame for Christ to die upon the cross, we are willing to bear part of the shame. If it is thought to be foolishness to believe in a crucified man—we are fools and come here to avow it. If it is said to be a stumbling block to many that Jesus of Nazareth should be the Son of God—we come to declare that it is no stumbling block to us! We accept Him as divine! We trust in Him as the propitiation for our sins! Beloved, when you shall take that bread, you take part with Christ. You take lot with Him and, mark you, He often goes up the bleak side of the hill—and you will have to do the same with the snow between your teeth! And He often lodges in huts and hovels—yes, He has not where to lay His head! He has handfuls of the world's filth thrown at Him and but little of its gold laid at His feet. He is despised and rejected of men—and if you will keep Him company, you

must expect to be despised, too, and to be as ill-treated as He was—for the servant is not above his Master, nor the disciple above his Lord! Whoever follows David must go to him in the wild goat tracks of Engedi, or dwell with him in the cave of Adullam. He that would be David's man must share David's needs and David's disgraces or else he cannot share his crown. Believers, have you counted this cost? You professors who come to this table, and who say to the onlookers, "We go with Christ! We are enlisted under His banner! We have given ourselves to Him"—have we counted the cost?—

***"Have you counted the cost? Have you counted the cost?
You followers of the cross?
And are you prepared for your Master's sake
To suffer all worldly loss?
And can you endure with the virgin band,
The lowly and pure in heart,
Who wherever the Lamb does lead,
From His footsteps never depart?"***

Oh, that so counting the cost, you may continue with Him till life's journey is over! Thus, you see, you not only assert that Christ died, but you communicants assert that He died for *you* and that you are one with Him and will take shares with Him when He comes into His kingdom!

You do even more than that. *You explain the meaning of Christ's death by the mere fact of coming to this table.* "How," you ask, "is that?" In eating the bread and drinking the wine, you set forth a sacrifice—a libation of blood and a slaughter of flesh—and you say to the entire world, "Our trust for salvation rests in a sacrifice! We have no hope of being saved by anything that springs of ourselves—we look wholly out of self and entirely to the sacrifice which was offered up on the cross." While some of you sit down to the table, others of you will be onlookers. I do pray, as you look on, if you have never known this truth of God before, learn it now. All your hope of ever entering heaven must lie quite out of yourselves and be concentrated in another—in God's only and own dear Son! While I am stating this fact, which is so well known to you that it sounds commonplace, I feel as if I could burst into a flood of tears to think that it should grow so commonplace and yet be not believed! Does God become man and die, and will you not trust Him? Does my God, that made the heavens and the earth, of whom I read that without Him was not anything made that was made—does He become a man and suffer that sinners might live? And is it nothing to you, is it nothing to you and will you prefer the tawdry pleasures of this world to the solid bliss which He can give you? And will you dash yourselves upon the bosses of Jehovah's buckler and run upon His glittering spear and ruin yourselves forever rather than close in with Christ and kiss the Son lest He be angry? I can understand why it is that you do not love my Lord, for once I was so foolish, myself, but oh, it is brutish—it is worse than that, it is devilish to despise a dying Christ! I know not whether I have not maligned the devil in using his name in such a matter as that, for surely, had Jesus died for devils, they would not have been such devils as men

are who, hearing of a Savior and believing the story of His passion, yet turn a deaf ear to it and give their souls up to Madame Wanton, or to base-born mammon, or to some other carnal thing which will but delude and destroy them!

There are some of you I shall never see again. I charge you before the Eternal God, as we shall meet at His last judgment-seat, think of this—that if it is worth God's while to come here and be incarnate, and so to suffer to make atonement, it is not a thing for you to trifle with! But if you do, you will find that the stone which you refused will grind you to powder in that day when, like some cliff that is loosened from its socket, long quivering there, it shall come rolling down upon the heedless traveler to crush him and utterly destroy him! God save you, my dear hearer, stranger to me, and stranger to yourself, and stranger to my God! And though you may remain a stranger to me, yet may you begin to know something of yourself, tonight, and something of my Master, of whom I will say this one thing—If you did but know Him you would love Him—

***“His worth if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him too.”***

Thus, then, do we show the fact of our participation in Christ's death and the meaning of it.

Does not the voice of ages and of generations after generations speak to you now in the constancy and frequency of this celebration? And do you not perceive that we move forward to the boundary which shall realize the Church's hope? “We do show the Lord's death till He comes.” Then He is coming! He is coming! I know not when, no, nor know the angel of God that is nearest to the eternal book when God unfolds the leaves. But He is coming! As when the earthquake comes, with many signs and prodigies that make men start, and yet they know not what it is, He comes! As the lightning flash that is seen from east to west, He comes! As the thief that steals silently through the shadows of the night and robs the sleeper, so He comes! The man that wore the crown of thorns is coming with a crown about His brow more glorious than all the coronets of earth. He is coming! The Son of Mary is coming to wear no more the garment without seam, but wrapped—

“With rainbow wreath and robes of storm.”

He is coming! The man that did hang upon the cross will sit upon the great white throne—

***“On cherub wings and wings of wind,
Appointed judge of all mankind.”***

And you said tonight—you said it and I heard you—that you crucified Him, and you said that yours were the hands that drove the nails, and made the hammer fall. You sang just now—

“Tis I have thus ungrateful been.”

Now you have confessed it! You who have trusted in Him will confess it and yet, thank God that out of a fault springs your salvation! But you who have not trusted Him, what will you say to Him in that day when He shall come to judge the world? You shall look on Him whom you have

pierced and you shall weep and wail because of Him! Oh, that you would look at His wounds now and trust Him, for if you do not, you shall look on them, then, and you shall say, "I made those wounds." And that thought will shake you as when a lion shakes its prey. That thought will melt your bones as though they were but ice in the heat of the sun! And your loins shall be loosed and your soul shall sink in dismay. I pray you—I beseech you by the love you bear to yourself, and to your soul that can never die—look unto Jesus and be saved! Look unto Him now! You must look one day—look tonight! You must look, either with repentance and faith, or else with terror and despair! Choose which it shall be. Choose now! Young men and women who have stepped in here tonight, I pray God that you may have grace to decide for Jesus now. Old men and fathers, maidens and matrons, may you also have grace to say, "I will take Him as my Savior, not as my judge"—

***"But if your ears refuse
The language of His grace,
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race.
The Lord in anger dressed,
Shall lift His hand and swear,
'You that despise My promised rest
Shall have no portion there.'"***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EZEKIEL 36:16-38.**

Verses 16-20. *Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before Me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Therefore I poured My fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it: and I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. And when they entered unto the heathen, where they went, they profaned My holy name, when they said to them, these are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of His land. All through Scripture we are told that God has great regard to the honor of His holy name. "The LORD your God is a jealous God." And this is no small blessing to us, for it has so happened that when there has been no other reason for mercy, God's regard to His own name has found Him a reason for dealing mercifully with His unbelieving, undeserving people! See how He had scattered His chosen people. He had sent them away into captivity, justly, on account of their sins. But it came to pass that wherever they went, whether it was into Persia or Babylonia, the people said, "These are Jehovah's people! These are Jehovah's people and they are gone forth out of His land." What was the consequence of this?*

21. *But I had pity for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, where they went. He had pity for His own*

name! He had a reverence and esteem for His own renown and standing, even among these heathen nations!

22, 23. *Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus says the LORD GOD; do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the heathen, where you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which was profaned among the heathen which you have profaned in the midst of them: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD says the LORD GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.* Brothers and sisters, what must God think of a nation like ours which has come to be called by His name, albeit it so little deserves that great honor? What, I say, must He think of the fact that if there are any vices yet unknown, white men will teach them to the heathen? And when the heathen have heard the gospel, the great sources of doubt are the white men—Englishmen! Full often the greatest oppressors will spring out of our own nation! Certainly we hold the belt for drunkenness and where our fellow countrymen go, the name of Christianity is rendered base among the heathen! The Muslims say of such a man, “He has been drunk and turned a Christian.” I will grant that much that is said is said unwisely, untruthfully, and slanderously in exaggeration, for these men are no Christians! They know not the Lord. It is not a Christian country—it is a heathen country, as some of us know, not only by what we read, but by what we see and hear! Can you walk the streets without hearing blasphemies more black than might be heard in any streets under heaven? This is a heathen country, but yet it has somehow come to be thought to be a Christian country and, therefore, its conduct is bringing dishonor upon the name of the Most High! Oh, that He would have pity upon that name and interpose, and once more establish the truth of God and set up a throne of righteousness and turn the hearts of the people to Himself in this country! Oh, that it were so, for His great name's sake! He cannot bless us for our own sakes, for we deserve nothing but His wrath—but, oh, that He would once again have pity upon His holy name that is profaned—and bless this, our land! The Lord goes on to say concerning His people—

24. *For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.* Now, this stands true of Israel after the flesh. It will assuredly be fulfilled in the latter days. But it stands even more certain concerning Israel, the true Israel, of whom the natural Israel is but the type. Now, we read one form of that new covenant made with God concerning His elect, comprehending all that have believed in Christ, or ever shall believe in Him. This is the covenant that He makes with us in these days—

25, 26. *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I 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 a heart of flesh.* Here is, first of all, full justification. “From all your filthiness will

I cleanse you.” And here is, next, *regeneration*—“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” These are unconditional promises of that covenant which He has made with His redeemed in the person of Christ Jesus, their covenant head! See how majestically it is worded—“I will” and, “You shall.” There is not an “if” or a “but” all through it!

27. *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.* Here is *sanctification*! Here is *final perseverance*! Blessed promises of the covenant of grace!

28. *And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers: and you shall be My people, and I will be your God.* That is the greatest promise of all! If a man were to preach a series of sermons upon this text during every day in the year, he could never exhaust the fullness of its meaning. “You shall be My people, and I will be your God.”

29. *I will also save you from all your uncleanness: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.* And, spiritually, how true this is; that whenever God saves us from sin, He also saves us from every form of famine. No heart was ever left to hunger and thirst in vain when it was cleansed from its sin! Our needs come out of our sins, but when we walk with God, He lays no famine upon us in spiritual things.

30. *And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that you shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.* “Then,” when I have blessed you thus—when I have fully saved you, when I have brought you up from all the places where I have scattered you, when I have enriched you and indulged you with *my love*—

31. *Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.* Repentance is not the root of grace, but the lily-like flower of it. It is not a thing for the early morning of Christian life, alone. Repentance will go side by side with faith all through the ways of righteousness till we get to heaven gate! It is when we have most of mercy that we have most loathing for sin—

**“Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone.
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Soon dissolves a heart of stone!”**

32. *Not for your sakes do I do this, says the LORD GOD. Be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.* There is no man saved for his own sake. There is no man redeemed for his own sake. It is for God's own glory's sake. There is no motive so high—there is none so worthy of God, as the making known to all generations and all realms the majesty of His love and the faithfulness of His covenant.

33-36. *Thus says the LORD GOD: In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and*

the wastes shall be built. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I, the LORD, build the ruined places, and plant that, that was desolate; I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. Now, as He will do this, I doubt not, in Palestine, in due season, so does He always make the most desolate places to be built when His people live near to Him. Let us have courage, brothers and sisters, about London, about England, about the world! It is very wicked, but if we will keep close to God, we are able to overcome this wickedness in Christ's name. Let us have comfort about these evil days in which the most of men seem to be departing from the gospel. We can "hold the fort" till Christ comes—let us but have courage! God will give us yet to see better and brighter days. He was thought to be a good citizen who never despaired of his country and he is a good Christian who never indulges a dreary thought about the ultimate triumph of Christ and the coming of His kingdom—"for Yours is the kingdom," even now, "and the power and the glory," and so shall it be, forever and ever!

37. *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.* There must be the spirit of prayer and supplication poured out first. We shall see Israel restored to her land when Israel is restored to the mercy-seat—and we shall see great prosperity as a church and the blessing of God will rest upon our nation when once God's people go up to the top of Carmel with their faces between their knees and cry, and cry, and cry again, expecting that yet the heavenly shower shall end this long drought of the curse—and the blessing shall come. "I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

38. *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.* And that is the great end of it all—to make men know that the I AM is—that the true and real God is still potent among the sons of men, and does His will both here and among the armies of heaven. Unto His name be glory forever and ever!

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THE HEART PERFUMED

NO. 3339

A SERMON

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*“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts
by the Holy Spirit who was given unto us.”
Romans 5:5.*

AS one reads the opening verses of this chapter, one cannot help saying, “What marvelous treasures are those which belong to the people of God!” Hezekiah took the Babylonian ambassadors through all his varied treasure houses and herein he did evil—but if you can conduct your mind through the spiritual treasure houses and the minds of your friends in the same direction, you will do well. What is the wealth of God’s people? Who can count it? It is wondrous and beyond conception! The apostle seems to have taken up a whole handful of brilliants in the first verses of this chapter and he now holds them up, one by one, and lets them glitter in the light, no not merely a handful plucked at random, but they seem to be striving together, for one follows on after the other! “Therefore” is the link which connects justification with “peace,” and then there is a connection between this “peace” and “access,” and from this “access” to God we go on to “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” And when we have got as far as this string of pearls, the apostle adds, “And not only so,” and then he holds up a cluster—and when he has spoken of them he adds that “tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and”—another, “and”—“experience hope,” and then another, “and”—“and hope makes not ashamed.” And then at the end of this string of jewels he brings up the language of the text—“Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given unto us.”

I suppose the allusion in the text is to the pouring out of water—the love of God being to us like a spring shut up, a fountain sealed until the Holy Spirit comes—and then the love of God flows in, a pure and crystal stream being shed abroad in our hearts!

But perhaps another figure may suit us as well tonight. The love of God is comparable to precious spikenard, but it is in the alabaster box. The Holy Spirit opens that box and then the sweet perfume is “shed abroad” in our hearts, not merely “shed,” but, “*shed abroad.*” Not only

poured out as the oil was on Aaron's head, but running down to the skirts of his garments and perfuming all the room, just as it did in his case.

Now observe, to some extent we can shed abroad the love of God in this house. While the preacher is preaching of it, there will be a sweet savor Christ. There is, as it were, a spiritual perfume in the assembly of the righteous whenever Jesus Christ is spoken of, for, "Your name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love You." But the text means something more than this. It is the love of God shed abroad, not in the assembly, but in the heart. The one is the aggregate, but this is the *individual and personal* sense of it—not in the house, I say, but in the heart! The preacher sheds abroad this love when he preaches of Christ, but he cannot shed it abroad in the heart. He can only speak of it. He cannot bring it home to your own personal realization. It must be shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, but if it once gets there, the sweet perfume of it is always recognized by your inner man. It is not the preacher—neither is it the letter of this book—it is the Holy Spirit who most graciously comes there to shed abroad the love of God in your heart! Oh, see, then, how much we are indebted to the third person of the blessed Trinity! With what reverence should we always speak of Him! With what rapture should we love Him! With what devotion should we adore Him! The love of God, itself, is, even to us, as spikenard unperceived until He brings it to the spiritual senses and makes it sweet to us! The love of God is like light to a blind eye until the Holy Spirit opens that eye! It is like food and raiment to a dead man until the Holy One of Israel comes and gives us life to enjoy these mercies. Oh, then, may the Holy Spirit now be here in each one of us, to shed abroad the love of God in our hearts!

I shall first, then, and for a very little time, *speak of the precious ointment which is here said to be shed abroad*, namely, the love of God; secondly, *upon the shedding of it abroad*; thirdly, *upon the blessed results of its being shed abroad in the heart*; and then, fourthly, *upon some matters which tend to hinder our enjoyment of the shedding abroad of this love in our hearts*. First, let us speak of—

I. THE PRECIOUS OINTMENT WHICH IS HERE SPOKEN OF—"the love of God." Now, although I have to speak of this, yet it is a thing which, as to its essence, is not to be spoken of. It is to be enjoyed and to be felt, but no words can convey its unmistakable sweetness!—

***"The love of Jesus, what it is
None but His loved ones know."***

No words, either of the pen or the tongue will ever be able to convey it either to hearer or reader. We receive the love of God doctrinally and I think we do well to do so. We may speak of it in various theological

senses. We may declare the love of God to be in some respects universal—for, “His tender mercies are over all His works” and “the Lord is good to all.”

But we may delight most of all to speak of it in its discriminating and distinguishing character, as revealing itself in the full blaze of its splendor to those whom He has chosen unto Himself.

I believe the preacher does well who comments upon this love of God in its eternity, who says of it that it is an ancient thing, more ancient than the hoary mountains, or the aged sea, who speaks of it as an unchangeable and inimitable thing, abiding forever fast to those chosen ones who possess it. He does well, I believe, who speaks of it as being without an end, who shall declare in God’s name that Christ, having loved His own who were in the world, loves them to the end and that this is but a picture of the great love which is in God our Father towards us—that having loved us once, He will never cease to love us, but we shall always be the object of His heart’s affection. But, brothers, it is very easy *to talk doctrinally* about the love of God, but you may not know anything about the love of God when you know all that! If I were to give a description of a father’s love to some poor orphan, here, I dare say I might make him feel envious. I might make him desirous to have something of the kind, but it would be quite impossible by any mere words to tell him what a father’s love really is if he had never known it. It would be something like showing a skeleton to an angel who wished to see a man. A man is something more than a set of bones, nerves, muscles and ligatures—you cannot present the man by any description that you may give, however anatomically correct! Neither can you describe the love of God by merely doctrinally giving an outline of it, as the theologian would do, for there is vastly more there than the mere theologian has ever learned! You know some people have a herbarium in which they preserve specimens of various plants. Among the Alps you are asked by persons to buy collections of the flora of such-and-such districts. Well, you may buy them, and you will be interested in them when you get them home, but when you turn over the leaves and find the plants dried between the papers, they are nothing at all like what they are as they bloom on the Alps! The gentian has not the marvelous yellow blooms which startle you as you find them on the side of the glaciers. It is a dry, dead thing now—you cannot convey to your friends what the flower is really like when at home—to know that fully you must take them to see it! So is it with theology—it is easy to preserve the living things of the truth of God in a dry form, but you have not really understood them until you have seen them in life and known them by experience!

Again, you may think about the love of God *historically* and what a wonderful topic is here! Begin—where? Well, since there is no beginning, begin where you will. Begin with the council chambers of eternity! Begin with the purpose, the election, the covenant, the suretyship engagement. Then go on to the love revealing itself in the first promise—love sparing guilty man, love manifesting itself by slow degrees through the mist and smoke of the Mosaic ritual and, at last, bursting into its full splendor upon the cross in the person of the dying Savior! Then go on to love developing itself in our experience, beginning by convincing us of our folly and our danger and proceeding until it takes us into the arms of God, and puts us there forever in the enjoyment of the beatific vision! But, my dear friends, you know reading the story of a battle cannot give you any idea of the battle itself! Every man who has heard the sound of the cannon and has marked the pain and misery of those who fall beneath the sword of war will tell you that no description, however graphic, can ever make you feel what a battle is. So with regard to the love of God, you may give the history of it with the greatest accuracy, but when you have given it all, you do not know what it is unless you have really tasted and handled it in your own soul's experience; so that if I am to speak of this ointment, I know not where I shall find words. I must rather ask that you may have it shed abroad in your hearts.

I think there is a way, too, of speaking of the love of God in such a *manner as to get none of it*. I think that arguing over practical gospel truths is about the surest way of depriving you of the unction and the savor of them. I think we ought to treat divine truth very much as the true mother treated her child when they were before Solomon. Let us not rend it. But there are some who rend it anyway, as long as they can keep their share of it. Oh, yes, for a hair's breadth of a doctrine, for some infinitesimal point, for one Greek article, or a half a word, some men would mar the fellowship of the saints and drive away some of the best-beloved of God out of their communion! They are like the simpletons who, to find out who shall drink a jug of milk, spill it altogether and neither of them get a drop of it. They have some choice of rare fruit, but they trample it under their feet in a rush as to who should eat it! Let us beware of so doing with the love of God—and yet we have sometimes felt that we have handled themes connected with the love of God in such a controversial spirit as to take the bloom from the surface and the very juice from the grape.

After all, dear friends, the best we can say of the love of God is just this—you must know it and feel it for yourselves. But oh, the wondrous love! Angels marvel at it! To think that God should love His sinful creatures! You will marvel at it, even in heaven! When you shall have

grown accustomed to wonders, this will still strike you as being a great marvel. I believe you will—

***“Sing with rapture and surprise
His loving-kindness in the skies,”***

and that when you have dived into the greatest deeps that your intellect can bear, you will find the wondrous depth of love both beneath and above you! When your faculties shall have been expanded to the heavenly size and you shall be elevated to become the peer of the angelic host, even then you shall feel that the love of God surpasses your powers of knowledge and comprehension!

This, then, is all we will say concerning it, that the love of God is the precious ointment. But secondly, the text says—

II. THIS LOVE OF GOD IS “SHED ABROAD IN OUR HEARTS.”

What does this mean? Does it mean our merely knowing that God is love? We must know that as a preliminary step, but oh, the shedding abroad of the love of God is vastly more than that! It does not mean merely prizing that love, the coming into a state of desiring after it. When we feel that it must be a precious thing to be beloved of God. That is a very proper state of mind, but it is not what is meant here; it is not even believing in the love of God. That is the Christian’s privilege and should be his constant position—believing that God loves him, resting confident that even under affliction’s cross the love of God is still the same—and that if God should hide His face, yet His heart is not changed. But the love of God shed abroad is more than that. It is not even the waiting for visits from God’s face. It is a sweet thing to sit at Christ’s door and wait until He comes to us. If I may not feast at the table, I may be grateful to be allowed to hunger and thirst to do it! Next to having Christ, a real longing after Him is one of the most precious gifts of the Holy Spirit. But still, a great deal more than this is meant here. It is not even remembering former love-visits. That is often very consolatory—

***“Our former favors we recount
When with Him on the holy mount.”***

And we sometimes think on the Hermonites and the hill Mizar, and find great comfort in the thought that He did once shine upon us—He did once show His love to us and we rejoice greatly. But the shedding abroad of His love is more than this. It is not the remembrance of a thing, however precious, that is past and gone, but the deep enjoyment of something that is now present!

What is it, then? Well, is it not just this? When the Holy Spirit brings home to our souls a sense of the love of God, we no longer entertain the slightest doubt—we are *assured of God’s love to us*. We are now far past the range of questioning. It is no longer with us—

“Tis a point I long to know

Oft it causes anxious thought.

It is there, and we know it is there! I called today upon a friend whose business calls him to the use of many perfumes. And I was shown into his little room where there were various articles with which the perfumes were made. Now, I can suppose him to lose one of those pots of perfume, but I cannot suppose him to lose it and not know where it is when it is shed abroad, for then he cannot help smelling it and perceiving it—and then he says, “Why, here it is—the room is filled with it.” So when the love of God is shed abroad, you do not ask where it is! Your heart is filled with it. All your passions and powers are flavored and scented with it. It is not, “Where is it?” but, “Here it is!” Oh, the joy of saying, “Here it is!” If all the powers of earth and hell combined say that God does not love me, I can deny and refute them all, for I feel that love shed abroad in my heart! It is a clear perception of the fact that God loves me as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! It is a persuasion of the presence of the Holy Spirit, of the sealing of the Spirit, of the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are born of God!

And even more than that. It is a thing that *we hardly need a witness about*. It is a consciousness, a perception, of the love of God as it is shed abroad in our soul, so that this love of God being shed abroad seems to us to mean that it is deeply and intensely enjoyed. Treasure it up in the bottle and you do not enjoy the perfume—shed it abroad and then all the fragrance fills the room and every nostril is regaled. Oh, there are times when we are as full of heaven as we can hold this side of the Jordan! And when we know Christ’s love because He kisses us “with the kisses of His mouth” and we drink deep draughts of His love, it is better than wine! We do not look on at the feast—we feed! We do not admire the rich clusters—we take them and drink the nectar thereof! We do not look from Pisgah’s brow, as did Moses, with the eyes of faith—we come to the woods that drop with honey and, like Jonathan, we dip our spear into it and feel that our eyes are enlightened as doves’ eyes. Oh, Christian! You know what this means! You have had it in the prayer chamber when you have been alone with God! You have had it in the depth of trouble—some of you have had it on a sick bed, some in the furnace—and yet so manifestly was Christ with you there that the furnace glowed with joy as with the pain you felt! You rejoiced in Christ Jesus and as your tribulations abounded, so your consolations also abounded. The love of God was enjoyed by you; you felt it, you were ravished with it!

Where the love of God is shed abroad, *it fills the whole man*. There are some perfumes which if you once spill but a few drops of them, you would not only know it yourself, but everybody else would know it, too. “Gently,” said my friend, when he was showing me a certain perfume and I was going to pour out a drop, “if you do not want to smell of that for a

month, do not do that,” and as I did not particularly desire to smell of anything for so long a time as that, I kept my fingers off! If you could once get the love of God shed abroad in your heart, you would be flavored by it—and when it is once shed abroad, there, it will be there to all eternity! There will be no fear of its being taken away from us when it is once fully poured out in its entire glorious efficacy into our hearts. You must have felt it, my brothers and sisters in Christ, when from morning till night the whole day was full of the love of God! When you woke, you did not know how it was, but instead of a care and a fear about the day, you woke with a hymn, a verse, a comfortable promise, as though you had put a wafer made with honey between your lips when you went to sleep and it had been melting there till it had sweetened your mouth and your whole soul! And when you went downstairs, it did not matter whether things went cross or not—they seemed to you to go well all the day, for your will was, through this love of God, brought to *His* will—and that pleased you which pleased Him!

You were very rich, today, not that you had more than formerly, but you had the love of God to sweeten all! You were today kept from using the tongue too freely—you did not need to speak about the great many things which once had engrossed your conversation because your meditation of Him was sweet and you wanted to speak with Him. That day persons noticed you—they could not help it. If your face did not shine, your conversation did! And if you met with any of God’s people who had a spiritual taste to appreciate your conversation, they remembered that you dropped pearls of soul-enriching from your mouth, for you spoke as one who had “been with Jesus and learned of Him.”

Do you remember, too, locking up your heart at night and giving God the key? And then when you woke up remembering David’s words, “When I wake I am still with You”? Perhaps you did not remain with Him long, but, whether longer or shorter, it was the best exposition that could have been given you of the meaning of our text, “The love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit.”

I know this, dear friend, if you have ever known this, you will thirst and hunger after it again! This wine of heaven is such that if a man drinks of it, the more he drinks, the more he needs. If you have ever eaten the bread of heaven, the bread of earth will never satisfy you! If you have ever eaten of the bread which drops from heaven, and on which angels feed, the food of common mortals will have lost its sweetness for you! You have been made to feast at the “feast of fat things, full of marrow, and of wines on the lees well-refined”—you have been taken up from where men grovel and where you are, yourself, now groveling—and on the wings of eagles you have been made to mount into a clearer

atmosphere! And you will feel heavily oppressed in the dense smoke of this world, and you will want to be away with Christ again. Perhaps you are singing—

***“Ah, woe is me that I
In Meshech sojourn long!
That I in tents do dwell,
To Kedar which belong!”***

But it shall not always be so. You shall soon see His face if you seek after Him and again shall the “love of God be shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.” And now, may God help us, while for a few minutes we go over what we have said, and ponder—

III. THE RESULTS OF THIS LOVE BEING SHED ABROAD IN OUR HEARTS.

I have anticipated some of these already, but we remind ourselves more definitely that the love of God in our hearts *sweetens everything*. It sweetens our duties and they become *privileges*—

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

Oh, when you feel that God loves you, how you can watch and pray! Then you can fight and wrestle! “All things are possible to him that believes,” and more than all is possible to him that loves! When the heart gets the love of God in it, it—

***“Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, ‘It shall be done!’”***

A believer may have the most desperate enterprises and they may involve the most serious self-denial, but they will be accomplished with readiness when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. It sweetens all our trials. Trials are scarcely trials when we see them coming from a Father’s hand. The gardener wept, you know, when he found that his choicest rose had been cut. But when he knew that it was the Master who had taken it, he wept no more, for the Master had a right to it. There are no murmurings in the heart of him who can say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” And, beloved, it sweetens, I am certain, all our pursuits. We are very apt to think that our engagements in the world are too humble, too obscure—and then they become drudgery when we think so. Do you not know that Jesus counts the very hairs of your head and He seems to intimate by that, that your very humblest pursuits are the objects of His careful observation? He knows *where* you are, *what* you are and what you have to do—and He knows how to sweeten it all! But when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, how cheerfully the poor woman, with her eyes all weary and red, plies her needle and how the hard-toiling man finds his load grow light! Poverty seems to grow rich and the hut and the hovel seem to grow into a mansion—and even rags seem to glisten like robes

when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart! Have you never heard how the martyrs used to sing at the stakes? Why was it? Not because the fire was made of roses—they did not find the firewood to be less hot to them than they would have been to others—but it was because the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts and, therefore, they could endure all things for Christ's sake, seeing that love was theirs. It sweetens all.

Then again, *it overpowers all other things*. There are some perfumes that if they were let loose in a room, would overpower and kill all others. There may be other sweet scents in the chamber, but just unstop this bottle and now where are they? They are all swallowed up, as Aaron's rod swallowed up Egypt's rods! When the love of Jesus fills our souls we have love towards our dear friends and relatives—God forbid that we should not! But still, the love we have to Jesus seems to swallow them all up—His love towers above all other loves, like some mighty Alp above molehills! Best of all, when this love masters the soul, it kills all evil loves. During cholera times, people are very anxious to get something that will destroy all noxious vapors and bad smells. Ah, there is many a bad odor in our hearts! There is the old swamp of natural depravity which is capable of spreading death and destruction every time we encounter it. But when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, how effectually it kills this! Then the love of sin dies! The loving principle within subdues and tramples underfoot all lusts and all corruption—and we rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ and are not daunted by the conflict we feel within. This love kills all evil. And how blessedly it *destroys all doubt!* As I have said, when you smell a perfume, you cannot doubt but that it is there. If you go into a field at this time of the year, you might walk all down a path and not know that there was any game there, but as soon as ever the partridges begin to fly, or the hares begin to run, you know immediately that there is game there because you can see it. So when our graces are slumbering and we do not know that they are there, as soon as ever they get into active exercise, then we discover them and we are sure of them! So is it with the love of God. When it has been slumbering in our hearts, we have had some doubt—but when it is poured out and shed abroad—its fragrance fills the entire man and then doubts and fears are given to the winds!

And where this perfume is, once more, *it is quite sure to communicate itself from the man, instrumentally, to his fellows*. He who has been in beds of spices will smell, thereof, and they who sit with their Lord will bear away some tokens of His companionship. All the ways of the Lord Jesus are full of perfume, because “His garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia.” And when your garments smell of the same, through having been with Him, you will communicate something of the savor,

instrumentally, to those whom you meet. God grant you grace to seek this as a holy ambition, that, having the love of God in your hearts, it may be as when one has a candle lit and others bring their candles to his, and he imparts the light, for it makes him none the poorer, while they rejoice therein. And now, to conclude, I think we all who love the Lord desire to feel His love shed abroad in our hearts, but we sometimes mourn because we do not feel it. What, then, is

IV. THE REASON WHY WE DO NOT FEEL THE LOVE OF GOD SHED ABROAD IN OUR HEARTS?

May it not be, brothers and sisters, because *we have restrained prayer?* The common sin of God's people is slackness in prayer. If there is one sin that needs to be preached about more than another just now, it is the sin of the omission of secret dealings with God. This is the secret of our spiritual leanness, the secret of many of our trials, of our lack of joy, our loss of confidence in God.

Neglect the prayer chamber? Why, the merchant might as well neglect his office and counting house! This is the place where you will be impoverished if you neglect it. I am persuaded more and more the longer I observe myself, and certainly the longer I observe others, that when we grow weak on our knees, it is a sign of weakness throughout the entire man. How can you expect to know much of the love of God if you will not go with Him? If you give no time to meditation, if you have no season for searching the Scriptures, if you have no periods for communion with God, why wonder if you should miss enjoyment with Him?

I am persuaded, too, that a great many of us lose a good deal *through neglecting the means of grace*. I do not think that this applies to the most of you as a congregation. I believe there are none who frequent the assembling of themselves altogether as much as you do. I have no cause to complain. There are some of you who are always here as often as the doors are opened—and prayer-meeting and lecture nights are no burden to you. You come with willing feet to meet with your God. But it is not so with some professors. Step into most of the places of worship in London and look at the weeknight service—and in some country places they have to give up theirs because there are not enough to come to make it worth their while to hold such meetings. There is a sad deficiency in some places of a love of the means of grace. There are some professors who, when they get by the seaside, or a little away in the country, are always glad of an excuse not to go out to hear the Word of God. They know but little of the emotion of David when he counted that to be a dry and thirsty land when he could not go up to the public worship of God! Brothers and sisters, we must use the means of grace or else, as we despise them, we must not expect a blessing! We must dig the well when

we go through the valley of Baca. We must not depend upon that well, for it does not, in this case, fill from the bottom—it is filled from above! But still, the well must be dug. There must be our gracious exertions and then there shall come the divine blessing.

May we not also say that many Christians lose much joyous fellowship with Christ *because of idleness*? Christ is a worker. If we are idlers, we shall not have communion with Him. “The Father,” says He, “works hitherto, and I work.” If your possessions are unconsecrated, if your talents are unused, if your time is misspent, you cannot wonder if the Lord Jesus Christ should give you the whip! The “whip is for the ass, and the rod for the fool’s back.” Idle Christians must expect to feel the whip or the rod, but if we will do what we may for Christ, we shall have sweet consolation in the doing of it, and the love of God shall be shed abroad in our hearts!

Worldliness, too, is a bar to the shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts. Those who do as worldlings do, who can be amused and interested as they are, must not wonder if the love of God is not shed abroad in their hearts. I am very far from desiring to keep Christians from certain places of amusement where the amusement is simple, and only such as may be derived from social fellowship, science, music, and so on. But I am satisfied that the frequenting of such places, even the very best, must be unfavorable to the piety of the very best Christian. You will gain but very little compared with the risk you run of losing very much! If these things charm you, it is not likely that Christ will charm you longer. If you get worldly, you cannot be spiritual at the same time.

Is it not, also, very probable *that our little faith* prevents this love of God from being shed abroad in our hearts? If we trusted Christ more and honored Him more by resting upon the faithful love of His Father, would we not find His love shed abroad in us?

And may it not also be *our ingratitude as to past favors*? We have not thanked God enough for the comfortable seasons that we have enjoyed and, therefore, He keeps us hungering until we thank Him for what He did in days gone by.

And, dear friends, is it not because we do not sincerely seek conformity to the likeness of our Savior, that we have not, as we might, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts? It is even this, my brothers and sisters, it is even this! If you have ever known the sweetness of the love of Christ, you understand that I cannot exaggerate when I praise it. It is the sweetest, best and happiest thing of which a mortal can sing. It is bliss which angels might envy—the sense of the love of God in a man or woman’s heart! Then how is it that you and I can endure to be without it? The true wife would be grieved, indeed, if she had a doubt as to her

husband's love—she could not be happy unless she could have an assurance of being its possessor. And oh, how is it that we can bear ourselves when we are saying, “Does He love me?” How is it we can endure, as some professors do, day after day, not to have a word from His lips, or a smile from His countenance? Do we really love Him, or is it all mere talk? Has our heart any deep affection for Him, or is it only formal profession? Have we caught it up from others? Have we stirred merely natural emotions in ourselves and then thought we loved Him? Oh, I do hope we may say, “It is not so, we do love Him! We would be very wretched if we did not. We might sooner wish to die than cease to love Him. He is the chief among ten thousand to our hearts—we feel He is.”

Oh, then, without making vows and resolutions which we shall soon break, let us pray, “Oh, Savior, shed abroad Your love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit! Oh, God the Father, reveal Yourself in all the fullness of Your love to us now and we may never lose a sense of it, but have it abiding with us forever!” What a church would this be if we all had fellowship with Christ! Oh, how trivial would the world's troubles become! We would then go on serving the Master like seraphs. I think we would not rest day or night, but be always praising and blessing His dear name! This place would be a paradise! We would have to bless God so continually and our songs might rival those before the throne of God! “The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak,” but, “we have a high priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.” Let us draw near to Him with confidence and let this be the burden of our prayer, “Abide with me! Continue with me, for Your love's sake, Amen.”

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“TAKE AWAY THE FROGS”

NO. 3340

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1913,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat the LORD, that He may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD.”
Exodus 8:8.***

WHEN it pleases God by His judgments to humble men, He is never at a loss for means—He can use lions or lice, famines or flies. In the armory of God there are weapons of every kind, from the stars in their courses down to caterpillars in their hosts. The dust of the earth, out of which man is formed, will at God’s command forget its kinship and overwhelm a caravan, while the waters will forsake their channels, invade the tops of the mountains and drown a rebellious race. When the Lord contends against proud men, He has but to lift His finger and countless legions throng around Him, all loyal to their Lord and valiant for His name! Know you not that the beasts of the field are His servants and the stones of the street obey His bidding? Every wave worships Him and every wind knows its Lord. If you would war against Him, it would be well for you to know what His forces are—consider the battle—do no more.

In the case before us Jehovah has to deal with Pharaoh and He humbles him by frogs. Strange! Amazing! One would have thought that such despicable means would never have been used. The Lord began with the proud monarch by turning the waters into blood, but it may be that Pharaoh said in his heart, “What a great man I am! If Jehovah comes forth against me, He must necessarily work a terrible miracle in order to conquer.” He goes his way to his house unhumbled. This time the Lord will deal with him in another style. I grant you that the conflict was still sublime in the truest sense, but in Pharaoh’s estimation the croaking frogs which came up from all the banks of the Nile were a mean sort of adversary! From every reservoir and marsh they marched up in countless hordes, entering into his chamber and coming upon his bed and his kneading trough. He could neither sleep nor eat, nor walk abroad without encountering the loathsome reptiles. The Lord seemed by this to say, “Who are you that I should do great things to conquer you? I will even vanquish you by frogs.”

There was suitableness in God’s choosing the frogs to humble Egypt’s king, because frogs were worshiped by that nation as emblems of the deity. Images of a certain frog-headed goddess were placed in the catacombs, and frogs themselves were preserved with sacred honors. These are your gods, O Egypt! You shall have enough of them! Pharaoh himself shall pay a new reverence to these reptiles. As the true God is everywhere present around us—in our bedchambers and in our streets,

so shall Pharaoh find every place filled with what he chooses to call divine! Is it not a just way of dealing with Him?

The Lord has sure ways of reaching the hearts of proud men and if He does not use frogs, today, He can use other means, for He has servants everywhere prepared for each emergency. He knows how to reach the rich and make them sit by the wayside, like Belisarius, begging for food. The strong and healthy man, He can soon place among the invalids and make him cry like a sick girl, “Give me a drink, Titinius.” Your children are about you today—your pride and joy—but He can make you childless in an hour. His arrows can pierce through a sevenfold harness of steel—no man is so encompassed as to be beyond the reach of the Almighty! Let me speak of Pharaoh by way of observation and I will begin by remarking that—

I. IN SORE TROUBLE, THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD ARE GREATLY VALUED.

“Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron.” The frogs had taught him good manners and he longs to see the ministers of the Lord. How is this? *The man was somewhat brought to his senses*—and when this happens, men begin to value those whom they aforesaid despised. Listen to this story. There came a man of God to Bethel where king Jeroboam was setting up the golden calves and he began to cry against the altar. Then Jeroboam stretched forth his hand and cried, “Lay hold upon him.” In a moment the rebel’s right arm withered, and hung by his side, useless! Then he turned to the man of God, whom he was about to arrest, and said, “Entreat the Lord for me.” Thus have persecutors been forced to crouch at the feet of those whom they would have destroyed! Another story will set forth the same truth. King Saul had been forsaken of God and the Philistines pressed hard upon him. In his extremity he resorted to a woman who professed to deal with the spirits of the dead. With whom would he speak? He cries, “Bring me up Samuel.” Samuel was the man who had most sternly rebuked him! One would have thought that Samuel was the last person he would wish to see, but in his need, he asks for no one else but Samuel. When ungodly men get into straits, how they wish they could consult with one who has gone home, against whom they pointed many a jest. They never say, “Bring me up the jolly fellow who filled and quaffed the bowl with me.” In their tribulation they think not of such. They never cry, “Bring me up the wanton with whom I sported in sin, that I may again enjoy her company.” No, in their distress they desire other advisers—they would rather cry, “Bring me up my holy mother! Oh, for a sight of her dear, loving face as I saw it on her dying bed, when she urged me to follow her to heaven! Bring me up that old friend whom I ridiculed when I turned aside from the ways of God! Oh, for an hour with the man of God whom once I scorned!” Do you not see that it is the old tale repeated—Pharaoh, when his troubles are multiplied, calls for Moses and Aaron!

This is also to be accounted for by the fact that *God puts a mysterious honor upon His faithful servants*. The painters place halos about the heads of the Bible saints—there were no such crowns of light upon them, literally, and yet within the legend there slumbers a great truth. He who leads an upright, holy, gracious life has a power about him which

impresses the beholder—his presence in an ungodly company has an influence on wicked men like that of Zephon, of whom Milton sings in *Paradise Lost*. To the great fallen angel his presence was a rebuke. God hedges the good with a dignity which men feel even when they are not conscious of it. It was so in the case before us. Moses was made to be as a god unto Pharaoh. Pharaoh had said, “Get you unto your burdens,” addressing Moses and Aaron as if they were slaves! But now he sends for them and entreats their prayers on his behalf! This was like the case of Joseph. His brothers hated him and sold him for a slave—but how different the scene when they bowed before him and trembled as he said, “I am Joseph!” The archers had shot at him and wounded him, but still his bow abode in strength!

Remember, too, Jeremiah, whom Zedekiah, the king, treated with great indignity till the Babylonians had surrounded the city—and then he sent to him and said, “Enquire, I pray you, of the Lord for us.” Our Lord describes an instance still more remarkable. It belongs to the next world, but the same principles rule in all worlds. A poor saint was laid at a rich man’s door, full of sores. He begged for the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table, “moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.” The rich man, clothed with purple and fine linen, took small note of this saint of God. But what a change happened on a day when the beggar died and was carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom—and the rich man also died and was buried! In hell the rich man lifted up his eyes, and Lazarus had honor before him, for he begged that Lazarus might be sent to cool his burning tongue with the tip of his finger dipped in water. They had changed places, for God had crowned His poor servant with glory and honor! The halo was around the head of Lazarus most assuredly.

A light shone upon the face of Moses and a glory settled upon the brow of Jesus. “Such honor have all the saints” in a spiritual sense—and the proudest of men shall be made to know it!

Once more, let me note that this honor is doubtless set on saints that they may be of service to ungodly men. God intends, by their means, to bless the penitent. When it was wheat harvest and a thunderstorm came because Israel desired a king, you remember that while peal on peal the dread artillery of God was heard, the people trembled and besought Samuel the prophet to pray for them. And he said, “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you.” Holy Samuel’s prayer was heard for them!

Much later an earthquake shook the foundations of a prison and loosed the bands of the prisoners. Then the jailer woke up in his fright and feared that his prisoners had escaped—and that he should have to die for it—but there stood Paul, the man whom he had thrust into the inner prison, and whose feet he had made fast in the stocks! And the jailer, trembling before him, cried out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The answer was given. He was directed to believe and to be baptized—and the jailer and his house were saved! If God’s servants are treated with scorn and harshness they need not fear, for they are put just where they are, that unconverted men may be blessed by their agency. Like Moses to Pharaoh, saints will yet have to say, “Glory over

me. I will pray for you, or teach you, so that I may but lead you to the Savior."

It is clear that in times of trouble godly men and women are at a premium! Secondly, with ungodly men—

II. IN TIMES OF SORE TRIAL PRAYER ALSO BEGINS TO BE VALUABLE.

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, "Entreat the Lord." Pharaoh begs an interest in the prayers of good men—this is a fine change since the day wherein he said, "Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice?"

When men are sick and near to die, they send for us to pray with them. That old philosopher, Bion, showed much wisdom in his biting sarcasm. He was on shipboard and found that among the passengers there were certain foul-mouthed desperadoes. While they were venting all manner of abominations, a storm came on, and they began to pray! Then Bion cried out to them, "Hold your tongues, for if the gods only know that you are here, they will sink the vessel! Be quiet, lest your prayers should be our ruin." One's thoughts have taken somewhat of that form when we have seen men fulfilling the old adage—

"When the devil was sick, the devil a saint would be."

Such prayers are too often an insult to the holiness of God!

Why is it that reprobates take to praying when they are in deep trouble? Frequently *superstition moves them*. They regard a prayer as a spell or magical charm. So in their folly they send for a minister and cry, "Entreat the Lord for me!" Among many Londoners, so dense is this superstition that after a poor soul is dead, I have heard relatives say, "We sent for the minister and *he came and prayed to him*." Mark that word, "prayed to him"! Does not this discover the ignorance and superstition of the people? They do not know the design and object of prayer. This superstition needs to be spoken of with great truthfulness and fidelity.

In certain instances the man's hope in prayer is the result of a *condemning faith*. There is a justifying faith and a condemning faith. "What?" you say, "does faith ever *condemn* men?" Yes, when men have faith enough to know that there is a God who sends judgments upon them, that nothing can remove those judgments but the hand that sent them and that prayer moves that hand—there are persons who yet never pray, themselves, but eagerly cry to friends, "Entreat the Lord for me." That is a measure of faith which goes to increase a man's condemnation, since he ought to know that if what he believes is true, then the proper thing is to pray! It would have been a wonderfully good sign if Pharaoh had said, "Join with me, O Moses and Aaron, while I pray unto Jehovah that He may take the frogs from me." But, no, he had only a condemning faith which contented itself with other men's prayers!

In many instances this desire for prayer is *one of the movements of the Spirit upon the heart of man*. When a poor, afflicted man, in the depth of poverty, struck with consumption or laid aside by some other deadly disease, desires that a minister would come and pray with him, we will never treat such a wish with neglect. While it is our duty to expose the superstition which often lurks beneath the wish, we also hope that some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel may dwell in it. It is, perhaps,

the prodigal saying, "I will arise and go unto my Father, and I will inquire the way home." I hope it is so.

Take warning, you that do not pray—you will yet need to pray! There will come a time to the most of you when you will not be able to bear yourselves without crying unto God. May God, in His infinite mercy lead you to begin at once! For when it can be said of you, "Behold, he prays," it will be the best of news! Beginning to pray is the turning point of life! Why not at once set a high price upon that which in times of trouble you will seek for with tears? Our third observation is this—

III. IN SORE TROUBLE THE PRAYER IS OFTEN A WRONG ONE.

The petitions which men offer when they are in distress are often wrong prayers. Pharaoh said, "Entreat the Lord, that He may take away the frogs from me."

A fatal flaw is manifest in that prayer. It contains no *confession of sin*. He says not, "I have rebelled against the Lord. Entreat that I may find forgiveness!" Nothing of the kind—he loves sin as much as ever. A prayer without penitence is a prayer without acceptance. If no tear has fallen upon it, it is withered. You must come to God as a sinner through a Savior, but by no other way. He that comes to God like the Pharisee, with, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are," never draws near to God at all! But he that cries, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," has come to God by the way which God has, Himself, appointed! There must be a confession of sin before God or our prayer is faulty.

Pharaoh's prayer *dealt only with the punishment*. "Take away the frogs! Take away the frogs! Take away the frogs!" That is his one cry. So we hear the sick exclaim, "Oh, sir, pray that I may get well." The drunkard begs that he may be helped out of his poverty. The impenitent sinner cries, "Pray that my child may not be taken from me." It is not wrong to pray, "Take away the frogs." We should all have prayed so if we had been surrounded by such pests. The evil is that this was the whole of his prayer. He said not, "Take away my sins," but, "Take away the frogs." He did not cry, "Lord, take away my heart of stone," but only, "Take away the frogs." Perhaps I am addressing those who are in poverty, sickness, or distress and all they are crying about is, "Lord, take away the frogs! Deliver me from my poverty, my trouble, my hunger, my disgrace, my punishment!" Now, if you have brought yourself into evil by a vicious life, your prayer must not be, "Take away the disease and the poverty," but "Take away the sin." The drunkard's prayer must not be, "Lord, take away the result of my intoxication," but, "Remove from me the poisoned cup." Lay the axe at the root and cry, "Lord, take the sin away." Alas, most of the prayers of men in trouble are only like Pharaoh's selfish prayer, "Take away the frogs." The Lord did hear his petition, but nothing came of it. The frogs were gone, but flies came immediately after and all sorts of plagues followed in rapid succession—and his heart was still hardened.

When ungodly men are under a sense of divine wrath they turn not to God aright—their prayer is devoid of spiritual requests. When Cain had murdered his brother, did he express regret? No. He only murmured, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Esau sold his birthright. Did he

repent of the sin of having been a profane person, and seek pardon carefully? Not he! He sought carefully with tears to get back his birthright, but he found no place for repentance in his father Isaac! The blessing had gone to Jacob and on Jacob it must remain. Another telling case is that of Simon Magus. When Peter told him that he was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, he replied, “Pray you to the Lord for me that none of these things which you have spoken come upon me”—that was all he cared about. He expressed no desire to be delivered from his evil way, but only to be screened from the consequences of it! Every knave cries out against punishment—but he is attaining to honesty who entreats to be freed from his pilfering habits! Our last remark is that—

IV. THE SINNER IN HIS SORE TROUBLES IS VERY APT TO MAKE GREAT PROMISES.

Pharaoh cried, “Take away the frogs and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD.” In this way one of you talked when you were down with fever, or when you were likely to lose your employment through your folly. You said, “Please God, if You let me escape this once, I will be a very different man.” Such promises are *generally boastful*. Notice here the proud language of Pharaoh. “I will let the people go.” He does not long talk in this fashion, but now he is a great king and he gives his royal word, “I will let the people go.” Some folks are very big when they promise God, “I will do this and I will do that.” But you cannot, my friend! You reply that you are going to have a new heart and a right spirit. Are you looking to create them yourself? You talk as if you were! I think you said that you were going to “turn over a new leaf,” but a new leaf in a bad book may be worse than the old leaf! But you are going to be entirely new, are you? Are you to do all this yourself? You are greatly mistaken—true conversion does not begin by talking of what “I” will do! It begins in casting ourselves upon the Lord and begging Him to work all our works in us!

But this man’s promises were *all a lie*. I daresay that for the moment he meant them—but he did not keep his word, for he did not let the people go. “When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.” Has not that been the case with many others? You promised “faithfully,” as you said. You pledged yourself that it would be so, but it is not so. Stand still awhile and hear a message from the Lord—“You have not lied unto men, but you have lied unto God.” Let that sentence pierce the innermost heart of your conscience! “You have lied unto God.” Remember Ananias and Sapphira and what followed upon their falsehood? Be astonished that it has not followed upon yours, for you made the promise before witnesses in the presence of the Lord Himself!

Mark well that in all this, Pharaoh *increased his guilt*. His vows heaped up his transgressions. He forgot his promises, but God did not. They were laid by in store against him—and the blows of God upon him fell heavier and heavier until, at last, Jehovah drowned him and his chosen captains in the Red Sea! Oh, sirs, if God comes to deal with you in this fashion, what will become of you? Your promises are filed in heaven to be witnesses against you! God reaches out these promises of yours at this

hour and holds them up before your eyes. And what does your conscience say? If you had promised a kind friend and broken your word, it would have been base enough, but you have been ungrateful to your God in whose hands your breath is, and whose are all your ways! Let a sense of guilt overwhelm you and, in the name of Jesus Christ, ask mercy of your God!

I will tell you how God deals with His own children and then leave you to infer how He will deal with you if you are not His children. A certain man, to all appearances, feared God. Yes, and did so with a sincere heart. He was once an earnest Christian, a member of the church and a worker in the service—faithful to his light and fervent in spirit—but he grew cold. He had a farm and it occupied nearly all his time. He was filled with an intense desire to grow rich and, therefore, he devoted his attention to his business till he grew colder and colder in divine things—and the means of grace on the weekdays were forsaken. Work for God was dropped, communion with God ceased and the religious professor became to all appearance an utter worldling. But yet he was a child of God and this is how his Father restored him. He took from him the wife of his youth, to whom his heart was knit. But this made him more worldly than before because his wife had been a great help to him in the farm—but now she was gone—so he must stick to it more than ever! Nothing came of the first chastisement except increased sin. He had only one son, for whom he was saving up his money and working his business—and he saw that son cut down with consumption, like his mother. This also made him still worldlier. It ought to have brought him to his knees, but it did not. He carried on the practice of prayer, but with little heart. He said, “Now, my dear son, who was such a comfort to me, has gone, I can hardly get out on Sundays at all. I *must* look after the cows and attend to the stock.” So he sank deeper in the mire. Then the Lord began to deal with him in another way. He had a bad season and lost money farming, careful as he was.

Next year was worse, and the cattle plague emptied his stalls. He was brought down to poverty. He could scarcely keep the farm, for he could not pay the rent. Still he did not yield. He had tender moments now and then, but he was usually hard, for he felt that God was dealing severely with him. He felt angry against God and stuck to his business more than ever, while the things of God were forgotten. Then the Lord took His erring child more closely in hand than before, and sent him an incurable disease in his body. The worldly farmer lay upon a sick bed fretting about his business—he did not turn to the Lord even then! Last of all, his house took fire and as the barn and the ricks and the house were all ablaze and all that he had was going, they carried him out into the open air upon the bed from which he could not stir, and he was heard to say, “Blessed be the Lord! Blessed be the Lord! I am cured at last.” But, dear friends, nothing would cure him till everything was gone from him! Was not that a pity? He was saved so as by fire. He would be “as the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle” and, therefore, he had to suffer for it. I pray you do

not copy him. People of God, do not make rods for your own backs in that way! Do not drive your heavenly Father to hard measures.

But oh, you ungodly, *if He will deal thus with His children, how will He deal with you who are not His children?* If He means to bless you, He will not let you go unpunished, but He will smite you with heavy strokes. I remember one who used to bless God for a broken leg—he said that he never ran in the ways of God until he was lame. I believe that some parents never loved the heavenly Father till their dear infant child was taken away. The shepherd tried to get the mother sheep into the fold, but she would not come, so he took up her lamb and carried it away in his arms—and then the mother followed him! He has done that to some of you. You would never have come to Christ if dear little Johnny had not gone home to Jesus. You lost one and another for that same purpose—have you not had enough strokes? You have been smitten till your “whole head is sick and your whole heart faint.” Will you not turn unto your God without more ado? His blows are sent in mercy! It is far better that you should have a hell here than hell hereafter! It would be better for you to live a lifelong agony than to be cast into hell forever! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! He died for sinners—died for aggravating, guilty, willful sinners! And if they look to Him, they shall at once be forgiven! I cannot give the look of faith for you, or I would gladly do so, but I beseech you to look and live! May God the Holy Spirit lead you to do so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EXODUS 3:1-14; ROMANS 9:1-25.**

This chapter in Exodus tells of the appearance of God to Moses in the wilderness. Has He departed from us, brothers and sisters? He used to be seen by godly souls by mount and stream and sea—and even bushes were alive and blazing with the indwelt Godhead! Oh, that He would reveal Himself to us tonight! I am going to read this chapter with this longing in my heart. I pray that the same longing may be in the heart of every child of God—“Show me Your face: show me Your face, my God, tonight!”

Verse 1. *Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.* There is nothing dishonorable about common trade and matters of business at all. Here is a shepherd who keeps his flock—and God keeps him and reveals Himself to him. When God wants a man to lead His people, He seeks for him not among idlers, but busy, active men. And God was pleased to show Himself more to Moses, as a shepherd, than He had ever shown Himself to him as a prince in Egypt. I find no glowing deity in the halls of Pharaoh, but I find the consuming fire manifested in the lone wastes of the Sinai Desert!

2. *And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.* Well might it say, “Behold.” I have seen a bush set alight by a match. It blazed in a moment, but it was gone in

another moment! It burned up fiercely and hastily. But God was pleased to make a poor consumable bush to be the unharmed place of His abiding. He dwells today in the human person of the Savior. The Godhead is in Christ. He dwells today in the Church which might well enough be consumed by His presence—but it is not. He can come and dwell in my heart and in yours, tonight, and yet we shall bear the presence of deity to the hour of our death! He has a way of so throwing Himself into our feebleness that it becomes strong—and that which might otherwise have been destroyed, is even preserved by His presence! The bush burned with fire and was not consumed.

3, 4. *And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.* Oh, that personal call—that voice from God to the heart! How much we need it. Do you not remember when first the Lord called some of you? Then He says to you tonight, “I have called you by My name. You are Mine.” Acknowledge that sweet impeachment, confess that you are His and say to Him, “For suffering or for service, here am I ready, yes ready, even as Moses was. Here am I.”

5. *And He said, Draw not near here: take your shoes from off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.* Stand as a servant stands in the presence of his master in the East. He is not expected to wear, in the court of his master, the shoes which have trodden in the mire of the world. Now, put away your cares, put away your carnal thoughts, put away yourself, put away your sins. When God is near, solemnity and deep reverence become us. “The place where you stand is holy ground.”

6. *Moreover He said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.* You need not hide your face if God shall appear to you, though I am sure you will do it. You may come boldly. It is your Father’s face! It is the face of One who is reconciled to you in Christ. Therefore open your eyes and look—and may the Lord show Himself to you!

7. *And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows.* Now, you troubled ones, are not these verses real music to you? God has seen your afflictions—there are God’s eyes! God has heard your cry—there are God’s ears. “I know their sorrows.” There is God’s mighty understanding. He is thinking about you. He knows all that which tries you tonight.

10. *“Come now therefore”*—This was a very extraordinary thing to follow after all that. God has seen the affliction of His people. What then? Does He say, “I am come down to deliver them”? What then? Why, the next thing is that He is going to use this trembling man who stands awe-struck with his shoes off in the presence of the still burning bush! “Come now, therefore”—

10. *And I will send you unto Pharaoh, that you may bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.* You have been praying for a blessing. God is going to give it *through you*. You have been looking east

and west and north and south for some deliverer that shall win souls and stir up the Church. God calls *you* to do it! He invites you to undertake this gigantic service and I think that I see the color come into your face and then fly away again! You are ready to faint at the thought of such a charge laid upon you!

11. *And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? Now, catch this—*

12. *And He said, Certainly I will be with you.* What more does Moses need? He said, “Who am I?” This showed his weakness. God said, “Never mind who *you* are. Certainly I will be with you.” Here was strength enough for him!

13. *And this shall be a token unto you that I have sent you: When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.* And he did! You know how Sinai trembled while God made it His throne and how Moses must have been strengthened when he did exceedingly fear and quake before God when he remembered that this same God had appeared to him when he was alone in the desert—and had promised that they should worship Him there.

14. *Then Moses said to God, Behold, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, The God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they say to me, What is His name? What shall I say to them?*

14. *God said unto Moses, I AM WHO I AM.* That is His name—the Infinite, Eternal and Unchangeable God!

14. *And He said, Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you.* Oh, what a glorious commission—to receive it direct from the self-existent God, who is the same forever and ever, and only has immortality! Speak to us tonight, you great I AM, JAH, Jehovah, God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Speak to this company in this house of prayer tonight, because of Jesus, Joshua, Jehoshua, Jehovah, Jesus. I have tried to show you how that name of Jesus has the name “Jehovah” hidden away in it. Because of Him, draw near to us, O Lord!

ROMANS 9:1-25. The Jews thought that God must certainly save them. They thought they had a birth claim. Were they not the children of Abraham? Surely they had some right to it. This chapter battles the question of right. No man has any right to the grace of God. The terms are inconsistent. There can be no right to that which is free favor. We are all condemned criminals, and if pardoned, it must be as the result of pure mercy, absolute mercy, for there is no good in any one of us!

Verses 1, 2. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.* He never thought about his unbelief, brothers and sisters, without the deepest imaginable regret. How far is this from the spirit of those who look upon the ungodly without tears—settle it down as a matter that cannot be altered and take it as a question of hard fate—but are never troubled about it! Not so the apostle. He had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart.

3. *For I could wish that I, myself, were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* He had just that self-

sacrificing spirit of Moses, that he would lose anything and everything if they might but be saved. And this is the spirit which ought to actuate every Church of Christ. The church that is always caring for her own maintenance is no church. The Church that would be willing to be destroyed if it could save the sons of men—which feels as if, whatever her shame or sorrow, it would be nothing if she could but save sinners—that Church is like the Lord, of whom we read, “He saved others: Himself he could not save.” Oh, blessed heartbreak over sinful men which makes men willing to lose everything if they might but bless and win men to Christ! “My kinsmen,” he says, “according to the flesh.”

4, 5. *Who are Israelites; to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.* What dignity has God put upon ancient Israel! How favored far beyond any of us in these particulars! They had the light of God when the rest of the world was in darkness! Theirs was the law of God, and theirs the covenant promises! Above all, of them it was that Christ came! Our Savior was a Jew! Forever must that race be had in respectful honor and we must pray for their salvation.

6, 7. *Not as though the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel. Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall your seed be called.* Now the apostle is getting to his point. You Jews claim to have the mercy of God because you are of the seed of Abraham, but there is nothing in that, he says, for God made a distinct choice of Isaac to the rejection of Ishmael, as he did afterwards of Jacob, and then Esau was left out.

8. *That is, your flesh 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.* Now Isaac was not the child of Abraham’s flesh. He was born according to promise, when his mother was past age and his father well stricken in years. His was the birth according to the promise and that is the way the line of grace runs—not according to the flesh, but according to the promise! If, then, all my hope of heaven lies upon my being a child of godly parents, it is an Israelite hope and good for nothing! If my hope of heaven lies upon my having been born according to the promise of God—born of His grace and of His power—in that line the covenant stands! God has determined that it shall be so.

9-13. *For this is the word of promise. At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* So, then, there is no claim of birth, for he that had the claim of birth, even Esau, is passed by! There is, indeed, no claim at all, for God gives freely according to His will, blessing the sons of men.

14. *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! There is no unrighteousness in anything that He does! And in the winding up of all affairs, it shall be seen that God was righteous as well as gracious.*

15-16. *For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. That is where it must begin. When men are condemned, what can they appeal to, but the mercy of God? Where is the hope of men, but in the sovereignty of the Most High?*

17-24. *For the Scripture says unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore has He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will, He hardens. You will say then unto me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will? No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have You made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory, even us, whom He has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? There was the sting of it. They could not endure that God should, in His divine sovereignty save Gentiles as well as Jews! But He has done so and He has sent the gospel to us while they, having refused it, are left in the darkness which they chose.*

25. *As He says also in Hosea, I will call them My people, which were not My people: and her beloved, which was not beloved. Oh, what a splendid verse is this! Let some here who have been far from God until now and never had a gracious thought, nevertheless hear what He has done and will do again! "I will call them My people that were not My people, and her beloved which was not beloved."*

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“THE OIL OF JOY FOR MOURNING”

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“The oil of joy for mourning.”
Isaiah 61:3.

MOURNERS in Zion ought to be doubly comforted, for here, in this gracious promise, is a second gift of divine love to them—a second exchange of loss for gain. The varied expressions of this choice Scripture show the manifold loving kindnesses of the Lord to His afflicted and the plentiful devices of wisdom by which He ministers consolation. It was not enough to give the sorrowing ones, “beauty for ashes”—He must add oil with which to enhance the beauty and take away, not only the ashes, but the mourning which lay beneath them! This, also, illustrates the exceeding fullness of the blessings which are stored up in the Lord Jesus—in Him we have everything which heart can wish—a rich variety of joyful blessings never to be exhausted! It also shows us the marvelous fitness of our Lord Jesus, since solely because of His coming as the anointed of the Lord, there is healing for the wounded, liberty for the captives, eyes for the blind, comfort for mourners, beauty for the disfigured and oil for fading countenances! He meets every need of the soul and fills the heart to overflowing with contented gratitude. Let it be repeated and gratefully remembered that all these good things come by the anointed Savior alone. There can be no traffic with heaven except by the crimson road of the atoning blood! No channel for divine favor except by the Christ of God on whom the Spirit of the Lord forever rests! To Him be glory forever! Blessed be His name—He is the channel of divine grace and in Him is no straitness or shallowness! A divine riches of glory flows to us by Christ Jesus—

*“Immortal joys come streaming down,
 Joys, like His griefs, immense, unknown.”*

If our Redeemer were not what He is, what would we do? But being what He is, there is no necessity which He cannot supply, there is no grief which He cannot relieve and there is no right desire which He cannot satisfy. Let us drink of the river of His fullness and sing to His praise!

Notice, also, at the outset of our present meditation, the effectual way in which the blessings which Jesus brings are bestowed upon mourners. We have often heard doubting ones say, “Yes, there are promises, but we cannot reach them. We know that there are abundant consolations and rich and free comforts, but we do not feel their power, nor dare to take them to ourselves.” Now, in this place we see the condescending Lord,

Himself, applying the oil of joy in exchange for mourning! His own right hand pours the precious oil upon the bowed head—He, Himself, causes the face to shine and banishes woe! A man may lie bleeding on the battlefield and there may be liniments close at hand, but in his weakness and agony he may be quite unable to bind up his own wounds, or reach the cordials—he may die because he is not able to stretch so much as a finger to help himself to remedies which lie by his side! It is an unspeakable mercy that our Lord gives His grace to us in such an effectual manner that His mourners actually obtain the help they need! He is a very present help, a real comforter—the oil of joy is not shown us in an unbroken alabaster vase, nor merely offered to us in a vial, but it is actually and effectually applied to the soul!

Let us now come to the consideration of this second of the three great blessings bestowed upon the mourners in Zion—and may we all enjoy a portion thereof while we meditate thereon. In working out the metaphor we shall observe that—

I. OUR LOVING LORD BRINGS HIS MOURNERS TO SIT AT A FEAST.

This is clearly intended, for oil was largely used by Orientals upon festive occasions. The oil which makes man's face to shine was associated with the bread which strengthens man's heart, and the wine which makes glad the heart of man, (Psalm 104:15), because these are the chief provisions of a banquet. Before the feast, or during the entertainment, the guests were refreshed with perfumed oil which would be either poured upon the head, or furnished for anointing the face. It was part and parcel of a great feast. Hence we read of those who “drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with their chief ointments.” Therefore our first thought is this, that the *Lord Jesus brings mourning souls to a feast of love* at which they sing, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies, You anoint my head with oil.” How great will be our joy if we can feel that our Lord has brought us into His banqueting house and that we are now reclining there! Now, to all believers, this is truly the case. Our hunger now is relieved, for He satisfies our mouth with good things. That fierce, wolf-like hunger which we once felt is gone forever, for it is written, “He that eats of this bread shall never hunger.” Our craving, all-consuming thirst is ended, for he that drinks of the water which Jesus gives him shall never thirst! Many of Zion's mourners are sitting under the Word, longing for divine provision and praying, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.” The bread is theirs and a voice cries to them, “Eat, O friends! Drink, yes drink abundantly, O beloved!” Your deadly famine of heart is gone and the spiritual hunger which you now feel is a pleasant appetite which gives a zest to heavenly food—an appetite which you long to have increased to the utmost! Even at this moment, though you feel a blessed hunger and thirst after righteousness, you are filled with royal dainties. You are no longer starving in the streets, nor famishing under the hedges and in the highways, but, by divine grace you have been sweetly compelled to come

in and you are at this moment the guests of the table of boundless mercy where the name of Jesus is as ointment poured forth, so that all around you the oil of gladness is shedding a divine perfume! You are no longer feeding the swine, but resting at the Father's table—the oxen and the fatlings are killed and you are actually at the supper. Believe this and act accordingly!

And what a feast it is! For who is your host? The Lord of life and glory, Himself, ordains “the feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well-refined.” “The King sits at His table.” It is His table and He sits at it! It is a great thing to dine with a king, but what must it be to be daily eating bread at the table of the King of kings? Let the joy bells ring in your soul at the very thought, for you are already come to the great feast which the King has made for His Son! He comes in, Himself, to see the guests!

It is the feast of the universe. There never was such another and there never can be its like! It is the antepast of the great supper of the Lamb. What provisions are put upon the table! Men do eat angels' food when they come here. Yes, they eat viands better than the bread of angels, for the body of Christ has become the meat and the drink of His mourners. Poor souls, you feast upon incarnate deity! Speak of oxen and of fatlings? These are poor types compared with the wondrous provision of celestial grace with which the infinite Jehovah has loaded the table of the covenant! And all these things are yours. You may have as much as you will. There remains no need to eat bread by weight, or to drink water by measure—He will satiate your soul with fatness and nothing shall be withheld from you! Ought you not to bless Him that you are now a guest at such a table and that such food is at this very moment spread before you?

Think of your fellow guests. Look around you and inspect the company. Remember where you were a little while ago—you were strangers and foreigners, yes, you were as dogs in the street! Where are you now? You are permitted to sit with the children of God, with the saints of the Most High! Does it not bring the water into your eyes to think that you—you who long refused to come and despised the feast of grace—are, at last, brought in? No, not only are you sitting here at the feast of love with God's people, but the saints above are your comrades—for “you are come to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.” We sup with the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs and the holy church throughout the entire world! Now, also, have we fellowship with angels. We have come unto Mount Zion and to an innumerable company of angels. Better still, we have fellowship with Jesus. “Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant,” is the center of the whole! It is His wedding feast and we are glorifying Him by partaking of

His Father’s bounty. We cannot at this moment actually put our heads upon Jesus’ bosom as John did, nor need we wish for that visible and physical delight, but our heart rests upon His breast and enjoys an unspeakable bliss in so doing! Jesus, Immanuel, we are safe in Your arms, and our heart is at perfect rest in You! We are even now abiding in You, while at Your Passover we keep the feast. We are feasting with the great Father, Himself, for, beloved, when the glorious sacrifice becomes a meat offering, God Himself delights therein and partakes with us in the satisfaction made by His Son! Oh, the satisfaction which God the Father finds in Jesus! It is a theme upon which we dare not attempt to speak, but this we know—the Lord rests in His love. He smells a sweet savor in the person and work and sacrifice of His dear Son. If we love Jesus, so does the Father! And if we rest in Jesus, so does He! And if we would glorify Jesus, so would the Father! Thus are we brought to feast with God, the Judge of all, when we come to “the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel.” Here the oil of joy is most befitting. Is it not most natural and proper that it should be poured out at such a festival?

We cannot linger, but must pass to the next observation, which is this—

II. BEING AT A FEAST, IT IS BECOMING THAT WE SHOULD HAVE PRESENT JOY.

Hence the text speaks of “the oil of joy for mourning”—the mourning was present enough, the joy should be equally so. At feasts, the perfume poured upon the heads of the guests was a seemly and appropriate thing. It suited the feast, it made the guests feel at home and it gave refreshment all around as the delicious perfume sweetened the air. Come, beloved, we have at this moment reason for joy—let us use it! Let every child of God feel that he has the oil of joy in the fact that he possesses present blessings. Our best things lie on the other side of the Jordan—we are looking for our full bliss at the coming of our Lord, but we have much in the present. The oil of joy is on our faces now, our locks are even now bedewed with the sacred anointing—and it will be well for us to turn our thoughts towards that truth of God!

For, first, let all believers recollect that *we have today the joy of the atonement*. “By whom also,” says the apostle, “we have received the atonement.” The atonement will be no more ours in heaven than it is now. “We have redemption by His blood.” Our sin will be no more put away in glory than it is at this moment, for our iniquity is even now cast into the depths of the sea! Our substitute has finished transgression and made an end of sin. And having believed in Him, we know that for us the full atonement is already made and the utmost ransom forever paid! “It is finished.” “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” Having believed, we know that our sin is as far removed from us as the east is from the west! We also know that the righteousness of

Christ is imputed to us and that it covers us from head to foot. This is a divinely sweet ingredient of the oil of joy which now distils upon us from the head of our glorified Aaron and perfumes even those who are as the skirts of his garments!

Besides that, my brothers and sisters, *at the present moment we live in the love of God*. It may not be at this moment sensibly shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, but still, “the Father Himself loves you.” If you are a believer in Christ, He will not love you more when you are in heaven than He loves you now, for He loves you infinitely at this instant! You are even now, “accepted in the Beloved.” “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” Infinite love, eternal love, unchanging love, almighty love is the present possession of the children of God! Hence comes our safety, hence comes the certainty of the supply of all our needs—hence, indeed, flow all our joys! At this moment, despite our spirit depression and soul battling and heart strife, the Lord has set His love upon us and rests in that love! Should not this make our faces shine?

At this time, too, *we possess the divine life within us*. Having believed, we have been regenerated and the Spirit of God dwells in us! Yes, within these mortal bodies does the Godhead dwell! He has made our bodies to be the temples of the Holy Spirit. And what a favor is this, for this indwelling is the witness of the Spirit within us, the perpetual seal of divine grace. God has put into us a new life, a life like His own—He has created in us a superior principle, unknown to flesh and blood, for we are not born-again of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of the will of God! A supernatural life has been implanted in us that cannot die because it is born of God! We have this and we know it—and because of it we greatly rejoice.

And not only so, but because we are the sons of God, we are heirs according to the promise, since it is written, “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Is not this oil to make the face shine? What better delights can your imagination conceive than the divine joys of adoption? O, you mourners, have you not here the oil of joy?

Further, *we have the present joy of a high calling* involving the exercise of sacred functions. You are at this hour, beloved, as many of you as believe in Him, made kings and priests unto God! You are consecrated to the service of Him who has bought you with a price. The mark of the blood is upon you and “you are Christ’s.” At this moment you are a living sacrifice bound with cords to the horns of the altar. Your Lord has sent you into the world, even as the Father sent Him into the world, to proclaim His truth and to do His will among the sons of men. Is not this cause for delight? Does not your divine vocation anoint you with the oil of gladness?

With this *we have special privileges*. There is one privilege I prize at this moment—I cannot tell you how much. It is this—the liberty to pray,

the power to pray, the promise that I shall be heard! Take the mercy-seat from me and poverty, faintness and anguish would seize my soul! As long as there is a mercy-seat and a torn veil, and the voice that bids me draw near and tells me that if I wait upon the Lord I shall renew my strength, I have a joy worth worlds! What? Have you lost a child? Is your property melting before your eyes? Does health decline? Do friends forsake? Yet the throne of grace is accessible—fly there and lose your grief! There burdens are light. There crosses bud with crowns and tears sparkle into diamonds! Come here, you mourners, even with the load of your doubts and fears—supplication will quicken you and for mourning you shall obtain the oil of joy!

Time would fail me if I were to go through the whole catalog of the sources of the Christian’s present joy. Ah, you worldling, you know and we confess it is true, that our chief joys are yet to come! But notwithstanding, we have enough today to make us more than a match for you! You may display your present mirth and carnal delight if you will—and laugh at us who weep now—but we can endure your ridicule with calm complacency because we have a secret peace and a deep fathomless repose of heart which make us even now as far from envying you as an angel from envying a mole! We are not of all men the most miserable, but of all men the most blessed! Our eternal hopes revive us amid the sorrows of this fleeting life. The harvests of heaven shale out and drop golden grain from above, upon which we feed even now! To have Jesus for our Brother, God for our Father and the Spirit to be our Comforter is a better portion than the richest, the proudest, or the most famous of worldlings can possibly possess! The oil of joy is not made in the presses of earth—it drops upon us through the golden pipes of the sanctuary, flowing from the sacred olive trees which the Lord has planted! Passing on from that observation, we would offer a third, which is implied in the text, namely, that—

III. THIS JOY COMES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

This is clear, since evermore when we read of oil we have before us in Scripture the divine influence of the Holy Spirit. The first part of the chapter before us runs thus—“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me because the Lord has anointed Me.” The oil with which Christ was anointed was the *Holy Spirit*—and the oil of joy with which we are anointed is the same Spirit! It is He who gives us joy in the Lord!

The Holy Spirit brings joy to believers thus—first, *He clears the understanding* and enables us to comprehend the deep things of God. Many poor souls know but little of the precious gifts which the Lord has bestowed upon them. As yet, though they are the Lord’s elect, they are not aware of it. Though they are the redeemed of the Lord, they perceive it not. There is the light of God about them and yet they cannot see, for their eyes are not yet opened beyond the power to see men as trees walking. Let us be grateful if we have passed beyond this stage. Through infinite mercy the Holy Spirit has visited some of us and while He has

painfully made us see our ruin, He has also most blessedly led us to comprehend something of the remedy—and has enabled us to understand with all saints what are the heights and depths, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge! We have an anointing so that we know all things. Now are the mysteries opened and the hidden things laid bare and, therefore, we have joy in the Lord, for our renewed understanding floods our heart with rivers of delight!

The Holy Spirit also gives us joy as He *enables us to exercise an appropriating faith*. You that have faith, do you bless God sufficiently for it? Do we not fail to adore the divine mercy which has worked this grace in us? We ought to blame ourselves when we find our faith to be weak, but we must never commend ourselves when faith is strong. The weakness of faith is ours, but the strength of faith comes of the Holy Spirit and of Him alone. Let us bless Him that He has enabled us to take to ourselves what the Lord Jesus has provided, so that now we do not only see His grace to be excellent, but we grasp it as our own! Here is oil of joy for us, indeed!

The Spirit also, *very graciously, sanctifies us*, and this is joy. It is a part of His work to discover sin in us and to excite a holy hatred of it. He burns in our soul like flames of fire consuming evil. Now, the destruction of sin is the destruction of sorrow and, as a child of God grows in likeness to Jesus, he grows in solid peace of mind. If you will follow your doubts and fears to their roots, you will find that they grow from the dunghill of your sins—and when the Lord cleanses out the evil of our hearts and creates a new spirit within us, the oil of joy perfumes the soul and we are glad in His salvation.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit *graciously quickens His people* and what a wonderful effect quickening has upon our joy! Whenever we are slothful in the things of God, we miss the delights of healthy spiritual life and, before long we mourn. But when the Holy Spirit comes and makes us feel lively and energetic and sensitive, then we begin, also, to rejoice in the Lord and the power of His might within us works in us a leaping of holy joy! Those who not only have life, but have it more abundantly, are a highly favored people and know how to exult in the Lord! Beloved, long for no joy but that which the Holy Spirit gives you! Thank God for the comforts of this life, but do not let them become your idols, as they will be if they become your exceeding joy. Draw from the upper fountains, fill your pitcher at the eternal springs—ask neither for the cinnamon nor camphor of this world’s gardens, but let your chief spices be the fruit of the Spirit which are joy and peace through believing! We may now, in the fourth place, remark that—

IV. THE JOY WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES US IS A GREAT PRESENT GIFT.

I once heard a person say, very wickedly, indeed, as I thought and still think, that sin could do the believer no harm. But he added, “Except that

it destroys his comfort.” I thought, “Well, that is a terrible ‘exception,’ indeed! That surely is quite enough to fill us with holy fear! If anything robs the Christian of his joy, surely the loss is great enough to set him upon his watch tower!” Yet I fear that many Christians do not consider this. They dream that it can be well with their souls when the joy of the Lord is gone, but, brothers and sisters, it is not so! The healthy condition of a child of God is a state of peaceful rest in the Lord. It is amazing how full Scripture is of comfort for mourners because the Lord’s objective is that the mourner may be comforted. “Comfort you, comfort you, My people, says your God. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem.” Our Lord desired that we might have His joy fulfilled in ourselves and He said, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” “Rejoice in the Lord always,” said the apostle, and as if that were not enough, he added, “and again I say, rejoice.”

Hear me, you mourning ones—the maintenance of a cheerful, happy frame of mind is of the utmost importance to you, and that for many reasons which may be drawn from the metaphor of oil.

Oil is refreshing, and so is holy joy. It puts new life into the soul and renews its youth like the eagle’s. When the man is faint with long pursuing, he revives if he perceives he already possesses present blessings in which he may rejoice. The joy of the Lord is our strength!

Oil was intended to also make each guest agreeable to his neighbors. When his head was anointed with the sweet perfume, those around about him were gratified. Happy Christians are pleasing to those about them—and thus they become a means of attracting souls to Jesus. We ought to be so happy that others ask, “From where have these men their joys?” If so, you can clearly see why we should exchange our mourning for the oil of joy. It would be evil to frighten men from the glad tidings by drawing long faces and using doleful tones.

Besides, brothers and sisters, you all know how weak you are in the service of God if your heart runs down into despondency. But when holy joy comes back, you feel that you could face a lion, or the old roaring lion, himself! Joy makes us brave. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?” Give me the joyful Christian for his Master’s service, for he will break through a troop and leap over a wall!

How gloriously does sacred joy lift us up above the sorrows of the world! No, more—how it lifts us up above earth’s joys! The man who has once drunk the old wine of the kingdom does not desire the new and sour wine of earth. He who knows the joy of the Lord will despise the joy of the world. Earthly comforts are small concerns to the heavenly mind. He receives them gratefully as matters of ordinary gifts from his Father’s hands, but his heart cries, “The Lord is my portion, says my soul.” He who has eaten the white bread of heaven has his mouth put out of taste for the black bread of earth. He who has feasted at God’s table and had the oil of joy poured upon his head by the Holy Spirit has risen above the

fascinations of the hour! What can charm a man who has gazed on the beauties of Jesus? What can delude us into idolatry when we have once beheld the glory of the Lord? The joy of the Lord is a grand safeguard. Earnestly could I wish that all God’s people were flooded with it—there would then be no fear of angry tempers, harsh speeches, or murmuring words! Full of the joy of the Lord, deeds of injustice in trade or of grasping at the world would be disdained by you! Suffering would be endured with patience and labor performed with diligence! Railing would never be returned for railing, or proud looks given to the poor. The joy of the Lord makes a man so calm, so quiet, and so heavenly, that he lives above the world. What a grand life is that of Abraham! He has his trials and some of them are intense, but he walks along the road of history with an almost noiseless tread, gliding along as though all were smooth! The record says, “It came to pass that the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things”—and yet in the previous pages we read of trials with Lot, with Hagar and Ishmael—and the grand ordeal with Isaac! Faith made his trials blessings, and his inward joy, like Aaron’s rod, swallowed up all the rods of his afflictions. The same road is open to us and we have the same reasons for walking in it since the God of Abraham is our God forever and ever! He who can live by faith shall have a constant supply of the oil of joy poured upon him by the Holy Spirit—and his mourning shall flee away. Our last observation is—

V. THE JOY WHICH GOD GIVES HIS PEOPLE IS BEST SEEN AND FREQUENTLY BEST FELT IN FELLOWSHIP.

We began with noting that oil is connected with festivity. Sweet spices are for banquets where men feast together. Oh mourners, you will often find your souls made joyous when you assemble with your brothers and sisters! Bread eaten in secret is sweet and morsels behind the door are delicious, but still, the choicest and most abundant provisions are brought forth when the king’s household gathers around his table, and realize that “they, being many, are one bread.” Speaking personally, my happiest times are spent with my brothers and sisters in Christ in the high festivals; *when the multitude keep holy day*. Draw a circle around my pulpit and you have hit upon the spot where I am nearest heaven! There the Lord has been more consciously near me than anywhere else. He has ravished my heart while I have been trying to cheer and comfort His mourners. Many of you can say the same of your pew where you are known to sit—it has been a Bethel to you and the Lord Jesus has revealed Himself to you in the midst of His people. Let us remember what delightful times we have had in prayer together. We have come into the sanctuary heavy of heart and while one brother after another has approached the throne of grace for us, we have been unburdened and helped to joy in God till the prayer meeting has seemed to be a heaven below, an antepast of the eternal meetings above! Thus the oil of joy is poured out in the assembly of fellowship.

Ofttimes, also, *when we have been singing together* some delightful hymn, in a lively, feeling manner, we have felt as if we could leap with delight and so the oil of joy has streamed upon our heads. Have you not often cried with the poet—

***“I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise!
Oh for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies!”***

Yes, that is the oil of gladness given at the festival of praise among the sons of God—who would not be there?

A joyous influence has also been within the house *when believers have met to talk with one another concerning the things of God* in simple, pious conversation. Alas, how little is there of such speaking, one to another, especially among wealthy Christians. A Christian man remarked to me the other day that when he was a boy the good old Christian people were constantly talking upon the doctrines of grace and other things which concern the kingdom of God, but there is little of this now. The staunch old men of the last generation knew what they believed and discerned between things that differed—they were, perhaps, a little too severe in their judgments—but still they did converse on divine things and were refreshed thereby! But now we are so very charitable that we are afraid to talk to one another about the things of God, for fear we should differ! It should not be so, for when Christ is the subject and God’s people converse together, their hearts burn within them with sacred delight, and the oil of gladness is poured upon their heads! Holy fellowship brings heavenly joy—the conversation of saints with each other is the source of unnumbered delights.

Lastly, *the communion table has been to many of us, above all other places in the world, the palace of delight*. There are certain of us who never forget the ordinance for a single Lord’s Day, and years of experience bear witness to the value of this means of grace! It is marvelous that so few, even among Christians, are regular in their attendance at that thrice blessed supper. A young girl said to me the other Sabbath, “Jesus seems so near when we are at the table.” And she was quite right. The emblems used at the supper so vividly bring our Lord before us that we think only of His passion, of the blood that was shed and of the body which was made to suffer for our sins. Then are we borne away with grateful emotion and feel as if we had reached the very gate of heaven! While we drink the wine and eat the bread, the oil of gladness is poured upon us by our Lord Himself! You who neglect that ordinance are losing a great privilege and besides that you are neglecting a solemn duty. May the Lord convince you of your negligence and bring you to delight in that ordinance which is the joyful means of communion with Himself.

Now, all this while I have been talking to God’s people and you will say, “Have you not a word to say to the sinner?” Well, I have all the while

been speaking to the sinner, too, because all this is for you if you repent of sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! If you will come and have it, the table is spread and loaded for you. No, more—“the Word is near you, even in your mouth.” What? Is the bread of life *in your mouth* and will you not eat it? Poor, hungry, empty, needy sinner, can you reject what God, Himself, puts into your mouth? If angels will rejoice when you repent, depend upon it there is also joy in store for you! Come then to Jesus, just as you are! Bring no money with you, bring no fitness with you, bring no fancied goodness with you—bring your sins and lay them before your Lord. Bring your hard heart, your lack of feeling, your lack of divine grace and just come and find all that you need in Christ, who is waiting to bless you! When I was a child I remember how at a school festival the children were instructed to bring their own mugs with them. Now that showed the poverty of those who gave the treat, but my Master does not want you to bring anything! He supplies everything. Come as you are, with nothing about you except your needs and your willingness to be saved! When an empty, guilty, lost, undone, ruined creature is coming to a great, blessed and mighty Savior, all he has to think of is the love which invites him and the greatness of the Redeemer who will receive him! Come here, then, all you who mourn because of sin, or mourn that you cannot mourn, and, by believing in Jesus you shall obtain the oil of joy and the days of your mourning shall be ended!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 9:20-41.**

This miracle is one that shows the transforming power of the Savior in a remarkable fashion.

20-21. *And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming. And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. A terrible case.*

22-25. *And oftentimes it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes. And immediately the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, You dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you, come out of him, and enter no more into him. That is one way in which Christ cures. When He drives the devil out of a man, He adds, “Enter no more into him.” I believe in the final perseverance of the saints, because I believe in the omnipotent ejection of Satan out of men when Christ speaks the word, “Come out of him, and enter no more into him.”*

26-29. *And the spirit cried, and convulsed him sorely and came out of him: and he was as one dead, insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And He said unto them—According to another evangelist, it was from lack of faith. Howbeit, He added—*

29. *This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting. God does not give us everything in answer to one prayer. It may be necessary for some blessings that the prayer should be reiterated—that it should deepen—that it should grow into an aching. It may be even necessary, in order that a blessing should come, that fasting should be used with prayer in order to show the intense eagerness and earnestness of the petitioner. Now notice the 38th verse.*

38. *And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Your name, and he follows not us: and we forbade him, because he follows not us. John in this case was like a good many people at the present day. You notice it. They could not cast out the devils, themselves, and when they found somebody else that did it, they forbade his doing it because he did not follow with them. I have known learned, eloquent, respectable ministers who cannot save sinners. And they hear that certain poor, illiterate, uneducated men have snatched sinners like brands from the burning—and they forbid them to do what they cannot do themselves. It is insanity—that would stop any man from doing what God enables him to do! And we ought to be the very last to forbid others from doing it.*

39. *But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. These people were dissenters, we may say—a sort of outsiders. And John puts forth the whole power of his apostolic authority to put them down—and then Jesus Christ puts forth the full power of His divine authority to give them liberty to go on!*

40-41. *For he that is not against us is on our side. For whoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.*

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FAITH SEEING GOD'S GLORY

NO. 3342

A SERMON
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“Jesus said to her, Said I not to you that, if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?”
John 11:40.

IT is not every man whose deed is as good as his word, but of the Son of Man, Christ Jesus, it may be said that whatever His lips have promised, His hands perform. He can, after the fact has transpired, turn to His disciples and say, “Did I not say to you, such-and-such, and is it not even as I said?” Seeking sinner, Christ has said that you shall have peace if you believe on Him and He will not run back from that word! If you cast yourself upon Him, you shall have peace right now; you shall have happiness evermore, you shall have heaven at the last, for there is no promise which Christ has made which He is not prepared to keep! There is no blessing which He presents to the hand of our faith which is either unreal, a sham, or a mockery! You shall find that Christ’s gold is not mere tinsel, but true, and that His silver is silver tried in the furnace—good spending money, both for time and for eternity!

I shall hope to use the text tonight—may God, too, use it—first, *with regard to the case of our fellow men*, about whom many of us are much concerned; and then, in the second place, *with regard to our own case*.

Dear friends, I know that I touch a sympathetic chord in your hearts when I speak—

I. WITH REGARD TO OUR CARE FOR OTHERS’ SOULS.

I bless God that so many of you love your fellow creatures and fellow sinners and earnestly desire to promote their highest interests by bringing them to Christ!

You have tasted and known the sweetness of true religion for yourselves and you are not selfishly satisfied merely to rejoice in this, but long that others, too, may taste and see, as you have done, that the Lord is good! Now, I know that if you are really in earnest about the matter, you will often meet with *cases which will stagger your faith*, will throw you back entirely upon your God and compel you to make your passionate appeal to His omnipotence. Well, the text addresses itself especially to those who meet with such cases. Poor Martha, when she saw the stone rolled away from the tomb of her dead brother, was shocked with what would meet the eyes and nostrils of her Lord, and so, in deep solicitude and almost alarm she declared, “Lord, by this time he stinks.” The spectacle was too revolting, for he had been dead nearly four days—and in an Oriental climate that signified much that was repulsive.

Terrible havoc would already have been worked on the body and she could not bear, I say, that the Savior should be exposed to such a spectacle! Now, how often do we meet with men and women, young and old persons, whose case is a very terrible one! We do not like to speak of it. It is getting among the putrid things, for "it is a shame even to speak of the things which are done of them in secret." There are some cases which are shocking, terrible, fearful! We may well wish that a stone may cover the cave so that they may not be seen, that they may be left unobserved as cases too vile for the ordinary gazer to look upon. Have you never met with such? I am sure, my dear Friends, if you are City Missionaries, or lovers of City Missionary work, you must meet in this great city with some of the most revolting instances of immorality, debauchery, dishonesty and everything that is dreadful—and you are very apt to think that these are cases in which the gospel will be out of place and the publishing of the news of pardoning love will be like throwing pearls before swine! The text, however, tells you something which may comfort you concerning such cases.

Perhaps I shall be addressing some tonight who have been laboring of late in connection with cases which appear hopeless to them, not so much from any gross immorality as from a hardness of heart which has come over the people. There may be a mother here tonight who is much concerned about her daughter—that daughter was once here, frequently here, but where she is at this moment the weeping mother does not know, nor does her anxious father—and it is with deep concern and sad hearts that some of us have asked, "Where can she have gone?"

While some thus actually leave the parental home and, we fear, plunge into sin and excess, there are others who cause great anxiety in another way. They do not want to hear the gospel which once greatly moved them—they have wearied of it—they contrive to stay away from the public worship and now the mother's admonitions have become positively irksome. The girl feels herself too big to yield to a father's counsels and entreaties. Perhaps even worse than this is the case you have been praying for—the case of one who actually denies and flouts the religion of Jesus Christ, who declares it is all a sham, a mere form got up that priests of all sects may get a living by it. Perhaps even blasphemy has taken the place of attention to the word. You feel, as you think of such an one, who is the object of your love, that you would give up your very heart if you could but have a hope of his ultimate salvation—but he seems to have gone too far. Now, you cannot get him to listen to the word. He is tonight—yes, good woman, your own husband—where is he? He is possibly in the gin palace, or even worse. You fear that at the very moment when you are sitting here, some for whom you have been pleading night and day are plunging deeper and deeper into sin and that when you reach home, the cross you will have to endure will be to hear hard things and bitter against the Savior whom you love, and to see and hear those dear to you thus penetrating further and further into the lairs of wickedness! Now, you see, you have a desperate case before you, and I

want, if God shall help me, just to push the text home. Christ says, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?" This death, this burial, this "stinking" of Lazarus—to use the expressive word of Martha—all this is only a platform for the divine glory to display itself! This horrible sin, this hardness of heart, this rejection of the Word of God—all this is only a stage upon which the grace of God, in answer to your prayerful faith, shall come and do its wonders!

Let me tell you what you will yet see if your faith is able to lay hold upon Christ. You will see *the conversion of these lost ones* and then you will see the glory of God, for you will say, "Could God have given His only-begotten Son instead of such sinners as these?" Did it never strike you as strange that there should be two—one, the perfectly holy Christ, the beloved Son of God and, on the other hand, a reeling, cursing, blaspheming drunk—and that God would sooner smite His Son than smite that drunk? That He should even grieve His Son and make Him smart, rather than that that blasphemer should smart? Truly, when the Jews made the choice of a robber rather than Christ, it was a strange choice and only to be understood by their wicked infatuation. But here, such is the power of God's love, that when one out of two must suffer, He chooses that the innocent Christ should suffer and that the drunken, blaspheming sinner should go free! Truly "God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

Look at it again. There is this great sinner whom we have been describing—is it not marvelous that Jesus Christ could really give Himself for such a one? He has been in prison, perhaps, two or three times, and he has done everything that is bad, and yet, oh, wonder of wonders—the Lord Jesus Christ gives Himself for him! Now, "scarcely for a righteous man would one die: perhaps for a good man one would even dare to die," but God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. What? Did Christ shed His blood for thieves, harlots, and drunks? Yes, sir, as much as for the self-righteous, and even more so, for while the self-righteous miss heaven by reason of their pride and refusal of His salvation, some of these, coming humbly to the cross, find pardon through the precious blood!

But it is a great wonder—and when a soul of this kind is converted you do see the glory of God! You do not understand the miracle of love it expresses, in that Christ could die for such a mass of spiritual corruption, as some of His creatures have really made themselves to be before they had been helped by sovereign grace to trust in Christ. As the glory of Christ's power was seen in Lazarus coming out of the grave, though He had been four days dead and was corrupt, so the same glory is seen in the conversion of every great sinner!

What? Does the former swearer pray? Yes, and prays better than half of us and much more earnestly! Oh, what depth of feeling, what groaning that cannot be uttered, comes welling up from his grateful, adoring heart. Does "the woman who was a sinner" love the Savior? Yes, and she washes His feet with her tears and wipes them with the hair of her head,

thus doing more for Christ than Simon did, whose guest He was, though he thought he had done so much. Ah, yes, grace can make bright saints out of black sinners, can take the very scum and dregs of Satan's dominions and make them into sparkling jewels to glitter in the crown of divine grace forever! It is wondrous what the grace of God can do! My dear hearer, if you should happen to feel yourself to be degraded by sin, do not give up! Do not think that Christ cannot save you! Do not let Satan tell you tonight that Christ can never save you! Look upon this case of Lazarus—"By this time he stinks, for he has been dead four days," and yet where the worm had been, where corruption had been, life came back at the Savior's word! And so shall it be with you. He can save you. He can save you now! He can save you from the blackest of your sins and make you sing His praises! The glory of God, then, is seen in the conversion of every sinner, but most conspicuously in the conversion of the chief of sinners!

And this glory is also seen in the fact that these sinners, when saved, hold on and continue to the end. I have sometimes heard it said of such a one, "Ah, he will never hold out!" I bless God that there have been so many whom God has blessed in this house who have held out year after year! Look over our church records—see the names of very nearly 3,600 souls associated here in church fellowship, and in a year how many are excommunicated for their sins? Why, enough to make us grieve, but so few that they make us wonder at the grace of God which keeps them! Many of them have been brought in while young and they have been exposed to many temptations—some plucked from the depths of sin—and yet they are an honor to the Christian Church of which they are members! And I can speak of them in every company into which I move and say that they honor Christ and prove the power of the gospel and the reality of conversion! Brothers and sisters, we see the glory of God, not only in the regenerating of those who were once great sinners, but even more remarkably displayed when we see that they do not go back to their old sins, but they have become such new creations that it is impossible for them to return to the old evil life and its evil loves and longings! So, then, it appears from the text that if we are praying for our friends, their present condition ought not to stagger us and, however bad their state may be, we should only hear the Savior telling us that He is making herein larger room for the display of His matchless grace! So we should be encouraged to pray more earnestly for such—rather than even for a moment to give them up as though such case were hopeless!

Now, who is it that sees the glory of God in the conversion of a soul? When a man has produced some masterpiece of art or other genius, he likes others to see it. Who are they who see great sinners when they are converted? Who are they? We read of one stone upon which were seven eyes. When such a sinner is saved, all eyes are set upon him. Why, *his neighbors see him*. Some of them hate the change, but they cannot help seeing it. When a great sinner is converted, beloved friends, his wife knows of it, his children know of it, his relatives know of it and it is a

matter of wonder to them all! "Oh," they say, "So-and-so has become a Christian." Very likely they say he has become a Methodist, or a "Spurgeonite," or some such ugly name. They are sure to call him by the name of the minister whom God has blessed to him. And then they talk of it in the workshop and he gets jeered at for it, but they say, "Ah, what is this? Here is a kind of religion come among us which really has power over people to alter their lives, which takes them out of the old ruts in which they were known to run and puts them on a new highway, and turns their minds in another direction! What is it?" So that friends and relatives see it and enemies see it, too, and, what is still more remarkable, it becomes a theme of *wonder in other worlds!* Devils see it and they do not like it—and they resolve to overthrow the man—but all the devils in hell cannot destroy a true child of God! You know Toplady's saying about the grace of God. He says it is like leaven—if you once get it into the cake you may boil it, you may fry it, you may bake it—but you cannot get it out! And so, once get the grace of God into a man's heart and you cannot get it out again! God does what the devil cannot undo when He makes "a new creature in Christ Jesus." And then the angels see it. We have God's Word for that, for we are told that they rejoice over one sinner that repents. A poor woman upstairs in an attic found the Savior and her finding the Savior affected three worlds in one moment! It made earth glad. It made hell howl with indignation, and it set heaven in a blaze of extraordinary joy! Do not the harps of the angels thrill with super-celestial harmonies when they hear of sinners being eternally saved? Do they not lift up a new paean, and yet more exalted praise unto Him who trod the wine-press alone, and of whose victory these souls are the reward?

Yes, earth, heaven and hell, all know of it! We know it for the text says, "Did I not say to you, that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?" It is a very great comfort in one's labors to see those who are truly converted. Of course, we ought to be able to work on and to believe in success even if we cannot yet see it, but it is a great delight to be privileged to see the sheaves cut and then carry them to the great husbandman and say, "That is a sheaf You gave me." I have heard of Mr. Matthew Wilks, the famous but eccentric preacher, being waited on by some of his very excellent and very proper members to reprove him for some of his quaint sayings. "Well," said Mr. Wilks, "if you will wait just a little, I will answer you." Going upstairs, he brought down a long roll which contained the names of those whom God had blessed and saved through his ministry. "Now," he said, "all these precious souls have been brought to God by these sermons which you feel moved to criticize. By the grace of God I will preach yet more of them!" And so may every minister say when God gives him success, for it strengthens him in his work! You dear Sunday school teachers who teach in your classes; you who distribute tracts; you who preach in the streets—if God gives you conversions, I am sure you will go on with your work! It will whet your

appetites! You will want more! You will never be satisfied, but will press on in your Master's service!

But now comes in an "if," and then I will leave this point. "Did I not say to you, *if* you would believe, you would see the glory of God"? That is the thing! Why is it that we are not more successful? It is because we do not *believe*. I heard a conversation the other day, something like this. A brother said—and a very excellent brother, too—"When I go into the pulpit I go hoping that perhaps God will bless the word that I am going to deliver, prayerfully seeking that He would do so, and feeling satisfied that it will be according to His mind and will and believing that if I preach the word, perhaps it will be blessed." Another brother said, "Well, my brother, I think you are right, but I do not go into the pulpit in that way at all." "How then?" asked the other. "Why," was the answer, "I go into the pulpit believing that God *is* going to save souls tonight, that I am going to be made by Him the instrument of it and I preach believing that while I am preaching, souls must and will be saved—that there is not a chance they *may* be, but they *will* be, that God's Word will not return unto Him void, but will prosper in the thing whereto He has sent it. I hope I am as humble as if it were a peradventure, but I am all the more earnest, I trust, because I feel certain that now souls will be blessed." Now, I do believe that God does bless in a very great measure according to what we believe will be the result and that if we can only stand and preach Christ, believing Christ will come to souls and souls will find Him, then the more of such faith that we have, the greater will be the results. Beloved, do we always pray in faith, as we ought? We pray here at every prayer-meeting that God would save souls—but do we believe that He certainly will hear us? If we do not, we shall lose the blessing. We must believe not only that God is, but that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, or we shall miss His blessing!

Oh, what a mercy to rise from your knees and say, "I have got it! I asked for souls and God has heard me—and I shall see my desire and be satisfied! I have prayed definitely for conversions, and conversions will be given me." Brothers and sisters, in such a church as this, where God is so manifestly and so marvelously working, we ought to be forever expecting conversions!

You Christian people, as you sit in the pews should be looking out for God to bless your friends, believing that your dear children will manifest the first signs of His gracious saving power. Then should you encourage these seedlings of promise and put the young plants in the hothouse of deep love during the winter of their conviction, so that they may not be withered or blighted, but come to be plants of God's right hand planting! Expect the blessing! It is coming! It is coming! God is blessing His church and He intends to bless it yet more. He has opened the windows of heaven and He is pouring out the blessing so that we have not room enough to receive it! We have not even now room enough to receive the hearers—the day is coming when we shall not have room enough to hold the church! Only let us pray and work—and God, even our own God, will

bless us and bless His other churches, too—and the ends of the earth shall fear Him! So you see, then, the whole matter is if you can believe. Now, Mother, can you believe about your child? Now, good woman, can you believe about your husband? Now, my brother, can you believe about your wife? May God help you to believe Him! Depend upon it, the struggle is there. It is much harder for you to believe in God than it is for God to convert your wife, much harder for you to trust God about your child than it is for Him to save your child! It is much easier for God to save the harlot, the drunk, the thief, than it is for us to think He will do it! But when we can believe in Him and, believing, boldly pray for it *and expect it*, we shall get it, and he that was repulsive but yesterday shall be fragrant with divine grace tomorrow! He that rotted in his tomb but the other day, so far gone that men turned away from him, shall come into the midst of God's church, be found among the living in Zion and make the church on earth and the church in heaven glad in his society! But now we must have a few minutes in which to use the text for—

II. THE COMFORT AND BLESSING OF THOSE WHO ARE NOT THEMSELVES SAVED.

I do not suppose, dear friends—speaking to those of you who are awakened and quickened in your consciences—I do not suppose I could give a descriptive character of you which you would think to be too bad. You once thought yourselves very good and excellent, but it is quite a different tale with you now. God the Holy Spirit has met with you and made you see yourselves—and now you are ashamed of yourselves. You feel as if you were dead, as if you had no power, no life.

You feel more, you seem as if you were buried. Satan tells you that there is no hope for such as you are and you feel as if you were like Lazarus, really corrupt in soul, so that you cannot sometimes endure yourselves. You cannot sleep at night—your fears distract you. You are afraid that God will do with you as Abraham did with his dead, that is, bury you out of His sight. I have known many like you and whenever I have met with them, I have been glad, for I have always felt that God was about to bless them when they could never stand, much less, bless themselves! It was just then, when they thought so badly of themselves, that God thought well of them. Now, dear friends, I say I cannot describe your condition as being worse than you really think it to be, for you really now feel yourselves to be about as bad as a person could ever be. Now, what about you? Why, this—that the badness of your present condition is no barrier whatever to your salvation if you can now, enabled by divine grace, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you! I will not enter into your past life, or into your present state. We will suppose both to be outrageously bad, if you like. You may say that you have no feeling, no sensibility—that you cannot repent and a great many other things. But now, can you believe that Christ can save you? Can you trust Him to do it? If you can, then all there is of hardness in you—even if it were ten times more—could not keep you out of heaven! “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red

like crimson, they shall be as wool." If your heart is hard, pardoning love can melt it! If you have no repentance, Christ is exalted on high to give repentance! If your will is stubborn, He can make you willing in the day of His power! Can you believe this? Have you not heard the story? It was God, Himself, who died on Calvary! It was none other than that same One who made the heavens, who came down on earth and became a man for the sake of men—and on the bloody tree expired in extreme agonies! He, "very God of very God," though a man like you died that sin might be put away and that sinners might be saved!

Sinner, can you believe this? Can you trust Him? "Yes, I should trust Him," says one, "but I cannot." I do not mean what you can do, but can you trust *Him* to do? Can you believe? For if you will believe on Him, you shall see the glory of God. "But I cannot see." No! No! No! It does not say if you can *see*, but if you *believe*, you *would* see! Believing comes first, and then the seeing follows! And what is it you are to see? The glory of God! Now, supposing you were a very good sort of person and had not any sin, it would not be much glory to God to save you. Why, you would not need saving—you could save yourselves, or there would be nothing from which to be saved! What glory would then be His? But if, on the other hand, you can see nothing to nurture it—then, in your wondrous salvation would the glory of God be gloriously seen! You, and others, too, would see God saving you in spite of your sin, in the teeth of your soul's corruption and in defiance of all the powers of evil! Such a sight of God's glory will make it impossible for a single note of praise to be given to yourselves, but all the glory, all the glory shall be to His rich, all-conquering, sovereign grace!

Now, can you believe this? Can you trust Jesus Christ, alone, to utterly save you? Sink or swim, can you throw yourself into the sea of Jesus' love? Now, can you just give yourself up to Christ to save you, for if you will believe, you shall see the glory of God. You shall see that glory in your pardon, in your new creation, in your being sustained under temptation, in your being kept in the hours of life, in the night of death, in your being lifted up at the Day of Judgment to receive an acquittal and in your being presented faultless before His presence with exceedingly great joy! Mercy, in her dream—if you remember—laughed, and when Christiana asked her why she laughed, she said it was because of what she had dreamed. Now, verily, I have known what it is to laugh in the same way. I have thought of myself as black, defiled, corrupt, unworthy. And then I have thought of myself as one day wearing a crown, of waving a palm branch, of bowing before the eternal throne of God, having neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing—and, verily, I have seemed to laugh that that should ever be true and my soul has leaped at the very thought that I—yes I, shall tread the streets of gold, passing through the gates of pearl and see *His* face and bow before *Him*—I, who was once filled with sin and corruption, filled to the brim with the vision of God! And, brothers and sisters, we will meet there and what a wonder it will be that we should ever get there! Do you not think they will sometimes

say to one another in heaven, "I remember—it is almost enough to make me weep to remember—when I stood in the tavern and made others laugh at a lascivious jest and when I could sing a merry song. Oh, how different from the song that now engages this happy heart and from the music that comes from these blessed strings!" And do you not think that another will say, "And I remember haunts of wickedness and vice that dare not be mentioned here, but I am washed!" And oh, when they think of that, they will strike up again the grand old song that will always be new—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever." I am of the same mind as the good old soul who said that if Jesus Christ ever took her to heaven, He would never hear the last of it. And He never will!—

***"I'll praise Him in life, I'll praise Him in death,
I'll praise Him as long as He lends me breath!
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."***

Yes, and up there in heaven we shall still praise Him! We shall not have time to think of anybody else, nor to think of any but our Lord—

***"Jesus sought me when a stranger
Wandering from the fold of God.
He to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood."***

"Why, if an angel had come to me 17 years ago and had said to me, "Now, my lad, get up from that bedside"—there was I, about that time, on my knees before God, with many tears, thinking that I should never be saved. I had longed and entreated for mercy from my childhood, without having any comfortable answer. And I considered that I was among the reprobate and was meant to illustrate forever the justice of God in hell—if, I say, an angel had come to me at that time and said, "Come, my lad, you will one day preach the Gospel to thousands of sinners, and tell them what a dear Savior you have found"—do you think I would have believed him? "No," I would have said, "that will never be." Why, it is such a change for me to be here talking to you from being there, afraid of the wrath of God, that I do not know how to talk of it! But oh, that is nothing! That is no change at all compared with our being taken away to heaven! With our being taken up where angels dwell! Above all, where He dwells, that Blessed One whom, though we have not seen, we love and unceasingly adore, to be in His bosom forever, to be kissed with the kisses of His mouth, to be His dear ones, to live in His Father's house where the many mansions are! Oh, the glory of God! What a sight that will be! And, sinner, if you will believe, you shall see it! Where did you come from tonight? Where are you going when you leave this service? I hope you will leave a different man, a different woman! If you will believe, you shall see the glory of God! Oh, may the Holy Spirit constrain you to believe tonight! May this be the time when you shall come empty-handed and take Christ to be your all-in-all! May this be the instant when you shall be done with your self-righteousness, when you will give up trying to save yourself and come and rest where God would have you rest—in

the blood of His dear Son! In His death! His resurrection! In His intercession before the throne of God!

Oh, come, sinner! God help you to come! Come! All black and ruined, come! All lost and defiled, come! Though you are as one dead, no, like Lazarus rotting in the tomb of your sins, "Awake, you that sleep, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light!" In the name of Jesus, thus I speak to you, and He speaks to you through me. Come forth! Come forth! You corrupting Lazarus, come forth! 'Tis Jesus bids you come! Trust Him! He bids you trust Him, and whoever trusts Him shall see the glory of God forever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 11:1-26.**

Verse 1. *Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister, Martha.* In God's book, towns are most remarkable for saints that dwell in them. "The town of Mary and her sister, Martha." A day will come when a city shall be more illustrious for a saint than for a Caesar—be more renowned for deeds of faith than for deeds of battle! It was "the town of Mary and her sister, Martha."

2, 3. *(It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick). Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.* They did not say anymore. They felt that it was quite enough to tell Him that Lazarus was sick. They left it to the tender heart of Jesus to do whatever seemed good in His sight. Some prayers would be all the better if they were shorter—all the better if they did not so much declare our own will as declare our confidence in the good will of Christ! I like the omissions of Martha's and Mary's prayer.

4. *When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.* Our Savior speaks in a different style from us. We would have said that the sickness was unto death, but, ultimately, to the glory of God. But He who sees the end from the beginning speaks with grandeur of style which could not be imitated by us! So the Lord speaks of things, not as they seem to be, nor even as they are in the present moment, but as they shall be in the long run—"Not unto death, but that the Son of God might be glorified."

5. *Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus.* Yet Lazarus died. Jesus loved Lazarus, yet Lazarus was sick. Jesus was not of that cruel sort of people, of whom we have some in these days, who call themselves saints, and who attribute all sickness among God's people to their sin or to their lack of faith. Not He! Here was one that was sick, but Jesus loved him just as much for all that.

6. *When He had heard, therefore, that he was sick, He abode two days, still, in the same place where He was.* Notice the connection. "Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus"—and yet when He had heard that

Lazarus was sick, "He abode two days, still, in the same place where He was." Sometimes true love may think fit to make us wait. It may be the truest love on God's part to let us lie sick and not to come post-haste to us to make us well. Yes, the truest love may demand that the sickness should turn to death, for out of the death He may bring the greater glory. The Lord acts not upon the scale of man, for He sees not as man sees. He sees the end as well as the beginning.

7. *Then after that He said to His disciples, Let us go into Judaea again—and that because He loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus! If that love in its wisdom made Him tarry, yet that love in its sincerity at last moved Him to seek the house of grief.*

8, 9. *The disciples said to Him, Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? Is there not a time in which the sun will not go down—in which it is safe and right for men to work?*

9, 10. *If any man walks in the day, he stumbles not, because he sees the light of this world. But if a man walks in the night, he stumbles because there is no light in him.* There is a singular turn, is there not, in that expression? We expected it to be, "Because he sees not the light of the world," instead of which the Savior says, "Because there is no light in him"—because in spiritual things our light not only comes from above, but it shines *within*—and without that inner light we are sure to stumble.

11. *These things said He: and after that He said unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.* It is the Savior's way to use terms concerning His miracles, which, so far from exaggerating them, even appear to depreciate them. He is about to raise a man from the dead, but He says, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." I am afraid that our tendency is always to describe our actions in the largest possible terms consistent with truth, perhaps sometimes forgetting those last words. But the Savior describes truthfully what He does, but still in terms which, like His humanity, seem to veil the glory. Wonderfully condescending is it of Him to speak thus—

12. *Then said His disciples, Lord, if He sleeps, He shall do well.* It is considered to be a sign of getting better when a patient can sleep.

13-16. *However Jesus spoke of his death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent you may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with Him.* A singular mixture of faith and unbelief! He so believes his Master that he is willing to die with Him. He so doubts Him that, although the Savior had plainly told him that He was immortal till His work was done, yet he is afraid that His Master and all of them will be put to death. Oh, the Lord knows us better than we know ourselves—and the Lord accepts us notwithstanding our infirmities.

17. *Then when Jesus came, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already.* So that he was probably dead as soon as the messengers arrived to tell the Savior that he was ill.

18. *Now Bethany was near unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.* Just a nice little walk which our Savior had often taken in the evening after the toils of the day in Jerusalem. He had loved to make Bethany His quiet resting place. "Fifteen furlongs off."

19-20. *And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him: but Mary sat still in the house.* Because she had not heard that Jesus was come, or else, no doubt, she would have been there as soon as Martha.

21. *Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died.* They had often said to one another, "Oh, we wish the Lord would come." They had sent for Him. They felt sure that He would come. But, alas, their brother had died before the Master had arrived—and now this thought which was uppermost in their hearts is uppermost in their speech, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died."

22. *But I know that even now, whatever You will ask of God, God will give it to You.* There is faith there, and there is unbelief, too. She believes that Christ can have what He wills of God, but she does not recognize His own personal Godhead—His own power to work resurrection.

23-26. *Jesus said unto her, Your brother shall rise again. Martha said unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?* She looked upon the resurrection and the life as things that were to be in some dim and misty future. "No," says Christ, "I am the resurrection and the life. Not only do I get these things by prayer from God, but I *am* these things." And then He goes on to explain it. He says, "I am the resurrection. He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. I am the life. Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" He has taken her out of the thought of this poor common animal-life into the thought of the spiritual and higher life, which is, indeed, to the soul what the resurrection is to the body! It was well for the Savior thus to teach her higher truth than as yet she knew.

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“THE STAR OUT OF JACOB”

NO. 3343

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“There shall come a Star out of Jacob.”
Numbers 24:17.

THIS prophecy may have some reference to David, but we feel persuaded that the true design of the Holy Spirit is to set forth an emblem of our Lord Jesus Christ. All nature, above as well as around us, is laid under contribution to set forth our Lord. All the flowers of the field and many of the beasts of the plain—and now the very orbs of heaven—are turned into metaphors and symbols by which the glory of Jesus may be manifested to us! Where God takes such pains to teach, we ought to be at pains to learn. Where He makes heaven and earth to be the pages of the book, we ought to be most ardent in our study. Oh, you who have neglected to learn of Christ, may that neglect come to an end and may some word be spoken which shall be as the beaming of a star unto the darkness of your soul, that henceforth you may be led to know Christ and to be found in Him!

Our Lord, then, is compared to a star, and we shall have seven reasons to assign for this. He is called a Star as—

I. THE SYMBOL OF GOVERNMENT.

You will observe how evidently it is connected with a scepter and with a conqueror. Jacob was to be blessed with a valiant leader who should become a triumphant sovereign. Very frequently in Oriental literature, their great men, and especially their great deliverers, are called stars. The star has been constantly associated with monarchy and even in our own country we still look upon the star as one of the emblems of lofty rank. Behold, then, our Lord Jesus Christ as the Star of Jacob! He is the Captain of His people, the leader of the Lord's hosts, the King in Jeshurun, God over all, glorious and blessed forever!

We may say of Jesus in this respect that He has an authority which *He has inherited by right*. He made all things and by Him all things consist. It is but just that He should rule over all things. As there is not a tongue that can move in heaven or earth except by His permission, it is right that every tongue should confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father! Oh, that men were just towards the Son of God! Would that their rebellious souls would give way to the force of rectitude—that they would no longer say, “Let us break His bonds asunder and cast His cords from us!” Unconverted men and women, I would that you would yield to Jesus. He has a right to you. It is through His intercession that your forfeited life is still spared! It is by His divine goodness that you are where you are tonight. Through His mediatorial sovereignty it is that you

are allowed to be on praying ground and pleading terms with God! Give Him His due then. Rob Him not of the allegiance which He so justly claims. Give not your spirit over to that exacting tyrant who seeks to compass your destruction! Bow the knee and kiss the Son, even now, lest He be angry and you perish from the way. Acknowledge Him to be your Lord!

Our Lord as a star has an authority which He has valiantly won. Wherever Christ is king, He has had a great and a stern fight for it. Remember the dread conflict in Gethsemane in which He said, “I have trodden the wine press alone.” When He came red with His own gore from Calvary, He had, in fact, then and there put to flight the hosts of Bozrah and of Edom and stained His garments with the victor’s crimson! He who, then, traveled in the greatness of His strength is still mighty to save. In every human heart where Jesus reigns, He reigns through having dislodged, by the force of grace, the old tyrant who had fixed his sovereignty there. The maintenance of that sovereignty within the heart is the result of the same powerful scepter of His love and grace. Oh, that King Jesus would put forth His power and get a throne in more hearts! Believers, do you not long to see Him glorious? I know you do if you love Him! You would live for this, you would die for this—that Christ might have His own and drive the milk-white steeds of triumph through the streets of Jerusalem, all His people bowing before Him and strewing His pathway with their honors! O sinners, would to God that you would yield to Him! I pray that now He may gird His sword upon His thigh and by the power of grace constrain you to bow your willing necks to His silver scepter! Brothers and sisters, it is a mournful fact that Christ has so small a part of the world as yet in His royal power. Look, the gods of the heathen stand fast upon their pedestals! The old harlot of Rome still flaunts in her scarlet! The crescent of Mohammad wanes, but still its baleful light is cast throughout the nations! Why does He tarry? Perhaps His finger is on the latch. It may be that He will come before long. Come quickly, Lord! Our yearning hearts beseech You to come! Meanwhile, it is for you and for me to be fighting, each soldier in his rank, each of us standing in his place, as his Master has bidden us, contending with heart and soul and strength for the right and for the true, for faith, for holiness, for the cross and all that that cross indicates among the sons of men! Blessed Star of Jacob! You shine with no borrowed rays! You shine with a mysterious power which none gave to You, for it is inherently Your own.

Before we leave this point, I will only say this kingdom of Christ, *wherever it is, is most beneficent*. Wherever this star of government shines, its rays scatter blessings! Jesus is no tyrant. He rules not by oppression. The force He uses is the force of love. There was never a subject of Christ’s kingdom that complained of Him. Those who have served Him most have longed to serve Him more! Why, even His poor martyrs in the catacombs of Rome, dying of starvation, or dragged up to the Coliseum to be devoured by wild beasts, never said an ill-word of Him. Certainly if it were difficult to any, it seems it would be hard to

them—but the more they were troubled, the more they rejoiced—and there never were sweeter songs than those which came from dying lips when men were crackling on the firewood, or being dragged limb from limb at the heels of wild horses, or being sawn asunder! Just in proportion as the bodily pains became acute, the spiritual joy became intense! And while the outward man decayed, the inner man leaped up into newness of life, anticipating the joys of the first-born before the throne of God! He is a good Master. Young people, I would that you would serve Him! Oh, that you were enlisted in His service. It is now a good many years since I gave my heart to Him—it is fast coming on 20 years, but I cannot say a word against Him! No, but I wish I had always served Him! I wish I had served Him, before, and I pray that He may use me to the fullest extent. If He will make but a doormat for His temple of me, I shall be but too glad. If He will let my name be cast out as evil and give my body to the dogs, I do not care, so long as His truth does but prosper and His name becomes great! But alas, there is so much self in us, pride and I know not what besides, that we who really know the Master, have reason to ask Him to bring in His great artillery and blow down the castles of our natural corruption—conquer us yet again, and rule in us by main force of grace, till in every part and corner of our spirits there shall be nothing but the love of Christ and the indwelling of His gracious Spirit! By the star we understand the symbol of government. In the second place, the star is—

II. THE IMAGE OF BRIGHTNESS.

When men wish to speak of brightness they talk of the stars. They who are righteous are as the stars and they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever! Our Lord Jesus Christ is brightness itself! The star is but a poor setting forth of His ineffable splendor. Oh, let the thought come home to you. He is the brightness of His Father's glory—unutterably bright as the deity. He is brightness Himself in His human nature, for in Him there was neither spot nor wrinkle. As mediator, exalted on high, enjoying the reward of His pains, He is bright indeed! Observe that our Lord as a star is a bright particular star in the matter of holiness. In Him was no sin. Look, and look, and look again into His star-like character. Even the lynx-eyes of infidels have not been able to discover a mistake in Him! And as for the attentive eyes of critics who have been believers, they have been made to water again and again—and then to glisten and sparkle with delight as they have seen the mingling of all the perfections in His adorable character to make up one perfection!

As a star, He shines also with the light of knowledge. Moses was, as it were, but a mist, but Christ is the prophet of light. “The law was given by Moses”—a thing of types and shadows—“but grace and truth come by Jesus Christ.” If any man is taught in the things of God, he must derive his light from the Star of Bethlehem. You may go as you will to the universities, to the tomes of the learned, to the schools of the philosophers, but in spiritual things you receive no light till you look up to Jesus! And then in His light you see light, for there is transcendent

brightness in Him. He is the wisdom of God as well as the power of God. He is the way, the truth and the life! Divine light has found its center in Him!

His light, too, is that of comfort. Oh, how many have emerged from the darkness of their souls and found peace by looking up to this Star of Jacob, the Lord Jesus Christ! Well did our hymn put it—

***"He is my soul's bright Morning Star,
And He my Rising Sun."***

One glimpse of Christ and the midnight of your unbelief is over. But a sight of the five wounds and your sins are covered and your iniquities put away. Happy day, happy day, when first the soul beholds a crucified Redeemer and gives herself up to Him, relying upon Him for eternal salvation! Shine, sweet Star—shine into some benighted heart tonight! Give holiness, give light, give the knowledge of God, give joy and peace in believing, in believing in the precious blood!

When speaking upon Christ as a star, "the symbol of government," I said, submit to Him. Now, speaking of Him as a Star, the image of brightness, I say, look to Him—look to Him! It is the gospel's precept, "Look unto Me, and be you saved all you ends of the earth," and well do we sing—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One."

Poor sinner, delay no longer! You are not asked to *do* anything, or to *be* anything, or to *feel* anything! You are simply bid to look away from self to what Christ has done, and you shall live—

***"View Him prostrate in the garden,
On the ground your Maker lies!
On the bloody tree behold Him,
Hear Him cry before He dies—
'It is finished!'
Sinner, will not this suffice?"***

Look to Him, then, and live! Thirdly, our Lord is compared to a star to bring out the fact that—

III. HE IS THE PATTERN OF CONSTANCY.

Ten thousand changes have been worked since the world began, but the stars have not changed. There they remain. We dreamed at one time that they moved. Untaught imagination said that all those stars revolved around this little globe of ours. But we know better now. There they are both day and night—always the same—and we may say they have not changed since the world began, nor probably will they till, like a vesture, God shall roll up creation because it is worn out. It is very delightful to recollect that the same star which I looked at last night was viewed by Abraham, perhaps with some of the same thoughts! And when we have gone and other generations shall have followed us, those that come after will look up to the same star! So with our Lord Jesus; He is the same yesterday, today and forever. What the prophets and apostles saw in Him, we can see in Him! And what He was to them, that He is to us and shall be to generations yet unborn! Hundreds of us may be looking at the same star at the same time without knowing it. There is a meeting place for many eyes. We may be drifted, some of us, to Australia, or to Canada, or to the United States. Or we may be sailing across the great deep, but

we shall see the stars there. It is true that on the other side of the world we shall see another set of stars, but the stars, themselves, are always the same. As long as we who are in this hemisphere are concerned, we shall look upon the same star. So, wherever we may be, we look to the same Christ. One brother here has learning, but as he looks to Christ, he sees the same Christ as the poor unlettered woman in the aisles. And you, poor man, who have not, perhaps, a sixpence in the world, you have got the same Christ to trust in as the richest man in the entire world! And you who think yourself so obscure that no one knows you but your God, you look to this same star, and it shines with the same beams for you, as for the Christian who leads the van in the Lord's hosts! Jesus Christ is still the same, the same to all His people, the same in all places, the same forever and ever! Well, therefore, may He be compared to those bright stars that shine now as they did of old and change not! In the fourth place, we may trace this comparison of our Lord to a star as—

IV. THE FOUNTAIN OF INFLUENCE.

The old astrologers used to believe very strongly in the influence of the stars upon men's minds. Without endorsing their exploded theories, we meet in Scripture with expressions like this—"Can you bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion?"—alluding, no doubt, to the fact that the Pleiades are in the ascendant in the sweet months of spring when the warm breath and gentle showers are bringing forth the green sprout and tender blade, the foliage and the flowers of May with all the loveliness of the season. While Orion is in the ascendant as a wintry sign, when the bands of frost are binding up the outburst of nature. But, whether there is an influence in the stars or not, as touching this world, I know there is great influence in Christ Jesus! He is the fountain of all holy influences among the sons of men. Where this star shines upon the graves of men who are dead in sin, they begin to live! Where the beam of this star shines upon poor imprisoned spirits, their chains drop off, the captive leaps to lose his chains! When this star gleams upon a burdened Christian with its light, he begins to bud and blossom and precious fruits are brought forth! When this star shines upon the backslider, he begins to mend his ways and to follow, like the eastern sages, its light till he finds his Savior once more! This star has an influence upon our nativity. It is through its benign rays that we are born-again and in our destiny it has an influence upon our death, for it is in its light that we fall asleep, believing that we shall wake up in the image of the Lord Jesus! Oh, sweet star, shine on me always! Never let me miss Your rays, but may I always walk in the light thereof, till I am found sitting in the full noontide heat of the Sun of Righteousness forever and ever! In the fifth place, the Lord Jesus Christ may be compared to a star—

V. AS A SOURCE OF GUIDANCE.

There are some of the stars that are extremely useful to sailors. I scarcely know how else the great wide sea would be navigated, especially if it were not for the polar star. Jesus is the polar star to us. How the poor Negro in the olden times, when the curse of slavery had not been

taken away, must have blessed God for that polar star—so easy to find; any child with but a moment’s teaching will soon know how to discover it in the midst of its fellows at night. And when the Negro had once learned to distinguish the star that shone over the land of freedom, how he followed it through the great dismal swamps, or along the plains which were still more dreadful! How he could ford the streams and climb the mountains, always cheered by the sight of that polar star. Such is Jesus Christ to the seeker! He leads to liberty. He conducts to peace. Oh, I wish you would follow Him, some of you who are going about a thousand ways to find peace where you will never find it! There is never a Sunday but I try to speak, sometimes in gentler tones, and at other seasons with thundering notes, the simple truth that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I try to make it plain to you that it is not your prayers and tears, your doings, your willings, your ANYTHING that can save you—but that all your help is laid upon One who is mighty and that you must look alone to Him! Yet, sinners, you are still looking to yourselves! You rake the dunghills of your human nature to find the pearl of great price which is not there! You will look beneath the ice of your natural depravity to find the flame of comfort which is not there! You might as well seek in hell, itself, to find heaven as look to your own works and merits to find some ground of trust! Down with them! Down with them, every one of them! Away with all those confidences of yours, for—

**“None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good!”**

Just reverse that helm and shift that sail, and tack about! Follow not the wrecker’s beacon on yonder shore luring you to the rocks of self-delusion, but where that pole star guides, there let your vessel sail and pray for the favoring gales of the blessed Spirit to guide you rightly to the port of peace. Our Lord is compared to a star, surely—

VI. AS THE OBJECT OF WONDER.

One of the first lines which full many of you ever learned to recite was—

**“Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.”**

But that is precisely what Galileo might have said and exactly what the greatest astronomer that ever lived might say. You have sometimes looked through a telescope and have seen the planets, but after you have looked at them you do not know much about them—and those who are busy all day and all night long taking constant observations, I think, will tell you that the result is rather that of astonishment than of intelligence. Still, it is—

“How I wonder what you are.”

So to those of us who are in Christ Jesus, He is a peerless star! But oh, brothers and sisters, we may well wonder what He is! We used to think, when we were little ones that the stars were holes pricked in the skies through which the light of heaven shone, or that they were little pieces of gold dust that God had strewn about. We do not think so now. We understand that they are much greater than they look to be. So, when we were carnal, and did not know King Jesus, we esteemed Him to be very

much like anybody else—but now that we begin to know Him, we find out that He is much greater, infinitely greater than we thought He was! And as we grow in grace, we find Him to be still more glorious! A little star to our view at first, He has grown in our estimation into a sun, now, a blazing sun by whose beams our soul is refreshed! Ah, but when we get near to Him, what will He be? Imagine yourself borne up on an angel's wing to take a journey to a star. Traveling at an inconceivable rate, you open your eyes all of a sudden and say, "How wonderful! Why, that which was a star just now has become as large to my vision as the sun at noon!" "Stop," says the angel, "you shall see greater things than these," and, as you speed on, the disc of that orb increases till it is equal to a hundred suns! And now you say, "But what? Am I not near it now?" "No," says the angel, "that enormous globe is still far, far away," and when you come to it, you would find it to be such a wondrous world that arithmetic could not compute its size! Scarcely could imagination belt it with the zone of fancy. Now, such is Jesus Christ! I said He grows upon His people here, but what must it be to see Him there where the veil is lifted and we behold Him face to face? Sometimes we long to find out what that star is, to know Him, to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge—but, meanwhile, we are compelled to sit down and sing—

***"God only knows the love of God—
Oh that it now were shed abroad
In this poor stony heart!"***

We have to confess that—

***"The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depth to see!
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, the breadth, the height!"***

But, to conclude, the metaphor used in the text may well bear this seventh signification. Our Lord is compared to a star as—

VII. HE IS THE HERALD OF GLORY.

The bright and morning star foretells that the sun is on its way to gladden the earth with its light. Wherever Jesus comes, He is a great prophet of Good. Let Him come into a heart and, as soon as He appears, you may rest assured that there is a life of eternity and joy to come! Let Jesus Christ come into a family and what changes He makes there! Let Him be preached with power in any town or city and what a herald of good things He is there! To the whole world, Christ has proclaimed glad tidings. His coming has been fraught with benedictions to the sons of men. Yes, the coming of Christ in the flesh is the great prophecy of the glory to be revealed in the latter days, when all nations shall bow before Him and the age of peace, the golden age, shall come—not because civilization has advanced, not because education has increased, or the world grown better—but because Christ has come! This is the first, the fairest of the stars, the prognostic of the dawn.

Yes, and because Christ has come, there will be a heaven for the sons of men who believe in Him. Sons of toil, because Christ has come, there shall be rest for the weary! Daughters of sorrow, because Christ has

come, there shall be healing for the weak! O you whom chill penury is bowing down, there shall be lifting up and sacred wealth for you because the star has shone! Hope on! Hope always! Now that Jesus has come, there is no room for despair!

I commend these thoughts to you and earnestly ask you once again, if you have never looked to Christ, trust in Him now! If you have never submitted to Jesus, submit to Him now! If you have never confided in Him, confide in Him now! It is a very simple matter. May God the Holy Spirit teach and guide you to disown yourselves and to acknowledge Him. Cease from your own thoughts and trust His word. This done by you all, there is proof positive that all is done for you by Christ. You are His and He is yours—where He is, shall your portion be—and you shall be like He, for you shall see Him as He is! It will be a day to be had in remembrance if you are now led to give yourselves to Him. I well recollect when my heart yielded to His Divine grace—when I could no longer look anywhere else and was compelled to look to Him! Oh, come to Him! I know not what words to use, or what persuasions to employ. For your own sake, that you may be happy now! For eternity’s sake, that you may be happy hereafter! For terror’s sake, that you may escape from hell! For mercy’s sake, that you may enter into heaven, look to Jesus! You may never be bidden to do so again. This bidding may be the last, the concluding measure which shall fill up the heap of your guilt because you reject it. Oh, do not despise the exhortation. Let the prayer go up quietly now from your spirit, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” Let your soul wrestle vehemently. Let your tongue utter its mighty resolve—

***“I’ll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives.
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives!
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 the King have tried—
That were to die, delightful thought,
As sinner never died!”***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 15:1-24.**

Verse 1. *Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him.* They were drawing near. It was not an unusual occurrence. It was their habit to draw near to Christ. The Pharisees and Scribes stood in the outer ring. They did not come too near. These poor outcasts and publicans and sinners drew near. They wanted to catch every word. They could not have too much of it. They took a delight in getting near to His blessed person. They drew near to hear Him.

2. *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receives sinners, and eats with them.* The sinful, known to be so; this man

receives them, welcomes them, admits them to an intimacy with Him. What is worse, He eats with them! To teach them is bad enough, but to sit at the same table with them, making Himself their company, and making them His company—this is worse than worse! And so they murmured. I am very glad that they did. We owe a great deal to the murmurings of the proud Pharisee, for our Lord graciously answered those murmurings and then He gave us some of the choicest jewels of speech that are preserved in the treasury of knowledge!

3. *And He spoke this parable unto them, saying.* So it is only one parable, yet it is three. Three panels making one picture. The whole three are necessary to make up all His teaching.

4. *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he finds it?* He is justifying His looking for the lost ones. Their accusation was that He received the sinful and false, and ate with them. “Well, well,” says Christ, “I do that, but I am a shepherd, and if I have lost one of My sheep, do you blame Me if I leave the flock to go after the lost sheep?” “And he goes after that which is lost until he finds it.”

5, 6. *And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.* A true picture of Christ going after those who are willful and wayward and, therefore, have taken to wandering till they are lost—lost to God, lost to society, lost to usefulness, lost to happiness—perhaps lost to hope. He goes after them. That is, in His life. He throws them on His shoulders in His death. He will bring them home rejoicing by His resurrection life and then throughout eternity He will make the glorified spirits in heaven glad by showing them the sheep that was lost, the soul that was saved!

7. *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.* If there is such, if there is some that have never wandered and who belong to the flock, yet the flock, itself, does not, of itself, cause any great exuberance of joy. The overflow of delight is caused by the lost sheep when it is found! A church of godly people will give great content to Christ, but still, if there is any bell ringing, any sound of joy and gladness, it will be over the wandering one that has been restored! Here you have the Son of God, Himself, and His relation to the wandering souls of men. He is their shepherd! He seeks them! He brings them back to the fold and He is glad! Now comes the second panel of the picture.

8-10. *Or what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repents.* In this second picture you have the Holy Spirit working through the Church, compared to a woman.

She has lost her piece of money. She gets the candle of the gospel. She takes the broom of the law—she sweeps and searches, she raises dust, she expends her candle till she finds her piece of money. You notice that she blames herself for its being lost, for she says, “I have found the piece which I had lost.” The shepherd did not say that of the sheep. He said, “The sheep that was lost.” That was its own doing. The church of God seems to blame herself that she has lost her hold upon so many who once belonged to her. The Holy Spirit, through the church, seeks after lost souls who bear the image of the King upon them, like minted pieces of silver. It is a wonderful verse which is repeated here. “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God.” It does not say that the angels rejoice. It means that—but there is joy in their presence. Who is in their presence but God, Himself? The great and blessed God, whose throne they continually surround, in whose face they see joy over saved souls! And notice the joy is about one sinner—a sinner. That is all we know about him. He may have been as poor as a church mouse and he may have made himself sick unto death by his vice. There was joy over him when he repented. It was only one! It was not a batch of twenty. It was not a large number converted—there is joy over one sinner. What had he done? Built a church? No. Preached a sermon? No. He had repented! That is all, but that is quite enough to set all the music of the angels’ harps pouring forth the praise of God! “One sinner that repents.”

11. *And He said*—and here comes the greatest of all the parables, the most instructive, perhaps, and the best loved of them all! In these parables we do not find anything about a Savior, a mediator. Did you ever read a parable that contained all the truth of God? If any man were to try and make a parable that contained all truths of God at once, verily I say unto you, he would be a fool! He must fail, and fail in his object of teaching anything—

***“One thing at a time, and that done well,
Is a very good rule as many can tell.”***

And to teach one truth at a time is quite sufficient. It is true that the parable that we are going to read says nothing about a mediator, and it does not say anything about the father seeking his lost son, not a word. No work of the Holy Spirit. It is meant to teach one thing—and it does teach it! And if it does not teach 50 things, do not imagine that the other 49 are not true!

11, 12. *A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.* He would have that when His father died. Does he demand to have his heritage in his father’s life-time? Yes, he does. It is an unreasonable demand. Yet—

12. *And he divided unto them his living.* He was of a gentle mold, of a kindly heart. He did not want to have a son stay with him like a slave. He must be served willingly or not at all—so he divided to them his living.

13. *And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together.* He turned the sheep and the stock and everything into money.

13. *And took his journey into a far country.* We do not know where it was. It does not matter, it was a far country. He wanted to get away from

his father, from his authority, from his observation. He went into a far country.

13. *And there wasted his substance with riotous living.* What he did I do not know. His elder brother had heard some very bad stories about him which we shall see at the end of the chapter. They may not, however, have been all true, for rumor is greatly given to exaggeration. Beware of this exaggeration, especially of the follies of others!

14. *And when he had spent all.* Got to his last penny.

14. *There arose a mighty famine in that land.* Famines generally come when one's money is all gone. He might not have feared a famine if he had still been wealthy. The two things come together, the two seas meet. He had spent all and now there was a famine.

14. *And he began to be in need.* The first time in his life; he had always had everything he wanted, but now he began to be in want. It is an ugly kind of feeling when, for the first time, you cannot buy a loaf of bread. When, for the first time, you cannot get a night's lodging for love or money—and have not any money and nobody gives you any love. He began to be in need.

15. *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country.* I dare say he was a member of the same company that he belonged to. He went to him and said, “Now help me. You have many a time enjoyed yourself at my house. You have drunk my champagne, now help me. I am in trouble.” Well, he had a berth empty and that was to keep his pigs—the very worst thing a Jew could do—and what a Jew would never do unless he was starving.

15. *And he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* “There is a job for you! You need a job? Go into my fields and feed my swine.” The son has become a swineherd. One who fared sumptuously every day at home, has now come to serve pigs!

16. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.* So hungry was he, that if he could have eaten the slop which the pigs fed upon, he would have been glad to kneel at the trough and feed with them!

16. *And no man gave unto him.* No, they all alike seemed stony-hearted. When you have plenty, everybody will give you some more. When you have nothing, nobody will give you a penny. “No man gave to him.”

17. *And when he came to himself.* For he had been away from himself; he was beside himself, and now he came home to himself.

17. *He said, How many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I—the son whom he loves.* “And I.”

17-19. *Perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants.* Let me be anything, so that I may have something to do with you. Let me live at home. Let me eat the bread from your table. Put me in the lowest place. I cannot be so low as I now am. Put me anywhere. Make a hired servant of me.

20. *And he arose, and came to his father. But—Blessed “but.”*

20, 21. *When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son.* He was going on with his prayer, “Make me as one of your hired servants,” when his father kissed him right on his lips and smothered that prayer! He did not mean to let him pray that, and so the father, interrupting him, stopped that legal bit of prayer.

22. *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him: and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.* Is this the justifying righteousness of Christ? I think not. No servant can put that on. God Himself, imputes the righteousness of Christ to us! It means just this—receive this poor forgiven sinner into the church and treat him like a gentleman. Do not look at him as one that is wearing rags any longer. Put the best robe on him, treat him well, take him into your favor, receive him into your society, put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.

23, 24. *And bring here the fatted calf, and kill it: and let us eat, and be merry: For this, my son was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry* A fine old Saxon word that is, “merry.” I have known some good people afraid to say, “I wish you a merry Christmas.” But I always like it, for I like these grand old Bible words. If the word “merry” means anything wrong, it is you that make it wrong! But it is right enough in the Bible. “They began to be merry.” Now, is it not a very curious thing that the father said, “Put the robe on him, put the shoes on him”—but he never said, “Now make him eat.” Why is that? He says, “Let us eat and be merry.” He does not say anything about the son eating. No, brothers and sisters, because the best way to make another man eat is to go at it yourself. It breeds an appetite in him. If he is standing there looking at what you are doing—“Let us eat and be merry”—his mouth begins to water! Why, you know how hard it is if you are called upon to stand when you are very hungry and see other people eat. How you want to eat! That is the best preaching in the world. If the end of the discourse is to make a man eat, the best preaching is to fall to, yourself! “Let us eat and be merry,” and they did that—and then this restored prodigal son found his appetite, and so feasted, too.

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*“O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not;
 and in the night season, and am not silent.”*
Psalm 22:2.

IT is very clear to everyone who reads this Psalm that these are not so much the words of David as they are the words of David's Son and David's Lord, our blessed Master. He prayed with strong crying and tears. He came before His Father's throne with supplications and for a long time it seemed as if He would have no answer. It did appear as if God had utterly forsaken Him and that His enemies might persecute and take Him.

Now, why was the Savior permitted to pass through so sad an experience? How was it that He whose lightest word is prevailing with heaven, that He who pleads with divine authority this day in His continual intercession, was permitted, when here below, to cry, and cry, and cry again and yet to receive no comforting answer? Was it not mainly for this reason—that *He was making an atonement for us*—and He was not heard because *we, as sinners, did not deserve to be heard*? He was not heard, that we might be heard! The ears of God were closed against Him for a season, that they might never be closed against us—that the mourner's cry might forever find a way to the heart of God—because the cry of Jesus was shut for a while out from mercy's gate. He stood the surety for our sins, and was numbered with the transgressors! Upon Him the Lord laid the iniquity of all His people and, therefore, being the sinner's representative, He could not, for a while be heard.

There was also, no doubt, another reason, namely, *that He might be a faithful High Priest having sympathy with His people in all their woes*. As this not being heard in prayer, or being unanswered for a while, is one of the greatest troubles which can fall upon the Christian, and fall it does, the Savior had to pass through that trouble, too, that so it might be said of Him—

*“In every pang that rends the heart,
 The Man of Sorrows bore His part.”*

When I fear that I have not been heard in prayer, I can now look upon my Savior and say—

*“He takes me through no darker rooms
 Than He went through before.”*

He can now have a tender, touching sympathy with us because He has been tempted in all points like as we are.

Was it not, also, once more in our Savior's case, *with a view to display the wondrous faith, fidelity and trustfulness of the obedient Son of God?* Having been found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to His Father's will. Now, obedience is not perceived until it is tried, and faith is not known to be firm and strong until it is put to the test and exercised. Through what an ordeal did this pure gold pass! It was put into the crucible and thrust into the hottest coals—all glowing with a white heat, they were heaped upon Him and yet no dross was found in Him! His faith never staggered! His confidence in His God never degenerated into suspicion and never turned aside into unbelief. It is, "*My God! My God!*" even when He is forsaken. It is, "*My God and My strength*" even when He is poured out like water and all His bones are out of joint! In this thing He not only sympathizes with us, you see, but *He sets us an example.* We must overcome, as He did, through faith. "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even your faith." And if we can copy this great High Priest of our profession who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself—if we can copy Him so as to be neither faint in our minds, or turn from our Master's work—we shall triumph even as He overcame!

But my chief objective in considering this theme is not so much to speak of the Savior's trial as to address myself to those of our number who may even now be passing through the same experience as our Lord. It will already comfort you to know that *Christ has been where you are.* It will already guide you to know that He has set you an example and that He bids you follow in His steps. Let us now draw near to His sorrow and think on it for a while for our instruction and comfort.

In the first place, the text—without any inquiry into the cause of unanswered prayer, seems to give—

I. A GENERAL GUIDE FOR OUR CONDUCT.

Suppose that we have been seeking some blessing from God for many months and have not obtained it? Whether it is a personal blessing, or on behalf of others, what ought to be our conduct under such a trial as that, the trial of a long delay, or an apparent refusal?

In the first place, brothers and sisters, it is clear the text teaches us that *we must not cease to trust God.* "O My God." Oh, that appropriating word! It is not, perhaps, "My Father." The spirit of adoption is not here so much as the spirit of reverent trustfulness, but still there is the hold-fast word—"O My God." Christian, never be tempted to give up your hold upon your only strength, upon your solitary hope! Under no conceivable circumstances, ever give place for an instant to the dark thought that God is not true and faithful to His promises! Though you should have seven years of unanswered prayer, yet suggest any other reason to your mind than one which would dishonor Him. Say with the Savior in this Psalm, "But You are holy." Settle that in your mind. Oh, never allow the faintest breath of suspicion to come upon the fair fame of the Most High,

for He does not deserve it! He *is* true. He *is* faithful. In this apparently worst of all cases, He did deliver His Son and come to the rescue in due time. In all other cases He has done the same—and I pray you never to distrust your God until you have some good and valid occasion for it. Never cast a slur upon His integrity till He really does forsake you—till He absolutely gives you up to perish! Then, but not till then, shall you doubt Him. Oh, believe Him to be good and true! You may not know why it is that He deals so strangely with you, but oh, never think that He is unfaithful for an instant, or that He has broken His word. Continue to trust Him! You shall be rewarded if you do—and the longer your faith is tried, it shall be with you as when the ship is longest out at sea—it goes to the richest climes and comes home with the heaviest and most precious freight. So shall your faith come back to you with joy!

Your faith may lie among the pots for many a day, but the time of her deliverance shall come and, like a dove, shall she mount with wings covered with silver and her feathers tipped with yellow gold! “Trust in the Lord at all times you people, and pour out your hearts before Him.”

Once again, as we are never to cease to trust, so we are *never to cease to pray*. The text is very expressive upon this point. “I cry in the daytime, but You hear not: and in the night seasons I am not silent.” Never cease your prayers! No time is a bad time for prayer. The glare of daylight should not tempt you to cease—and the gloom of midnight should not make you stop your cries. I know it is one of Satan’s chief objectives to make the Christian cease praying, for if he could but once make us put up the weapon of all-prayer, he would easily vanquish us and take us for his prey. But so long as we continue to cry to the Most High, Satan knows he cannot devour the very weakest lamb of the flock! Prayer, mighty prayer, will yet prevail if it has but time!

Oh, if this is the dark suggestion of the Evil One, “Forsake the closet! Give up private devotion. Never draw near to God, for prayer is all a fancy”—I pray you, spurn the thought with all your might and still cry, both in the daytime and at night, for the Lord will still hear your prayer!

And while you never cease from your trust, or from your prayer, *grow more earnest in both*. Let your faith be still more resolved to give up all dependence anywhere but upon God, and let your cry grow more and more vehement. It is not every knock at mercy’s gate that will open it—he who would prevail must handle the knocker well and dash it down again, and again, and again! As the old Puritan says, “Cold prayers ask for a denial, but it is red-hot prayers which prevail.” Bring your prayers as some ancient battering ram against the gate of heaven and force it open with a sacred violence, “for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by storm.” He that would prevail with God must take care that all his strength be thrust into his prayers! The Lord will not hear you if you only bring up a rank or line of the display of your desires. There must be no reserves—the whole army of your soul must come into the conflict and you must besiege the mercy seat, determined to win the

day, and then shall you prevail! If there are delays, take them as good and sound advice to be more firm in your faith and more fervent in your cry!

And yet again, *cease not to hope*. The New Zealander has a word for hope which means, “the swimming thought,” because when all other thoughts are drowned, hope still swims. She lifts her head out of the foamy waves with her tresses all trailing and sees the blue sky above her and hopes, as it is there. So if you have prayed ever so long, yet hope on! “Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the strength of my life and my portion forever.” As long as there is a place of prayer and a promise of an answer, no believer ought to give way to despair. “Go again,” said Elijah to his servant seven times! It must have been weary work to the prophet to have to wait so long. He did not stand up once and pray to God as on Carmel—and then instantly came down the fire to continue the sacrifice—but again and again and, getting more humble in posture, with his face between his knees, he beseeches the Lord, not for fire, which was an unusual thing, but for *water*, which is the common gift of the skies! And though he pleads for that which the Lord, Himself, had promised, yet it did not at once come! And when his servant came back, four, five, six times, the answer was still the same—there was no sign of rain, but the brazen heavens looked down on an earth which was parched as if in an oven! “Go again!” said the prophet, and at the seventh time, lo, there appeared the cloud like unto a man’s hand—and this cloud was the sure forerunner of the deluge and storm! Christian, go again seven times! No, I will venture to say 70 times seven, for God *must* keep His promise! Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of Jehovah’s Word can fail. “The grass withers, the flower thereof fades away, but the word of our God endures forever.” Do you plead that enduring word of God? Let no dark thoughts drive you to despair. Continue to trust! Continue to pray! Increase in your fervency and in the hope that the blessing will yet come! It did come to the Savior. The morning broke upon His midnight after all. Never tide ebbed out so far as in the Savior’s case, when the great stretches of misery and sorrow were visible where once God’s love had rolled in mighty floods. But when the time came, it began to turn, and see how it has turned now in mighty floods of matchless joy! The love of God has come back to our once suffering Savior and there, upon the eternal throne He sits, the man, the crucified, who bowed His head under mountains of almighty wrath, which broke in huge billows and covered His soul. Be of good courage, Christian! Hope on, poor soul, and hope on forever!

Thus much by way of general direction; but we now go on to a second point and shall inquire into—

II. THE CAUSES OF UNANSWERED PRAYER.

We shall, perhaps, on this theme, get a few special directions which may be available in particular cases. Dear friends, there are some of us who are not often troubled about unanswered prayer—on the contrary,

our own experience is such that the existence of a God who hears His people's cry is reduced to an absolute, mathematical certainty!

I have no more doubt about this than about my own existence, not because I can see it clearly and understand it perfectly, or because with a blind credulity I submit myself to the Bible as being the infallible revelation of God, but because I have had real dealings with God, have tried and proved His promises to be true and have found out that according to my faith, it has been done unto me in a thousand instances! This is truth that those who have learned to live in the spirit world and to talk with God understand and know as plainly as they understand and know that when a child speaks to its father, its father grants its request. It has become to many believers not at all a matter to be argued or talked of by way of dispute—they *know* that they have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, and their prayers are answered. But occasionally, to all believers, I suppose, there will come staggering moments when they scarcely know how to reply to their doubts because certain of their prayers have not been answered.

It may possibly happen that the cause of unanswered prayer may many times lie *in something connected with sin*. Do you not think that unanswered prayers are often a Fatherly chastisement for our offenses? The Savior, in that wonderful chapter where He tells out His love to us, says, "If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love," and then He notes, as a special favor, if a man abide in His love and keep His commandments, he, "shall ask what he wills and it shall be done unto him." Now it seems to me to be only reasonable that if I will not do what God wills, God will refuse to do what I will—that if He asks of me a certain duty and I refuse it—when I ask Him for a certain privilege or favor, it is not unkind, but, on the other hand, most wise and kind that He should say, "No, My child, no. If you will not listen to My tender command, it is kind to refuse you your desire until you repent and obey."

Perhaps this is the way in which, too, are visited upon God's people *some neglects of ordinances*. "He that knows his Master's will and does it not, the same shall be beaten with many stripes." And one of these stripes may surely be our failure in prayer! It may also be temporal affliction, but probably this is one of the main ways in which the Master inflicts the stripes upon His children. They are negligent of His commands and He says, "Then you shall tarry awhile. I will not yet grant you what you seek. But when you come to a better mind and are more scrupulous and tender in the fulfilling of My commands, then your longings shall be satisfied."

It may occur, too, that this delay may be a sort of *disclosure* to us as to wherein our sin lies. Sin sometimes lies in a Christian unrepented of because he only dimly realizes that it is there. Hear what Job declares—"Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you?" That is to say, if you love selfish ease and feeble comforting. If you do not prevail with God in prayer, is there some secret sin in you

which keeps back the blessing? God does, as it were, say to us, "Search and look." Unanswered prayer should be to every Christian a search warrant—he should begin to examine himself to see whether there is not something harbored within which is contrary to the will of God. Oh, believer, this is not a hard work for you to do, surely, but it is a very necessary one! Search yourself and breathe the prayer, "Search me, O God, and try me, and know my ways, and see if there is any evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." I think this is one great reason for unanswered prayer, namely, that it is a chastisement for sin committed or an admonition against sin harbored.

Sometimes there may be great sin in the prayer, itself! Are not our greatest sins often connected with our holiest things? We must be aware of our prayers. There is such a thing as polluting the mercy seat. Remember what became of Nadab and Abihu, who offered strange fire before the Lord. Beware, Christian, beware—you may sin against God in the prayer chamber as well as you can in the market—and you may offend on your knees, as well as when you are in your business! Have a care, for how can you hope that a prayer thus stained with sin can ever succeed unless you bring it to the blood to have it purged and cleansed from all defiling before it mounts to the throne of grace?

And I sometimes fear, too, that our prayers do not speed because the thing asked for, though as we think good for us, is *asked for from a wrong motive*.

If, for instance, a Christian minister asks that he may win souls in order that he may gain reputation and fame as a useful and successful evangelist for his Master, he will probably not be heard, for he asks from an unworthy motive. If I seek to be useful merely that I may be known to be a useful man or woman, I am really seeking *my own honor*—can I expect God to minister to and pamper that?

I must take care, then, that even when I ask for a good thing, I ask it for the purest of reasons—for God's glory. Oh, what washing even our prayers need! What cleansing, what purging! Can we wonder that they do not succeed when we so often make mistakes, both in the substance of the prayers and the motives from which we offer them?

Praying seems, to some persons, to be simply a child's play or a formal habit. They will take a book, read a form of intercession, and perhaps offer a few extemporaneous words and that is all. But these are all nothing and naughty prayers unless God shall touch them and give them life!

Sometimes, then, failure in prayer may be caused by sin. In such a case, heart-searching, deep repentance and especially a speedy going to the cross to have renewed fellowship with the cleansing blood and to be brought once more in contact with the holy sufferings of the blessed substitute will make us speed.

But we go on to notice that failure in prayer *may sometimes be the result of ignorance*.

I think persons often offer *very ignorant prayers, indeed*. I am sure I have good evidence that some do. There is scarcely ever a week passes in

which I do not receive intelligence from different persons who are on the verge of bankruptcy, or deeply in debt, that they have prayed to God about it—and that they have been guided by God to write to me to get them out of their difficulties and to pay their debts! Now, I am always perfectly willing to do so as soon as ever I am directed expressly by God, Himself! But I shall not receive the direction at secondhand! As soon as I receive it myself—and I think it is only fair that I should receive it, as well as they—I shall be quite willing to be obedient to His direction, provided, too, the funds are in hand, which does not often happen! But folks must be very foolish to suppose that because they ask God that such-and-such a debt may be paid by miraculous means, it will certainly be done! I have a right to ask for anything which God has promised me, but if I go beyond the range of the divine promises, I also go beyond the range of assured and confident expectation. The promises are very large and very wide, but when one gets a fancy in his head, he must not suppose that God is there in his fancy. I have known some fanatical persons who thought they could live by faith. They were going to preach the gospel, having no gifts whatever for preaching. They were going to be missionaries in a district having no more gift to be missionaries than horses in a plow. But they thought they were destined to do it and, therefore, they tried to live by faith. And when they had been nearly half-starved, then they complained against the goodness and abandoned the labor. Had God really inspired and sent them, He would have sustained and kept them, but if they go about it willfully and stubbornly on their own account, they must be driven back to realize their own ignorance of the divine will. Now, we must not pray ignorantly—we must pray with the understanding and with the spirit, so that we may clearly know what we are praying about. Get the promise and then offer the prayer—and the prayer will be answered as sure as God is God! But get your own fancy into your head and you will only have to get it out again, for it will be of no service to you.

And then oftentimes we pray in a way *in which our prayers could not be heard consistent with the dignity of the Most High*. I love a holy familiarity with God and I believe it to be commendable, but still, man is but man, while God is God and, however familiar we may be with Him in our hearts, we must still remember the distance there is between the Most High and the most elevated and most beloved of His creatures—and we are not to speak as though it were in our power to do as we will and as we please. No, we are children, but we are to remember that children have a limit as to how they are to speak to their father. Their love may come as near as they please, but their impertinence may not—and we must mind that we do not mistake the familiarity of communion for the impudence of presumption! We must be careful to distinguish between the two, for he who is taught of God and waits upon Him according to His mind will find, as a general rule, that he will not be long without an answer to his prayer.

Now, if it is ignorance that thus prevents the answering of your prayers, you should get better instructed and search especially into such texts as bear upon the matter of prayer, that you may know how to use your private key of heaven and open the sacred portals, the gate of the divine mercy, for ignorance will often make you to fail.

Again, does it not often happen that there may be *reasons for delay lying in our own infirmity?*

Sometimes, if a mercy were to come to a believer immediately when he asked for it, it would come too soon. But God times it until it appears only at the right and best moment. When a gracious godly soul has been much exercised in his mind concerning a special mercy—has studied it, weighed it, arrived at a proper apprehension of it and arranged his plans for its proper use and benefit—then, just at the time that the barn was swept and all the lumber taken out—then God's harvest of bounty comes home and the man, being quite ready for the blessing, the blessing comes!

Perhaps you are not yet ready for the blessing. You have asked for strong meat, but you are but as yet a babe and, therefore, you are to be content with milk for a little while longer. You have asked for a man's trials, a man's privileges and a man's work, but you are as yet only a child growing up into manhood—and so your good Father will give you what you ask for, but He will give it to you in such a way as to make it not a burden to you, but a blessing. If it came now, it might involve responsibilities which you could not handle, but coming by-and-by, you shall be well prepared for it!

There are reasons, too, I doubt not, *which lie in our future*, why our prayers are not answered. Delays in prayer may turn out to be a sort of training school for us. Take the apostle's instance. The "thorn in the flesh" was very painful, and though he was a chosen apostle, yet he had no answer. Thrice he cried, but still the "thorn in the flesh" was not removed. It was well that it was not, for Paul needed to be taught tenderness in order that he might write those loving epistles of his and, therefore, he received an answer of another sort, "My grace is sufficient for you." Oh Christian! If you could get rid of the trouble in which you now are, you would not be able to comfort poor mourners as you shall yet do! You would not be a full grown, strong man if you had not these stern trials to develop your manly vigor! Men do not learn to be intrepid sailors by staying on dry land. You are to put out to sea in the midst of the storm, so that you may learn how to manage and guide the vessel of your soul! You are going through a rough drill, that you may be a valiant and stalwart, a good soldier of Jesus Christ, for battles are yet to come and grim foes yet to face—for you have many fights between now and the blessed active ease of heaven!

You have not yet won the crown, but you will have to cut your way, inch by inch and foot by foot, and the Master is making you an athlete that wrestling with your enemies you may overcome. He is strengthening

your muscles and tendons, sinews and power by the arduous exercise of unanswered prayer that you may be finely useful in the future!

Still, yet again, perhaps the reason why prayer is not always quickly answered is this—a reason which no tongue can tell, but *which is inscrutable lying in the sovereign purposes and wisdom of God.*

Now, look! If I cannot tell why God does not hear me, what must I say? I had better say nothing but put my finger on my lips and wait. Who am I that I should question Him as to what He does? Who am I that I should arraign my Maker before my bar and say to Him, “What are You doing?”? Almighty Potter, You have a right to do as You will with Your own clay! We have learned to submit to Your will, not because we must, but because we love that will, feeling that Your will is the highest good of Your creatures and the most sublime wisdom! Why should we be so anxious to know the depth of the sea which cannot be fathomed by our line? Why must we be toiling to heave the lead so often? Leave these things with God and go on with your praying and your believing—and all shall yet be well with you!

And now I conclude this point by saying that if the Christian, after looking into the matter, cannot find a reason why he should not be answered, let him still expect that he shall be, and *still wait upon God*, remembering, however, that he may never be answered after his own fashion, but that he shall be answered after God’s fashion.

I like that verse of old Erskine’s, for though rough and quaint, it is true—

***“I’m heard when answered soon or late.
Yes, heard when I no answer get!
Yes, kindly answered when refused,
And treated well when hardly used.”***

In heaven every believer will realize how great was this truth—and so here I leave it.

And now, to conclude, I thought I would say a few words upon a very special case which may occur, and which may be here represented this evening. I have no doubt that it is in more than one instance. It was once my case. It is not the case of a Christian asking a blessing for himself, but it is the case of *a sinner, conscious of his danger as a sinner, asking for mercy.*

Brothers and sisters, it was a very unhappy lot to have to seek the Lord with such earnestness as I could command as a child for four or five years—with sighs, and cries, and entreaties—but to have no comfortable answer whatever, to be as one that chooses strangling rather than life because of a sense of God’s anger in my soul. To desire reconciliation, to live in the midst of gospel light and to hear the truth of God preached every Sabbath day, indeed, every day in the week, after a fashion, and yet not to discover the way to heaven was a great affliction. Now, sometimes it is not good advice to say to such a person, Go on praying. It *is* good advice! I must correct myself, there, but it is *not the best advice* in such a case. Soul, if you have been seeking mercy and you

cannot find it, go on praying by all means—never relax that, but it is not by praying that you will ever get peace. The business of your soul is to listen to Christ’s command—and His command is contained in the gospel, which gospel is *not*, “Go you into all the world and tell every creature to pray,” but it is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Now, your business is to pray, certainly, but your first business is to believe! Your prayers before you believe have but little weight in them. Unbelieving prayers! Shall I call them prayers? Prayers without faith? They are birds without wings, ships without sails and beasts without legs! Prayers that have no faith in Christ in them are prayers without the blood on them! They are deeds without the signature, without the seal, without the stamp—they are impotent, illegal documents! Oh, if you could but come as you are and look to Christ on the cross! It is not your prayers that can save you—it is Christ’s prayers, Christ’s tears, Christ’s sufferings, Christ’s blood and Christ’s death! If you trust to your prayers, you have gone back to the old beggarly elements of the law. You might as well trust to your good works as to your prayers, but to trust either will be to rest in “a refuge of lies.” Your hope, sinner, lies in the altogether gratuitous mercy of God—and that mercy only comes to those who rest in Jesus Christ, alone, waiting patiently for Him! Oh, that you could but come just as you are and lay yourself at mercy’s door with such a word as this on your lips—

***“My hope is fixed on nothing else
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness!”***

There are no doings of yours needed to complete the work. No! I venture to say, not even any praying of yours. Your praying and your doings shall each occupy their proper place, afterwards, and then they shall be essential in their way, but now, as a sinner, your business is with the sinner’s Savior! If you are now enabled to look completely out of self and see all that your flesh can do as dead and buried forever in the grave of Christ—and as being nothing and worse than nothing! And if you can see Jesus, the mighty Savior, distributing the gifts which He has received for men, even distributing them to the rebellious—if you can thus trust Him, you are saved! What do you say, sinner? Are you enabled to do it now? Can you fall flat before His cross? Oh, the happy day when I learned that I was no longer to look to self, but found that the gospel was, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” Many of you have looked, brothers and sisters! Look again to that sacred head once wounded and filled with pain and grief, but which now is crowned with glory! Look and renew your vow of dedication and He will lift you up to be above the angels and only second to God, Himself!

Oh look now!

And as to you who have never looked before, I pray the Master to open your blind eyes and cause the scales to drop, so that you may look now and, while you look, may see everything you need laid up for you in Jesus! Everything a sinner needs can be richly supplied by Him—and then the sinner can go his way rejoicing and singing, “Christ is all, and

happy am I that I have sought and found Him.” The Lord bless you all for His name’s sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 32.**

This is a great Psalm of grace, a Psalm in which a sinner, cleansed by sovereign grace, adores and blesses the mercy of God.

Verse 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* This is not a blessing for the man who says he has no sin—this is not a benediction for the innocent who talk about their own good works—but blessed is the man who, having sinned, is pardoned, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! In a word, it is a gospel blessing—it is the blessing of free grace.

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* He had a thousand iniquities. He transgressed in all sorts of ways. The Lord does not impute these things to him. He has set them down to the account of another who has ventured to stand in the sinner’s place and be made sin in the sinner’s place! But to this man, this blessed man, God does not impute iniquity—and in his spirit there is no guile—he confesses his sin with honesty, he is pardoned with certainty and in his spirit there is no cunning concealment.

3, 4. *When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture was turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* This is the experience of those men whom God saves. Till they confess sin, that sin rankles in them like venom—it boils their blood, it eats into their bones, it makes life worse than death, it makes them dread the wrath to come—their days are nights, and their nights are hells! They cannot stand themselves. This was David’s experience and it has been the way by which God has led thousands of His redeemed ones that He might bring them to Himself. As long as we cloak our sin and conceal it and pretend that we are innocent, the fire burns within us—but when we just confess the sin, then it is that we are dealing with God aright—and God deals with us in grace!

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* All gone, gone forever, gone at a stroke! Oh, what a mercy this is, that when once we will take the place of sinners and plead guilty, then it is that we are absolved at once! We have but to acknowledge that we deserve the punishment and immediately that punishment is remitted! This is the way of grace, the plan of infinite condescending love!

6. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come*

near unto him. The man that has so prayed as to find complete forgiveness, he is the man that will never leave off praying as long as he lives! The one gain which covers everything, the gain of conscious forgiveness, inspires a man to pray about anything and about everything as long as he lives! “For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You.” “You are my hiding place.” You see God was his hiding place when he was in a storm of sin, and now he takes God to be his hiding place in every time of trouble, from all the afflictions of his life, all the sorrows of the way. “You are my hiding place. You shall preserve me from trouble.” Shall He not, since He has blotted out our sins? Oh, if God has preserved us from the wrath to come, what is there to be afraid of? “You shall preserve me from trouble. You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance.” I shall live in a ring of music! I shall march onward to heaven as in the center of song! Why, it may well be so, when once God has freely blotted out our sins—“You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance.” Yes, says God that I will, and I will do more!

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes.* I have not blotted out your sins to leave you to wander back into them again—I will be your teacher, your folly shall not be your ruin, your ignorance shall not be your destruction. I will guide you—look at Me!—“I will guide you with My eyes.” “A glance, a look, shall be enough for you! I will give you such a heart that you shall understand the least motion of My finger. No, I will guide you with My eyes.”

9. *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.* A pardoning God may well ask this of us, that we would be tender. Oh, let us be very willing to do the Lord’s will, plastic in His hands like clay in the hand of the potter! It is a great pity, brothers and sisters, when we won’t be guided by the gentle leadings of God, and must be whipped and spurred, and tugged at, for God *will* govern us if we are His people. If one bit will not do it, He will get a tougher bit that shall cut us and hurt us, but He will rule us! And so He ought to do, blessed be His name!

10, 11. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.*

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SUNLIGHT FOR CLOUDY DAYS

NO. 3345

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT MENTONE.

***“But I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.”
Psalm 40:17.***

IT is not everybody who would like to apply to himself the first part of the text. Perhaps we, most of us, accept it because it happens to be Scriptural language—and yet we might not spontaneously say of ourselves, “I am poor and needy.” Some would even wish us to believe the very opposite, for if I read their hearts aright, they say, “I am not poor, nor needy.” They have enough of this world’s goods and as for spiritual matters, they are strong and self-reliant. All this comes of vainglory and, in the long run will end in vanity and vexation of spirit—for if a man can do without God, it is certain that God can do without him—and the day will come when God *will* do without him, according to His word, “I will ease Me of My adversaries.” He who has tried throughout life to do without God will inherit remorse forever and ever. It is well to begin, continue and end in this life with God’s favor, that we may enjoy it world without end! I therefore trust that none among you would wish to say, “I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing,” for that would be tantamount to a proud resolve to do without God—and it will end in your eternal ruin!

There are some who cry, “I am poor and needy; woe is me that I should be so! But the Lord does not think of me. I have looked up to heaven, but no eye of pity looks down upon me in the depth of my misery.” Many a wretched mind, many a bereaved spirit, many a downcast heart has cried, “The Lord has forgotten me! He counts the number of the stars and calls them by their names, but as for me, I am too little, too insignificant, too obscure—I cannot believe that God thinks upon me.” Dear friend, I hope you will be converted from this unbelief! I pray that you may not only be able to join in one half of my text by saying, “I am poor and needy,” but that you may humbly unite in the second declaration, “Yet the Lord thinks upon me.” Despite your insignificance and unworthiness, you may yet learn that the Lord has thoughts of love towards you and is causing all things to work together for your external, internal and eternal good!

Do not let it surprise you that one of old should say, “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me,” for God has often thought of poor and needy persons. Look at Joseph when he was in prison and the iron entered into his soul—his reputation was gone, he was reproached and even punished unjustly—yet we read that the Lord was with Joseph and, in due time He brought him out and set him on the throne of Egypt!

Ruth, the Moabitess, came penniless to Israel's land and she went to glean among the sheaves as a poor and needy peasant woman. But the Lord was thinking upon her and so provided for her that she rose to an honorable estate and her name is written among the progenitors of our Lord Jesus! To give you a more modern instance—the apostles were poor fishermen with their little boats and well-worn nets, upon the Lake of Galilee—yet the Lord looked upon them—unlearned and ignorant men as they were, and made them to be the pioneers of His kingdom! Never mind how poor and needy you are, you may yet be heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ!

“Alas,” you say, “my trouble is not a poverty of gold and silver, but I am poor as to anything like goodness in the sight of God. I feel so guilty and so far from being what I ought to be.” Yet the Lord has oftentimes thought of such people as you! Look at the blessed Master sitting on the well at Sychar, talking with that wanton woman who had had five husbands and he whom she then had was not her husband—she was a woman whom none would honor—but the blessed Savior thought upon her! Remember, too, the thief dying upon the cross next to the Redeemer—with all his sins red upon him, for he had been a robber and probably a murderer, too—his prayer, “Lord, remember me,” touched the heart of Jesus and, “Today you shall be with Me in paradise” was the gracious response! The Lord thought on him and yet there was never one more poor and needy than he! There, too, was Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor, breathing out threats and slaughter against the church of God! But the Merciful One in heaven, who saw his sin, thought on him with love and said, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” Poverty of all merit and need of all grace do not prevent the Lord from thinking upon men! Is not this fact as clear as the sun in the heavens? However spiritually poor you may be, you may yet partake of the riches of His grace and so become rich in faith—indeed, none but consciously needy ones ever obtain the privilege of saying, “Yet the Lord thinks upon me.”

I was troubled, when I was asking the Lord, with the notion that I was so utterly insignificant that the Lord would never notice *me*. There is no reason for such fear, since the Lord has thought upon very obscure people. Think of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter. What was her name? Do you know what sort of a girl she was? Can you tell her after-history? She is quite unknown to fame, yet the Lord thought upon her and healed her. That little daughter of Jairus, a child of 12 years of age, what could she do? Did she become a distinguished woman? What lifework did she perform? She makes no figure in history, yet the Lord thought upon her and even restored her from the dead! The widow's son, who was being carried out of the city of Nain, what did he achieve? What post of honor did he occupy? What lofty path did he pursue? We know nothing of him except that the Lord thought upon him! The most of the persons whom the Lord Jesus thought upon in the days of His flesh were unknown to fame and, for my part; I judge that the happiest persons are those who pass through life unknown of men, but known of God! During the French Revolution, a man of great influence escaped the guillotine

and when asked how it was, he replied, "I made myself of no reputation and kept silent." Those who are content to follow the cool sequestered vale of life are often happier than those who climb the high places of the earth. Do not, therefore, think that your being in the background is any hindrance to the Lord's thinking upon you! He cares nothing about the blare of trumpets, or the blaze of fame—the Lord looks upon the meek and lowly and finds out the men that are of a broken heart and of a contrite spirit, and that tremble at His word—and with these He deigns to dwell. May we be found among them!

At this time my desire is to do four things upon each of which I would speak briefly. By the words of the text I desire, first, *to help your faith* to remember that if you are poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon you; then I long *to enlarge your hope*; thirdly, *to inflame your love*, and fourthly, *to direct your life*. May God the Holy Spirit perform all these things for us! First, let me—

I. HELP YOUR FAITH. You say to yourself, "I cannot understand why God should think of me." Why not? "Because I am so little." Let me ask you if there is anything in the world which is not little to God? You say, "There is the world, itself," and I answer that the earth which we think so large, is no more to God than a single grain of dust! The solar system and all the other systems that make up the creation of God are as nothing to the infinite Jehovah! So great is the universe that the most elevated conception of the most enlarged mind has never compassed more than a fragment of it—yet God is infinitely beyond the inconceivable whole of created existence! A man must always be really greater than his own works and certainly God must be infinitely greater than all that He has ever made. Now, if you think it difficult that God should think upon the little, what else should God think upon? You reply that you expect Him to think of the great ones of the earth. Alas, the most of them think very little of Him—the Lord has had the least worthy treatment from those who are ranked as rich and honorable. When we reach heaven, we shall find few kings and princes, few of the learned and lauded—"God has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith"—so says the inspired apostle.

Again, if it should seem difficult to you for God to think upon the poor and needy, I invite you to answer the question, "Who need God's thoughts most?" On the field of battle, after the fight, if a surgeon should be there to attend to the wounded, where will he go first? Of course he will go to those whose gaping wounds have almost opened the gates of death for them! And the slightly wounded he will leave till he has more time. The Lord will not look upon us according to what we deserve, for if He did, He would destroy us all! He will look upon us in proportion to our needs. Our urgent needs move His mercy and He will go first to those who require Him most. Do you need His grace more than anyone else? Then He will hasten at once to you! If I see a physician's carriage hurrying down the street, I feel morally certain that he is not driving to my door, for I am not dangerously ill. But if I know of one who has fallen in a fit, or has been badly injured by an accident, I conclude that he is

going to him. When the angel of mercy is made to fly very swiftly, you can be sure that he is speeding to one who is in urgent need of divine grace.

Remember, too, that *God has always dealt with men from that point of view*. When God made His election of men before the earth was, He chose them as fallen and undeserving, that He might lift them up to the praise of the glory of His grace. His choice of men was never guided by anything good that He saw in them! As says the apostle Paul, “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls.” The decree still stands, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion.” The Lord of grace asks in His sovereignty, “Shall I not do as I will with My own?” God views all men as guilty and, finding them guilty, He yet chooses unto Himself a people in whom His grace shall be resplendent! Therefore do not conclude that He will pass you by because you are poor and needy.

Moreover, the *redemption* of Christ obviously views us as fallen and guilty. Did He lay down His life to redeem those who were not captives? Did He pour out His blood to cleanse those who were already clean; if we had not needed a great salvation, would the darling of heaven have stooped to the death of the cross, that we might be saved? They who think that sinners cannot be saved, or that men can be saved by any other means than by true faith in Jesus, make a superfluity of the death of Christ—and this is a blasphemy atrocious to the last degree! “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly.” “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save”—*the righteous?*—oh no, but, “to save sinners, even the chief.” Stagger not at the grace of God to your own hurt but say, “Though I am spiritually poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.”

Furthermore, the *gift of God the Holy Spirit* proves that God regards us as poor and needy. If we were strong and full of all spiritual forces, we would not have needed the Spirit of God to quicken and regenerate us! And we would not have needed that Spirit to abide in us as our teacher and helper. Why, brothers and sisters, you cannot even pray without the Spirit of God! The Spirit is given to help your infirmity in prayer because that infirmity most surely exists. The gift of the Spirit of God to men is a proof that God looks upon them as being poor and needy in spiritual things. Now, if you feel that you cannot pray, that you cannot repent, that you cannot believe, that you cannot do anything that is good in your own strength, fret not about it, but fly to the strong for strength! Say, “I am poor and needy, but the gift of the Holy Spirit is evidence that the Lord thinks upon me.”

Let me further say, to help your faith, that though you say you are very poor and spiritually needy, you are not alone in this, for *so are all God’s saints*—and the brighter the saints the more they feel their own poverty and need! Certain boasters talk “exceedingly proud” about their religious attainments. But the more they glory, the vainer is their glory. True saints are humble. In a company where certain people were

displaying their spiritual attainments, it was noticed that one devout person remained silent. Finally a talkative man turned to him and asked, "Have you no sanctification?" He replied, "I never had any to boast of, and I hope I never shall have." The more high in grace, the more low in self-esteem! Ask the man who has the most holiness what he thinks of himself and he will be the first to lament that he has not yet reached the point which he desires. We are like those old-fashioned wine glasses which had no foot to them, so that they could not stand upon the table, but must be held in the hand. When Jesus has us in His hand, we can be filled with the water of life—but out of His hand we cannot hold a drop, or even stand! We are nothing at all without our all-in-all! "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me," said one. "Without Me you can do nothing," is the true word of Christ to every branch of the living vine. Now, if all God's saints say that they are nobodies, do not despair because you are nobody! If they all confess that they can do nothing without Christ, do not despond because you, also, can do nothing without Him!

Do you reply, "I wish I had a greater sense of spiritual riches"? If you had more faith in Christ, it would be well, but to have any confidence in your own experience would do you mischief!

Let me here relate a story which may cheer those who feel themselves to be so guilty that the Lord will not think upon them. The Lord looks upon those who feel their guilt. A Savior is on the lookout for sinners quite as much as sinners are on the lookout for a Savior. I have heard that a great English prince on one occasion went to visit a famous king of Spain. The prince was taken down to the galleys, to see the men who were chained to the oars and doomed to be slaves for life. The king of Spain promised, in honor of the prince's visit, that he would set free any one of these men that the prince might choose. So the prince went to one prisoner and said, "My poor fellow, I am sorry to see you in this plight, how came you here?" "Ah, sire," he answered, "false witnesses gave evidence against me. I am suffering wrongfully." "Indeed!" said the prince, and passed on to the next man. "My poor fellow, I am sorry to see you here, how did it happen?" "Sire, I certainly did wrong, but not to any great extent. I ought not to be here." "Indeed!" said the prince, and he went on to others who told him similar tales. At last he came to one prisoner who said, "Sire, I am often thankful that I am here, for I am sorry to admit that if I had received my due, I would have been executed. I am certainly guilty of all that was laid to my charge—and my severest punishment is just." The prince replied wittily to him, "It is a pity that such a guilty wretch as you are should be chained among these innocent men, and therefore, I will set you free." You smile, and well you may. How you will smile if Jesus does the same for you! Assuredly this is the manner of Him—He passes by those who think highly of themselves and looks upon those who are self-condemned and plead guilty before God. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance! When we

have nothing to pay, He frankly forgives the debt! He thinks upon the poor and needy.

I ask you to look at the text again, by way of—

II. ENLARGEMENT OF YOUR HOPE. “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.” It is a great thing that God should think upon us. Is it true that the great heart of God is thinking upon *me*, an inconsiderable atom of existence? What then? It is enough to make the bells of our hearts ring for joy! Let us listen again to the silver note of the text, “The Lord thinks upon me.” The Lord thinks as much of one of His people as if there were nobody else for Him to think upon! Poor needy one, the Lord thinks upon you as intensely as if you were the only being now existing! The Lord is able to concentrate His whole mind upon any one point without dividing that mind—He has such an infinite capacity that each one of us may be the center of God’s thoughts—and yet He will not be forgetting any other beloved one! God is a being whose center is everywhere, but His circumference is nowhere! “The Lord thinks upon me.” Is it not beautiful to notice how God thought of the first man whom He placed on this earth? He did not make man till He had prepared everything for his happiness! The Lord would not rest until He had finished His work, until He had lighted up the heavens and created all manner of comforts and conveniences for His child. Not till He had even prepared the birds to sing to him and the flowers to breathe their perfume upon him, did God create man. Why did God rest on the seventh day? Because He had thought of all that man needed and had made all things good for Him. Our Lord Jesus never rested till He had finished the work that His Father gave Him to do, which work was all for us—and the great providence of God will never rest till all the chosen of God are brought safely home to heaven! Thus you see how God thinks upon us.

Remember, also, that God’s thoughts are not dumb thoughts. They break out into words and this precious Bible contains the expression of those thoughts of love. This priceless book is a love letter from our Father who is in heaven. Read each line as if it was freshly written, and it will make you say, “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me, and here are His thoughts.”

Nor does the Lord rest in words. I have heard of a waiter who said to a guest, “I hope you will remember me, sir.” “Yes,” replied the other, “I shall never forget your bad behavior.” It would be well for us if our fellow men would not think of us when we have done them wrong, but God’s thoughts of us are always kind and forgiving. His thoughts are practical and produce deeds of kindness. He thinks to give and forgive, to save and succor, to cheer and cherish. The Lord is thinking what He will give you, what He will make of you and what mansion in heaven He will appoint for you! If He has thought upon you, He always will think upon you, for the Lord never changes! Our God, in whom we trust, is not fickle. He is not thoughtful of us today and forgetful of us tomorrow. If you should live to be as old as Methuselah, the promises of God will never wear out—and if all the troubles that ever fell upon humanity should pounce

upon you—God’s strength will be put forth to sustain you and to bear you to a triumphant close!

Oh, the joy of knowing that God thinks upon us! It is better to have God thinking upon us than to have all the kings of earth and all the angels of heaven thinking upon us. Thirdly, and very briefly—

III. LET THIS INFLAME YOUR LOVE. “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.” Dear friends, think much of God since He thinks much of you. Let your hearts go out towards Him on whose heart your name is written. It ought to be impossible for a Christian to wander among these olive groves without saying, “Beneath such trees as these my Savior sweat great drops of blood.” We ought not to sit on the beach without thinking, “The Lord has cast my sins into the depths of the sea.” As the palm tree lifts itself to heaven, without an earthward branch, so send all your thoughts upward; as the vine, though sharply pruned, yields its cluster, so bear fruit unto your Lord. Upon yonder sea the apostle of the Gentiles was tossed and wrecked for love of Jesus—yield to that same Lord, your whole hearts as you think upon His thoughts of you! Everything about this place should make us think of our Lord, for in many respects it is the counterpart of “Your land, O Immanuel!” This day God is thinking upon you! This day think upon God! Christ in heaven is preparing heaven for us—let us be preparing a place on earth for Him. I have often wondered what is meant by our Lord’s preparing a place for us, since heaven is prepared for us from before the foundation of the world. I suppose heaven was not fully fit for us till Jesus went there and the very going there of our Well-Beloved has prepared heaven for redeemed men and women to live in it in His own sweet society! Jesus is watching in heaven for the time when we shall come home and He is praying for that homecoming—“Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.”

Do you not receive frequent tokens that the Lord Jesus is thinking upon you? Special mercies in answer to prayer, sweet visits of love—do not these cheer your heart? Our sacred joys, which come from Jesus, are like those boxes of flowers that we send to our friends who are freezing in the cold at this time in England. They know that we remember them as they look upon every rosebud, violet and anemone that comes to them through the post. Our heavenly Father sends us many such tokens of His loving remembrance while we are hearing the gospel, or enjoying the Lord’s Supper, or occupied in our private prayers and meditations. “How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them!” To close, let me use this text to—

IV. DIRECT YOUR CONDUCT. “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.” The whole of what I say shall go into this one thought—if God thinks upon you, leave off all anxious and carking care about yourself! I do not suppose there is any place in the world that has more care and anxiety in it than this little town which nestles beneath the mountains and suns itself by the sea.

Many of you come here with dear ones who are pining away before your eyes, or you are alarmed about your own health. Do not unduly trouble yourselves, for if you do so, you cannot remove sickness, thereby, but you may even increase it. If I could do any good by worrying, I would worry away to my heart's content! But as it is useless, I find it best to let it alone. They tell me that if a man were to fall into the sea, he would float if he would remain quiet, but because he struggles, he sinks. I am sure it is so when we are in affliction. Fretfulness results in weakening us, in hiding from us wise methods of relief and, in general, in doubling our pains. It is folly to kick against the pricks! It is wisdom to kiss the rod. Trust more and fear less. If you have trusted your soul with Christ, can you not trust Him with everything else? Can you not trust Him with your sick child, or your sick husband; with your wealth, with your business, with your life? "Oh," says one, "I hardly like to do that! It is almost presumption to take our minor cares to the great Lord." But in so doing you will prove the truthfulness of your faith! I heard of a man who was walking along the high road with a pack on his back. He was growing weary and was, therefore, glad when a gentleman came along in a chaise and asked him to take a seat with him. The gentleman noticed that he kept his pack strapped to his shoulders, and so he said, "Why do you not put your pack down?" "Why, sir," said the traveler, "I did not venture to impose. It was very kind of you to take me up, and I could not expect you to carry my pack as well." "Why," said his friend, "do you not see that whether your pack is on your back, or off your back, I have to carry it?"

My hearer, it is so with your trouble. Whether you care, or do not care, it is the Lord who must care for you! "But my daily trouble seems too mean a thing to bring before the Lord in prayer." Then I fear you forgot my text, or fail to see the spirit which dictated it—God thinks upon the poor and needy—and all the concerns of the poor and needy are, like themselves, poor affairs. Why do you weary yourself with care when God cares for you? If I were afraid of burglars and kept a watchman to guard my house at night, I certainly would not sit up all night, myself! The Lord is your keeper, why are you fearful? It is infinitely better that you should be able to say, "The Lord thinks upon me," than that you should have all power, wisdom and wealth in your own hands! I charge you, then, to rest in the Lord and fret no longer!

First, trust your Lord with your souls, and then trust Him with everything else! First, surrender yourself to His love, to be saved by His infinite compassion—and then bring all your burdens, cares and troubles—and lay them down at His dear feet and go and live a happy, joyful life, saying, as I will say, and close—

***"All that remains for me,
Is but to love and sing!
And wait until the angels come,
To bear me to my King."***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8:1-31.**

Verse 1. *There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* To my mind one of the sweetest words of that verse is that little word *now*. “There is, therefore, *now* no condemnation—at this very moment! Walking under the power of the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus, there is, therefore, now no condemnation to believers! It is a logical conclusion, too, from something that went before. You and I are not absolved from sin apart from the truth of God, but there is a great truth at the back of it which necessitates it. “There is, *therefore*, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.* Sin and death cannot govern me—cannot condemn me—cannot destroy me. Another law has come in. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has brought me into another kingdom wherein I cannot be affected, so as to condemn me, by the law of sin and death.

3, 4. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* The law of God was a good law, a just and holy law. It was weak, not in itself, for, verily, if righteousness could have been by any law, it would have been by the law of God! But it was weak through our flesh. We could not keep it. We could not fulfill the conditions of life laid down under it. Therefore, what the law could not do, God has now done for us! He has found a way of making us righteous through the righteousness of His own dear Son, whom He has sent in the likeness of sinful flesh. He has found out a way of condemning sin, without condemning us! He condemned sin in the flesh, but we escaped. And He has found a way of making us practically righteous, too, through the abundance of His grace, enabling us to walk no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Blessed be God for this, for when we had broken His law, He might justly have left us to take the consequences, but He has stepped aside—He has gone beyond all that might have been expected of Him—and brought in a law by which a remedy is applied to all our ills. Glory be to His name!

5. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.* They live to eat and drink. They live for self-aggrandizement. They live for the world and its pleasures. It is according to their nature. Everything acts according to its nature. The wolf devours—the sheep patiently feeds. They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.

5. *But they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* God has given us, then, the Spirit to dwell in us and now I trust we can say that we desire holiness, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, for these things are the things of the Spirit!

6, 7. *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* It is so deeply vitiated, so

thoroughly depraved, that so long as the fleshly mind exists, it will be in rebellion against God. “You must be born-again,” for that which is born of the flesh is flesh—and only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Unless we are renewed, then, by the Spirit of God, we never shall be subject to the law of God—neither, indeed, can we be.

8, 9. *So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But 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.* Christ does not acknowledge any that are not indwelt by His Spirit. They may wear the Christian name. They may perform some acts which look like Christian acts—but all this means nothing. You must have the Spirit of God within you, or else you are none of His! And what a thing it is to be “none of His.” “Verily,” says Christ, “I never knew you.” “But, Lord, we ate and drank with You! You preached in our streets.” But He says, “I never knew you.” They are none of His. Oh, dear friends, the highest point to which human nature can reach falls short of being in Christ! There must be the Spirit of God dwelling in us or else we are none of His!

10. *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin.* Therefore, it suffers disease and pain, for the soul is regenerated, but not the body. If I may so speak, the regeneration of the body happens at the Resurrection. It is then that it will receive its full share of the blessed work of Christ! “The body is dead because of sin.”

10, 11. *But the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.* So there is a complete deliverance provided for body, soul and spirit! As Moses said to Pharaoh when he agreed to let the people of Israel go, but said that they must leave behind their flocks, “Not a hoof shall be left behind,” so no particle of our real manhood shall be left under the thralldom of sin and death! The soul is already emancipated and the body shall be—by the Spirit which dwells in you!

12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.* For we owe the flesh nothing by way of gratitude or service. The flesh has dragged us down. The flesh has ruined us. We owe it nothing except mastery of it. We are not debtors to it, to live after it.

13. *For if you live after the flesh, you shall die.* It will die and so will you who make it your master!

13. *But if you, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.* “Mortify,” kill, put to death.

14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* There may be a great many weaknesses and infirmities about them, but if they follow the divine leadership of the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God!

15. *For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.* Is this true of you? “You have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Dear friends, hearing these words, can you respond to them? Are they true of you?

16. *The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* Many of you make a profession of being the children of God. Can your own spirit say that it is true? And is there, in addition to this, the witness of the Spirit within you that it is true? If not, unless there is a witness to our testimony, it avails nothing. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true." And if He chooses to put Himself on a level, as it were, with the rest of humanity in that respect, we cannot expect that our witness will stand for anything if it stands alone! No, there must be the Spirit, Himself, bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God!

17. *And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.* Oh that *if*—"if children." There are some that get over all that. They believe in a universal fatherhood—which is not worth the words in which they describe it. This is a different fatherhood altogether!

17. *If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.* Oh, this blessed co-partnership—this fellowship; this being joint-heirs with Christ; taking part in the whole heritage; the heritage of suffering and the heritage of glory. "It shall bruise Your heel, but You shall bruise his head." There is to be the heel-bruising for the Christ, as well as for us, but there is to be the head-crushing of sin and Satan for Him and for us, too!

18. *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* Glory in us? Only think of that! You know the Revelation that is in the book—but how grand will be the revelation that is in the man! "The glory which shall be revealed in us"; We shall be full of glory! And a part of God's glory, which otherwise must have lain concealed, will be revealed in His people to His own praise forever and ever—but also to our own eternal joy.

19. *For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.* There is something that the whole creation is waiting for and it cannot come till God's children are manifested—till the glory is revealed in them!

20, 22. *For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. "The whole creation."* It is the same word all through—so I have used the same word. The whole world is in its pangs and birth throes, and there can never come its complete deliverance into the new heavens and the new earth, except there shall also be the manifestation of the children of God and their deliverance from all that now hampers and hinders the divine life that is within them!

23. *And not only they, but ourselves, also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* This is what we are looking for! Our manhood is not all soul—it is body, too! And here, as yet, this

poor body seems to lie outside the gate, like Lazarus, while the soul rejoices in God. But its time of glorifying is coming! The trumpet of the archangel shall proclaim it!

24. *For we are saved by hope. As yet we are saved by hope.*

24-26. *But hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities. That is a grand thing! We have got the first fruits of the Spirit to be the pledge of all the glorious harvest. The very fact that the Spirit dwells in us is the conclusive proof that our bodies shall be raised from the dead! Meanwhile, the Spirit of God is helping us, as we groan and labor, towards the complete perfection. "The Spirit helps our infirmities."*

27. *And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. Nor is it only the Holy Spirit who is thus helping us onward towards the grand finale!*

28, 29. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. And you know that He is the first-born in this sense—not only as the greatest, but that as the first-begotten from among the dead, He has risen from the dead! He has risen from the dead and in this He leads the way for us all. "That he might be the first-born among many brethren."*

30. *Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. No slips, no gaps or chasms by the way. The foreknown are predestinated. The predestinated are the called. The called are justified. The justified are glorified!*

31. *What shall we say, then, to these things? Shall we succumb under the sufferings of the body? Shall we yield to doubt because of all our heavy feelings and the dullness that comes of the flesh? By no means!*

31. *If God is for us, who can be against us? We can get through all these difficulties if God is with us!*

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RESURRECTION FOR THE JUST AND THE UNJUST NO. 3346

A SERMON
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“There shall be a resurrection both for the just and the unjust.”
Acts 24:15.

THE heathen had, somehow or other, spelled out the truth of God that the soul of man is immortal. Almost all their religions implied this and some of their sages plainly taught it. But never had they imagined that this immortality might belong also to the body!

The doctrine of the resurrection from the dead was peculiar to Christianity. It was so novel and it seemed, at first, to be so absurd that when men heard the apostles speak of such a resurrection they mocked and laughed them to scorn as fools. They called Paul, “a babbler,” because of this. They believed he must be mad. Had they not seen the body sicken and die? Had they not marked it in various stages of decay? Did they not know that it was frequently dissolved into small dust, scattered to the manifold winds of heaven, or that its fragments mingled with the waves of the sea, or that its various members were torn by wild beasts and could they, therefore, imagine it to be credible that any sane person could believe that the human body would rise again from the dead? Yet Paul believed this, and this he preached—that there would be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust, not that the just and the unjust would merely live as to their souls, but that their *bodies* would be restored from the grave and that a resurrection, as well as an immortality, would be the future of every man of woman born, whatever his character might be!

Now, this is the great doctrine of the Christian faith which we do not doubt, but joyously accept! Our Lord’s body, that same body in real identity which was nailed to the tree and laid in the tomb for three days—that same body came to life again, with the nail prints visible—into which Thomas was invited to put his finger—with the mark of the spear into which the same doubting apostle was asked to thrust his hand! Christ proved Himself to be not merely a spirit, but a solid, tangible, corporeal existence, for He said, “Handle Me, and see; a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have.” And although He appeared in the room, the doors being shut, and thus proved that His body had lost some of the properties of coarse matter, yet, at the same time, He took a

piece of flesh and of honeycomb and did eat before them—and let them see that it was His very self who had hung upon the cross and died there at Calvary! And so shall it be with us! Though by death our bodies shall lose some of their qualities which we shall all be only too glad to lose, though their corruptions and weaknesses shall all be laid aside, yet my body and yours in definite identity, each for itself, shall rise up from its bed of dust and silent clay, and enter into the rest that remains where Jesus dwells before the throne of God! Behold at this present, “the whole creation groans and travails in pain together, until now, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.”

My great purpose tonight, beloved, is to speak on the majestic fact that the just and the unjust are to live on in a resurrection state. I am not going to debate, discuss, argue as to the fact of it, but, assuming your belief in God’s inspired word, declare a few thoughts which that sublime truth seems to raise in one’s mind. I shall treat the truth as though it were a lantern—and shall look at some of the rays of divine light that stream from it on all sides. And, first of all—

I. WHAT AN ENNOBLING EFFECT THIS TRUTH HAS UPON US!

Observe the effect it has, first of all, *given our bodies*. Paul elsewhere calls the body, “this vile body,” and so it is in comparison with what it is to be, by-and-by! But yet if this body has been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and if the Holy Spirit dwells in our bodies, as we are taught in Scripture—and if these bodies are to be partakers of a pure and sinless immortality—then what noble things these otherwise vile bodies become! So noble, my brothers and sisters, that it becomes us to guard them sacredly, as sacred things! Now, our bodies may be defiled, but shall they be defiled after being washed in pure water and after being given up to Christ? You know how they may be defiled. The apostle speaks very plainly concerning certain carnal lusts whereby members of Christ may be made members of all manner of iniquity. From these things we fly—they should not be so much as named among you, as becomes saints. Our bodies may be defiled by eating and drinking, unless in the eating and the drinking we glorify God. We may by excess in either way bring ourselves into conditions in which the mind will not act and I believe, mark you, that gluttony is as much a sin in the sight of God as drunkenness, and that, in fact, any eating or drinking which makes us unfit for communion with God becomes sinful at once! Any passing beyond that boundary, whatever it may be, whether in eating or in drinking, becomes sinful! The body is clogged and defiled and who would have it so when it has been purchased by Christ’s precious blood and is to dwell with Him forever?

The body, too, may be defiled by outward adornments, for the Holy Spirit has expressly warned Christian men and women against these. There is a holy adornment that we speak of—that of a meek and a quiet spirit—but when men and women hang upon themselves their jewels and their ornaments of an ungodly profession, they sin against the plain

precepts of the Word of God and they really defile the bodies that belong to Christ! So every bowing of the knee to that to which I ought not to bow, every yielding of this body of mine to write what is not true, every motion of my tongue to speak that which is not upright and according to the fear of God, every movement of these feet to take me where it is not good for me to be—defiles the body! So there are ten thousand ways in which the temple of God may be defiled, but I say again that with the thought that this body is to live forever and ever, we ought to guard with sacred care these members of Christ! The body that has been bought with His blood—that is to sleep on His bosom, that is to be awakened in His likeness, that is to dwell with Him forever, molded after His own Image—take care of that body and keep it consecrated unto the Lord!

And while this ennobles the body, let me say that *it also ennobles the entire man*. If man is a creature, if he is only first among animals, though the most highly organized of all the vertebrate creatures; and if, when he dies, that is the end of him, as that might be of a sheep or a dog, then, looking up to the stars and thinking of man as a mere beast, you need not say with David, “Lord, what is man?” You know what he is! You have got your answer—and a gloomy and a melancholy answer it is. But if man is to live forever and ever, what a noble creature he becomes! And, mark you, men are ready enough to admit this of some of their fellow creatures—kings, queens, princes, senators and men who have heaped up their gold—but when it comes to this, that the beggar, being immortal, is to be honored, they do not like it! I would that men would remember that the same Bible that says, “Honor the king,” also says, “Honor all men”—that is, be they what they may! But men must honor people’s coats—not the men! Or they honor their carriages, or they honor their sovereigns, but they do not honor the men! And yet, in truth, seeing that man is to live forever, that his existence in the future is coeval with the life of God, every man becomes a strange and wondrous thing! If you could pile up a mountain of gold, a huge pyramid of it, and then by the side of it a pyramid of precious stones, yet all these put together could not be valued with the soul of the pauper’s child that has been in the workhouse from its very birth! Despise not, then, despise not a man made in the image of God—a man redeemed with the blood of Christ, a man immortal, a man a mystery if he is immortal—a mystery of mysteries!

As I begin to look at him in the light of my text, which is far above all the fictitious surroundings to which men attach so much weight, he appears to me now to be a greater being than stars or suns, for these may die out and their brightness become extinct—but here is a star that shall shine on forever! A sun that shall flash its beams throughout eternity! We must not, therefore, if we are poor, broken, despised—at once go into sin as though we were too mean to be capable of excellence! We must not begin to say, “I cannot be saved—I am so illiterate, I am so

obscure.” Why not? If you are not saved, you will have to live forever in misery! Can you understand that? You are endowed with an immortality from which it is impossible for you to escape! In that respect, by that wondrous gift, God has put you on an elevated position and I pray that you may look at it as such—may, by His grace, not fling yourselves away, nor trifle with yourselves, nor do the devil’s bidding—but seek Him who has promised in His Word that they that seek Him shall find Him!

Thus much on that one thought, and now a second one. If there is another state, as you know there is, for body and soul—

II. WHAT A LIGHT THAT CASTS UPON THIS PRESENT LIFE!

How little it makes it! How great it makes it! How little! Well, if I suffer, today. If my life should be made weary through weakness of body, or if it should be bitter through heart-toil, or if it should be severe through stern poverty, yet you know how we sing—

“The way may be rough, but it cannot be long.”

And again, we sometimes sing—

“An hour with my God will make up for it all.”

These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the weight of glory which shall be revealed in us! Looking at the trials of this present life and comparing and contrasting them with the splendor, glory, and eternity of the life to come, they are not worth a thought! They disappear and we sing as we wade through the midst of them, knowing that it is so written that through much tribulation we must inherit the kingdom of God. When we look back from the hilltops of heaven, I suppose life itself will seem to be infinitesimal. Those great troubles of ours will look like pin’s pricks and we shall almost laugh to think that we should have weighed those burdens and thought them so heavy when they were, after all, light as feathers. I think we shall, as Watts says—

***“With transporting joys recount
The labors of our feet.”***

We shall say, one to another, “How could we have been so unbelieving?” What was there, after all, in our trials to depress us so much? Our sufferings were not worth a thought when once compared with those of our Master. “His way was much rougher and darker than mine. Did Christ my Lord suffer, and did I repine?” Why was it that with such blessed help, such rich promises, such covenant blessings and with the everlasting arms underneath us, yet nevertheless we were faint and ready to die? Oh, brothers and sisters, this world seems so little when we think of the world to come! Now, you who have been envious of the rich, you little think how soon they will be as poor as you! You who have sometimes thought how richly you were favored—think how fame is nothing but a breath—and how soon it is gone! Princes will sleep side by side with the slave. The great conqueror will not be distinguished from the victims of his ambition. The greatest millionaire will be no richer than you! Both alike, you came naked into this world—and naked you return

to the dust. So must it be. Oh, it is all little! “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” The big round world becomes a bubble and it vanishes—and as a puff of smoke, the glory of the world departs!

And yet in this respect, I say, how great this present life becomes! You know how our poet puts its—

**“Great God! On what a slender thread
Hang everlasting things!
The eternal state of all the dead
Upon life’s feeble strings.”**

This life is the mother of the life to come. There is a resurrection for the just, and all the glory which the just shall inherit will be but the outcome of that immortal life which they received here! There is a resurrection for the unjust, and the worm undying and the fire that shall never be quenched! And all these will be just the development and open revealing of the character which they acquired here on earth. Living in sin is the germ of living forever in hell! Believing in Jesus is the root of rejoicing forever in glorious immortality! Now, sirs, see you not that life is not a thing to be played with, not a heap of counters that a child may toss to and fro, not the mere spray on the great sea of eternity? You must not joke and talk about it as though it were a thing to be despised—but come up and look at it with all its solemn possibilities and results—and live the life of sober men, live the life of men who have peered beyond the veil and seen some of the momentous issues of this fleeting existence! Henceforth, live while you live, earnestly, as in the sight of God, the judge of the quick and the dead! Yes, let the light of the resurrection stream over the whole of your present life to make its great things for the present to become little—to make those things which otherwise might be little, which have a reference to eternity—become great in your esteem. But I will not tarry on this and, therefore, pass on to the thought—

III. WHAT ENCOURAGEMENT THIS OFFERS TO US!

To think that there is a resurrection and another life! What? Were it worth our while to toil here in the service of Christ, often unrewarded and very frequently misrepresented and persecuted for what we do, if there were not a place where the reward of divine grace would be given and where the mistakes of earth would all be set right? “Therefore,” says the apostle, “beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” It might be in vain *here*, but forasmuch as there is a resurrection, your labor is not in vain in the Lord! If we win souls for Christ, it often happens that some of those, whom we thought were saved, go back into perdition—many of those who are really saved walk disorderly—others are ungrateful to their spiritual parents and turn aside to crooked ways. But if our record is on high and we do not look to our success for our reward, but to our Master—then we may be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in work! You who are doing something for Jesus Christ in the school, or in any other department of

labor, if you look upon your rewards as the *result*, you may, perhaps, have very few conversions and you may go toiling on very heavily. But if you will look beyond all present results to the great taskmaster's blessed smile and think you hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant"—when you see Him reward you not according to your success, but according to the measure of grace which you use faithfully in His service—when you see that, you will pluck up courage, you will not be of heavy heart, you will be instant in season, out of season!

The same thing is an encouragement under suffering. For this the martyrs cheerfully gave themselves up to their tormentors, not accepting deliverance because they looked for a better resurrection. This it was that made them brave to meet the lions in the amphitheater, or to lie and silently rot in the dismal dungeons of the Roman Emperors. This it was that made Smithfield glorious, as the saints in their chariots of fire clapped their hands and ascended to the skies! They were, of all men, most miserable if, in this life only, they had hope. They were, of all men, most insane to fling away their lives if this world were all! But because there is another and a better land, to die for Jesus became a glorious thing and they did it, being not amazed, not trembling, but dying with greater grandeur about them than that with which most men have learned to surround their living! And now, you that are poor today, or today scoffed at; you who, though trying to follow Christ, find it a hard path; you who at home have little to encourage you, and comfort you—remember *this world* is not your rest! If you were to have 50 years of your present trouble, well, it will be as nothing compared with the eternal weight of glory! Have patience. Ask your Master to give you His patience. Pray of the Holy Spirit to work in you holy virtue, that after you have endured awhile, you may inherit the promise. Remember that there must first be the service before there can be the reward—and even under the economy of grace—in which we are not saved by works, but saved by the merit of Jesus, yet the Lord will have His servants, first of all, be made perfect through suffering before He admits them to their everlasting rest. Be of good courage, then! He will strengthen your heart. This is not your rest, but it remains for you, and you shall inherit it, by-and-by. Passing on again, for I only dwell for a moment upon each thought—this fact of our rising again and living forever suggests to us—

IV. WHAT OUGHT TO BE THE ONE CONCERN OF LIFE.

What shall this be for the saint—what for the sinner? If I am to live again as a child of God; if my salvation is accomplished; if my sin is blotted out and I am really saved, then *let me serve my God with all my might*, seeing what a blessed immortality He has prepared for me! Slaves work when they hear the whip crack, but the children of God are not slaves—they are not under bondage—they work from a very different motive. They have no fear of hell, no fear of losing heaven. When their faith is constantly fixed upon the merits of their Savior, they know that their warfare is accomplished, that their iniquity is pardoned, that their

salvation is secure beyond all risks through the everlasting covenant, the inimitable purpose and the divine promise of the Father in Christ Jesus! Because their salvation is secure and because it leads to such a blessed immortality, they burn with fervent love and passionate gratitude towards Him who has done so much for them! Gratitude in the heart ought to be, and I believe it is, the most powerful force in human motive. Love—what shall equal it? Its wheels move until the axles grow hot with speed. Love has an impetuous force about it. Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. What love we owe to Him who died, that when we die we may live again, who rose that we might rise and made a pathway to the skies that we might follow Him, even to His throne!

“He lives, the great Redeemer lives,” and beckons us to come and live with Him! When our bodies must, for a while, see corruption, His voice, which shall be the trumpet sound, shall call us from the beds wherein we slumber to abide with Him forever! Let us love Him, then! Let us be up and doing to find the lost ones that are His sheep, to find His pieces of money that are now in the dust, to discover our prodigal brethren that are still going astray! Shall we ask for rest when rest remains? Shall we escape from toil when toil is the only exposition of our love? Shall we bemoan our sufferings when sufferings give us opportunities of proving our affection to Him? If the saint in heaven could wish himself back again, he almost might—if he could win a soul by tarrying here a little longer! If any one of yonder white-robed hosts could wish to be on earth, surely it might be to occupy the place of an earnest evangelist, or of a fervent Sunday school teacher, or of any other who is a soul-winner for Jesus! I must confess I do not envy Gabriel his crown when God gives me souls! I have then thought that I would rather be here to talk with you and point you to my Master’s cross, than be up there and cast my crown at His feet—for surely there can be no joy in heaven greater than the joy of doing the Master’s will in winning souls for Him! Do not let us throw away our opportunities for doing this. Some of you do not, perhaps, think of using them. In your business, in the acquaintances that providence puts in your way—you have opportunities in all these things of bearing your witness for your Master. I pray you to see them and seize them! They will soon pass, and in the silent chamber, when you are about to enter into another world, if regret shall mingle with the holy peace that then shall gild your brow, it will be this regret, “I wish I had served Him better, whom I am so soon to see. I wish I had more to take to Him who gave Himself up for me.” Surely you will bid “good-bye” to friends with reluctance, if you have never warned them to escape from the wrath to come! And those dear children—it will bring hotter tears into your eyes to leave them—if you leave them unsaved because you did not plead and wrestle with them for their salvation. So live, dear friends, that when you come to die, there shall be nothing left undone and you may go

and feel that through grace you have been what you are, and unto God be the praise—that you have not neglected the lifework which your Master gave you!

Now, I said that this text should make the unforgiven sinner *think*—and so it should, and very earnestly, too, because there will be a resurrection of the unjust as well as of the just. If you who are now living in sin were really to die and perish like horses, there might be some sort of excuse found for choosing the pleasures of this life as being all-in-all. After all, if there is no other world, I do not know but what the epicurean philosophy is the right one—“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” If we are only to live in this world, it is the part of wisdom to enjoy one’s self as much as possible. I do not know but that even then a man would be justified in running into vice—because that does not bring enjoyment—it is sure to guarantee, even in this life, the most serious results. But still, at the bottom, that old Greek philosopher had hit upon the true philosophy of life if this life were all—“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” But if there is a life to come, as there is, then what a fool Epicurus was! And what nonsense his philosophy becomes! Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we do *not* die, or if we do, yet we live again—and in the light of living again, why, eating and drinking seems such dreadful trumpery, such driveling idiocy that a man cannot tolerate it either from philosopher or from a fool! Oh, if you are to live forever, you who are living without thinking of your God, what sort of life must the next one be for you? You to whom, even now, to think of God is an irksome burden, what will the next world be for you? You believe that book, you dare not doubt it! And that book tells you that “except you repent of your sin, you shall all likewise perish.” Moreover, it tells you that there is no salvation out of Christ, but “He that believes in Him shall be saved; but He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.” According to this book of God’s perfectly revealed mind, there is reserved for you, if you remain impenitent, a “fearful-looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation.” Fear not him who can destroy the body—only fear Him who can cast both soul and body into hell!

Why do you give so much attention to this world that is so soon to be left—and the eternal things are quite forgotten or despised by you? I do not feel as if I could plead this with you with any sort of force or eager earnestness because it is really so plain that you, in your sins, must see it for yourselves! You surely, surely, as sober-minded men and women—and I know there are some here who are accustomed to think—you must feel that the living throughout millions of ages ought to be of greater concern than living from week to week, or even year to year! We think a man is very foolish that lives from hand to mouth, and never cares to make any provision for a rainy day. But what a fool that man must be who makes no provision for that rainy day when the tempest of heaven’s retribution shall beat upon his naked soul—and he shall have no shelter

and no way of escape! And if a man has grown old, and yet neglects eternity; if his constitution is being gradually undermined, and yet the everlasting things are despised; if he has had solemn warnings that he must soon depart; if he has seen old companions, one by one, taken to the grave—and he still trifles away his time, lingering upon the brink of fate—what folly is this and in what words can I describe it?

Blessed Spirit, take away this folly and make men wise that they may be saved! Let this be our one great concern—with holy care to make our calling and election sure, that when the Master comes we may not be found castaways—but may be gathered with His people! And now for the last point; I do not know whether you will set much store by this last thought, but it is this—considering that our friends whom we talk with every day, with whom we go up and down to the market, and to the place of worship—considering that they are to live forever—

V. SHOULD WE NOT ALTER A GREAT DEAL OF OUR PRESENT BEHAVIOR UNDER THE POWER OF THIS TRUTH?

What kind of behavior does this majestic fact inculcate towards our fellow men and women? Well, I think that Christian people ought always to *act to one another as immortal beings*. Now I know some who belong to one denomination who will scarcely speak to those of another section of Christ's one Church. Well, well, well—if you both ever get to heaven, you will have to dwell together! Yet it seems as though you cannot live together on earth without bickering! Why can't you make up your minds to *differ from each other, but always in a Christian spirit*? I think, if I knew I had to live with a man, forever, one thing I would like to do would be to tell him perfectly honestly, with sincere love, all the truths of God I knew—and I ought to be willing to hear from him all the truth he thought he knew. I would not like him to say to me, "Now, you must not hold your views strongly—you must not speak of them, or try to propagate them." That would be as bad as telling me I must sin against God by restraining the light which He had given me! Neither ought I to say to him, "You shall not be free to hold and disseminate your views," for that would be to take upon myself a responsibility which does not belong to me!

But each holding our separate views and contending earnestly for what we believe to be "the faith once for all delivered to the saints," might we not thus exercise an honesty which we shall look back upon in heaven with joy—and at the same time, a brotherly kindness which will be a sweet reflection even beyond the stars? If any two of you have fallen out, even about the faith, go your way and agree tonight! You have got to live together forever—do not quarrel! You who are relatives, especially, let not the sun go down upon your wrath, but as you are birds in the same nest, children of one family, and one with God, do not fall out! And if you have, make it up at once and let holy Christian forgiveness reign and rule! You see, God will not put a partition between you in heaven. I do

not believe they will practice any kind of strict communion up there. I do not believe there will be any separate bench for any who would like to have that kind of thing, but that the whole company of saints will have communion with each other, and with their common Lord, their glorious risen Head; and that it will be their delight, all washed from all their imperfections and infirmities, to eat bread together in the kingdom of God, world without end! Well, let us have large hearts and brotherly kindness—not keeping back our views, for that would be to sin—but holding with a firm hand everything which we have received from the Holy Spirit, and yet loving the whole household of faith. If we were to die, and there were no life to come, then we might be foolish and unchristian enough to be forever squabbling and bickering! But if, after death, we are to live forever in the same place of glory, let us so behave to one another that we shall not be ashamed or embarrassed to meet each other there.

And so with regard to the unconverted. Oh, Christian people, try to *think of all the unconverted* people with whom you have to meet *as immortal souls*. Your servant girl that nurses and loves your child—you may, perhaps, never have thought of but as a servant girl—but she is an immortal soul as much as the Queen on the throne! Or it may be the man who comes to do odd jobs about the house and who blacks your shoes—you never thought of him, probably—but as a worker, yet he—even he—shall outlast the stars! And all those working men and women, and girls who come streaming into your yard or factory, who weave at your looms, toil in your workrooms, stand at your printing press or at the book-binding, or in your builder’s shop—all these and the myriads engaged in commercial and professional life you may hitherto, perhaps, have only thought of them as two-legged machines to earn so many shillings for you and draw so many less from you every week! Yes, but now just think again. They are living for immortality as well as yourselves! Will you try to act with them that if their funeral knell were heard and they were gone, the voice of conscience might not have to torment you with this suggestion, “You neglected their souls! You did not do to them what you ought to have done to them! You kept back from their immortal part that which, alone, could make them blessed in this life and in the life to come.” ‘Tis but a simple thought, and yet if I leave it with you, and God the Holy Spirit blesses it, it may be a very blessed thought to some whom you know not of today! Remember that all you see in the streets, and all you see in the house, and all you see here tonight are all immortal and shall live again! And so treat them as such, looking forward to the time when you will have to give an account whether you have abused or used graciously the opportunities which your Master placed in your way.

And now may the good Lord keep our thoughts heavenward and bless us in them, for His name’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PSALM 73.

Here you have the Psalmist in a fainting fit. He has allowed the flesh to conquer the spirit. The observant eye of reason has, for a while rendered dim the clear vision of faith.

Verse 1. *Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.* That must be true. Whatever we have seen or felt, it cannot be doubted but what God must become a good God to His own people, “Such as are of a clean heart.”

2, 3. *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped; for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.* I began to envy those whom God hates and to think that it would be better for me to have been one of them!

4. *For there are no pangs in their death: but their strength is firm.* Their unbelief helps them to die in peace, mocking God even to the last.

5, 8. *They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain; violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.* They justify themselves in treading others down. They laud it over others. They bully them. They rob them. They crush them, yet speak as if they had a perfect right to do so!

9. *They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth.* Leaving nobody alone, sparing no character, however pure.

10, 11. *Therefore his people return here: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How does God know? And is there knowledge in the most High?* They get to doubt the personality of God. If they will not precisely say that there is no God, yet they go as near to it as they can! They come to what is about the same thing. They have a god who does not know and who does not perceive.

12. *Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.* And this is what the good man said—

13, 14. *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.* “Is this all I am to get by my righteousness? Is this the reward of following after God—to be whipped as soon as I wake, and to be sent to bed sore with grief?”

15. *If I say, I will speak thus, behold I should offend against the generation of Your children.* So he did not say what he thought. Some have said, “If you think so, you may as well say so.” But not so! You might as well say if you have a match you may as well burn your house down! Bad thought is bad to yourself, but it ends there—turn it into words and tell it to others and it may do infinite mischief.

16, 17. *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end. He went and hid himself in his God! He got near his God. It does not mean that he went to some place of worship, but that he went to the God whom he worshiped—hid himself in his God.*

18. *Surely you did set them in slippery places; You cast them down into destruction—*

**“On hills of ice I see them stand,
While flaming billows roll below,”**

melting down their foundation.

19, 22. *How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes; so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my veins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You. It is a man of God that talks thus about himself. He feels that he had got to act and think as a beast might do, for a beast only calculates things according to time present—it crops the grass, is satisfied and lies down. But an immortal man ought to take a wider sweep and range in his thoughts and not merely think of today and of this present life, but of the end of time and of the eternity that lies beyond this present mortal state! And because he had failed to do so, he calls himself foolish and ignorant, and says—*

23, 28. *Nevertheless I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand. You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You. My flesh and my heart fails: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For, lo, they who are far from You shall perish: You have destroyed all them that desert You for harlotry. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works. He finds all his comfort in his God. He comes to the conclusion that whatever the portion of the ungodly may be, his is infinitely better than theirs because they have not God and he has God, who is all-in-all!*

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THINGS TO BE REMEMBERED

NO. 3347

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 1913,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“A psalm of David to bring to remembrance.”
psalm 38. (Title).

THESE words form the title to the psalm before us, which we read just now in your hearing. Let us note, for a short time, the subjects which David thought it necessary to bring to remembrance. We must all have noticed that our memories much more readily retain evil than good. The snatch of a profane song heard in childhood will remain with us to our graves—while many a holy thought leaves scarcely an impression upon the tablets of memory. We heard it—it is gone—it would be difficult to recall it. The draft that flows down the rivers of Sodom, one retentively collects, but the goodly cedars of Lebanon that are floated down the stream pass by unheeded. We may well say, “Forget not all His benefits,” for alas, while the multitude of God’s benefits is forgotten, if there is anything to murmur at, it is pretty sure to be treasured up as though it were a priceless relic to be carefully preserved! May the Lord mend our memories, as He makes us new men and women in Christ Jesus, may the Holy Spirit give to our memories the power to grip the right and the true—and with a loose hand to let slip that which is evil and contrary to His rule. The psalm is “to bring to remembrance.” This seems to teach us that good things need to be kept alive in our memories, that we should often sit down, look back, retrace and turn over in our meditation things that are past, lest, at any time we should let any good thing sink into oblivion. I have read the psalm to you and I think you will all agree with me that among the things which David brought to his own remembrance, the first and foremost were—

I. HIS PAST TRIALS AND HIS PAST DELIVERANCES.

Come, my brothers and sisters, let me stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. Let me remind you of your past battles and victories, of your troubles and conflicts and your sweet cheer and safe preservation. It will do you good to remember them—*such a remembrance will prevent your imagining that you have come into the land of ease and perfect rest.* We may have our time of prosperity and say with David, “I shall never be moved. Lord, by Your favor, You have made my mountain to stand strong.” But soon adversity surprises us, as it suddenly overtook him and changed his note, “You did hide Your face and I was troubled.” This is not the place for us to have peace and rest! We are as yet at sea—the vessel has not reached the port. We are as yet in the wilderness—we have not come to the goodly land, even to Canaan. We are not yet out of gunshot of the devil. We are not yet beyond afflictions and trials and if,

for a while, the weather has been calm and the sun has been bright—and we poor pilgrims have been trudging on along green pastures and by the side of still waters—let us remember the giants with whom we fought in days long gone! Let us remember the hills of difficulty, the valleys of humiliation, the conflicts with Apollyon—for as it was at the first, so shall it always be till we come to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Oh, you who are making for yourself a downy nest and building up a castle in the air, remember you do this without the permission of your God! No, you do it in the teeth of His warnings, for has not Jesus said, “In the world you shall have tribulation”? And is it not written, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous”? Bring to remembrance, then, your former struggles lest you begin to settle upon your lees and fancy that there is no more trial for you!

Remember them, too, *because they will refresh your memories with regard to the mercy of God and so will stir you up to gratitude.* Oh, we thought when we were in trouble that if the Lord would guarantee us deliverance, He would never hear the last of it! We said to ourselves, “I will praise Him while I have any being if He brings me out of this strait and sets my feet, once again, in a large room.” But our song was not quite as long as we expected and, after having praised God a little, the novelty of the mercy departed and our gratitude subsided. But, oh, my brothers and sisters have we not much cause to bless God? Have we not cause to bless Him that we have been delivered from the burden of guilt—a burden that once bowed us to the earth—that we have been saved in dire afflictions when it seemed as if we must be crushed, that tribulations have been averted which threatened us, or that we have been sustained under those which have actually come upon us? Oh, sing unto the Lord a new song! And weave that new song out of the remembrances of His past mercies when He appeared for His servants in the times of trouble and worked amazingly for them according to the counsels of His love! Blessed be the name of the Lord at this time as we bring to remembrance trials past, and mercies that have been received!

Such a remembrance will be of great service to you, my brothers and sisters, *if you are at this time enduring the like exercises.* What God was, that He is. “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever,” is His people’s trust and glory. Having begun to deliver you, He will not afterwards forsake you! He has not brought you this far to put you to shame. What is the trouble of today? You have passed through another quite as great. What is the doubt that assails you? You have already met a doubt quite as gloomy and by faith you have overcome it! What is the fear which now gathers like a heavy cloud? The time before, it burst with mercies upon your head—and it shall do the same again! Draw courage from the recollections of the past and go forward to the fears of the future—and they shall vanish as you advance confident in your God. The great point, however, in David’s psalm is—

II. TO BRING TO REMEMBRANCE THE DEPRAVITY OF OUR NATURE.

There is, perhaps, no psalm which more fully than this one describes human nature as seen in the light which God, the Holy Spirit, casts upon it in the time when He convicts us of sin. I am persuaded that the description here does not tally with any known disease of the body. It is very much like leprosy, but it has about it certain features which cannot be found to meet in any leprosy described either by ancient or modern writers. The fact is, it is a *spiritual* leprosy—it is an inward disease which is here described—and David paints it to the very life and he would have us remember this. Child of God, let me bring to your remembrance, tonight, the fact that you are by nature no better than the vilest of the vile! “Children of wrath even as others,” are we. Even you who are favored by divine grace to enter into rich fellowship with Christ are no better, naturally, than the lost spirits in hell! There was no difference at birth and no intrinsic essential difference of moral constitution between Peter and Judas, between Paul and Demas, between the brightest apostle and the bloodiest persecutor! We have grown in grace—had we been left to ourselves, we would have rotted in sin! We have gone from strength to strength in the way of holiness, but if it had not been for divine grace that interposed most sovereignly, we would have gone from depth to depth in the way of crime!

Just turn that over for a minute. By nature not one whit better than the rest of mankind, see what grace has done for you in making such a difference! Why are you not tonight upon the drunkard’s bench? Why fill you not the seat of the scorner? Perhaps you have been there already, and if divine grace had not prevented, you would have continued there! I think it does us a world of good, when grace has made the difference, to still take the place which the publican did. I never feel so well in spiritual health as when I cry out, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” Somehow there is safeness about it, when a sense of sin makes one cling to the sinner’s Savior. Growth in grace, and high frames in spirituality are very pleasant, but it does us much good, every now and then, to come right on the ground again, flat on our face before the Lord, crying out, “What am I that You have brought me to this? God forgive me, and accept me through the precious blood, for in myself I am loathsome, vile and abhorred—and in me there dwells no good thing.” The best mode of living is to live upon Christ every day as you did the first day of your conversion—always to stand at the foot of the cross with—

***“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling.”***

A saint, I hope, by grace, but a sinner certainly by nature. Still, still dependent upon the same merit of the substitute, still accepted through the continual plea of the divine intercessor who has espoused my cause and is able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by Him. “Heirs of wrath even as others”—this is what we were! Sinners saved by grace—this is what we are! It is well to bring to the remembrance of the child of God that although his past sin is all blotted out, and he is justified by faith which is in Jesus Christ, yet there still remains in him the old body of this death. Sin, the force of sin, still dwells in him! Now,

brothers and sisters, there are times when everything goes very smoothly with us. Everybody treats us kindly. We are much in religious exercises. We go from prayer-meetings to lectures, from lectures to sermons, and from sermons to our room and to our Bibles. We do not get vexed or troubled and we begin to think, "Now I really am somewhat of a superior being. I think I am not what I used to be—I never could be roused to that old anger which once flamed out so furiously, nor could I now be led into such fretfulness as once was known to overcome me." I have noticed—take my experience for what it is worth—that the most dangerous time in the Christian's life is when he has been nearest to God in devotion. You meet the devil and not expecting him, he is too much for you. It is just when you have been most spiritual that the temptation which you had almost thought would never come again, trips you up, and ah, how soon you find that if when upon the mountain, your face glowed, down in the valley, again, unless your Master holds you up, your foot will slip and your face will be covered with the filthiness of the valley! Remember, child of God, let others say what they will to you, that the dictates of experience and the teachings of God's word lead you to the remembrance that there is still in you a spirit that lusts after all manner of evil, a nature which, if it were not curbed and confined by the grace of God, would make you again to be what you were, yes, and would bring into your house seven devils worse than the first! Never conceive that any one of the evils of your nature is so dead that it cannot have a resurrection. Strive against every form of sin, every *thought* of sin, every carnal tendency, every evil passion—and when you have striven most, never count your victory to be complete until your feet are within the pearly gate! Never reckon that you may take off your helmet and lay aside your sword and say, "The battle is fairly won," until you have crossed the river of death and go waving the banner of love in the streets of the New Jerusalem!

David brings this to remembrance and that, too, in the most forcible words. Some of the children of God can use very terrible words about what they feel in their own nature, so that ungodly men say of them, "How bad these Christians must be!" It is not that they are worse than others, but that they have the sense to see the evil. A man in a black coat may have a hundred spots and blots upon it, but nobody will see them—but let him wear a coat of white and if there is only a little a speck of mire, it is immediately perceived! The holier the Christian becomes, the more readily he perceives his imperfections and the wickedness of his sins—and sin, instead of becoming more bearable to a Christian, becomes growingly more and more intolerable! A man in the water may bear much—in fact, much of it might roll over his head and he would not feel the weight of it—but let him come out on the dry land and put but a small quantity of water in a bucket and how heavy it is when he carries it upon his head! When he is in the water, he does not feel the weight, for it presses him on all sides—but get him out of the water and then he begins to feel its gravity. So, a sinner in his sin is like a man in the deep—he does not feel the weight of his sin. But get him out of it, bring

him into a new element, and then immediately sin becomes exceedingly sinful! Oh, if we could but be perfect! If it were possible to be rid of this evil nature! So we sigh and so we cry, waiting for the adoption, for the coming of the Lord, for the perfecting of our nature as it shall be, by-and-by, when the furnace work of providence and the refining work of divine grace shall all be done!

It is a gloomy thing to bring to your remembrance, my dear friends, but it is often brought to mine, and I know it is good for me—what you were by nature and what you still are, unless the grace of God prevents it. Remember old John Bradford's remark whenever he saw a man go by his window to Tyburn to be hanged—and he lived at that time where he saw them all—"Ah," he said, "there goes John Bradford if the grace of God had not prevented." It is said that a Scotchman once went to see Rowland Hill and, sitting down, he looked at the lines in his face. He looked a long while, till Rowland smilingly said, "And what are you looking at, my friend?" "I am looking at the lines in your face, Mr. Hill." "And what," said he, "do you make of them?" "Why, that if the grace of God had not saved you, you would have been a great rogue." "Ah," said Rowland, "and you have hit the mark!" It is even so, and even worse than that! If the grace of God had not come into our hearts and made new creatures of us, we had been equal to the devil, or, at any rate, it would not have been our fault if we had not excelled even Apollyon, himself, in rebellion and enmity to God! A third thing the psalm brings to our remembrance is—

III. OUR MANY ENEMIES.

David says that his enemies laid snares for him, sought his hurt, spoke mischievous things and devised and imagined deceits all day long. "Well," says one, "how was it that David had so many enemies? How could he make so many? Must he not have been imprudent and rash, or, perhaps, morose?" It does not appear so in his life. He rather made enemies by his being scrupulously holy. His enemies attacked him not because he was wicked, but, as he says in this very psalm, they were his enemies because he loved the thing which is good. Now, you must not suppose that because you seek to live in all peaceableness and righteousness, that, therefore, everybody will be peaceable towards you. Far from it! Our Lord put us upon the right tack when He said, "I came not to send peace upon earth, but a sword." The ultimate result of the religion of Christ is to make peace everywhere—but the first result is to cause strife. When the light of God comes, it must contend with the darkness. When the truth of God comes, it must first combat error. And when the gospel comes, it must meet with enemies—and the man who receives the gospel will find that his foes shall be they of his own household. You shall not be helped by an ungodly father, nor be cheered onward by an un-Christian mother. One would think that even nature, itself, might lead parents to admire that which should make their children virtuous, preserve them in this life and bless them in the life to come. But such is the enmity of the human heart against Christ and His

gospel, that hundreds of parents have been monsters to their children when those children have been obedient subjects to Christ! Why those stakes, those dungeons and those racks? Why the snows of Piedmont dyed scarlet with human gore? Why the glens of Scotland marked with the lurking places of the saints? Because this world hates the people of God! “You are not of the world,” says Christ, “even as I am not of the world, and therefore the world hates you.” It is good to be reminded of this, that we may not be astonished at the fiery trial as though some strange thing had happened to us! It is the part and lot of the follower of the true to have to contend with deadly odds.

And remember, Christian, you have enemies who seek to turn you aside and do you mischief. You are not now traveling along a road that is safe for your feet, in which there is no enemy whatever, but behind every hedge there lurks a foe. Whether you are in high or low estate, temptation will assail you. It is not possible for you to shut the door so quickly as to shut out temptations to sin! Snares assail you in your bed and at your table—snares will be about your feet at home and abroad, with your fellow workmen and in the bosom of your family. Be always on the alert then. Travel with a naked sword—never sheath it. “Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation,” and until you have come out of the enemy’s country, into the land that flows with milk and honey, always hear your captain say, “What I say unto you I say unto all—watch.” Watch—especially watch against those who come to you with words softer than butter which inwardly are drawn swords! Watch against temptations that appeal to your pleasure. You need not be so much afraid of that which grieves you as of that which charms you. Watch against the fair siren whose fascinating song will attract you from the billowy deep with the hope of rest to where, alas, you will find shipwreck and ruin! Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it moves itself aright. Let the charm of the temptation be the warning to you. Let the pleasure be the very beacon which shall make you turn aside from it, feeling that there must be evil lurking there. Christian, be always on your guard! Never be taken by surprise. Once more—

IV. THE PSALM REMINDS US OF OUR GRACIOUS GOD.

Anything which drives us to God is a blessing and anything which weans us from leaning on an arm of flesh, and especially that weans us from trying to stand alone, is a blessing to us! Think awhile how much you owe to the grace of God who has preserved you until now. The man who carries a bombshell within his heart, and has to walk through the midst of sparks, may wonder that he has not been blown to pieces—

***“Kept alive with death so near,
I to God the glory give.”***

With such a heart as mine, if You, O Lord, had not held me fast, I had long ago declined and turned back to the world! Praise the grace that has held you till now! Keep in remembrance the patience of God in enduring with you, the power of God in restraining you, the love of God in instructing you and the goodness of God in keeping you to this day.

Nor ought we ever to forget with regard to our inward depravity, and the grace of God, that mighty work which the Holy Spirit has undertaken. I was trying the other day in my own mind to weigh in the scales the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit—and the only conclusion I could come to was this—that I did not know which in its execution was the more difficult, or which in its results was the more precious. For Christ to take the guilt of sin and suffer was certainly a marvelous thing, but for the Holy Spirit to condescend to *dwell* in our hearts and to combat day by day with our sin until He should eradicate the very principle of selfishness and make us to be holy even as God is holy—this is a work worthy of God! And if the former work, that of Christ, was divine, certainly this is no less so! Oh, let us never depreciate the Holy Spirit's work, but looking forward to what we are to be, as well as backwards upon what we were, let us magnify the Holy Spirit with our heart, soul and strength who has worked all our works in us and by whom we shall be presented faultless before the presence of God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing!

“My God, I thank You for reminding me of Yourself, of Your Son by whom I am cleansed, of Your Holy Spirit by whom I am sanctified, of Yourself by whom I am daily succored. Oh, bind me to Yourself with tenfold cords and as your providence brings me where I have to encounter new sins, and new trials, and to experience new deliverances and new mercies, may You be brought more closely to my soul and may everything bring You to remembrance.” We never walk so safely as when we walk with God. We are never so rich as when we are poor in everything without Him, and never so strong as when we are weakness, itself, except for such strength as we get from our invisible helper. Lean heavily there, Christian. Lean heavily! You can never make that arm weak. Bear with all your weight—He can never tire. Cast all your burden upon Him. You may even be glad to have a burden to cast there, so that you may have opportunities of knowing and proving the power and faithfulness of your God. Tonight, as your troubles have been brought to remembrance, let those bring your weakness to remembrance—let that bring your God to remembrance and so do you go up the rungs of the ladder from the bottom of the horrible pit and of the miry clay, to the very heights of joy and gladness! And as you go say, “My God, You are mine—mine, despite my sin—mine to deliver me from it all and to make me like Yourself, to dwell with You forever.”

Brothers and sisters, the mercy is that all the badness that we see in ourselves does not at all affect our standing before God, or our belief in our own personal safety! Though I see within myself all that is foul and corrupt, everything that is villainous and even devilish, by nature, yet do I know that I am saved and rejoice that neither death nor hell shall divide me from my Master's bosom, for our standing rests not in ourselves, but wholly in what Christ has done! His perfect work presents to us a foundation upon which we can build securely—and though we grieve daily over indwelling sin and have come to God with many a bitter

accusation against ourselves, yet glory be to His name, Christ changes not and our acceptance in the Beloved does not wax and wane like the moon, but abides in one sacred, high, eternal noonday never to go down! Glory be to God, and let our souls exult in such mercy as this!

I would to God as I bring these things to your remembrance, that you would remember how many have forgotten these things all their lives. How many of your own companions live as if there were no God and no hereafter? I bring them to your remembrance. Pray for them and do what you can to lead them to Jesus!

I wish I could bring to *their* remembrance that they must die and that after death there comes the judgment—and that the judgment for an unpardoned soul means eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord! Oh you who have much remembrance for the things of this world that are not worth remembering, for a while use that faculty for nobler ends. Scrape not up the mire of the streets, but begin to gather a little of the pure gold that God puts before you! Think upon your latter end! Think upon the gospel which now is preached to you. Think upon the time when it shall be preached to you no more! Think of the hour when you shall be called to account for having rejected the gospel's invitation. Whoever trusts Jesus shall be saved. Rely upon what Jesus has done and, guilty as you are, your sins shall be forgiven!

God grant that it may be so with you, for His love's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ROMANS 6.

Verse 1 *What shall we say, then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?* The 5th chapter ends up in this way, that “*where sin abounded, etc.... Jesus Christ our Lord.*” Then he goes on to say, “*What shall we say, then?*” What inference shall we draw from the fact that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound? Shall we be base enough to draw a wicked inference from a gracious statement? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? It is a horrible suggestion and yet it is one which has come into the minds of many men, for some men are bad enough for anything—they will curdle the sweet milk of love into the sourest argument for sin! “*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid!*” With all the vehemence of his nature, he says—

2. *God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* The grace of God makes us dead to sin. This is the grace of God which delivers us from the power of evil—and if this is so, how can we live any longer therein?

3. *Know you not, that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?* If we are in Christ at all, we are partakers of His death and as His was a death *for* sin and a death *to* sin, we are made partakers of it—we are really dead because Christ died and we are in Him. Therefore we are dead to the old life, to the old way of sin. We signify that by our baptism.

4. *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.* Our baptism, solemn as it was, was a great acted lie, a living pretense unless we are dead to our former way of living and have come to live unto God in a new life altogether, by virtue of the resurrection of Christ from the dead!

5. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.* If we have partaken of His death, we partake also of His rising power. We live because He lives and we live as He lives, not after the old manner, but in newness of life.

6. *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* We are to regard ourselves as persons that have been dead. We are ourselves, it is true, and yet in another sense we are not ourselves. We are not to look upon ourselves as though we owed any kind of service to the power which we obeyed before we knew the Lord. We are new people—we have a new life and have entered upon a new existence—the old man is crucified with Him

7, 8. *For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we are dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.* There was no getting free from the power of sin except by dying to it but, being dead to it, we are free from it and, now being dead that way, we have entered into a new life that we might live as Christ lives!

9. *Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him.* So we, being raised from our former death, shall die no more—death has no more dominion over us. That is to say, sin cannot reign in us again—we are dead to it, we are brought into a new life that can never end, even as our Lord Jesus Christ is. There is a parallel between us and Christ, even as there is a union between us.

10. *For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God.* And so do we! We have died unto sin once, but now that we live, we live unto God.

11, 12. *Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.* It is in the body that it tries to reign. These poor things, these mortal frames of ours, have so many passions, so many desires, and so many weaknesses, all of which are apt to bring us under the dominion of sin unless we watch with great care.

13. *Neither yield you your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* “Neither yield you your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin”—neither eyes, nor ears, nor hands, nor feet—neither allow any of these to become the tools of sin, “but yield yourselves unto God.” He is ready to use you! Lay all the powers of your nature out as tools for Him

to use. “Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead.” He is not the God of the dead—He cannot use the dead, but He is the God of the living—and as you profess to have received a new life in Christ, yield up all the faculties of this new life unto the living God, “and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

14. *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.* When you were under the law, sin did get dominion over you! That law which was ordained to life, worked towards death. The evil concupiscence of your nature revolted against the command and led you astray. But *now*, beloved, it is of love and grace, and now sin cannot get in—stronger motives shall hold you to holiness than ever held you before, and the grace of God, itself, like a wall of fire, shall guard you from the dominion of sin!

15. *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid!* That must not be! Again the evil spirit crops up, trying to turn the grace of God into licentiousness, and to make us feel free to sin because of God’s love—that must not be!

16. *Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?* It is a wonderful heart-searching text, is this! Let us put ourselves under its power. Whatever you obey, that is your master! And if you obey the suggestions of sin, you are the slave of sin! And it is only as you are obedient to God that you are truly the servants of God. So that after all, our outward walk and conversation are the best test of our true condition. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, nor can he have any reason to believe that he belongs to God.

17. *But God be thanked that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.* Or into which you were delivered. God has taken you, melted you down, and poured you into a new mold! God be thanked for that—you are not what you used to be. Although you are not what you hope to be, yet you have reason to bless God you are not what once you were—you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine into which you were delivered.

18. *Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness.* The fetters are struck off, and the lusts of the flesh do not hold us any longer. We are the Lord’s free men and women—and out of gratitude for this glorious freedom, we become the willing servants of the righteous God!

19. *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.* It needs no explanation. In the days of our sin, we sinned with all our power. There was not one part of us but what became the willing servant of sin and we went from iniquity into iniquity! But now the cross has made us entirely new and we have been melted down, poured out into a fresh mold. Now, let us yield every member of our body, soul and spirit to righteousness, even unto holiness, till the

whole of us, in the wholeness and consequently the holiness of our *nature*, shall be given unto God.

20. *For when you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness. You did not care about righteousness then. When you served sin, you felt it was utterly indifferent to you what the claims of righteousness might be. Well, now that you have become the servant of righteousness, be free from sin! Let sin have no more dominion over you, now, than righteousness used to have when you were the slaves of sin! "What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed?" What profit did they ever bring you? There was a temporary delight, like the blossom on the tree in spring, but what fruit did you find? Did it ever come to anything? Is there anything to look back upon with pleasure in a life of sin? Oh no, those things whereof we are now ashamed were fruitless to us, "for the end of those things is death."*

22, 23. *But now being made free from sin, and being servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

ISAIAH 53.

This is a chapter which you have read hundreds of times, perhaps. I am sure it is one that needs no comment from me. I shall read it through with scarcely a sentence of comment.

Verses 1-9. *Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form or comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He has done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. A strange reason for making His grave with the wicked, and yet remember, if it had not been that He had done no violence, He would not have been fit to be a substitute for sinners! And so He was numbered with transgressors to redeem men.*

10, 11, 12. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief; when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed. He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied; by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong because He has poured out His soul unto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* How clearly you have before you, here, our blessed Redeemer, and how strong are the expressions used by Isaiah to set forth His substitution. If he intended to teach us the doctrine that Christ suffered in the place of His people, he could not have used more expressive words. And if he did not intend to teach us that truth of God, it is marvelous that he should have adopted phraseology so likely to mislead. Yes, we believe and hold it fast, that Christ did take the sins of His people verily and truly upon Himself and did, in proper person make a complete expiation for the guilt of all His chosen! And in this we find our hearts' best confidence—

***Our soul can on this doctrine live,
Can on this doctrine die!"***

Have you and I an interest in this atonement, or must the complaint be made concerning us—"Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" While I was reading just now, could you say by faith, "Yes, surely He has borne *our* griefs and carried *our* sorrows"? Have you an appropriating faith which takes the sufferings of Christ to be its own? Do you now humbly, but yet confidently, look to Jesus Christ, the great burden-bearer on yonder tree, and know that your guilt was there? If so, rejoice and walk worthily of your calling! If not, soul, you do not know the first letters of the alphabet of religion! May the Lord teach you, for His name's sake.

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KNOWING AND DOING

NO. 3348

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“If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.”
John 13:17.

THE original scope of these words was just this—“If, as you say, you have understood the meaning of this—the washing of your feet by your Master—if you have comprehended My intention in so doing, then it will be to your lasting honor and happiness if you do the same. I have symbolically represented to you, by washing your feet, certain virtues. You shall be a happy people if these virtues are found in you and abound.” And have we not abundant proof that our Lord spoke the truth, for where are churches as happy as where they are knit together in brotherly love, where they have laid aside contentions about priority and distinction and where each one becomes a servant of all—everyone willing to take the lowest place and no one contending who shall be the greatest! May we prove, as I trust in our measure we have already done, how true these words are, and never may Diotrefes be in our midst to strive for the preeminence, nor a root of bitterness spring up to trouble us! May we, everyone, try to be like our Lord and happy, indeed, shall we be in such a case.

But the sentence before us is equally applicable to every other gospel precept. If we understand anything which the Holy Spirit has revealed to us, happy shall we be if we follow its practical intention—if, being first taught and instructed—we afterward practically exemplify in our life and conduct the things which we have learned! That is the one thought I propose to lay upon our hearts and minds this evening! And that one thought may be enough.

You will notice in the text that there are two “ifs”—“*If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.*” It appears, then, first, that *genuine and acceptable service to Christ should be based upon intelligent knowledge*—“*If you know these things.*” And secondly, that all *intelligent understanding of the things of God should lead us to the practice of them*—“*Happy are you if you do them.*” The first “if” shall be taken first—“If you know these things”—

I. ALL SERVICE OF CHRIST IS BASED UPON INTELLIGENT KNOWLEDGE.

Our first observation is that this is an “if” even in this country. “If you know these things.” Alas, even in such a city as this, where the gospel is to be heard in all our streets and Bibles are to be found in all our homes,

it is so sad that tens of thousands do *not* know these things! They are so careless about what God has revealed that they will not even cross the threshold to listen to the Word of God! This day what a mass of Sabbath-breaking has grieved the Spirit of God! All around us there are those who are toiling hard six days in the week for themselves and cannot give to their God and, I may add, to their truer and nobler selves, this one day in which to think of Him. He has written to them the great things of His law and they have trifled with it! He speaks to them and invites them to hear that their souls may live, but they would rather rest in their beds, or be found in any kind of pleasure sooner than seeking pleasure in the ways of God! Pity this poor city, you who know its sins! Pray for it, you who know its high privileges and solemn responsibilities! Work for it, you who have power with the heavenly Father, until at last the blessing shall come and men shall no longer need to say to their fellows, "Know the Lord."

Alas, this is an "if," however, which does not merely concern those who are outside our walls. There are many who know not these things, though they hear about them—and the reason is because while they come to the place of worship, and the sound of the preaching glides across their ears, *they never give deep, earnest attention to it*. They say that preaching is dull—very possibly it is—but it is very amazing that it should not be still duller when people have no concern to get into its inner meaning, but find it quite enough to come and to go like a door on its hinges! Full often from the humblest teacher something might be learned if we were but anxious to be taught. Or if we learned little by what he said, his very emotions might remind us and one thought, however commonplace, might engender another—and it would not be altogether without profit to sit together in the assembly of the saints.

Oh, how negligently do some hear! They are thinking of their homes, of their horses, of their cattle, of their farm and their merchandise. God gets no such attention from men as legatees give the lawyer when he reads the will. If men would listen to the preaching of the gospel but half as well as they listen to sweet music, there might be hope of its being a blessing to them! But many understand not the things of God because of their negligent hearing of it.

Alas, too, there are some who attend at least with an outward attention which we cannot blame, but they know not the things of God because they have not yet found out that the letter, that is, the external word, is a killing thing, and that it is the inner *and spiritual sense which is, alone, to be sought after*. To listen to a doctrine, for instance, is right enough, and to catch the theory of it and be able to repeat the definition may be in some respects valuable. But it is imperative to get into the soul and spirit of that teaching of God which alone is spirit and truth and, consequently, food to the spiritual man! Dead orthodoxy, mere doctrinal correctness—these will never land men in heaven because they do not even put them into the kingdom of heaven now! Men who merely have these are like botanists who know not the flowers, but only know the

names of the divisions and the orders. They are like physicians who speak of drugs they have never seen or used, who would attempt to deal with men's bodies before they had even studied anatomy or seen a bone!

We need to come to the tasting and handling of God's Word. And all the hearing in the world will end in nothing unless the soul gets still closer and in the very soul and secret of the truths of God. Hence there is an "if," an "if" about the best of hearers, about the most intelligent—"If you *know* these things"—you may have listened to them, have drunk them in from the earliest days of your life, but unless the Holy Spirit has revealed them to you, flesh and blood cannot do so and you cannot, therefore, know them!

It is greatly to be regretted that there are some persons who do not know the truth of God because they have *no care to know at all*. They have contempt for anything that God reveals. They are wise men and, therefore, they spend their whole lifetime in studying a piece of rock, or in collecting specimens of beetles, or in any wonderfully wise track of science! But to listen to the eternal Jehovah is quite beneath them! To hear what He has been pleased to say concerning Himself in His own Word seems to them to be trifling. Have I not often met with men who would think it to be worth years of study to make the idlest possible conjectures about the formation of a limestone rock, who yet would laugh in one's face if one began to speak about the soul and the things of the world to come? And these are wise men—at least according to their own estimate of themselves! Whether or not they are fools shall remain for the future to reveal to them—may they find it out before the discovery shall be too late!

Others never will become intelligent in the things of God because *they are prejudiced*. They have made up their minds that they *do* know—and he who thinks he knows will never learn. The conceptions which they received early in life—their training, the fancies which they have forged for themselves as being what should be the truth—these occupy their minds and they cannot see the things of God because the mind has been blinded with other matters. Would to God that we could be clear of prejudice and clear of unholy contempt for God's truth—and could come simply to Him and ask to be taught as a child by the great Father and lay bare our bosoms that the Holy Spirit might cast out error from us and might write the mind and will of God there clearly! Then, indeed, with such a humble submission and a divinely earnest desire, there need be no longer an "if" as to whether we learn these things. There is an "if," however.

Let us now observe that *we ought never to rest content while there is an "if."* "If you know these things." My God, is it a question whether I know You or not, whether I know Christ or not, whether I know the Revelation which You have given to us or not? Then begin to teach me now! Oh, Sirs, it will not do to trifle with an ignorance which shall be our lasting ruin! We ought not to give sleep to our eyes until we have asked

to be taught of God! To be ignorant about the things of ordinary daily life is not wisdom, but to be ignorant about eternal life is stark madness!

An uneducated man stands but little chance in the battle of this life. A man uneducated for eternity—alas, how exposed is he to innumerable adversaries, how sure to fall, how certain to perish! Go, I pray you, brothers and sisters, go to the wise One for wisdom! Go to this book for the light of God! Go to the Holy Spirit, Himself, for divine instruction and let it not be any longer with you a matter of question as to whether you are taught of God or not! Oh, I would speak very earnestly here. I do not ask that you should be learned. I do not ask for myself that I may be profound. But I do pray that we may comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, or at least may know Him and be found in Him, clothed in His righteousness and accepted in His merits. It ought not to be an “if.”

But, supposing that there is no “if” with any of us, then what *ground is there for gratitude!* If the Savior need not say, “If you know these things,” but if we can say, “Lord You know that we love You, that we rest in You, that we serve You, that we have been taught of Your Spirit,” then there is no room for self-congratulation, no room for pride! What have you which you have not received? Thank God, dear friend that you were not born amidst the heathenism of Africa! Thank God that you were not left to the Sabbath-breaking of London! Thank God that when you did hear the Word, it broke through the outer door and came into the inner chamber of your soul! Thank God that that passage of Scripture was not sent to you, “Come and speak to this people and make their ears heavy that they shall not hear, for their hearts have grown gross”! Blessed be the distinguishing grace that enabled us, who once were as incapable of this as the dead in their graves, to see and hear spiritually!

What should come of it? Why, if you know these things and have learned them by the Spirit of God, make it the method of showing your gratitude to try and be His instruments in teaching others! If you know these things, be not silent. If you know these things, wrap not up these blessed secrets in your hearts as though they were committed to you only for your own personal enjoyment, but in the name of Him who gave such a priceless gift, go and tell wherever your tongue can be heard, the good news of the salvation of Jesus Christ! And perhaps God may make you a blessing to some of His hidden ones who as yet have not come to Christ.

Thus much about the first “if.” It looks to me like the first arch—and having passed through it, I can see another beyond me—and I must pass to the second if I would get the happiness.

II. THE INTELLIGENT KNOWLEDGE OF THE THINGS OF GOD SHOULD LEAD US TO THE PRACTICE OF THEM.

“If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.”

This second “if” applies to all the things which we have been taught of God. Let me give you, however, a specimen. *Saving truths*—if you know them, happy are you if you do them! This is a saving truth of God—that

whoever trusts in Jesus Christ is saved. You know that. If there is anything you ought to know, you who come to this house, you ought to know that, for it is the staple of all our sermonizing every Lord's day—that a simple confidence in Jesus Christ, the Savior, saves the soul! Happy are you, then, if you have exercised this simple confidence, for then you are saved! If you have trusted with the whole weight of your sin upon Jesus, you have the happiness of being saved, accepted, secure. Saving truths ought to, every one of them, be the first objects of practice. That same Spirit who teaches us the truths of God enables us to put them into action in our daily life. Dear hearer, have you been a hearer of the good message, but have been a hearer, only? If so, you have missed the joy of the whole business! I pray you go a step farther and believe and live!

After saving truths come *purifying truths*. Such is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's indwelling. The Holy Spirit dwells in believers and where He dwells, there should be purity, peace, holiness and purging out of sin.

You believe this, but happy are you if you seek so to act. If you pray that you may not grieve the Spirit of God, nor cause Him to depart from you, your daily anxiety shall bring its results and you shall be happy.

Then, there are certain *ennobling truths* in God's Word and happy are we if we do them. Such is the truth of divine adoption. Every believer is a child of God. Happy are we if we live like one, if we exercise the privileges of heirs, if we come to our Father with a child-like confidence, if we plead with Him as a dear son asking a generous Father to supply his needs. Remember that every doctrine of the gospel has a practice appended to it and that to get the happiness out of the doctrine you must put its preceptory part, or its practical inference, into action. You may be as orthodox as you please, but your orthodoxy shall be only like so many grapes untrodden in the winepress! But if you cast them into your daily life, then shall the luscious juice run forth and you shall be satisfied with favor and be full of the goodness of the Lord! Bread on the table will not satisfy you, nor will mere doctrine. The bread must be taken and eaten—and assimilated—and then shall it comfort you. And so with the truth of God—it must be a part of yourself and be worked out into your daily life—or else the happiness of it cannot be yours.

If there were time tonight, I would make an inventory of all the truths of Scripture and say after each one, "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." If you know it to be a privilege to be united with God's people, come and join the church! If you know that Jesus bids you be baptized and come to His table to remember Him, I pray you be not disobedient, even to what you may think to be His least commandment! Whenever you get the glimpse of a truth from God's Word, or in your conscience by His Spirit, never be a traitor to the heavenly vision! Depend upon it, it is a terrible thing to trifle with knowledge! Some men would not see when they might have seen—and they have always been blind. Many a man who might have led the van in the Church of God,

and have helped on a glorious reformation, has stepped back from the forefront because, perhaps, of some spurious charity with which he indulged the flesh—and he has gone back into the rear—to the vile dust from whence he sprang! But he that is faithful to God, faithful to the convictions of his conscience—and carries all out into practice—shall be among those to whom the Master shall say, “Well done,” at the last. I say to every truth in Scripture there is a practical conclusion and I beseech you to see to it that you hear Christ say, “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.”

Why is it that the practice of a truth of God is required to the enjoyment of the happiness which it brings? Answer—*this is always God’s rule*. The ground is fat and full of bread, but the farmer, by his tillage, must bring out the corn. Down deep in the heart of the earth are the stores of gold and silver—there gleam the precious ores in quantities that might make even Croesus, himself, to blush for poverty! But the metal starts not up from the soil by itself. It must be dug for—it must be cast into the furnace and separated from the ore. There shall be wealth in many nations, and trade shall bring comforts to all ranks, but the sea must be traversed, the sails must be spread, the voyage must be made! Labor everywhere shall bring enjoyment, but without labor there shall be none. God is not the God of idleness! He speaks not to the earth to bid it bring food to the door of the idler. He commands neither the ravens nor any other of His creatures to bring bread and meat for the sluggards. There shall always be practice, and then the result of work shall be the reward. So must it be in the things of God—you must put them into practice to get the blessing they hold! The laws of nature are wonderful, and a knowledge of them desirable, but a knowledge of all the laws of nature would never have reaped a field, built a house, found jewels in the mine, or even have made a steam engine without a furnace, a hammer and strenuous toil!

All the knowledge with which a man can cram his brain cannot secure him in his daily needs until he transfers it from his brain to his right hand and sets to work with it! If you would get God’s blessings, then, in nature or in grace, carry out the divine laws into immediate and energetic practice!

In the next place, for God to give the comforts of His promises to men who will not obey His precepts would be to discourage all Christian effort. Every man would fold his arms and sit down. “If I am to have salvation without believing,” says one, “why should I believe? If I am to have grace given me without using such grace as that which is already entrusted to me, then let me eat and drink, for grace will come to me! Let me be as carnal as I like.” But God will not so act as to give graceless hearts such an excuse!

To give His blessing to those who do not practice His precepts would be, in fact, *to give a premium for sin*. The more knowledge, if that knowledge is not put into practice, the more sin, in consequence! Shall God reward a man who, sitting in the light of God, will not walk by the

light? And shall He give enjoyments to those who know His will and who do not that will? No, sirs, if blessings came to merely knowledge, I suppose the devil would be the most blessed of beings! Certainly if the comforts of the gospel came to those who understand the gospel best, but who do not practice it, there would be some of the vilest of mankind who would be orthodox enough—who would, on such a rule, go to heaven! But they shall find themselves shut out when that judgment shall be given which proceeds upon this rule, “By their fruits you shall know them.” You all see, without any reasoning from me, that it would seem strange, indeed, if God allowed the precepts of the gospel to be trampled underfoot and then gave the same blessings to the rebellious as to the graciously obedient! It must not, shall not be! See we not, then, that our happiness from the things of God must come, not merely through knowledge, though that is the first stage of divine favor—but we must not rest satisfied until we pass into the *second stage*—the *doing* of what we have learned! We close with the question which the text naturally inspires—

III. WHAT IS THE HAPPINESS WHICH THIS PRACTICAL OBEDIENCE BRINGS?

Briefly, it is always a blessed thing to be obedient to God. The very soul of joy to the creature who wants to be truly happy is conformity to the will of the Creator. When God’s will and ours keep pace together, it will be heaven on earth to us! It is only when our will jars with the divine mind that our soul’s happiness departs, but when we are helped to lay aside self and say from our inmost soul, “Not my will, but Yours be done,” and so come to be ruled and governed entirely by the divine mind, then shall we be in Paradise here below!

Added to this, to increase our happiness if we do these things, *we shall have the blessings promised to the doing thereof*. We are no legalists. We do not believe in salvation by works, nor even in rewards given to men because of any merit on their part, but we do know that if Jesus says, “He that believes shall be saved,” then he that believes will get that salvation and this will be the blessing which he enjoys, and so with every other new covenant blessing!

Brothers and sisters, there is happiness here in practical Christianity and there is happiness hereafter. In mere nominal Christianity there is no happiness. Look at some of your professors. They have got religion enough to make them miserable! Their attendance at church or chapel—what is it but a bit of slavery? They would not go to church if they could help it, but they think it looks respectable. If they had their way, and the force of custom were withdrawn, they would not be found among the worshipers! Look, I say, at many of them. The very sight of their Bible and prayer book seems to make their faces long and dismal at once. Prayer—is that a pleasure to them? To sing God’s praise—is that a delight? No, far, far, far from it! And why is this? Because they have never, by divine grace, been led solemnly to trust in Jesus and earnestly

to give themselves up to those truths which only in their practical force and influence can make us happy—but which in their mere theory are “the letter which kills,” and only in practice are they the spirit and life! Oh, that some of you church members would put in practice what you believe! Oh, sirs, it is well enough to say that a Christian should be consistent, but if you are not honest in your business, how does your belief help you? It is well enough to say that a Christian should be godly, but if you are godless in your families—if family prayer is neglected and private prayer given up—what is the use of your beliefs, what the use of your perfect creeds? You may talk until doomsday about what you believe or what you do not believe, but it is that part of your belief which gets interwoven into the warp and woof of your daily life which affects your business, which really moves you, impels you, or restrains you according to whether you would do right or wrong—it is this, it is this, it is this, and it is just this, only, that is worth having! Your dead religion—it is a corpse—bury it! Your living godliness, your vital godliness, the godliness that vitalizes you and makes you live unto God and His truth—this it is to be sought after—and may God in His mercy grant it to each one of us! “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.”

And so we come to a conclusion by noticing that if the text were read in another form, it would read very solemnly, “If you know these things, unhappy, wretched, ruined are you if you do them *not*.” I scarcely feel that I have either strength or will to enter upon the few sentences I meant to have uttered tonight. There are not many of you here who are ignorant of the gospel. The most of this great assembly have read it and heard it, and if any should ask you, “What is the way of eternal life,” you could give them a very ready answer. And, thank God, there are not a few of you who have put into practice this gospel! You have looked to Jesus—you are resting in Him. You can say, while confessing many imperfections, that you desire to walk in the ways of obedience to Him who has redeemed you with His blood.

But, painful reflection! There are many—very many—and you know who they are—who know these things, but do them not! Ten years ago they were greatly affected by a sermon and they vowed repentance. The season passed away and their conscience became crippled—no good results came. Some time ago, at an earnest prayer-meeting, they were again pricked in conscience, but this time they were not so wounded as before. And now, tonight, they are just what they have always been—willing hearers, attentive hearers, kind friends to the gospel in some respects, contributing towards any godly enterprise, but still they have not surrendered to God by believing in Christ—and so are still strangers to Him as the soul’s Savior. And I have to ask them tonight whether it shall always be so, and, if not always, then how long? “How long halt you between two opinions?” And if it is not to be long, why not end it tonight? Oh, blessed Spirit, they do know! It is not this they need, but they need to feel! They do not love! They do not believe! Oh, give them these, that they may not go down into hell with the accumulated responsibilities of

abundant light. “If I had not come and spoken to you,” said Christ, “you had been without sin, but now you have no cloak for your sin.” Oh, the godly mothers of some of you will rise up against you to condemn you, for you knew these things, but you did them not! Some of you, your conscience will speak with a voice of thunder—it will roar like a lion on you when God condemns you because you knew the gospel and refused it—you understood the way of salvation, but you would not walk therein! There is no place more terrible to be lost than from the shadow of a pulpit! The more plain the gospel, the more sure your ruin if you reject it! The more earnest the ministry that comes to you with its notes of warning and invitation, the more horrible your overthrow if your ears refuse the words of Jehovah’s love! Tonight, I pray you—and I think I speak in God’s name—cast in your lot with Christ and with God’s people! You are guilty, but He is gracious and delights to pardon! You feel unworthy, and you are, but Christ receives the most undeserving! Rely upon Him now. You have nothing else that will suffice. Oh, cast yourselves upon Him! Happy shall you be if you do this. Other doings without this were mere legalism and vain, but this is the great work, the master work, the God work, that you believe on Jesus Christ whom God has sent! Trust, then, in Him, and your peace shall be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Trifle no longer! Listen no longer merely with the outward ear, but now decide that if there is an inner sense, you will find it—if there is a secret truth, you will hunt it out until you secure it.

If there is a living Christ to pardon you and make you snowy clean, resolve you will find Him! If there is a road to heaven, determine to find and walk in it. “And now farewell sin, farewell self-righteousness, farewell the shallow pleasures of this world! Jesus, take my heart just as it is—I give it up to You—and help me to do now what I have never done before—to put in practice what I hear, and carry out what I have been taught.” So may God help you and we will meet in heaven and we will say together there that this night’s text was true, “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.” God help you to do them, now, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: HEBREWS 11.

First, a definition of faith.

Verses 1-3. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.* There was no pre-existent matter. The world was made by God’s word, so that prior to the things which are seen, there existed that which is not seen. We, dear friends, when we are trusting in the unseen God, are

going back to first principles—we are getting to that which is the essence and the source of all. The next verse illustrates the *worship* of faith.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he, being dead, yet speaks.* There is no worshiping God aright except by faith. The most gorgeous ceremonies are as nothing in His sight! It is the faith of the heart which He accepts. Next we read of the *reward* of faith.

5, 6. *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.* See this reward then—it pleases God—and that is reward enough for anyone of us. Next see faith's *safety*.

7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.* Faith can outlive a deluge which drowns the whole world! She has an ark even when God's wrath sweeps all the rest away! Next we learn the *obedience* of faith.

8-10. *By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed: and he went out, not knowing where he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* Here you have the *expectation* of faith. Faith does not live on things seen—she lives on something yet to come. That which is to come she regards as eternal, not like a mere tent in which she dwells here, but a city that has foundations, fixed and firm. Next we see the *strength* of faith, that strength seen in the deadness of nature.

11-13. *Through faith, also, Sara herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* That is a rich word, they, "embraced them." They were far off and yet faith brought them so near that they seemed to receive them to their hearts and feel the comfort of them! Next is the *confession* of faith.

14-19. *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.* And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from which they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly one. Therefore God

is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall your seed be called. Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure. Here you have the *triumph* of faith, one of the greatest victories that was ever achieved by faith, when a man was willing, at God's command, to offer up his son, his only son, his son according to promise, his son in whom all the covenant was to be fulfilled! In the 20th verse you get the *discernment* of faith, faith foreseeing—

20, 21. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff.* You remember this discernment, how he crossed his hands willingly that he might lay the right hand upon the younger son. Faith is always giving blessings to others and she knows which way to give them, for God makes her wondrous quick of heart and quick of eye.

22, 23. *By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel: and gave commandment concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.* Here is the *courage* of faith—

24, 25. *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter: Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.* Here is the *choice* of faith—

26. *Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.* Here is the *judgment* of faith, by which she judges wisely, choosing rather to be reproached for Christ than to reign with the world.

27, 28. *By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the first-born should touch them.* Here, again, you have the *obedience* of faith, taking God's precepts and carrying them out.

29. *By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.* There you have the difference between faith and presumption—faith goes through the sea. Presumption is drowned in the sea.

30. *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.* Here are the *weapons* of faith, the *warfare* of faith, with nothing but her ram's horn trumpet she encompasses the giant walls of the city and down they fall!

31. *By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not when she had received the spies with peace.* Here you have faith uniting

itself with the people of God—she perished not with them that believed not, for she had come out from among them and allied herself with the people of God by receiving the spies.

32-35. *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae: of David, also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, grew valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not excepting deliverance: that they might obtain a better resurrection. Oh the victories of faith! When faith takes to working, how mightily she works.*

36, 37. *And others had trial of cruel mocking and scourging, yes, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented. You have seen the works of faith and the sufferings of faith—now you see God's estimate of faith. He counts the believing man to be far beyond the rest of mankind!*

38, 39. *(Of whom the world was not worthy). They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. All these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise. It lay in the future to them far more than it does to us, for Christ has now come and we look back to that glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior, but they had altogether to look forward.*

40. *God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. For it never was God's intention that any part of His church should be able to do without the rest of it, so that those who lived before the time of Christ cannot do without us—neither can we do without them.*

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“THE GARMENT OF PRAISE”

NO. 3349

**A SERMON
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***“The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”
Isaiah 61:3.***

THE list of comforts which the Anointed has here prepared for His mourners is apparently inexhaustible. He seems as if He delighted to give “according to the multitude of His tender mercies” a very cloud of blessings. This is the third of His sacred exchanges—“the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” Grace, like its God, delights to be a trinity. This is also the broadest of the blessings, for whereas the first adorned the face with beauty, and the second anointed the head with joy, this last and widest covers the whole person with a garment of praise! Man’s first vesture was of his own making and it could not cover his shame—but this garment is of God’s making and it makes us comfortable in ourselves, and comely in the sight of God and man. They are better adorned than Solomon in all his glory, to whom God gives the garment of praise. May the blessed Spirit sweetly help us to bring out the rich meaning of this promise to mourners, for again I must remind you that these things are only given to them—and not to the thoughtless world.

We have already noticed the variety of the consolation which Jesus brings to mourners—the plant of renown produces many lovely flowers with rich perfume and a multitude of choice fruits of dainty taste. Now we would call your attention to their marvelous adaptation to our needs. Man has a spirit and the gifts of grace are spiritual. His chief maladies lie in his soul and the blessings of the covenant deal with his spiritual needs. Our text mentions “the spirit of heaviness” and gives a promise that it shall be removed. The blessings which Jesus gives to us are not surface blessings, but they touch the center of our being! At first we may not perceive their depth, but only know that beauty is given instead of ashes—this might seem to be an external change. Further on, however, joy is given, instead of mourning, and this is inward—the thought has advanced, we are getting nearer the heart. But in the words before us, the very spirit of heaviness, the fountain from which the mourning flows, the hearth whereon the ashes are burned is dealt with and taken away—and instead thereof we receive the garment of praise! What a mercy it is that the blessings of the everlasting covenant belong to the realm of the spirit for, after all, the outward is transient, the visible soon perishes. We

are grateful for the food and raiment which our bodies require, but our sterner need is nourishment, consolation and protection for our spirits. The covenant of grace blesses the man, himself—the soul—which is the essence of his life. It puts away the sordid sackcloth of despondency and robes the spirit in royal garments of praise. Judge you your state by your estimation of such favors, for if you have learned to prize them, they are yours! The worldling cares nothing for spiritual blessings. His beauty, joy, and praise are found in things which perish in the using. But those who know their preciousness have been taught of God and since they can appreciate them, they shall have them! Soul-mercy is the very soul of mercy and he whom the Lord blesses in his spirit, is blessed indeed!

I want you still further to notice how these blessings grow as we proceed. At first, out of the triplet of favors here bestowed there was beauty given, instead of ashes. There is much there—beauty of personal character before God is no mean thing—yet a man might have that, and by reason of his anxiety of heart he might scarcely be aware of it. Doubtless many who are lovely in the sight of God spend much of their time in bewailing their own uncomeliness. Many a saint sorrows over himself, while others are rejoicing in him! Therefore, the next mercy given to the mourner in Zion is the oil of joy, which is a personal and conscious delight. The man rejoices. He perceives that he is made beautiful before God and he begins to joy in what the Lord has done for him and in the anointed One from whom the oil of gladness descends. This is an advance upon the other, but now we come to the highest of all! Seeing that God has made him glad, he perceives his obligations to God and he expresses them in thankfulness—and so stands before the Most High like a white-robed priest, putting on praise as the garment in which he appears in the courts of the Lord’s house, and is seen by his brothers and sisters. As you advance in the divine life, the blessings you receive will appear to be greater and greater. Some promising things become small by degrees and miserably less, but in the kingdom of heaven we go from strength to strength. The beginning of the Christian life is like the water in the pots at Cana, but in due time it blushes into wine. The pathway which we tread is, at first, bright as the dawn, but if we pursue it with sacred perseverance, its radiance will be as the perfect day! There shall be no going down of our sun, but it shall shine with increasing luster till it shall be as the light of seven days, and the days of our mourning shall be ended!

I beg you also to mark that when we reach the greatest mercy and stand on the summit of blessing, we have reached a condition of praise—praise to God invests our whole nature. To be wrapped in praise to God is the highest state of the soul. To receive the mercy for which we praise God is something, but to be wholly clothed with praise to God for the mercy received is far more! Why, praise is heaven, and heaven is praise! To pray is heaven below, but praise is the essence of heaven above! When you bow lowest in adoration, you are at your very highest. The soul full of

joy takes a still higher step when it clothes itself with praise. Such a heart takes to itself no glory, for it is dressed in gratitude and so hides itself. Nothing is seen of the flesh and its self-exaltation, since the garment of praise hides the pride of man. May you all who are heavy in spirit be so clothed upon with delight in the Lord, who has covered you with the robe of righteousness that you may be as wedding guests adorned for the palace of the King with glittering garments of adoring love!

Looking carefully into the words before us, we will dwell, first, upon *the spirit of heaviness*. Secondly, upon *the promise implied in the text—that this shall be removed*. And then, thirdly, upon *the garment of praise which is to be bestowed*. First, let us muse upon—

I. THE SPIRIT OF HEAVINESS.

We would not make this meditation doleful and yet it may be as well to set forth the night side of the soul, for thus we may the better show a sympathetic spirit and come more truly home to those who are in heaviness through manifold temptations. Some of us know by experience what the spirit of heaviness means. It comes upon us at times even now. There are many things in the body. There are many things in the family. There are many things in daily life which make us sad. Facts connected with the past and with the future cause us, at times, to hang our heads. We shall just now dwell upon those former times when we were under the spirit of heaviness on account of unpardoned sin. We cannot forget that we were in bondage in a spiritual Egypt. We would awaken our memories to remember the wormwood and the gall, the place of dragons and of owls.

Observe that *this heaviness is an inward matter* and it is usually a grief which a man tries to keep to himself. It is not that he is sick in body, though his unbelieving friends fancy that he must surely be ailing, or he would not seem so melancholy. “He sits alone and keeps silent,” and they say that he has a low fit upon him and they invite him out into company and try, if they can, to jest him out of his distress. The fact is that sin is pressing upon him, and well may the spirit be heavy when it has that awful load to carry! Day and night God’s hand is also heavy upon him and well may his spirit be loaded down. Conviction of sin makes us as a cart that is loaded with sheaves—but it is intensely inward and, therefore, not to be understood by careless minds. “The heart knows its own bitterness and a stranger intermeddles not therewith.” I have known persons who have been the subject of this heaviness most sedulously endeavor to conceal from others even the slightest appearance of it. And I cannot say that there has not been some wisdom in so doing, for ungodly men despise those who tremble at the Word of God. What do they care about sin? They can sin and rejoice in it as the swine can roll in the mire and feel itself at home. Those who weep in secret places because the arrows of the Lord have wounded them, are

shunned by those who forget God, and they need not be sorry for it, since such company can furnish no balm for their wounds. Mourner, you are wise to keep your sorrow to yourself as far as the wicked are concerned, but remember, though perhaps you think not so, there are hundreds of God’s children who know all about your condition, and if you could be bold enough to open your mind to them and tell them of your heaviness of spirit, you would be surprised to find how thoroughly they would sympathize with you and how accurately some of them could describe the maze through which you are wandering! All are not tender of heart, but there are believers who would enter into your experience and who might, by God’s blessing, give you the clue to the labyrinth of your grief. The Lord comforted Paul by Ananias, and you may be sure that there is an Ananias for you! If you feel, as many do, that you could not unburden your soul to your parents or relatives, go to some other experienced believers and tell them as far as you can your painful condition. I know, for I have felt the same, that all hope that you shall be saved is taken away and that you are utterly prostrate—but yet **THERE IS HOPE!**

While this heaviness is inward, notice in the next place that *it is real*. Heaviness of spirit is one of the most terribly true of all our griefs. He who is cheerful and light-hearted too often contemns and even ridicules him who is sad of soul. He says that he is “nervous,” calls him “fanciful...almost out of his mind,” “very excitable...quite a monomaniac,” and so on. The current idea being that there is really no need for alarm and that sorrow for sin is mere fanaticism! If some persons had suffered half an hour of conviction of sin, themselves, they would look with different eyes upon those who feel the spirit of heaviness, for I say it, and know what I am saying, that next to the torment of hell, itself, there is but one sorrow which is more severe than that of a broken and a contrite spirit that trembles at God’s Word, but does not dare to suck comfort out of it! The bitterness of remorse and despair is worse, but yet it is unspeakably heartbreaking to bow at the mercy-seat, and to fear that no answer will ever come—to lie at the feet of Jesus, but to be afraid to look up to Him for salvation! To be conscious of nothing but abounding sin and raging unbelief and to expect nothing but sudden destruction—this is an earthly Tophet! There are worse wounds than those which torture the flesh, but more cruel pangs arise from the broken bones of the soul than from those of the body. Sharp is that cut which goes to the very heart and yet does not kill, but makes men wish that they could die or cease to be. There is a prison such as no iron bars can make and a fetter such as no smith can forge. Sickness is a trifle compared to it—it is to some men less endurable than the rack or the stake. To be impaled upon your own sins, pilloried by your own conscience, shot at by your own judgment as with barbed arrows—this is anguish and torment!

This heaviness of spirit *puts a weight upon the man’s activity* and clogs him in all things. He is weighted heavily who bears the weight of sin. You

put before him the precious promises, but he does not understand them, for the heaviness presses upon his mental faculties. You assure him that these promises are meant for him, but he cannot believe you, for heaviness of spirit palsies the grasping hand by which he might appropriate the blessing. “Their soul abhors all manner of meat, and they draw near to the gates of death.” Troubled minds at times lose all their appetite. They need spiritual food and yet turn from it. The most wholesome meat of the gospel they are afraid to feed upon, for their sadness makes them fearful of presumption. Heaviness brings on amazement and this is but another word for saying that the mind is in a maze and cannot find its way out.

They are weighted as to their understanding and their faith, for “the spirit of heaviness” also presses there. Their memory, too, is quick enough at recollecting sin, but to anything that might minister comfort, it is strangely weak, even as Jeremiah said, “You have removed my soul far off from peace: I forget prosperity.” Indeed, David was still more oblivious, for he says, “My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread.” All the faculties become dull and inert, and the man is like one in a deadly swoon. I have heard persons, under conviction of sin, say, “I seem absolutely stupid about divine things.” Like one that is stunned by a severe blow, they fall down and scarcely know what they feel or do not feel. Were they in their clear senses, we could set the gospel before them and point out the way of salvation and they would soon lay hold of it! But, alas, they seem to have no capacity to understand the promise, or to grasp its consolation.

Now, this heaviness of spirit also *renders everything around the man heavy*. The external is generally painted from within. A merry heart makes mirth in the dull November fog under a leaden sky, but a dull heart finds sorrow amidst May blossoms, and June flowers. A man colors the world he lives in to the tint of his own soul. “Things are not what they seem,” yet what they seem has often more influence upon us than what they are! Find a man, then, with heaviness of spirit, and you will find that his sorrows appear to be greater than he can bear. The commonplace worries of life which cheerfulness sports with, are a load to a sad heart—yes, the grasshopper is a burden! The ordinary duties of life become weariness and slight domestic cares a torture. He trembles lest he should commit sin even in going in and out of his house. A man who bears the weight of sin has small strength for any other load. Even the joys of life become somber. It matters not how much God has blessed a man in his family, in his basket, or in his store, for as long as his heart is oppressed and his soul bowed down with sin, what are the bursting barns and what are the overflowing wine vats to him? He pines for a peace and rest which these things cannot yield. If the eyes are dark, the sun, itself, affords no light!

There is one thing, however, which we would say to mourners pressed down with guilt—whatever heaviness you feel, it is no greater heaviness than sin ought to bring upon a man, for it is an awful thing to have sinned against God. If the sense of sin should drive you to distraction—and cavilers often say that religion does this—it might reasonably do so if there were no other matters to think upon—no forgiving love and atoning blood. That which is the result of sin ought not to be charged upon religion, but true religion should be praised, because it brings relief to all this woe! Sin is the most horrible thing in the universe—and when a man sees how foully he has transgressed—it is no wonder that he is greatly troubled. To think that I, a creature that God has made, which He could crush as easily as a moth, have dared to live in enmity to Him for many years, and have even become so hardened as to forget Him and perhaps defy Him! This is terrible! When I have been told of His great love, I have turned on my heels and rejected it. Yes, and when I have even *seen* that love in the bleeding body of His dear Son, I have been unbelieving and have done despite even to boundless grace, and gone from bad to worse, greedy after sin! Is it marvelous that when they have seen the guilt of all this, men have felt their moisture turned into the drought of summer and cried in desperation, “My soul chooses strangling rather than life”? However low you are, beloved mourner, you are not exaggerating your guilt! Apart from the grace of God, your case is, indeed, as hopeless as you suppose. Though you lie in the very dust and dare not look up, the position is not lower than you ought to take. You richly deserve the anger of God and when you have some sense of what that wrath must be, you are not more fearful of it than there is just need to be, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. “He touches the hills and they smoke.”—

***“The pillars of heaven’s starry roof
Tremble and start at His reproof.”***

What will His wrath be when He puts on His robes of justice and comes forth to mete out justice to the rebellious? O God, how terrible is Your wrath! Well may we be crushed at the very thought of it!

Another reflection we would suggest here and that is, that *if you have great heaviness of spirit on account of sin, you are by no means alone in it*, for some of the best servants of God have endured hard struggling before they have found peace with God. Read their biographies and you will find that even those who have really believed in Christ have at some time or other felt the burden of sin pressing with intolerable weight upon their souls. Certain of them have recorded their experience in terrible sentences, but others have felt what they have not dared to commit to writing. “Weeping cross,” as the old writers call it, is a much-frequented spot—many roads meet at that point, and most pilgrims have left a pool of tears there.

There is this to be added. Your Lord and Master, He to whom you must look for hope, knew what heaviness meant on account of sin. He

had no sin of His own, but He bore the iniquity of His people and, therefore, He was prostrate in Gethsemane. We read that “He began to be sorrowful and to be very heavy.” The spirit of heaviness was upon Him and He sweat as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground! This same heaviness made Him cry upon the cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Jesus was sorely amazed and very heavy—and it is to Him as passing through that awful heaviness that I would bid you look in your hour of terror, for He alone is your door of hope. Through His heaviness, yours shall be removed, for “the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” So much, then, concerning heaviness of spirit. And now, secondly, let us—

II. SEE THE HEAVINESS REMOVED, for of this the text contains a divine promise—the anointed Savior will take it away. Only a word or two upon this.

Brothers and sisters, do you inquire how Jesus removes the spirit of heaviness? We answer, He does it thus—by revealing to us with clearness and certainty that *our sin is pardoned*. The Holy Spirit brings us to trust in Christ and the inspired word assures us that Christ suffered in the place of all believers and, therefore, we perceive that He died for us. And also that nothing remains for us to suffer because sin, having been laid upon the substitute, it is no more upon us. We rejoice in the fact of our Lord’s substitution and the transfer of our sins to Him. We see that if He stood in our place, we stand in His—and if He was rejected, we are “accepted in the Beloved.” Then straight away this spirit of heaviness disappears because the reason for it is gone—

***“I will praise You every day!
Now Your anger’s turned away,
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice.”***

Moreover, in the new birth *the Holy Spirit infuses into us a new nature*—and that new nature knows not the spirit of heaviness—it is a thing of light, and life, and joy in the Holy Spirit! The newborn nature looks up and perceives its kinship with God. It rejoices in the favor of the Holy One from whom it came. It rests in the Lord; yes, it joys and rejoices in Him! And whereas, the old sin-spirit still sinks us down according to its power, there still being in us the evil heart of unbelief, this new life wells up within us as a living fountain of crystal and buoys us up with the peace and joy which comes of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling! Thus the inner life becomes a constant remedy for heaviness of spirit.

And faith, too, that blessed gift of God, wherever it resides, works to the clearing away of heaviness, for faith sings, “All things are mine, why should I sorrow? All my sin is gone, why should I pine and moan? All things as to the present life are supplied me by the God of providence and grace—and the future is guaranteed to me by the covenant ordered in all things and sure.” Faith takes the telescope and looks beyond the narrow range of time into the eternal heavens, and sees a crown laid up

for the faithful. Yes, and her ears are opened so that she hears the songs of the redeemed by blood before the throne of God—thus she bears away the spirit of heaviness! If I see no joy with these poor optics, faith has other eyes with which she discovers rivers of delight! If flesh and blood afford me nothing but causes for dismay, faith knows more and sees more—and she perceives causes for overflowing gratitude and delight! Hope also enters with her silver light, borrowed from faithful promises. She expects the future glory, at which we hinted just now, and begins to anticipate it all. And so, again, she drives away the gloom of the heart. Love, also, the sweetest of the three, comes in and teaches us to be resigned to the will of God and then sweetly charms us into acquiescence with all the divine purposes. And when we reach that point, and so love God that whatever He may do with us, we are resolved to trust Him and praise His name, then the spirit of heaviness must vanish!

Now, beloved mourners, I trust you know what this great uplifting means. It is a work in which the Lord is greatly glorified when He raises a poor, begrimed soul out of the sordid potsherd among which it has lain, and gives it to soar aloft as on the silver wings of a dove! Some of us can never forget the hour of our great deliverance—it was the day of our espousals, the time of love—and it must forever remain as the beginning of days unto us. All glory be to Him who has loosed our bonds and set our feet in a large room! But now we come to the third and most prominent point of the text, which is—

III. THE GARMENT OF PRAISE BESTOWED, which takes the place of the spirit of heaviness. We suppose this may mean, and probably does mean, that the Lord gives us a garment that is honorable and worthy of praise—and what is this garment but *the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ*? The Lord arrays His poor people in a robe which causes them to be no more worthy of shame, but fit to be praised. They become unblameable in His sight. What a blessing this is! Did not the father, when he received the prodigal, say, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him”? That was a praiseful garment, instead of the spirit of heaviness—and whenever a child of God begins to perceive his adoption and to say, “Abba, Father,” then He puts on a fit garment for a child to wear, an honorable dress, a garment of praise! When we realize that Christ has made us priests unto God and we, therefore, put on the priestly garment of sanctification by beginning to offer the sacrifice of prayer and praise, then, again, we wear a praiseful garment! When we exercise the high prerogative of kings, for we are kings as well as priests, then, again, we wear not a sordid vesture of dishonor, nor the costume of a prison, or the rags of beggary, nor the black robe of condemnation, but a garment of honor and of praise! Every child of God should be clothed with the garments of salvation—his Savior has prepared them for this end—let him wrap them about him and be glad, for these garments make him beautiful in the sight of God!

But I choose, rather, to follow the exact words of our version tonight and speak of the garment of praise as meaning gratitude, thanksgiving, and adoration. The anointed Comforter takes away the spirit of heaviness and He robes His people in the garment of praise.

Now, *this is something outward as well as inward*. A wise man endeavors to hide the heaviness of his spirit, but when the Lord takes that away, he does not wish to conceal his gratitude. I could not help telling those I lived with, when I found the Lord! Master John Bunyan informs us that he was so anxious to let someone know of his conversion that he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed land all about it! I do not wonder. It is a piece of news which it would be hard to withhold. Whenever a man's inward heaviness is graciously removed, he puts on the outward manifestation of joy and walks abroad in the silken robes of praise!

As we have already said, a garment is a thing which covers a man, so when a man learns to thank God aright, His praise covers him—he, himself, is hidden while he gives all the glory to God. The man is seen as clothed in praise from head to foot. Many persons very unfairly judge Christians when they begin to speak of the love and mercy of God to them, for they cry out that they are egotistical—but how can it be egotistical to talk of what the Lord has done for you? If you speak with any sort of confidence, captious individuals say that you are presumptuous. How can it be presumptuous to believe what God, Himself, declares? It is presumptuous to *doubt* what God says, but it is not presumption to believe God! Neither is it egotism to state the truth. If I were to say that God has not blessed me abundantly, the pulpit on which I stand would cry out against me! Shall I conceal the mercy of God as if it were stolen goods? Never! But rather I will speak the more boldly of the measureless love which has kept my soul from going down to the pit! “He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.” Bless the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks to His holy name. Show forth His salvation, compel men to see it, gird it about your loins and wear it for your adorning in all companies!

While speaking of this garment of praise, let us inquire of what *it is made*.

Is not praise composed in a large measure of *an attentive observation of God's mercy*? Thousands of blessings come to us without our knowledge. We take them in at the back door, and put them away in the cellar. Now, praise takes note of them, preserves the invoice of favors received and records the goodness of the Lord. O friends, if you do this, you will never be short of reasons for praise! He who notices God's mercy will never be without a mercy to notice. This is the chief material of the garment of praise—attentive consideration of divine grace is the broadcloth out of which the garment of praise is made.

The next thing is *grateful memory*. Very much that God does for us we bury alive in the grave of oblivion. We receive His mercies as if they were common trash. They are no sooner come than they are gone, and the proverb truthfully says, “Bread eaten is soon forgotten.” Why, my brothers and sisters, the Lord may give you a thousand favors and you will not praise Him. But if He smites you with one little stroke of the whip, you grumble at Him! You write His mercies on the water and your own trials you engrave on granite! These things ought not to be. Maintain the memory of His great goodness. “Forget not all His benefits.” Call to remembrance your song in the night and remember the loving-kindnesses of the Lord. In this, also, we find rich material for the garment of praise.

We are further aided *by rightly estimating mercy*. Is it not a great mercy to be alive and not in hell; to be in your senses, and not in the lunatic asylum; to be in health, and not in the hospital; to be in one’s own room, and not in the workhouse? These are great favors, and yet, perhaps, we seldom thank God for them! Then count up your spiritual mercies, if you can. Remember, on the other hand, what you deserved, and what it cost the Savior to bring these blessings to you—how patient the Lord has been with your refusal of His love and how continuously He has loaded you with benefits! Weigh His mercies, as well as count them, and they will help you to put on the garment of praise.

It is the telling out of the divine goodness which largely constitutes praise—to observe, to remember, to estimate, to prize and then to speak of the Lord’s gracious gifts—all these are essential. Praise is the open declaration of the gratitude which is felt within. How greatly do many fail in this! If you visit them, how readily they enlarge upon their troubles—in five minutes they have informed you about the damp weather, their aching bones and their low wages. Others speak of the bad times and the decline of trade till you know their ditty by heart! Is this the manner of the people of God? Should we not entertain our visitors with something better than the bones of our meat and the hard crusts of our bread? Let us set before them good tidings and cheerfully tell of the divine goodness to us, lest they should go away under the impression that we serve a hard master. It would create an almost miraculous change in some people’s lives if they made a point of speaking most of the precious things and least of the worries and ills! Why always the poverty? Why always the pains? Why always the dying child? Why always the husband’s small wages? Why always the unkindness of a friend? Why not sometimes—yes, why not *always*—the mercies of the Lord? That is praise and it is to be our everyday garment, the livery of every servant of Christ!

Let us inquire, *too, who ought to wear this garment?* The answer may be suggested by another—whom does it fit? Truly there is a garment of praise which exactly suits me and I mean to wear it. It is so ample that some of my brothers and sisters would wonder if they could see it spread out. I am so much in debt to my God that, do what I will, I can never give

a fair acknowledgment of it. I freely confess that I owe Him more than any man living and am morally bound to praise Him more earnestly than anyone else! Did I hear some of you claiming to be equal debtors? Do you demand to be allowed to praise Him more than I? Well, I will not quarrel with you. Let the matter stand and if you will excel me, I will praise my Lord for it. I once, in preaching, remarked that if I once entered heaven, I would take the lowest place, feeling that I owe more to God’s grace than anybody else, but I found, when I left the pulpit, that I had several competitors who would not yield the lowest place to me! They were, each one, ready to exclaim—

***“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace!”***

Blessed be God, this is the only contention among the birds of Paradise—who owes the most, who shall love the best, who shall lie lowest and who shall extol their Lord the most zealously! Charming rivalry of humility! Let us have more of it below. I again say there is a garment of praise that fits me. Brother, Sister, is there not one which fits you, exactly suiting your state and condition? If you are an heir of Heaven, there is—there must be a garment of praise which will rest most becomingly upon your shoulders—and you should put it on at once.

Then, *when shall we wear it?* We should certainly appear in it on high days and holidays. On Sabbath days and communion seasons the hours are fragrant with grateful memories. I heard of someone who did not attend public worship because his clothes were not fit to come in, and I replied, What can he mean? Does the Lord care for our outward dress? Let him put on the garment of praise, and he may come and welcome! The outer vestments matter little, indeed! All garments of that sort are only proofs of our fall, and of the need to hide our nakedness for very shame. Fine dress is unbecoming in the house of God, especially for those who call themselves “miserable sinners.” The best adornment is humility of spirit, the robe of thanksgiving, the garment of praise! The Lord’s Day should always be the happiest day of the week, and the communion should be a little heaven to our souls. “Call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable.”

We should wear the garment of praise on the most commonplace of days. It should be the peasant’s frock and the merchant’s coat, the lady’s dress and the servant’s gown—it is the best for wear, for comfort, for beauty and it never gets out of fashion. I once knew an old saint, a Methodist, a very quaint, original, rustic old man, who was celebrated for happiness. When he went out to day labor early in the morning, he was always singing as he went along the road. The country people used to call it “*tooting* to himself.” Quietly he hummed a bit of a hymn wherever he was. When he used his spade or his hoe, he worked to the music of his heart and never murmured when in poverty, or became angry when held up to ridicule. I wish we were all as spiritually minded and as full of

praise as he! Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord! When should we *not* bless Him? We will praise Him when our beds refresh us—blessed is He who kept the night watches. When we put on our clothes in the morning, we will bless His name for giving us food and raiment. When we sit down to break our fast, we will bless the love which has provided a table for us. When we go forth to our work, we will bless the Lord who gives us strength to labor. If we must lie at home sorely sick, with fierce pain or slow decay, let us praise Him who heals and sanctifies all our diseases! Let us endeavor to display the sweet spirit of thankfulness from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. Every moment may suggest a new verse of our life Psalm and cause us to magnify Him whose mercy endures forever!

Now, lastly, *why should we wear the garment of praise?* We should wear it as we wear other raiment, to keep us warm and comfortable, for there is no such vesture in the world as that of praise! It warms the inmost heart and sends a glow through the whole man. You may go to Nova Zembla and not freeze in such a robe! In the worst cases and in the most sorrowful plights, be you where you may, you are proof against outward circumstances when your whole being is enwrapped in praise! Wear it because it will comfort you. Wear it also because it will distinguish you from others. It will be livery to you and men will know whose servants you are. It will be a regimental dress and show to which army you belong. It will be a court dress and manifest to what dignity you have attained. So arrayed, you will bear the tokens of your Lord who often, in the days of His sorrow, lifted His eyes and heart to heaven and thanked the great Father for His goodness!

May some poor burdened soul lose its heaviness while thinking over our text, and henceforth wear this kingly robe—the garment of praise! Amen.

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“STEWARDS”

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**A SERMON
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***“Let a man so consider us, as of the ministers of Christ,
and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is
required in stewards that a man be found faithful.”
1 Corinthians 4:1, 2.***

MY beloved brothers—I might even say with Paul, “My dearly beloved and longed for”—it gives me intense delight to look into your faces once again, and yet I feel weighted with a solemn responsibility in having to direct your thoughts at this time so as to give the keynote to our solemn conference. I ask your continued prayers that I may speak aright, saying the right thing in the right way.

There is considerable advantage in the freedom of the usual inaugural address. It may take the methodical form of a sermon, or it may wear looser garments and come forth in the undress of a speech. Certain freedoms which are not usually accorded to a set sermon are allowed me in this rambling discourse. You shall call my talk by what name you choose, when I have done, but it will be a sermon—for I have a very definite and distinct text in my mind—and I shall keep to it with at least an average closeness.

I may as well announce the text, for it will furnish you with a clue to my intent. You will find the passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, in the first verses of the fourth chapter—“*Let a man so consider us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.*”

The apostle was anxious to be rightly considered and well he might be, for ministers are not often estimated rightly. As a rule, they are either gloried in, or else despised. At the commencement of our ministry, when our stores are fresh, and our energies are full—when we blaze and flash and spend much time in the firework factory—people are apt to think us wonderful beings! And then the apostle’s word is needed, “Therefore let no man boast in men” (1 Cor 3:21). It is not true, as flatterers insinuate that in our case the gods have come down in the likeness of men— and we shall be idiots if we think so! In due time foolish expectations will be cured by disappointment and then we shall hear unwelcome truth mingled with unrighteous censure. The idol of yesterday is the butt of today! Nine days, nine weeks, nine months, or nine years—be it more or

less—time works disenchantment and changes our position in the world’s view. The primrose day is over, and the nettle months are come! After the time of the singing of birds has passed away, we come nearer to the season of fruit, but the children are not half as pleased with us as when they wandered in our luxuriant meadows and strung our daisies and buttercups into crowns and garlands. In our more autumnal years, the people miss our flowers and greenery. Perhaps we are becoming sensible that it is so. The old man is solid and slow, whereas the young man rode upon the wings of the wind! It is clear that some think too much of us, and some think too little of us—it would be far better if they considered of us soberly “as the ministers of Christ.” It would be for the advantage of the church, for our own benefit and for the glory of God if we were put in our right places and kept there, being neither overrated, nor unduly censured, but viewed in our relation to our Lord, rather than in our own personalities. “Let a man so consider us, as of the ministers of Christ.”

We are *ministers*. The word has a very respectable sound. To be a minister is the aspiration of many a youth. Perhaps if the word were otherwise rendered, their ambition might cool. Ministers are *servants*—they are not guests, but waiters, not landlords, but laborers. The word has been rendered “under-rowers,” men who tug the oar on the lowest bench. It was hard work to row a galley—those rapid strokes consumed the life of the slaves. There were three banks of oars. Those on the upper bank of oars had the advantage of fresh air. Those who were beneath were more closely shut in and I suppose that the lowest bank of rowers would be faint with heat, as well as worn out with sore travail. Brothers, let us be content to wear out our lives even in the worst position, if by our labor we can speed the passage of our great Caesar and give speed to the ship of the church in which He has embarked! We are willing to be chained to the oar and to work on through life to make His boat cleave the waves. We are not captains, nor owners of the galley, but only the oarsmen of Christ!

The text, however, does not call us simply ministers or servants, but it adds, “*of Christ*.” We are not the servants of men, but of the Lord Jesus! Esteemed sir, if you think because you subscribe to my support that I am bound to do your bidding, you are mistaken! Truly, we are “ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake” But in the highest sense our sole responsibility is to Him whom we call Master and Lord. We obey superior orders, but we cannot yield to the dictation of our fellow servants, however influential they may be. Our service is glorious because it is the service of Christ—we feel honored in being permitted to wait upon Him whose shoe laces we are not worthy to unloose!

We are also said to be “stewards.” What are stewards? Let us consider—

I. WHAT IS THE OFFICE OF STEWARD? What is required of stewards? This is our duty. We are not now speaking of anybody outside, but of you and myself, therefore, let us make personal application of all that is said.

First, *a steward is a servant and nothing more*. Perhaps he does not always remember this—and it is a very pitiful business when the servant begins to think that he is “my lord.” It is a pity that servants, when honored by their master, should be so apt to give themselves airs. How ridiculous Jack-in-office makes himself! I do not refer now to butlers and footmen, but to ourselves! If we magnify ourselves, we shall become contemptible—and we shall neither magnify our office nor our Lord. We are the servants of Christ, but not lords over His heritage.

Ministers are for churches—not churches for minister. In our work among the churches we must not dare to view them as estates to be farmed for our own profit, or gardens to be trimmed to our own taste.

A steward is a servant of a peculiar kind, for he has to superintend the other servants and that is a difficult thing to do. An old friend of mine, who is now with God, once said, “I have always been a shepherd. Forty years I was a shepherd of sheep and another forty years I was a shepherd of men—and the last flock was a deal more sheepish than the first.” This witness is true. I think I have heard that a sheep has as many diseases as there are days in the year, but I am sure that the other sort of sheep are liable to ten times as many! A pastor’s work is an anxious one. All sorts of difficulties occur with our fellow servants and, alas, unwise stewards make a great many more than there need be by expecting perfection in others, although they do not possess it themselves! Our fellow servants are, after all, wisely selected, for He who put them into His household knew what He was doing—at any rate, they are *His* choice and not ours. It is not our place to find fault with our Lord’s own election!

The other servants will take their cue from us. A steward, who is dull, inert and slow, will have a slow team of servants about him and the business of his lordship will fare badly. Those who travel will have noticed that the servants in a hotel are very much like the landlord—if the landlord is cheery, attentive, and obliging—all the maids and waiters partake of his geniality! But if he looks sourly at you and treats you with indifference, you will find that the whole establishment is of a disdainful order. Oh, that we may always be alive and earnest in the service of the Lord Jesus and that our people may also be alive! A minister must give himself wholly to his work. I have read of a Puritan divine, that he was so full of life that his people said he lived like one who fed on live things! Oh, for a life sustained by living bread! We shall not be good stewards in the management of our fellow servants unless we are, ourselves, filled with the grace of God! We must set our fellow servants an example of zeal

and tenderness, constancy, hopefulness, energy and *obedience*. We must ourselves practice constant self-denial and select as our own part of the work that which is the hardest and most humiliating. We are to rise above our fellows by superior self-forgetfulness. Be it ours to lead the forlorn hopes and bear the heaviest burdens. Archdeacon Hare was giving a lecture at Trinity College when a cry of, “Fire!” was raised. His pupils rushed away and formed themselves into a line to pass buckets of water from the river to the burning building. The tutor saw a consumptive student standing up to his waist in the water and cried to him, “What; *you* in the water, Sterling?” The reply was, “Somebody must be in it, and why not I as well as another?” Let us say to ourselves, “Some fellows must be doing the drudgery of the church and laboring in the hardest places—and why should not I take that post?”

Next, remember that *stewards are servants under the more immediate command of the great Master*. We should be as the steward who daily goes into his lord’s private room to receive orders. John Ploughman was never in the squire’s parlor, but the steward is often there. If he neglected to consult the squire, he would soon be doing amiss and involving himself in heavy responsibility. How often ought you and I say, “Lord, show me what You would have me to do!” To cease to look up to God, so as to learn and practice His will, would be to quit our true position. A steward who never communicates with his master? Give him his wages and let him go! He who does his own will and not his master’s is of no value as a steward! Brothers, we must continually wait upon God. The habit of going for orders must be cultivated. How grateful should we be that our Master is always within call! He guides His servants with His eyes and with His guidance He also gives the necessary power. He will make our faces to shine before the eyes of our fellows if we commune with Him. Our example must encourage others to wait upon the Lord. As our business is to tell them the mind of God, let us study that mind very carefully.

Again—*stewards are constantly giving account*. Their account is given as they go along. A business-like proprietor requires an account of outgoings and incomings from day to day. There is great truth in the old proverb that “short reckonings make long friends.” If we make short reckonings with God, we shall be long friends with Him. I wonder if any of you keep account of your faults and shortcomings. Perhaps the time will be better spent in constant efforts to serve your Master and increase His estate. We ought, each one, to ask himself, “What am I doing by my preaching? Is it of the right kind? Am I giving prominence to those doctrines which my Lord would have me put in the forefront? Am I caring for souls as He would have me care for them?” It is a good thing thus to review one’s whole life and inquire, “Do I give sufficient time to private prayer? Do I study the Scriptures as intensely as I should? I hurry about to many meetings, but am I, in all this, fulfilling my Master’s orders? May

I not be gratifying myself with the appearance of doing much, whereas I could really be doing more if I were more attentive to the quality than to the quantity of the work?” Oh, to go often to the Master and to be right and clear in our accounts with Him! This will be profitable both to our churches and to ourselves.

To come to the main point—a *steward is a trustee of his master's goods*. Whatever he has belongs to his Master and choice things are put into his custody, not that he may do as he likes with them, but that he may take care of them. The Lord has entrusted to each one of us certain talents—and these are not our own. Gifts of knowledge, thought, speech and influence are not ours to glory in, but ours in trust for the Lord alone! It is *His* pound that gains five pounds!

We ought to increase our capital stock. Are all you young brothers doing that? Are you increasing in gift and capacity? My brothers, do not neglect yourselves! I observe that some brothers grow and others stand still, dwarfed and stunted. Men, like horses, are very disappointing creatures—good colts drop suddenly lame, or develop a vice of which they were never before suspected. To be always giving out and never taking in tends to emptiness.

Brothers, we are stewards of the mysteries of God—we are “put in trust with the gospel.” Paul speaks of the gospel of the blessed God which was committed to his trust. I hope none of you have ever had the misfortune to be made a trustee. It is a thankless office. In executing a trust, there is little scope for originality—we are bound to carry out a trust with literal exactness. One person wishes to receive more money and another desires to alter a clause in the deed—but the faithful trustee falls back upon the document, and abides by its provisions. I hear him say, as they worry him, “Dear friends, I did not make this trust. I am simply the administrator of it and I am bound to carry it out.” The gospel of the grace of God needs great improvement—at least, so I am informed—but I know it is no business of mine to improve it! My part is to act upon it. No doubt many would improve God, Himself, from off the face of the earth if they could. They would improve the atonement until it vanished. Great alterations are demanded of us, in the name of the spirit of the age. And of course we are warned that the very notion of punishment for sin is a barbarous relic of mediaeval ages and must be given up! And with it the doctrine of substitution and many other old-fashioned dogmas! We have nothing to do with these demands—we have only to preach the gospel as we find it. Stewards must keep to their orders and trustees must carry out the terms of their trust!

My brothers, we are at this present hour set for the *defense* of the gospel. If ever men were called to this office, we are so called. These are times of drifting—men have pulled up their anchors and are driven to and fro with winds and tides of many kinds. As for me, I have in this

hour of danger not only let down the great bower anchor, but I have cast four anchors out of the stern! That may be quite the wrong place, but in these times we need anchoring both fore and aft. Now I am fixed! Skeptical reasoning might have moved me at one time, but not now! Do our enemies ask us to lay down our swords and cease to fight for the old faith? Like the Greeks to Xerxes, we answer, “Come and take them!” The other day the advanced thinkers were going to sweep the orthodox into limbo, but as yet, we survive their assaults. These boasters do not know the vitality of evangelical truth! No, glorious Gospel, you shall never perish! If we are to die, we will die fighting. If we shall personally pass away, fresh evangelists will preach upon our graves. Evangelical truths are like the dragon’s teeth which Cadmus sowed—they breed men all armed for the fray. The gospel lives by dying! Brothers, at any rate, in this contest, if we are not victorious, we will at least be faithful!

A steward’s business is to dispense his Master’s goods according to their design. He is to bring forth things new and old—to provide milk for babes and strong meat for men, giving to each one his portion of meat in due season. At some tables I fear the strong men have been waiting a long time for the meat and there is small hope of its yet appearing—the milk and water is more plentiful by far! Someone went to hear a certain preacher last Sunday and complained that he did not preach Christ. Another remarked that perhaps it was not the due season, but my brothers the due season for preaching Christ is every time you preach! God’s children are always hungry and no bread will satisfy them but that which came down from heaven.

A wise steward will maintain the proportion of the truths of God. He will bring forth things new and old—not always doctrine, not always practice, and not always experience. He will not always preach conflict, nor always victory—not giving a one-sided view of the truths of God, but a sort of stereoscopic view which shall make the truth of God stand out “*evidently set forth*” before them. Much of the preparation of spiritual food lies in the correct proportion of the ingredients. Excess in one direction and failure in another may breed much mischief! Let us, therefore, use weight and measure—and *look up* for guidance!

Brothers, take care that you use your talents for your Master, and only for your Master. It is disloyalty to our Master if we wish to be soul-winners in order to be thought to be so! It is unfaithfulness to Jesus if we preach sound doctrine with the view to be thought sound, or pray earnestly with the desire that we may be known as praying men. It is for us to pursue our Lord’s glory with a single eye and with our whole heart. We must use our Lord’s gospel, our Lord’s people and our Lord’s talents for our Lord and for Him alone.

The steward should also be the guardian of his Master’s family. Look to the interests of all who are in Christ Jesus, and let them all be as dear to you as your own children. Servants in the olden times were often so

united to the family and so interested in their masters’ affairs that they spoke of *our* house, *our* land, *our* carriage, *our* horses and *our* children. Our Lord would have us thus identify ourselves with His holy business and especially He would have us love His chosen. We, beyond all others, should lay down our lives for the brothers and sisters in Christ! Because they belong to Christ, we love them for His sake. I trust we can heartily say—

**“There’s not a lamb in all Your flock
I would disdain to feed.”**

Brothers, let us heartily love all whom Jesus loves! Cherish the tried and suffering! Visit the fatherless and the widow! Care for the faint and the feeble! Bear with the melancholy and despondent! Be mindful of all parts of the household and thus shall you be a good steward.

I shall cease from this picture when I have said that *the steward represents his master*. When the master is away, everybody comes to the steward for orders. He had need to behave himself well who represents such a Lord as ours! A steward should speak much more carefully and wisely when he speaks for his lord than when he speaks on his own account. Unless he is guarded in his utterances, his lord may be forced to say to him, “You had better speak for yourself. I cannot allow you thus to misrepresent me.” My beloved brothers and fellow servants, the Lord Jesus is compromised by us if we do not keep His way, declare His truth, and manifest His spirit. Men infer the master from the servant. Are they not to be excused if they do? Ought not the steward to act after his master’s manner? You cannot dissociate the squire from the steward—the lord from his representative. A Puritan was told that he was too precise, but replied, “I serve a precise God.”

If urged to utter your own thoughts rather than revealed truth of God, follow Jesus, who spoke not His own things, but those of the Father. In this you will be acting as a steward should do. Here lies your wisdom, your comfort, and your strength. It was a sufficient vindication for a steward, when one accused him of folly, that he could reply, “Say what you please of what I did, for therein I followed my master’s orders.” Caviler, do not blame the steward! The man has done according to the command of his superior—what else would you have him do? Our conscience is clear and our heart is restful when we feel that we have taken up our cross and have followed the footprints of the crucified One! Wisdom is justified of her children.

The second part of our study is—

II. OUR OBLIGATIONS AS STEWARDS. “It is required in stewards that a man be found *faithful*.” It is not required that a man be found brilliant, or that he be found pleasing to his associates, or even that he be found successful! All that is required is that he be found faithful—but truly this is no small matter! It will need that the Lord, Himself, be both our wisdom and our strength, or we shall surely fail. Many are the ways by

which we may come short of this requirement, however simple it may seem to be.

We may fail to be faithful through *acting as if we were chiefs instead of servants*. A difficulty arises in the church which might readily be settled by loving forbearance, but we “stand upon our dignity” and then the servant grows out of his livery. We can be very high and mighty if we please—and the smaller we are, the more easily do we swell out. No cock is greater in fight than a bantam—and no minister is more ready to contend for his “dignity” than the man who has no dignity! How foolish we look when we play the grandee! The steward thinks he has not been treated with proper respect and he will “let the servants know who he is.” His master was roughly used the other day by an angry tenant—and he took no notice, for he had too much mind to be put out with so small a matter—but his steward passes by nothing and fires up at everything! Is this as it should be? I think I see the gentle Master lay His hand upon His furious servant’s shoulder, and I hear Him say, “Can you not bear it? I have borne far more than this.”

Brothers, our Master “endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself,” and shall we be weary and faint in our minds? How can we be stewards of the gentle Jesus if we behave ourselves haughtily? Let us never ride the high horse, nor attempt to be lords over God’s heritage, for He will not have it—and we cannot be faithful if we give way to pride.

We shall also fail in our duty as stewards if we begin speculating with our Master’s money. We may play ducks and drakes with our own, but not with our Lord’s money. We are not bidden to speculate, but to “occupy” till He comes. Honest trading with His goods is one thing, but to play a high game and run unlawful risks is quite another! I do not intend to speculate with my Master’s gospel by dreaming that I can improve it by my own deep thinking, or by soaring aloft with the philosophers! We will not, even with the idea of saving souls, speak other than the gospel! If I could create a great excitement by delivering novel doctrine, I would abhor the thought! To raise a revival by suppressing the truth of God is dealing deceitfully—it is a pious fraud and our Lord wants no gain which might come by such a transaction! It is ours simply and honestly to trade with our Master’s pounds and bring Him such increase as they gain in fair dealing.

We may become false to our trust *by acting as men-pleasers*. When the steward studies the good pleasure of the plowman, or the whims of the maid, everything must go wrong, for everything is out of place. We are influenced by one another and we influence one another. The greatest are unconsciously influenced in some measure by the least. The minister must be overwhelmingly influenced by the Lord, his God, so that other influences may not warp him from his fidelity. We must resort continually to headquarters and receive the word from the mouth of the Lord, Himself, so that we may be kept straight and true! Otherwise we

shall soon be biased, although we may not be aware of it. There must be no holding back to please one person—no rushing forward to satisfy another—no moving an inch even to gratify the whole community! We must not harp upon a certain string to win the approval of this party. Neither must we be silent upon an important doctrine to avoid offending that clique! What have we to do with idols, dead or alive? O brothers, if you go in for pleasing everybody, you have indeed set yourselves a task! The toils of Sisyphus and the labors of Hercules are nothing to this! We must not flatter men. We must speak plain words—and words which conscience will approve. If we please men, we shall displease our Lord, so that success in our self-imposed task would be fatal to our eternal interests! In trying to please men, we shall not even succeed in pleasing ourselves! To please our Lord, though it may seem very difficult, is an easier task than pleasing men. O steward, have your eyes only upon your Master!

We shall not be found faithful stewards *if we are idlers and triflers* Do you ever meet with lazy ministers? I have heard of them, but when my eyes see them, my heart abhors them. If you plan to be lazy, there are plenty of avocations in which you will not be needed, but, above all, you are not needed in the Christian ministry! The man who finds the ministry an easy life will also find that it will bring a hard death. If we are not laborers, we are not true stewards, for we are to be examples of diligence to the household. I like Adam Clarke’s precept—“Kill yourselves with work and pray yourselves alive again.” We shall never do our duty either to God or man if we are sluggards.

Yet some who are always busy may yet be unfaithful, if all that they do is done in a jaunty, trifling manner. If we play at preaching, we have chosen an awful game. To shuffle texts like cards and make literary essays out of themes which move all heaven and hell is shameful work! We must be serious as death in this solemn work. There are boys and girls who are always giggling, but who never laugh—and they are the very image of certain always-jesting preachers. I like an honest laugh. True humor can be sanctified and those who can stir men to smile can also move them to weep. But even this has limits which the foolish soon exceed. Be seriously in earnest. Live like men who have something to live for and preach like men to whom preaching is the highest exercise of their being! Our work is the most important under heaven, or else it is sheer imposture! If you are not earnest in carrying out His instructions, your Lord will give His vineyard to another, for He will not put up with those who turn His service into trifling.

When we *misuse our Master’s property*, we are false to our trust. We are entrusted with a certain amount of talent, strength and influence—and we have to use this trust money with a single purpose. Our purpose is to promote the Master’s honor and glory. We are to seek God’s glory

and nothing else. By all means, let every man use his best influence on the right side in politics—but no minister has liberty to use his position in the church to promote party ends! I do not censure workers for temperance, but even this admirable purpose must not push out the gospel! I trust it never does. I hold that no minister has a right to use his ability or office to cater for the mere amusement of the multitude. The Master has sent us to win souls—all is within the compass of our commission which tends towards that—but that is chiefly our work which drives directly and distinctly at that end. The danger lies at this time in setting up theatricals, semi-theatricals, concerts, and so forth. Until I see that the Lord Jesus Christ has set up a theater, or planned a miracle play, I shall not think of emulating the stage or competing with the music hall! If I do my own business, by preaching the gospel, I shall have enough to do. One objective is enough for most men—one such as ours is enough for any minister, however many his talents, however versatile his mind.

If we would be faithful as stewards, *we must not neglect any one of the family*, nor neglect any portion of the estate. I wonder whether we practice a personal observation of our hearers. Our beloved friend, Mr. Archibald Brown, is right when he says that London needs not only house-to-house visitation, but room-to-room visitation! We must, in the case of our people, go further and practice man-to-man visitation. By personal contact, alone, can certain persons be reached. If I had a number of bottles before me, and were to play upon them with a fire-engine, how much of the water would be lost? If I want to make sure of filling them, I must take them up, one by one, and carefully pour the liquid into them. We must watch over our sheep, one by one. This is to be done not only by personal talk, but by personal prayer. Dr. Guthrie says that he called upon a sick man who greatly refreshed his soul, for he told him that he was known to accompany his minister in his visits. “While I lie here, I shall follow you in your visitation. I keep on *remembering* house after house in my prayer, and I pray for the man, his wife, his children and all who dwell with him.” Thus, without moving a step, the sick saint visited Macfarlane, and Douglas, and Duncan, and all the others whom his pastor called to see! We ought thus to beat the bounds of our parish and go round and round our congregations, forgetting none, despairing of none, bearing all upon our hearts before the Lord. Especially let us think of the poor, the crotchety, the desponding. Let our care, like the hurdles of a sheepfold, enclose all the flock!

Another thing must not be overlooked. In order to faithfulness *we must never connive at evil*. This injunction will be warmly commended by certain brothers whose only notion of pruning a tree is to cut it down. A gardener comes to a gentleman’s house and when he is told that the shrubs are a little overgrown, he answers, “I will see to it.” In a few days

you walk round the garden. He has seen to it with a vengeance! He has done the garden, and it is done for! Some persons cannot learn the balance of virtues—they cannot kill a mouse except by burning down the barn! Did I hear you say, “I was faithful, I never connived at evil”? So far so good! But may it not happen that by a bad temper you produced more evil than that which you destroyed? Yield in all things personal, but be firm where truth and holiness are concerned! We must be faithful, lest we incur the sin and penalty of Eli. Be honest to the rich and influential. Be firm with the wavering and unsteady, for the blood of these will be required at our hands. Brothers, you will need all the wisdom and grace you can get in order to fulfill your duties as pastors! There is an adaptation to rule men which would seem to be quite absent from certain preachers—and the place of it is supplied by an adaptation to set a house on fire, for they scatter firebrands and burning coals wherever they go. Be you not like they! Strive not, and yet wink not at sin!

Some neglect their obligations as stewards by *forgetting that the Master is coming*. “He will not come yet,” whisper some. “There are so many prophecies to be fulfilled and it is even possible that He will not come at all, in the vulgar sense of the term. There is no particular need for us to make haste.” Ah, my brothers, it is the unfaithful servant who says, “My Lord delays his coming.” This belief allows him to put off labor and travail. The servant will not clean the room by daily duty because the master is away—and she can have a great clean up, in the form of a revival, before her lord arrives. If we would each feel that each day may be our last day, we would be more intense in our work. While preaching the gospel, we may someday be interrupted by the blast of the trumpet, and the cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go you out to meet Him!” This expectation will tend to quicken our pace. The time is short, our account is near—our Lord is at the door! We must work with all our might. We must not be eye-servants, except in this sense—that we labor in the Lord’s presence since He is so near!

I am impressed with the rapid flight of time, the swift approach of the last great audit. These annual conferences return so speedily! To some of us it seems only a day or two since that of 1886—the last of them hastens on. I shall soon be giving in the account of my stewardship, or, if I should survive for a while, others of you may be summoned to meet your Lord. You will soon go home to your Lord if your Lord does not soon come to you! We must work on from hour to hour with our eyes upon the audit, that we may not be ashamed of the record which will be found in the volume of the book.

The *reward* of faithful stewards is exceedingly great—let us aspire to it. The Lord will make the man who was faithful in a few things to be ruler over many things. That is an extraordinary passage where our Lord says, “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He comes, shall

find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself and make them to sit down to meat, and He will come forth and serve them.” It is wonderful that our Lord has already served us, but how can we comprehend that He will serve us again? Think of Jesus rising up from His throne to wait upon us! “Behold,” He cries, “here comes a man who served Me faithfully on earth! Make way for him, you angels, and principalities, and powers! This is the man whom the King delights to honor.” And to our surprise, the King girds Himself and waits upon us! We are ready to cry, “Not so, my Lord.” But He must and will keep His Word! This unspeakable honor He will pay to His true servants. Happy man to have been the poorest and most despised of ministers, to be now served by the King of kings!

Beloved brothers, we are bound to go forward, cost us what it may, for we dare not go back—we have no armor for our backs. We believe ourselves to be called to this ministry and we cannot be false to the call. If I must be a lost soul, let me be lost as a thief, a blasphemer, or a murderer rather than as an unfaithful steward to the Lord Jesus! This is to be a Judas, a son of perdition, indeed! Remember, if any of you are unfaithful, you win for yourselves a superfluity of condemnation. You were not forced to be ministers. You were not forced to enter upon this sacred office. By your own choice you are here. In your youth you aspired to this holy thing and thought yourselves happy in attaining your desire. Brothers, if we meant to be untrue to Jesus, there was no necessity to have climbed this sacred rock in order to multiply the horrors of our final fall! We could have perished quite sufficiently in the ordinary ways of sin. What need to qualify ourselves for a greater condemnation? This will be a dreadful result if this is all that comes of our college studies and our burning of the midnight oil in acquiring knowledge. My heart and my flesh tremble while I contemplate the possibility of any of us being found guilty of treachery to our charge and treason to our King! May the good Lord so abide with us, that at the last we may be clear of the blood of all men! It will be seven heavens in one to hear our Master say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

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THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

NO. 3351

A SERMON
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*“The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and condemn it: for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”
Matthew 12:42.*

OUR LORD, on this occasion, was addressing a number of captious critics who, instead of listening to what He said and giving it the attention due to its own weight, said, “Show us a sign.” Our Lord replies to them that He will give them no sign except the two signs of Jonah and of the Queen of the South. The first was very much to the point. Jonah, a lone man, working no miracle, went to Nineveh, a great city, where he was completely unknown. There he commenced to preach. The whole subject of his testimony was, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” Through the broad streets of that gigantic city and through its lanes and alleys, in its public squares the voice was heard, sharp and shrill, of that lone man—“Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” No rod was turned into a serpent. No mountains were made to smoke. None were struck dead by the sudden hand of God. No paralytics and sick folk were healed. No signs were given to the men of Nineveh, but the declaration of that one man sent of God was sufficient to denounce and discover their sin! They felt that they had been guilty of sins that deserved to be denounced. He pronounced their punishment and they also felt that the punishment was well deserved and, therefore, from the king on the throne to the meanest of the citizens, all the inhabitants of that great city humbled themselves and Jonah’s work was done! And God forgave the city. And the Lord Jesus seemed to say, “I also speak to you and tell you truths of God which ought to have as much power upon your consciences as Jonah’s testimony had upon the men of Nineveh, but you turn away, albeit that I speak truth which you cannot answer, and tell you things which you cannot meet nor deny. Yet you say, ‘Show us a sign,’ fools that you are! There shall no sign be given you except the sign of Jonah, the prophet.” The second sign was also quite as much to the point. It was the case of the Queen of Sheba. She had heard, by report, that Solomon was the wisest of men. She knew that men flocked to his court to be instructed from his lips. Under many disadvantages and at much expense, she set out upon a long journey that she might listen to the wise man’s teaching. She found it to her

benefit and returned with joy. “But”—Christ seems to say, “I am as wise as Solomon. I am able to instruct you as well as that monarch instructed those who came to his court and yet you show no eager desire to know what it is I teach! You are not willing to open your ears to receive, nor your minds to give a candid judgment upon what I utter, but you cry out at once, ‘Show us a sign.’ You would open your eyes and stare in vacant wonder at a miracle, but the mightiest wisdom that I can deliver to you, you tread under foot as swine tread under feet the choicest pearls.”

So Christ would give them no sign. He felt that they needed it not and, indeed, it would be wasted upon them. If they had possessed the same naive mind that was found in the Queen of the South, they would have listened to Him. And if they had been of the same honest spirit with the men of Nineveh, they would have repented upon His testimony, even as they did of old, who heard the prophetic voice of Jonah!

Ah, my dear hearers, this very night the same spirit broods over thousands! They do not, when they go to hear a sermon, think of the matter of what they hear, but they must have it delivered with cleverness, with refined speech, with polished periods. Ah, if men were wise, they would care but little how these truths of God were given to them, but they would weigh the truths themselves! We do not claim that you should believe all that we say—if we speak anything contrary to God’s Word, we charge you to reject what we say, but we do ask you to judge it, to weigh it and to let the important truths which we are charged by God to deliver to you, have a place in your attention—let them exercise your judgment, let them move your heart and will—let them influence your lives!

Coming now, however, at once to the text, we shall notice, in the first place, *that Jesus is “greater than Solomon”*; in the second place, that *Jesus “is here”*; and in the third place, that *if we do not listen to Him and obey Him, the Queen of the South may well rise up to condemn us*.

These things, I think, are very evidently in the text. In the first place, then, in the text—

I. OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST CLAIMS TO BE “GREATER THAN SOLOMON.”

You all know the history of Solomon. Solomon was great in several particulars and we shall point out to you that in each of these, Christ is greater than he.

In the first place, *Solomon was very great as a ruler*. His father, David, had, by much perseverance, valor and industry, very much enlarged the boundaries of his once small dominion. He was a man of war and he left to Solomon a heritage, indeed—a well-filled treasury and an army of veterans. Solomon ruled over the whole of Israel. There seems to have been no disloyal rebellion, no revolt throughout the whole of his reign. In David’s reign there were many rivals and the people were a restless, discontented, turbulent people. No people, perhaps, were more difficult to govern than the Jewish people in the days of David! But Solomon was

so judicious, noble and just a ruler, that he left the whole nation at peace with itself.

He was a monarch whom all respected and Solomon, too, in his time, enlarged the boundaries of his territory until it reached to the borders of Egypt and to the river Euphrates on the other side. They that dwelt in the wilderness “bowed before him and his enemies licked the dust.” Many nations paid him tribute and all the strangers who remained in the land, whom the children of Israel did not destroy, did him service. He had dominion from sea to sea and, to use an Oriental extravagance of expression, “from the river even unto the end of the earth.” Solomon had a kingdom from his father and with it a special divine blessing—the gift of wisdom which enabled him to rule well. His army was one of the largest of the various armies of the Oriental kings. He ruled with wonderful state. The throne which he had built for himself is said to have had none like it in the whole of the then known world. His treasury was filled so full that as for silver, it was accounted for nothing. He made gold to be as silver, and silver as stones in Jerusalem! He was the greatest monarch that Israel had ever seen!

And yet, dear friends, what a petty, little king he was, and when we compare him for a single moment with our Lord Jesus Christ, what a contrast there is! All the power of Solomon is gone and not a speck of it is left. He had dominion in his day over vast numbers of humankind, but he has no dominion now. But the throne of the man who was crucified on Calvary has power over tens of thousands of human hearts at this present moment. Lo, these 1,800 years Christ has reigned over multitudes who have been all too glad to kiss His feet and have rejoiced in the light of His countenance! His kingdom, instead of waning, has continually increased and the day shall come when all kings shall yield their scepters to Him and He shall gather sheaves of them beneath His arm when all monarchs shall doff their diadems and He, alone, shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords—the universal head of the great monarchy—the stone cut out of the mountain without hands which shall yet fill all the earth! The power of the Lord Jesus Christ over His church is like the power of Solomon over Israel. He keeps it at one, and together!

Apart from Christ, the church is a broken thing, divided into sects and parties, but in Christ Jesus, the Savior’s prayer is answered, “That they all may be one.” Bring any one of us to the cross and you shall not know this from that, for there we all agree to trust Him, to worship Him, to count His authority to be paramount and His example to be our pattern! Yes, Lord Jesus Christ, all Your children praise You! All those that are of Your household put the crown upon Your head. You rule in the household and You rule well, You “first-born among many brethren.” Moreover, our Lord’s dominion extends beyond His church. He rules even to the river of Egypt. Know you not that Christ is Lord paramount over providence? Nothing occurs without Jehovah-Jesus’ purpose, decree, or permission! The very hairs of your head are all numbered—

***“He overrules all mortal things,
And manages our mean affairs.”***

Nor is this all. The Lord Jesus has the government upon His shoulders—and that government extends not only to earth, but to heaven and hell—

***“Lo! In His hands, the sovereign keys
Of heaven, and death, and hell.”***

The power of Christ is felt beneath hell’s most profound wave and His glory is sung on heaven’s most starry heights! He has put all things under His feet. He is exalted far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things that are under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Our Lord Jesus Christ, then, has a dominion which, for duration and for extent, is infinitely superior to anything of which Solomon ever conceived! And as for majesty and glory—talk not of the peacock—throne of the Great Mogul, all set with many colors and with gems and precious stones that shine resplendent like a rainbow in the glittering sun! There is no throne like unto the throne of Jesus, the emperor of all worlds! See before Him the sea of glass mingled with fire. Around Him stand His seraphic courtiers. There stand the elders with their “vials full of sweet odors.” And as you listen you can hear their “harps of sweeter sound.” And mark you not the countless hosts who all cast their crowns before Him and, with one soul and voice, cry, “You are worthy to take the book and to loose the seals thereof, for You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood”? Oh, cannot your ears hear this very moment the mighty booms of that great sea of music which rolls up to the throne of Jesus? Can you not catch some stray notes from the harps of angels and archangels, as unceasingly they sing, “You are worthy! You are worthy to take the book and to loose the seals thereof”? Beloved, we cannot *think* of comparing Christ with Solomon, but we must contrast them, for a “greater than Solomon is here, as a ruler.”

Let us learn from this the obvious lesson of practical value and wisdom. If, from the far-off South, the Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon, how wise will it be for us to come to see Jesus! Oh, that we would do so and make Him our King! Let us enlist in His warrior bands. None ever served so great a master! Let us be members of His household, for happy are they that stand continually in His presence. Let us give over our enmity and cast down the weapons of our rebellion! And let us say by grace —

***“Oh, King of grace, my heart subdue—
I would be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive to my Lord,
To sing the triumphs of His Word,”***

Solomon was great as a builder. For this, perhaps, he is best known among us. ‘Twas a mighty deed to bring the towering cedars of Lebanon, all fashioned and prepared, to Jerusalem to make a house for the Lord—to hew from the quarries in the mountains, great stones and goodly ones,

all squared, and each one fitted and made ready for its place so that there might be no sound of hammer, nor lifting up of chisel in the building of the house. Happy were the eyes that looked upon the temple of Solomon! Even at this very day, when the explorers come upon what they suppose to be the temple, they are astounded at the masses of stone which they find there! Our Lord said that one stone should not be left upon another, but that all should be cast down—but even as they lie in the places where they were cast down—they are amazing! Even modern engineers have marveled how they could ever have been brought and put into their places—they are of such enormous size and yet so well squared and prepared for the building! Besides this, Solomon built a house of the forest of Lebanon, of which we have a descriptive account in the pages of inspiration and which also seems to have been a marvelous work. In addition to that, he was great in the erection of works for the carrying of water. He made pools in Zion—the upper and the nether pools. He seems to have carried aqueducts where they were never heard of before his time, and it is possible that many of the great discoveries of modern days were well known to Solomon, even all those years ago. He seems to have built an ascent to the house of the Lord, which particularly struck the Queen of Sheba as being a most wonderful piece of masonry. Besides this, he was the builder of treasure cities. He also built Gezer, Bethhoron, Baalath, Tadmor in the wilderness, and so on. Solomon was a great master builder—none could excel him as a piler of huge stones, one upon another.

Ah, but my brothers and sisters, a greater than Solomon is the Lord Jesus! It is easy enough to build with stones, granite, bricks and cedar. These are dead, coarse things that you can hew and cut as you will. Get enough sawing and cutting power and you can make what you will of these things. It is only brute mechanical force that is needed, with judgment here and there to direct and guide it. Get strength enough and, as Archimedes said, you might move the world with a lever—it is only one physical force pitted against another. But what shall we say of Christ, who has built a house that is made of living, immortal souls, built of what Peter, taught of the Spirit, calls, “living stones”? You do not cut these, nor polish them quite so easily. Men with strong, stubborn wills; men with diseased imaginations; men with perverse affections, men altogether gone from original righteousness—our Lord Jesus Christ has taken these, and He has prepared them to make a temple in which there shall be nothing but holiness and perfection! I trust that some of us have been prepared to be built into “a living temple, for a habitation of God through the Spirit.” But if the Lord Jesus Christ shall ever make tens of thousands—and thousands of thousands of once guilty men all perfect, and shall build these altogether, fitting each one into its place and making each one willing to maintain and stay in its place—this will be such a thing as a thousand Solomons could not have attempted! This is no work of brute force, of mechanical power, my brothers and sisters—

this is the power of the Holy Spirit Himself—a *spiritual* power, a power which comes from God, who is a Spirit, and who will have those who worship Him, worship Him in spirit and in truth! Can you conceive of this temple? My soul seems to rise upon the wings of imagination at the very thought of it—a temple all alive, a living temple—each stone a priceless soul, glittering with immortality! John tells us of a city, the foundations whereof were of precious stones and he tells us of the “new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven,” and I know not what besides. That was but a faint picture of the living temple of Jesus, where each soul shall be more precious than the whole world, even though all the world were one pearl of the purest water—a temple built by Him, for Him, to His own praise!

Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great master builder, has built many a pool and aqueduct. We sang about one just now, such as Solomon never knew—

**“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins!
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains!”**

This is more glorious than the pool of Gihon, the upper and the nether pool! Moreover, Solomon brought a river into Jerusalem that the multitude might drink, but it was not like this—“The water that I shall give you, shall be in you a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.” Beloved, we have said that Solomon built treasure cities, but our Lord has given us promises that hold richer treasures than Tadmor ever knew—a covenant—oh, the grandeur of that word, *covenant*—a covenant stored with all the fullness of God, for in Christ “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”!

I shall lose myself if I attempt to extol my Master as a builder! I only pray that you and I may be built upon His foundation—that we may come to the fountain which He has opened and may be cleansed therein—that we may come to His treasure city and be enriched, all our necessities being removed. And may we dwell with Him in the palace which shall never be taken down! A greater than Solomon, then, is Christ as a builder!

And now for a third view of Solomon. *Solomon was the greatest man of his age as a trader.* A careless reader may not observe this, but a careful student of the narrative will discern the reason why Solomon was so immensely rich. Possessed of great wisdom, he saw at once that the wealth of a people must largely depend upon its commercial enterprise and activity. He therefore took a city upon the banks of the Euphrates, and when the great caravans, laden with costly treasures from India and China, sought to make their way to Egypt, Greece and Rome, they crossed at the very ford which Solomon possessed. He seized upon an oasis in the great desert and upon it he built a city, known to this day as Tadmor—“Baalath and Tadmor in the wilderness.” This little oasis, this spot of green earth in the midst of the desert, the caravans must pass. It

was the only place where they could obtain water—and here Solomon built these cities which became the great depot, where exchanges were continually made of the productions of Egypt, India and China! The trade which, after the days of Solomon, went farther west and at last passed through the port of Venice—and then went still farther west and went through Holland, and has now come to London—all that trade was in the hands of Solomon. If you read carefully the record of his life, you will see that he was a most clever trader and managed for a time to secure a complete monopoly of all the provinces of the East. For this, the Queen of Sheba marveled at him. She wondered how it was that he could have been so wise as to be able to do this.

But our Lord says that “a greater than Solomon is here.” Our Lord Jesus Christ has been a trader of no common sort, my brothers and sisters. By His most precious blood He has brought us the supplies of the skies! Solomon could only bring to himself gold, and silver, and spices, and apes, and peacocks—but our Lord Jesus Christ has, by His precious blood, opened up the skies to the commerce of souls so that now, through Christ, there comes to us pardon for our sin, acceptance in the Beloved, sanctification by the Spirit, preservation by the indwelling of God and all those priceless gifts of which we cannot now speak particularly, only we must say of them, “Blessed be the name of Jesus, that ever our souls learned to trade in this heavenly direction.” Yes, Christ is, indeed, greater than Solomon! Oh that you would seek to be enriched by Him! Oh that you would seek to obey that text in which He says, “I counsel you to buy of Me gold, yes, fine gold, tried in the fire, and the white raiment that you may be clothed.” God give us grace that we may come to this greater trader than Solomon!

Moreover, *Solomon was exceedingly great as a sage*. I shall not amuse you, for that is no objective of mine, with the various legends that are told of him. The one instance of his decision between the two women reminds us of the excellence of his judgment.

He was renowned for this. You have his Proverbs, his Ecclesiastes, one of his thousand and one songs, and you may be assured that he was a mastermind in his day.

But the wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ far transcends this, for He can open up all the dark questions of your mind! He can teach you, O man, what you most want to know. He can teach you the way to heaven, the way to escape from the power as well as the result of your sins, the way to get peace with God! The sages could not tell you this, but Jesus can. Seek Him, for He is greater than Solomon! I had more to say upon this point, but time will not allow, for I must have a word or two upon the second head, which is—

II. THIS JESUS IS HERE

He is not here in body. As we reminded you last Sabbath evening, He is gone. He is not here in that sense, “for He is risen.” But Christ is here by His Spirit. If you want to get to Christ, this is the way—think of Him.

That is, coming towards Him. Read His life. Study His death. Meditate upon Him. Let the thought of His laying down His life for His enemies dwell upon your minds. I wish that some of you would read the story of His crucifixion very, very often. If you have not any faith, perhaps faith will come while you are reading it. "God commended His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." He did not die for those good people who have not any sin. He had nothing to do with those good people who are so righteous that they can get to heaven their own way. Christ died for the guilty, the lost, the worthless. He comes like a physician to the sick—like one who gives sustenance to the perishing poor. Oh, read His life, for this will help you to come to Him!

The true way in which to come to Christ is to believe Him, to trust Him. If any man trusts in Christ to save him, he has come to Him! When I used to hear sermons about coming to Christ, I thought, "Well, I would do it if I only knew how! If I had to walk from here to York, or no matter how far, I would find my way." But you do not come to Christ with your feet—you come to Him with your mind, heart and will—and he that trusts in Jesus, who says, "I will lean alone upon what Christ has done. I have been trying a thousand ways of salvation, but they shall all go to the winds and now, sink or swim, I believe that Jesus Christ died to save sinners and I trust in Him"—that man is saved! If you trust in Him, and lean on Him and if, just as you now see me throw the whole of my weight upon this rail, you lean the whole weight of your soul on Christ, you are saved!

That is the only way of salvation, to throw yourselves completely on Jesus! God must punish sin, but Christ bore what was due to our sin in the place of sinners, of all who trust Him! If you trust Him, then Christ was punished instead of you and no penalty can fall on you. Your debts have all been paid by Christ and God cannot—for He is righteous—demand from you what Jesus has already endured for your sake. If you trust Jesus Christ, then, as sure as God is true, He will save you! It is His own promise, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Now, for the purpose of trusting, *Christ is here*. If you could see Him with your eyes, you could not trust Him any more than you can tonight when you cannot see Him, though He is here and oh, wonder of wonders, He is also engaged yonder in heaven, according to this book, in pleading for you! You do not need to see a man to trust him. I can trust a man who is in India. I can trust a brother whom I may have in Australia, I can trust a man who may be in the backwoods of America and trust him quite as well as if I saw him—perhaps my trust might be all the more like trust because I did *not* see him. We say that there are some people whom we can only trust as far as we can throw them, that is to say, we cannot trust them at all! But Christ is not of that kind. For all the purposes that are needed, then, to save you, Christ is here! By His Spirit He is here, and here now, and He will now whisper into your soul, "Peace. Your sins

are forgiven you.” If you will now trust Him, you shall have in your heart a peace which passes all understanding, which shall be the best proof to you that Jesus is here. Oh, why do you put it off? Oh, why do you who feel you need a Savior, continue so long away from this simple faith.” I prayed for you just now—the Lord knows how sincerely I prayed—that we might all meet in heaven. We never shall, unless we all believe in Jesus, for He is the one door—if we will not enter by Him, we cannot enter—there is no stealing or climbing our way there.

If we have to come and rest in Christ, why should we not do it tonight? Oh, why should we this night not be led to rest alone in Christ? If we do this, we are saved, already saved, completely saved, irrevocably saved—so saved that neither death nor hell shall ever divide the believer from his Lord! May this be done by us all, for Jesus is here. And now I have to close by saying that if, with this gospel before us, we do not come to this greater than Solomon—

III. THE QUEEN OF SHEBA WILL CONDEMN US!

For look! *She was a heathen who had heard but a little about Solomon* and yet she came to see if it were true. You profess to be Christians, many of you. You have heard about Jesus from the time when you left the cradle. If you come not, these many Sundays, these many sermons, these good books and these Bibles of yours—what shall they be but like the big stones that were hurled at Achan to destroy him for his sin? May God grant that you may not sin against the light of God, but may the light lead you to Christ that you may be saved!

This woman *came to see Solomon from afar*. We know not how far it was—whether she was the queen of the southern part of Arabia, or whether her territory was upon the other side of the Red Sea in Abyssinia—she seems to have been the queen of both countries. But from whichever she might have come, it was a long journey. You have no distance to go. Thought can travel all the distance in a moment! Faith can throw a bridge across every difficulty! Believe in Christ and you are with Christ! Trust Christ and Christ is with you—and you are with Him and in Him!

The Queen of Sheba had to meet a thousand dangers. Traveling in those days was no easy task. The Bedouins would attack her caravans. She had many trials and hardships to put up with, but there are no such hardships to you. You have simply to trust. All the way to heaven is only two steps—the first is to step out of yourselves, and the second is to step into Christ; first to have done with all that you can do, and secondly, to ask for all that Christ has done. You have no difficulties, then.

Now, this woman, when she came, did not come bringing her own wisdom to Solomon, but she came to learn from Solomon. You must come to Christ, not to bring your own knowledge, but to learn of Him what He would have you to do. If you are to be saved, you must be taught as well. “Unless you are converted and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

And this woman *did bring very great presents to Solomon*—spices and I know not what. Now Christ asks you to bring nothing! And if you do not come on such terms, well may she condemn you. He needs no merits of yours. He needs no good heart. He needs nothing good from you. “Surely He needs faith and repentance,” says one. Yes, but—

**“True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings me nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”**

“But I must *feel* my needs,” says one. Yes, but—

**“This He gives you—
‘Tis His Spirit’s rising beam.”**

You are to come to Christ without anything—and Christ will give you everything!

This woman had never been invited to come. She went on a haphazard journey. Solomon never sent the Queen of Sheba an invitation to visit his court, but she came and was well rewarded. But you have been invited hundreds of times. I must bear this witness against you. I have invited you very earnestly times without number. Oh, why, why, why—when the gospel is so simple, why do you kick against it? If my Lord were hard I could understand your lifting up the heel against Him. If He laid down some difficult conditions, I could excuse you if you said, “Master, we cannot come up to them.” But when the only thing He says is, “Take what I give you. Receive it as a gift of grace”—oh, not to receive it is unkindness, is madness, is wickedness! May God forgive your unbelief! I know the difficulty in your case is that it is so easy. I do believe if salvation were more difficult, some of you would like it better. You are just like Naaman. If the prophet had bid him do some great thing, he would have done it, but when it was nothing but, “Wash and be clean,” it did not suit his pride. And it does not suit yours just to come and trust in Christ. I know you say you are afraid it would not be true. Ah, then you prefer your opinion to the testimony of God, for this is God’s simple testimony, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be condemned.”

May the eternal Spirit bring you, empty-handed and ruined, to the all-sufficient Savior, and may you be enabled to now rely upon Him and you shall find that He is true! “Him that comes unto Me,” He says, “I will in no wise cast out.”

The Lord bless you for Christ’s sake!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:113-120.**

The proper way in which to read these verses is to peruse them in the spirit of prayer, turning every verse into a personal supplication to God. I

trust that many of us may be so in the Spirit, today, that these words may suit us.

Verse 113. *I hate vain thoughts: but Your law do I love.* The moralist is quite content to look after his actions, but the Christian is never happy until his thoughts are sanctified. The true believer hates vain thoughts, because they lead to vain words and to vain actions—because vain thoughts nailed his Savior to the tree; because vain thoughts spoil his devotion, mar his communion with God, and like the birds which came down upon Abraham’s sacrifice—would destroy all his offering. “I hate vain thoughts.” The converse of this is, “But Your law do I love.” There is nothing vain there. Nothing in Your law to distract me, nothing to give me unhallowed thoughts. Brothers and sisters, here is a cure for vain thoughts! When you have been assailed by vain thoughts, let your mind be lovingly stored with texts of Scripture, with passages of God’s Word! The Psalmist, while writing these words, is evidently under a sense of danger, so he said—

114. *You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Your word.* Here is a hiding place to escape to from danger and a shield to protect while in danger. A hiding place is not enough because that cannot be moved—but the shield can be carried everywhere. It is buckled on the warrior’s arm and into every conflict he can take it. So, at evening, when I tell my troubles to my God, He is my hiding place. But all the day long, while I myself abide in the heat of the conflict, He is my shield! See where the Christian’s hope is, dear friends! It is not in his own integrity, or faithfulness, or sincerity—but, “I hope in Your word.”—

***“The gospel bears my spirit up!
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope
In oaths, and promises, and blood.”***

115. *Depart from me, you evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.* By which David did not mean that he would not speak with ungodly men. Monkish seclusion would be no advantage to a Christian! We are to be in the world, though not of it, as a ship is in the sea, but the sea is not in the ship, or else soon would she go to the bottom. We are to take care of the world—to hold such society with them as may come from necessity—but as to any nearer communion, “Depart from me, you evildoers. Your company I cannot bear! Your example pollutes the air! You do me damage, you vex my ears, you dishonor my God—depart from me, you evildoers, for I will keep the commandments of my God.” You see, it seems as if this was not possible as long as there was an intimate association with the ungodly. I know nothing that is so likely to destroy the purity of a Christian’s life as an intimate association with ungodly people. You cannot run with the hare and hold with the hounds, too. It is impossible for you to join with world and yet be true followers of Christ.

116. *Uphold me according unto Your word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.* You see, he feels his weakness and he cries to his God.

117. *Hold You me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually.* The brightest archangel owes all his glory to God—and the perpetuity of that glory depends upon the constant gift of the gracious One. How wise, then, is it of men, conscious of their weakness, to hang constantly upon their God! As the vessel hangs upon the nail, and if the nail can move, the vessel must fall, so must we hang upon God. If He is not faithful, and true, and potent, then we must perish—but, thank God, concerning this we have no doubt!

118-119. *You have trodden down all them that err from Your statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love Your testimonies.* You see, the Psalmist's mind is entirely occupied with this spirit of perseverance. He seems to tremble and to be filled with awe lest he should by any means prove an apostate and be unworthy to enter into the kingdom. He looks with solemn mind upon God as casting all the wicked of the earth down under His feet, just as men cast out the refuse—as the slag of the furnace is sometimes thrown down to make the footpath. So he says, "You put away the wicked of the earth like dross. You have trodden them down." David was filled with a heavy trembling lest this should be his lot—lest, after he had thought he had known and experienced the happiness of communion with God, he should be found to be reprobate silver and be given over to destruction! Does such a fear as this come upon you, my brothers and sisters? If it does not, there is room for you to fear, for even our holy apostle had this as his anxiety, "Lest, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." It is not as to whether God will be faithful to me, but whether I am really His, whether my conversion has been genuine and my union to Christ vital. These are questions which breed a holy anxiety, which is one of the very best means of keeping a Christian in the path of right and so of guaranteeing the perseverance which God has promised.

120. *My flesh trembles for fear of You; and I am afraid of Your judgments.*

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NO. 3352

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 1, 1913,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.”
Matthew 11:28.*

PERHAPS no verse in the whole of Scripture has been handled in the pulpit more frequently than this, and yet it has not been exhausted and never can be! It is a great soul-saving text. There are some words of Scripture which seem to be like special stars in the sky. As the polestar is conspicuous to the astronomer, so are these salvation truths of God to the evangelist—he is never weary of gazing at them and pointing to them. The promises that are fitted to give present and immediate relief to the conscience are stars of the first magnitude and many sinners have had their attention attracted by them and by them been directed to the port of peace! Upon such a passage as I have propounded for our sermon tonight, [see exposition at end of sermon] I shall have nothing new to say. No novelty is required. We only need to hear the same old truths—yes, to hear them till they work their way into our souls, and then to hear them yet again, that our pure minds may be stirred up by way of remembrance, and that we, feeling their value, may proclaim them out for the guidance and comfort of others! Observe first—

I. TO WHOM THE SAVIOR ADDRESSED HIMSELF—all them that “labor and are heavy laden.”

It is not once out of a dozen times that I have ever had the good fortune to hear this text quoted correctly. It is, “All you that are weary and heavy laden,” according to the modern rendering. But as Jesus Christ said it, it is, “All you that labor and are heavy laden.” I suppose the alteration has been made in the interests of those who will not venture upon an invitation to men to come to Christ until they have got Him—I mean will not tell men to look to Jesus till they virtually have already experienced all that a look to Jesus is ever likely to give them! They will insist so much upon the spirituality of the terms used here that, seeing the words are a little difficult to get over, they must change them altogether! When our Lord said, “All you that labor,” who is to tell me that I am to trace in the word all them that *spiritually* labor? I should be afraid to add to the words of Scripture and must leave the responsibility with those who do so. Men labor, and if they labor with their heads, or their brains, or their hearts, in any form of labor, Christ bids them come to Him for rest. Men bear great burdens, some of them burdens of care, some burdens of grief, some burdens of foolish hope—but if they come to Him, being heavy laden or heavily loaded, He will take their load from them and give them rest.

From the day of the fall man has been a laborer and he has been heavily laden. Into whatever condition man may climb, he cannot altogether escape that first curse, "In the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread." If he does not work with his hands, he must, at least, toil mentally. But if he is idle because he says he has a competency, there is a something about such a life as that from which a man cannot escape! Instead of the world getting better in the way of toil and burden carrying, it is every day getting worse. Why, our forefathers of the Puritan times were quite easy souls compared with us! When I read the diaries of some of their lives, I quite envy them. A Puritan minister, when he dedicated himself to the work of the ministry with all his heart, was not run upon by the public, hunted up by the postman and embarrassed with ten thousand of the difficulties which arise out of our unnatural civilization! Good souls, they sometimes had rest and walked with God with some degree of ease! But now the world goes by steam. We have laid down steel rails and all business must run on them. It is all driving and turmoil from morning till night. You wake up, some of you, with the sound of the steam whistle in your ears, and you scarcely can sleep in your beds because of the rumbling of the trains at your very doors! It is a world of toil, and I believe that it will go on so—and instead of getting better; the world will in some respects get worse. It will be a harder struggle to live and a sterner struggle to live a spiritual life as the world grows gray. Hence, the words of the Master seem to me to come more fresh tonight than even when they fell from His lips, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden," for we labor more, now, than men did in His day, and are even more heavily laden than they were then! Jesus Christ addresses you tonight whose toils are many and your burdens heavy. Some of you are laboring after wealth, and if you got it you would find no rest in it. But the probabilities are that you may never get it and so be disappointed. But you need rest. Well, come to Him and you shall have it! Some of you, perhaps, are toiling after learning and the honor which it will bring you—may you get it! If it is good for you, you may, perhaps, obtain it. But in all learning there is sorrow—oftentimes the greater the domain of knowledge, the broader expanse is there in the soul for the floods of grief to cover. But if your mind needs rest, Jesus bids you come to Him! Oh you with enlarged ambitions, with grasping desire! Oh you that are panting and puffing in the race of life, you that are faint and weary with tugging at the oar of the world's great ship, come to Him, for He can release you! He can take off the chain from the galley slave and set you free!

Still, while the text is not exclusively directed to those who spiritually labor and are spiritually heavy laden, it includes them. Do I not address some tonight who are laboring hard to establish a righteousness of their own? Oh, sinful attempt, since God has forbidden it and declares the effort to be futile! Oh, vain folly, thus to fly in the face of eternal wisdom which declares that "by the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified"! If you are ever to get rest, you must cease from your own doings and you must come to Christ! Oh, you that are heavily laden with your sins and feel them like a burden pressing your heart, bowing you to

the ground and crushing you, as it were, down to the lowest hell—that burden can never be lifted off your weary backs except by one hand—and that hand, the pierced hand which has felt the weight of the burden before! To you that toil, to you that are bowed down and crushed with the load, Jesus speaks tonight as He did of old! And He says, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” Now notice—

II. THE COMMAND OR THE INVITATION—which you will—**THAT JESUS GIVES.**

It is, “Come unto Me.” There never seems to have been any difficulty in Christ’s day in understanding the expression, “Come unto Me.” It exactly struck the Oriental mind—they understood it at once. But now-a-days thousands ask the question, “What is faith? What is to believe in Jesus? What is coming to Him?” Many convinced souls say, “If I could walk to Christ, it does not matter how perilous or fatiguing the journey—I would certainly go! And if He would be here, literally, and I could fall down and kiss His feet, I would certainly do it.”

Understand, then, that the coming here mentioned is not to be taken literally, but *spiritually*. It is not a physical coming. We cannot now come to Christ by the motion of our bodies, nor shall we be able until He calls us by the sound of the last trumpet. If men had come to Christ physically when He was on earth, it would not have been of any use to them, unless by faith they had spiritual contact with Him, for some drew near to Him with idle curiosity and others with malignant opposition—yes, there were those who came to Him to crucify Him! They looked to Him physically as He hung upon the tree, but they were not saved by such a coming as that! The coming here meant is coming by the mind, approaching with the *heart*—a thing of the inner nature, a spiritual thing! To come to Christ, then, is just this—in one word it is to accept Him as your Savior—but to spell out that one counsel, let me trace out the action of the mind in coming. First, you must *listen to His doctrine*. Seek to know, oh, weary ones, what it is that Jesus teaches! Turn to the record and see who He was, what He was, what was His commission, what was His message and what were the terms in which He delivered it, and what was the spirit in which He came to bring it. In the next place, *believe whatever He teaches*. Accept as being true what Christ declares. If He claims to be God, believe Him—accept Him as such. If He puts Himself down as prophet, priest and king, let your mind jump at it and say, “He shall be my prophet, my priest, my king.” Coming to Christ begins in many ways in the soul. With many it begins first by hearing of Christ, then by believing with the mind the testimony that is borne concerning Jesus. But this is not enough. After having heard and accepted that the witness of Christ is true, the genuine coming is then to cast your soul, with all its awful interests, into His hands and trust Him—in fact, to say, “I have no dependence for life, for death, for eternity, but on the person and merits of that Son of God who was born of Mary, who lived a life of holiness, who died upon the tree, who rose again and whoever lives to make intercession for us.” The simple act of *trust*—albeit by some it is so much despised—is the act which saves the soul! The moment a sinner

casts himself flat upon what Christ has done, with no reserve, no holding to any other hope even with his little finger. The moment he makes himself to be a bankrupt, gives up all and lives upon the charity of Christ. The moment he completely takes off his own rags and puts on no garment but the righteousness of Christ. The moment that he acknowledges himself to be a black, filthy, condemned—yes, and without Christ—a condemned sinner! The moment he feels that and then takes Christ to be his fullness, his trust, his all-in-all—he has come to Christ! He is saved, he shall have rest!

But to come to Christ implies a little more than even this, if we would get the perfection of it and the completeness of the rest which is promised. When I come to Christ and trust in Him to be my Savior, I am then to continue to come to Him *by following in His footsteps, obeying His precepts, drinking in His spirit, and serving His cause*. Brothers and sisters, we are all, as His people, constantly coming to Him! “To whom coming,” says the apostle, “as unto a living stone”—not, “to whom we have come, and there is an end of it,” but to whom we are always coming! We are like the country people who do not live by experience of having gone to the well seven years ago, but they go every day and dip the pitcher in afresh. We are like in our souls what we are in our bodies—we do not grow fat and flourishing on the experience of having eaten a good meal 20 years ago, but it is by daily coming to the table and continually receiving fresh food for the sustenance of our bodies! And, brothers and sisters, to get perfect peace through Jesus Christ, there must be a daily, an *hourly* coming to Him in constant trust, in faithful obedience and in holy fellowship, striving to be conformed to His image. “Come unto Me,” then, says the Savior, “all you that labor and are heavy laden.” He picks out you working men and He says, “Come and hear what I have got to say. Believe it, accept it, trust it and I will give you rest.” He finds out you merchants who toil so much that the brain sometimes gives way, and He says, “Now, come, Come to Me and I will give you rest. You expect to get it when you retire from business and go to your country house—but even now, if you come to Me, you shall have a rest that no suburban retreat, no accumulation of wealth, no immunity from the strain of business can ever give you! I can make that heart beat at an easier rate. I can cool that hot blood that is now coursing through your veins at such speed. I can bathe your spirit in a sleep that shall be like an infant’s slumber, soft and light—and I can do this for you while you are striving to be rich, or while you are poor, while your losses are great, while your friends are falling like autumn leaves and while your fears are howling in your ears like winter’s winds! I can give you rest, perfect rest, if you come to Me.” If you come to Him, believe what He says, trust Him entirely, rest and repose in Him and you shall get for your souls that paradise which they so much need, of perfect peace! Having noticed the persons addressed and the invitation given, let us observe—

III. OUR LORD’S DESCRIPTION OF THE BLESSING WHICH IS TO BE GIVEN TO SUCH WHEN THEY COME. “I will give you *rest*.”

The best word in all human language, next to, “*God*,” and “*Jesus*,” is that word, “*rest*.” Different views of heaven charm different people. No

doubt heaven is described under various metaphors so that every Christian may find some delight appropriate to himself. As for me, whether it is that I am constitutionally lazy or not, I do not know—there is no idea of heaven which charms me like that of being at perfect rest in Christ Jesus, where—

***“Not a wave of trouble rolls
Across the peaceful breast.”***

This text seems to ring like a marriage bell in one’s ears. “Come unto Me and I will give you rest.” Oh, you will not care about it, you who do not labor, you who are never heavy laden and have got no more burden than you can carry—you will not care about it—but those who are stuck in the struggles of life, or that are oppressed with spiritual grief—they will be the persons who will find the sweetness of it! Yes, rest for the weary, rest for the toiler, rest for the heavy laden—this is, indeed, a blessing!

And what is the rest which Jesus gives? Well, it is a *spiritual* rest which He bestows upon His people—a rest which rests them throughout, for when the mind gets rested, the very bodily frame seems to be sustained. While an agitated mind often brings the body into disease and lowers it into its grave—Jesus can give such a tonic to the entire system by the peace which He imparts—that the very lame shall be made to leap like a hart!

Oh, what a peace this is—the peace which Jesus gives! *He gives peace as to all the guilty memories of the past.* These will haunt us. When the conscience is awakened, our dead sins seem to start up, wearing, each one, its ceremony, and each sin stands before us like a grim ghost claiming retribution. And the awakened conscience, knowing right well that the wages of sin is death, becomes alarmed and the man says, “What must I do to be saved?” As if in your walk tonight there should suddenly open before you a pit in the very pathway which you were about to tread—how you would stand amazed and aghast! And then if another opened behind you, and then on either hand the earth began to rock and reel, how would you be astounded and dismayed!

Such is the position of a man when conscience is suddenly quickened. He thought himself to be standing on the solid ground of his own good works—but suddenly all is gone. No good works appear. Sin is on either side. Hell is beneath him and the sword of divine justice, all unsheathed, is gleaming above his head! Ah, but Jesus Christ can show you how sin is forgiven! If you believe Him, He will tell you that He came into the world to suffer for the sins of all who trust Him—that He actually did bear all the punishment which was due from the hand of God to all the sinners who will trust in Him—and that God is so rigidly just, severely righteous, yet infinitely gracious in the pardon of those who will trust in Christ!

Nor is it only the fear of the past, but *the power of the present*, from which this kindly rest exempts us! A man awakened longs to escape from sin. As an iron net, his habits of sin surround him. He tugs and toils to escape from there, but the more he strives, the more thoroughly is he enveloped therein. His attempts at reformation from some sin are often successful, but any attempts to reform our nature and to overcome our

inbred sin made by us in our own strength, must inevitably be a failure! Sin, indeed, will only become more exceedingly sinful the more we strive to bridle it unless we cry unto the strong for strength! How often has a man said, "I cannot lead a better life; it is no use—you may exhort me if you please, but see what I have been, how I am tempted and how my passions drag me this way and that? There is no hope for me!" But Jesus steps in and says, "Come to Me and I will give you rest. I can change your nature. I can take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I can give you tendencies and passions of quite another kind which shall combat with your old proclivities and ultimately overcome them. I can inspire in you a new hope. I can breathe into you a new and better life, for I am the resurrection and the life, and he that believes in Me, though he were dead, as you are, yet shall he live. And as to returning to your old sins, that shall not be, for he that lives and believes in Me shall never die. I will keep you and deliver you from the power of sin and Satan, and you shall be Mine even till life's end." Thus peace is given to us, both as to the guilt and as to the power of sin!

But this is not all! Jesus can give peace and does give peace to all who come to Him as to *the cares of this world*. The righteous have their troubles. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." But there is a sacred art which Jesus teaches, which enables the Christian to rejoice in tribulation and to triumph in the midst of distress! Some of the happiest moments that God's people have ever had have been when neither sun nor moon appeared and when in the darkness they crept into the bosom of Jesus and nestled there! We are not dependent upon outward circumstances when faith is in exercise. Jesus shows us that His love is faithful, eternal, immutable love—and immediately we kiss the smiting hand and love it as well as the giving hand. Oh, you that are now the poor slaves of your daily cares, how happy would you be if you came to Jesus and trusted in Him! The cage would grow no larger. The income might become no richer. You might still be among the poor and the laboring ones, but you would have a rest in your condition, a satisfaction in your state which would make it better, though it changed it not! For it is all one to a man to have his estate brought up to his mind, or to have his mind brought down to his estate. It matters not, as long as he is content! It all comes to the same end and Christ, by a divine baptism of His love, bathing us, covering us completely in the floods of His divine Grace can give us, as to the cares of this world, a perfect rest!

And, my brothers and sisters, if we come to Christ, we shall *likewise get rest as to our desires*. Thoughtful men find it difficult to rest. They go from one theory to another. When they think they have nestled for a while, a new difficulty comes and scares them from it. But he that believes in the Son of God has something upon which his mind may stand most stably, for as well is the teaching of Christ the most reasonable as it is also the most spiritual of doctrines! He that gets to know Christ, gets a fixed leverage for his soul on which to stand fast—let the world whirl as it may!

He that gets Christ gets rest for his *affections* as well as for his understanding. The affections need something to love. We are always

idolizing something or other, but those things either get broken in pieces, or else turn out to be our enemies. But he that gets the love of Jesus Christ supremely rests in his heart and he can sing—

***“Now rest, my long-divided heart!
Fixed on this blissful center, rest.”***

As I have already shown you, the conscience rests, so the understanding rests, the judgment rests, the affections rest and the whole powers of the man come to rest, even his desires—those insatiable things—those horse-leeches—those greedy, all-devouring things—these, too, are full when the man gets Christ, for he can then say—

***“All my capacious powers can wish,
In You most richly meet—
Nor to my eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet.”***

Yes, it is a perfect rest to every faculty of our nature that Jesus Christ gives us when we come to Him!

And what, after all, is that portion of the rest which we see and experience here when *compared with the fullness of which we shall enjoy hereafter?* “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. When the world passes away, and all the fashion, thereof; when the pulse grows faint and few; when the eyes are glazing; when the eternal world begins to dawn upon the disembodied spirit, I will give you rest—rest when the elements dissolve with fervent heat, rest when the trumpet grows exceedingly loud and long, and the dead arise from their graves—rest when the great white throne is set, and the books are opened—when the dividing voice separates the sheep from the goats! I will give you rest when hell opens and the guilty descend to their doom. Rest while their smoke goes up forever and ever, and the vengeance of Almighty God is seen in the overthrow of all His enemies! I will give you rest—rest in the Father’s bosom—rest at the right hand of God, rest in eternal union with Jesus, rest with the palm branch and the harp—rest in the everlasting vision of the blessed Son of God who is your trust and your all.” Ah, brothers and sisters, what a rest is that—

***“To which our laboring soul aspires,
With ardent pangs and strong desires!”***

It will be a rest from all sin! A rest from all temptation to sin! A rest from all painful memories about sin! A rest from all watchfulness against sin, from all liabilities of ever being led into it! A rest from secret sins, a rest from inbred sins, a total rest from every form of evil! It will be a rest from all the molestations of doubt and fear; a rest from every questioning as to our state before God; a rest from all the uprisings of natural depravity from an evil heart of unbelief; a rest from the attacks of Satan, the assaults of men without, and of fiends from beneath—a rest, too, from daily toils—no more those hands to be rough with labor, and that brow to be wet with sweat—no more the head to ache with thought, and the heart to throb with dismay! A perfect rest from every species of toil that can bring distress, though we shall serve Him day and night in His temple; it will be a rest from all care—no thoughts of those children and their little waywardnesses; no thoughts about the house and how to provide things honest in the sight of all men; a rest altogether from the

engagements of the city, and from the labors of the field; a rest completely from the toils which are allotted to the sons of men in this vale of tears. Oh, blessed rest! A rest from pain; a rest from death; a rest from fear; a rest with God; a rest, an eternal rest, which remains for the people of God!

And this is for you, laboring and heavy laden one! This is for you, son of poverty! For you, daughter of sorrow! This is for the inmate of the poorhouse, the dweller in the alms room; this is for the crossing sweeper; this is for the toiling artisan; this is for the burdened merchant; this is for the care-worn statesman; this is for the minister who serves his Master till he is weary in his work; this is for us all if we have, by the Holy Spirit, through divine grace, been led to come to Jesus! *That is the point.* Do you believe on the Son of God? Dear hearer, do you believe Jesus to have been God's Son, and to have died as the substitute for sinners? And will you trust in Him as such, wholly and only? Will you venture on Him, and venture on Him now? If so, here is His promise, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." If you believe Him, you shall have salvation now! Obey Him! Be baptized as He commands you, and you shall thus have the blessing which God gives to all who trust in the slain Lamb of God!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 6:1-41. (NKJV)**

Verses 1-5. *After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him. They had been hearing Him all day and He had withdrawn a little from them, but they pursued Him up the hill—and I doubt not that as they toiled up the hill, they showed their faintness and their weariness which led the Savior to see how much they needed refreshment.*

5-7. *He said unto Philip, Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to prove him: for He, Himself, knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. Men's calculations concerning divine things generally terminate in a deficit. Two hundred pennyworth is not sufficient. But Christ's calculations always terminate in a credit balance, as we shall see. "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing may be lost." We, at our best, fall short of the mark. Our blessed Master not only does enough, but in His House there is bread enough and to spare!*

8-10. *One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said unto Him, There is a lad here, who has five barley loaves: and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down—Or lie down, as it is, for they were accustomed to do that at*

feasts, and Christ would have them take their ease as well as enjoy their refreshment. “Make the men recline.”

10. *Now there was much grass in the place.* So it was a splendid dining room! It was luxuriously carpeted! We learn from this that it was the Eastern spring time, for there is not much grass otherwise. And there was, therefore, in Christ’s banqueting hall, a blue ceiling and a floor of green grass! What more could they need except the food?

10-11. *So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves—Common, coarse loaves of barley, not much esteemed, even then, as food.*

11. *And when He had given thanks.* Though out of doors and “in the rough,” as we say, He did not forget that! I know some that fall to their meals like so many swine—and have not as much grace as chickens that are sure to lift their heads whenever they take a drink, as if to bless God for every drop they receive! This gracious habit is going out of fashion among them.

11. *He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down—Or reclining.*

11. *And likewise of the fishes as much as they would.* That is always one of the rules of Christ’s feasting—as much as they would. According to your appetite, according to your will, according to your faith, so be it unto you!

12. *When they were filled—Had all they could desire.*

12. *He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.* Economy in the midst of bounty! However much we have, we are never warranted in wasting a single crumb! They had as much as they would, but they were not allowed to throw away the fragments.

13-14. *Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.* Men are often convinced by the argument of selfishness. They had been fed and now they believed. But faith that depends upon a full stomach will despair when they get hungry again! Always beware of that religion which is in dependence upon loaves and fishes. You know how it was with the children of Israel—

**“Now they believed the word,
While rocks with rivers flow,
Then with their sins they grieved the Lord,
And He did bring them low.”**

Oh, but we must not have a faith that depends upon what it can see, and upon what it can eat, and what it can drink! Oh, for the confidence in the blessed person of the Lord, and in the spiritual riches which He can communicate!

15. *When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain, Himself, alone.* What? Could He not have used His kingship for the best of purposes? Might He not easily have routed the Romans, restored Israel

to all her glory, conquered the Gentiles, subdued the world and set up a glorious church and state with Himself for the King, and Himself as the head of the church? Ah, that has been the idol of a great many and, like a will-o'-the-wisp, it has led many of the true people of God into bogs and sloughs where they were likely to be lost. But our Master knew better than this and was not to be tempted away from the true method by which His church is to be set up in the world. Therefore, "He departed again into a mountain, Himself, alone."

16-17. *And when evening was now come, His disciples went down unto the sea and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was dark, and Jesus was not come to them.* That is a sentence that I should think some very gloomy people might hang upon—and about which they might groan in unison, "It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them." Have you never been in that condition? Dark, dark, dark, as to circumstances and as to feelings, and Jesus was not come to them. Now, something comes beside that.

18. *And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.* Misfortunes never come alone. An absent Savior, a roaring sea and a bellowing wind! What will they do now?

19. *So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they saw Jesus.* Here He is! Here is the first of their blessings. The first mischief is removed and the rest will soon go. They see Jesus!

19. *Walking on the sea.* Oh, what a sight! A grander sight than to see Him on the land! And it is a more glorious sight to see Christ in the time of trouble than it is in the time of prosperity. He is always sweet, but He is more marvelous when they see Jesus walking on the sea.

19. *And drawing near unto the ship: and they were afraid.* Afraid of their best friend—trembling at their deliverer!

20. *But He said to them, It is I. Do not be afraid.*

21. *Then they willingly received Him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land where they went.* The sea and the winds knew how not only to spare the vessel, but to carry it instantaneously to the place where they wished to be! But how often have you and I been rowing about, 25 or 30 furlongs, and we did not seem to be getting out of the storm at all? But the moment Christ has come, we have been where we wished to be! Oh, glory be to His name—there is no difficulty that you can be in, dear friends, but Christ can get you out of it in a moment and bring you where you should be!

22-24. *The following day, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, save that one where into His disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples were gone away alone—however there other boats came from Tiberias near unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks. When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.* Was not that a pleasant sight? So it seemed, but it was not. "Seeking for Jesus." That is a good description of a man—seeking for Jesus. Yes, but they were only

seeking for more bread! They looked at Him as a bread giver—and they were after Him for that.

25. *And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when did You come here?* They could not understand how He could have got there. Jesus answered them and did not answer them. Some of Christ's answers are evidently no answers at all. That is very often the best answer you can give.

26. *Jesus answered them and said—What? Did He explain to them how 'He got there? No, He would not gratify their curiosity. He came not for that end. He therefore gave them a home stroke and said—*

26. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek Me not because you saw the miracles, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled. You are loafers—loaf-hunters. You seek not Me, but Mine. It is not for the good that I can give your souls, but it is that you may have another meal, that you are here. Yours is cupboard love. You come after what you can get.*

27. *Labor not for the meat which perished, 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.* Now, do you understand what Jesus meant? Seek after that which will feed your souls. Do not hunt so much after bread for the body. Yet the Savior puts it very curiously. This is a double-shotted perplexity—a singular, curious kind of word. You are not to labor for that which you cannot get without labor and you are to labor for that which you cannot get by labor! The Savior liked to put things in that sententious way, so that they might remember what He said. If they misunderstood Him, it was their own fault, for it is plain enough. God grant us grace to practice the meaning of these words! Why are you so eager to get a bit of barley bread and a fish? Oh, that you were half as eager to come and get the bread which comes from heaven which will make a man live forever and which will be food to him as long as he lives!

28, 29. *Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God—The chief work, the greatest work which you can do!*

29. *That you believe on Him whom He has sent.* This is the point. You would like Me to work miracles. You would be glad to have a very wonderful, mysterious experience, but this is the thing you ought to seek after—the grandest, greatest thing that you can have—"that you believe on Him whom He has sent."

30. *They said therefore unto Him, What sign show You, then, that we may see and believe You? What do You work?* Are you not wonderfully struck with the patience of Jesus? These people had seen His miracles and they had eaten loaves and fishes, and yet they say to Him, "What sign show You, then, that we may see and believe You?" Oh, the matchless patience of the Lord and the marvelous provocations of men!

31. *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.* They plainly hinted that they wanted more food.

32-34. *Then Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father gives you the true*

bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world. Then they said unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. Not understanding Him and praying still for bread, but not for grace.

35-37. *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life. He that comes to Me shall never hunger. And he that believes on Me shall never thirst. But I say unto you, That you also have seen Me, but believe not. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me and him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.* What a striking truth of God that was, with which to reply to them! You only come after Me for bread, but you do not come after spiritual things. You do not believe in Me. But, even if you do not, I shall not be disappointed, and My work will not fail. God has an election of grace and that election shall be carried out. "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." And then, as if to cheer them up again, He says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

38-41. *For I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.* The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, *I am the bread which came down from heaven.* And there you see Christ has got no farther with them but to leave them murmuring! And I believe that often the true minister of God must expect to see no other result come of faithful testimony than for the people to murmur at him. But what if it is so? Will his Master blame him? No. No more than He blamed the only-begotten. It must be so that there may be a separation between the precious and the vile—that God's chosen may be drawn out! While such as believe not shall be judged, and in their own consciences, shall be condemned.

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“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you.”
John 14:26.

THE Savior, when He departed from this world, provided for all the needs of His people, not so much by giving them divers benefits, but by promising them the presence of a gracious person who should supply them all that their spiritual needs might demand. I trust there are many of us who know in some degree the value of the promise, “I will send the Comforter unto you,” and that we know that when that Comforter comes, He brings us all good things. We have not to look in one place for quickening and in another place for comfort, in another for instruction and in a fourth for illumination. But when we receive the Spirit, we have all things in one! I may say of Him, as of Jesus Christ, “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” In Jesus it dwelt in a real human nature, physical as well as spiritual, but in the Holy Spirit we have the same fullness of Deity, but He comes in and dwells—resides—in His people!

Our Savior here directs us to one particular blessing, which the coming of the Holy Spirit would bring us, namely, that of divine instruction. In endeavoring to enter in some measure into the text, tonight—too briefly to enter into it fully—we shall, first of all remark that the text suggests to us—

I. THE VALUE OF ALL THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS SPOKEN.

For He tells us that the Holy Spirit shall “bring to our remembrance all things whatever He has said unto us.”

When the Savior was with His disciples, it is very possible that many of His choice sayings fell to the ground *for lack of attention on their part*. They did not, perhaps, know that every word of His had a fullness in it that should have been treasured up by them as priceless. But now He tells them that it shall be the Holy Spirit’s office to teach them all such truth and to bring all their meanings to their remembrance. Brothers and sisters, there is a great danger nowadays in not attaching sufficient importance to the teaching of Scripture. You will sometimes hear persons speak very disparagingly of doctrinal truth and others will smile at

anything like dispensational truth. Some are inclined to throw experimental teaching in the background and some few speak very sadly about the practical truth of God. But our Lord here speaks of “all things whatever I have said unto you,” and He also speaks of the Spirit teaching us “all things.” We may, therefore, believe that every truth of God that is revealed in Scripture has its proper place and its importance. And we may gather this from the fact *that Christ has taken the trouble to speak it*. We do not believe that He has uttered one foolish word—no more—not one useless word, for in the whole compass of His teaching there is not to be found a single passage which should have been left unsaid. There may be repetitions, but there are no redundancies. He may have taught the same truth in several shapes, but He has never taught it once too often. He has never revealed a truth which it were better to conceal, just as He has never concealed a truth which it would have been better to reveal. If my Lord has taught anything, it must be worth my while to learn it! If Christ lifts the veil, it is my privilege to look—and what He manifests to me I ought not to be slow to gaze upon.

Moreover, brothers and sisters, in addition to the importance which must attach to these things because Christ has spoken them, there is this—that He now *sends the Holy Spirit to teach them to us*. If you say that any one part of the truth of God is unimportant, you do as good as say that to that extent the Holy Spirit has come upon an unimportant or valueless mission! You perceive it is declared that He is to teach us “all things,” but if some of these “all things” are really of such minor importance and so quite non-essential, then surely it is not worth while disturbing our minds with them. And so to that degree, at any rate, we accuse the Holy Spirit of having come to do what is not necessary to be done! And I trust that our minds recoil with holy repulsion from such a half-blasphemy as that. Beloved brothers and sisters, He teaches us “all things,” because it is necessary for us to learn all things—and so He comes to bring to our remembrance not part, but, in turn, the whole of our Lord’s wondrous teaching! That teaching is essential to our knowledge of divine things, to our comfort and progress in spiritual things—that remembrance is part of our soul’s discipline and advance.

I wish that some of my friends would get this very simple and very old truth of God into the depths of their minds and hearts, for then they would surely study a great many things that they now overlook—and I think they would not be so apt to excuse their own lack of diligence in the school of Christ, by saying, “Well, there are some all-important doctrines. We have studied them and that is enough.” Brothers and sisters, when a boy goes to school, he may say, “If I learn arithmetic, I shall be able to be a tradesman and that is what I shall be. I do not want to read that dry Latin book. I do not care to read that book of poetry. It does not matter about my writing such a very elegant round hand.” But the schoolmaster says, “My boy, you are put under my teaching to learn all things and it is not for you to pick and choose what class you will attend.” Now, we are scholars under the tuition of the blessed Spirit and

it is not for us to say, "I will learn the doctrine of justification by faith, and when I know that, I shall not trouble my mind about election. I shall not raise any question about final perseverance. I shall not inquire into the ordinances, whether believer's baptism or infant baptism is right—I take no interest in these things—I have learned the essential matter and I will neglect the rest." You will not say this if you are an obedient disciple, for do you not know that the ministers of Christ have received a commission to teach all things that Christ has taught them, and do you think that our commission is frivolous and vexatious? Do you think that Christ would bid us teach you what it is no need of you to learn, or, especially, that the Holy Spirit would, Himself, come to dwell in the midst of His church and to teach them all things, when out of those, "all things," there are, according to your vain supposition, some things that were quite as well, if not better, left alone? Brothers and sisters, whatever the Lord has spoken as a Master concerns His servants! Whatever He has delivered as a prophet, concerns His disciples—whatever He has spoken as a friend, concerns us, His friends—and whatever He has taught us as Lord concerns every one of us as members of His body, of His flesh and His bones!

I must again reiterate this truth of God. I do not think I can leave it without still trying to further impress it upon your minds. There is a tendency, among us all, I suppose, to choose some part of the truth of God and attach undue importance to that, to the neglect of other truths.

It is a grave question if this is not the origin of various divisions which are to be found in the church of Christ—not so much heresy, as the attaching of disproportionate importance to some truth of God, to the disparaging or neglecting of others equally necessary. Some brother speaking to me the other day, declared of a certain truth, "You cannot have too much of a good thing." Whereupon I remarked, that a nose was a good thing, but it might be possible to so exaggerate it that you would spoil the beauty of the face. A mouth is a good thing and yet it may be very possible to have such a mouth that there would be no particular beauty about the visage, for the beauty of the man consists in proportion, and the beauty of divine truth consists in the proportion in which every part of it is brought into view. Now, there are some who exaggerate one feature and some another. There are some brothers who are fond of what is called "the high side" of doctrine. I am fond of it, too, very fond of it, but there is a temptation to bring that out and to neglect, perhaps, the practical part of the gospel and to cast into the background, possibly, the invitations of the gospel and those truths which concern our usefulness in the world. Then, on the other hand, there are some who are so enamored of experience that nothing but experimental truth will suit them—they must be always harping upon that one string and they look down with contempt upon those who hold fast doctrinal truth, which is very wrong—and shows that they have not yet been led into all the truths of God!

Alas, how many are so taken up with practical teaching that they grow legal for lack of having the salt of the doctrines of grace to keep them right. But oh, if it were possible for our minds to hold all the truth of God, as far as a finite mind could grasp it! If we could but cast aside the prejudices of education and, perhaps, of constitution, too, and say to the Holy Spirit, "My Lord, I will bind myself neither to this party nor to that. I will subscribe neither to this formula nor to that. I am prepared to receive Your mind into my mind. I am prepared to give up much that I hold dear if You will show me that it is not according to Your will—and I am prepared to receive the gospel from You, as You shall be pleased to show it to me!" It is *all* truth and not *some* truths of God that the Holy Spirit comes to teach! To teach His children truth in all its harmony, truth in all its parts, truth, indeed, as a whole!

But it may be said, "There must be some truths which are not so essential as others!" That is granted. There are some truths that are so vital to salvation and peace with God. And there are some others that do not vitally concern the regeneration and conversion of the soul—and upon these, men may be in error, and yet not risk their souls for all eternity. But still, even these truths are part of the whole body of truth, and the body cannot do without its head, its heart, though it might lose a limb. Yet is that a reason why I should chop off a limb, or consent to have it maimed, because I could still exist without it?

I could exist without an eye. Shall I not, therefore, mind being blinded? There may be a bone in my body, possibly there are several, the use of which even the anatomist does not know. There are some nerves, especially nerves in connection with the organs of secretion, the use of which are not known to the best physiologists, but nobody, I suppose, would like to dispense with them because each man who thinks, must feel that that God who made the man knew best how to make him perfect and how to adapt him to the position in which he would be placed. There may be bones or nerves in the human system which will never be used but once in our lives—and yet if they were not there, we might not be able to get through that particular juncture. So is it with the truths of Scripture. There may be a truth which I shall never need to use and which may never have a practical turn to serve in my life, but once—and then if I do not happen to know that truth just at that time, I may entail on myself a host of sorrows through my own ignorance—sorrows which I ought to have prevented.

The Holy Spirit comes to teach all the truth of God and I beg yet again, for the fourth time, to reiterate that all truth must be necessary for you and for me, or else the Spirit of God would not have come to teach it to us, and that while we may give more prominent importance to the greater and more vital truths, yet there is not one truth in Scripture to which we are allowed to say, "Be still! Be quiet—we do not need you." Brothers and sisters, how many of you might be happy if you did but study doctrinal truth! You go lean and starved through the world because your minister

does not preach the doctrines of grace, does not give you the full weight of the truths of the sovereign grace of God.

Still, if you but studied them for yourselves, you might yet have bright eyes and an elastic, bounding footstep, and rejoice in the everlasting love of God which never leaves His people, but preserves and glorifies them in the end!

And some, too, are always groaning from a sense of inward corruption and very properly studying their own hearts, but they might live gladsome, triumphant lives if they did but learn a little more of the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free, and seek to drink in the precious truths of our standing in Christ and our perfection in Him. It is the willful neglect or refusal to believe some majestic truth of God that is the cause of nearly all our doubts and fears—and a great many other pieces of mischief that keep us from serving and honoring our Lord as He deserves to be served and honored by those who are not their own, but are bought with a price.

This first point we may now leave, if the Holy Spirit will but bring it home with power to our souls, for this truth of God, among others, must be taught us by Him. We now come to a second point which is clearly in the text, namely, not only the value of all truth that our Lord Jesus Christ has spoken, but—

II. THE NEED OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO TEACH US ALL THE TRUTH.

But cannot an honest and a willing mind learn all the truths of God that are in Scripture without the teaching of the Holy Spirit? I infer that it cannot from the fact that the *Holy Spirit is provided*. There is nothing that is unnecessary in the covenant of grace—and the divine power is never unnecessarily exerted. It is constantly remarked of the miracles that there is not one of them that can be dispensed with—and God never interferes to do out of the course of nature what might be done according to the ordinary laws of nature. If the Christian were fully equipped to know and understand the divine mind without the teaching of the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit would not have been given. We should not find the Holy Spirit here unless it were necessary that He should be here. Even with Christ for a teacher, mark—so that there was no fault in the teacher—with Christ for a teacher, the disciples did not learn these truths without the teaching of the Holy Spirit! I infer, therefore, that much more is that teaching now necessary and that the Spirit of God should abide with us, to teach us truth, and to bring the things which we have learned to our remembrance. And why? Is it not because *there is a radical defect in us as disciples*? Are we not frequently inattentive? Do we not sometimes feel a lack of interest in the truths of God which we receive from the word, which I may now call the lips of Christ? A child may be very plainly taught, but if you cannot get its attention, if you cannot catch its will and interest it, it will not learn much—that which you teach it will glide like oil over a slab of marble—it does not penetrate and permeate and, consequently, is not properly and thoroughly learned.

And often on the Lord's Day you will hear most delightful truths, but if you are not interested in them, it does not catch your mind.

And in reading Scripture, how seldom do we show as much interest as we do in reading a letter from a friend? With what glistening eyes will some persons read the will of their relatives—and they never forget what they read there because mind and heart are deeply interested.

But alas, how often do we turn from these sacred pages without enough interest to learn what is in them!

We are not so eager to drink in their spirit. We do not bring our souls up to the truth and it is not any wonder, therefore, if we do not learn those truths of God which are so spiritual that they can only be grasped by a soul in active, alert exercise!

Besides this, we do not learn because of *our ready prejudice against the special truth we ought to learn*. A great part of God's truth is very unpalatable to human nature—to learn it is something like taking bitter medicine—people do not choose it with enthusiasm.

There are some truths which would always be unpalatable, even to Christians, Christians as they are, if it were not for the sugar which sometimes goes with the truth, and but for this it would be very nauseous to them. There are some minds which seem, more than others, to kick against certain points of divine truth, either from their prejudices, their education, or the nature and force of their constitution—and it is only the Spirit of God who can irresistibly come and convince the understanding! Ah, friends, when the scholar does not want to know, it needs a God to teach him—and sometimes our minds do not wish to know the truth. I should not like to say a hard thing of God's people, but I believe there are many of them who do not want to know too much. I have often thought that it has been the case with myself, and I believe it is the case with others. There is an awkward truth which, if it were learned, would throw us out of our present comfortable position and might even necessitate a change of our ecclesiastical connections if we were to know it—and so we do not want to know it! We do not read any book that might make us know it. We try to look at things on our own side if we can, and do not look fairly at the subject, nor inquire into it. It must, therefore, need the Spirit of God to teach us when a truth of God is so unpalatable and we are so unwilling to learn it! Then, besides this, beloved, when we recollect *the intense spirituality of truth*, and how our carnal natures are always prone to adulterate it with our own predilections and the notions of the flesh; when all things around us bring the truth of God down from its high spiritual atmosphere, where alone it can flourish, into the smoky, cloudy region of our materialism. When they bring down food worthy of angels to become poor bread even for mortals, then we see how desperately we need the Holy Spirit to help us as learners in the school of Christ!

We seize the fair fruit of divine truth with a careless, hasty hands, mar its heavenly bloom, never knowing its richest beauty and essence—and then we feel how true of us are Paul's words, inspired of the Holy Spirit,

written to certain Christians, “Not as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, and babes in Christ Jesus.”

These, then, are a few of the reasons why the Spirit of God is needed. There are plenty more, of which we will speak another day, but I think every Christian knows experimentally that he never does fully learn the truth and hold it tenaciously except by the teaching and sustaining grace of God the Holy Spirit. I like our young people to learn the *Westminster Assembly’s Confession of Faith*. It is a “form of sound words” that is well worth committing to memory, but even Christian people, when they know them, will find that unless those truths are, one by one, brought home to the soul, they have only the shell of truth, but do not know the life and inner essence of it. We must have everything we truly learn burnt into us by the Holy Spirit! It must be taught us sometimes by painful experience, at other times by blissful enjoyment—sometimes by a marvelous illumination, a light shining upon a passage in such a way that we see it as we never saw it before—and though we may have read it 20 times, we now for the first time in our lives see its true meaning and rejoice! Why, dear friends, what is the ministry without the Spirit of God? Do you not often come and go, and find no comfort in attending a place of worship? And even the Bible, itself, without the Spirit of God is but a lantern without a light! And what is even the mercy-seat, except the Holy Spirit is there, enabling us to drink into the very life and soul of the divine teaching? It is not that book as it is there on the paper—it is that book as it must be written on the fleshy tablets of our heart which becomes to us the Word of God, the word of our salvation in which we rejoice and upon which we often feed!

This second truth you know, and will never doubt, that we need the Holy Spirit to teach us truth of God. The third thing that is in the text is this—the Holy Spirit is said not only to teach us, but—

III. TO BRING TO OUR REMEMBRANCE THE TRUTH WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED.

Mark! The Holy Spirit does not now reveal fresh truth beyond what is already in the Word of God. There is a special curse pronounced upon any who shall add to this book—and you may rest assured that the Holy Spirit will not so transgress in a matter which He has peremptorily forbidden all His children to commit! When persons start up as prophets, or prophetesses, and tell us that they have had special visions from the Lord and they know what is going to happen next year, we always understand that their proper destination is Bethlehem Hospital [*London’s insane asylum*] and we begin immediately to shun them and their books! We are persuaded that the Holy Spirit makes no such fresh revelations to men, but teaches us what Christ taught, bringing all these things to our remembrance! What Christ has taught, and only that, it is His joyous work to make plain and clear and powerful to us!

Why do we need to have the truths of God thus spoken brought to our remembrance? Is it not that we often trust our memories not to forget

these truths, but, “he who trusts his own heart is a fool,” and so is he who relies absolutely on his own memory. For anything bad, alas, we may trust it only too well—we are sure to recollect the thing far better forgotten. But if it is anything very good and soul-inspiring, memory has a paralysis in the fingers and cannot retain it in their grasp! You may remember a great many things in business—these are sure to write themselves deeply on the memory—but divine things which concern the future state are often written so illegibly that they are very readily blurred, blotted out! We need the Holy Spirit to bring these things to our remembrance.

And then, again, *we are so constantly beset with cares* that it is little marvelous that the things of God should slip away from us. You have but one day in the week, as it were, devoted to these things—one day of building and six of pulling down! With many it is one day’s storing and six days’ scattering. It is but a slight advance that we make towards heaven. Believe me, it is one of the greatest joys of my heart to see you here so constantly at prayer meetings and on lecture nights. It always seems to me to be one of the best signs of vital godliness that can well be exhibited, except a holy life, to see people willing to come out to the weeknight services. Any hypocrite will come on Sundays, but to come on weekdays seems to me to be a favorable sign and a proof of sincerity. But even then how little do we get! Perhaps there is trouble in the family—from the first thing in the morning till the last thing at night it is nothing but hard work and there is the looking for the wherewithal we shall be clothed—and we do not always cast our care on Him who cares for us. So the thorns too often choke up the seed and did not the Holy Spirit bring these things to our remembrance, they might quickly slip away altogether.

There is, again, brothers and sisters, another reason for needing to be reminded of these truths of God, namely, because we *forget what we do not thoroughly apprehend*. I have a notion that as a rule, what a man thoroughly understands, through and through, he does not forget. When you have mastered a fact or truth, seen it from all points, grown familiar with it, it is not easy to let it slip. You may hold a joint of meat in your hand and be very hungry all the while. But cook your joint, eat it, and properly digest what you eat, and it is yours and hunger goes. The man who receives the truth of God in the mere letter of it may quickly forget it, but he who has received it in the spirit, understood it, digested it, assimilated it, will never altogether lose its nourishing and power! When a truth is understood, it is somewhat like it was with the boy from whom the priest took away his New Testament. “Ah,” said the boy, “but what will you do with the 10 chapters that I have learned by heart? You cannot take those away.”

Memory does not readily lose the things she really understands. And when the heart has penetrated into the marrow of the truth of God and the truth of God into the marrow of the heart, it abides! But, alas, with the most of divine things, we do not seek to enter into them as we

should. We hear them and that is all. We hear, but we do not understand and, therefore, the Spirit of God is needed to ring the bells of heaven again and again in our ears and to make us hear the same truth over and over again, bringing to remembrance what Christ has told us.

If it is asked how He does this, the answer is that He does it by instrumentality, as well as by His own immediate action. He does it through the preaching of the word! The Word of God brings to your mind the old truths of God that you have heard ever since you were a boy, or girl and, thank God, they have not lost their preciousness, but are just as sweet to your ears now, as they were when you heard them from old Dr. so-and-so, who has now gone home to heaven! Thank God you still love that truth whenever it is brought to your remembrance. I like to use the same Bible always in my study, and to mark it so that I may afterwards know the places which once filled me with delight and comfort. And sometimes the good old book which we have studied so long will thus bring things to our remembrance. Then there is communion with Christian brothers and sisters. Sometimes even an illiterate Christian brother may set a truth in such a light as you never saw it in before, just like some of those fine old pieces of architecture which are very fine from one point of view, but some day you are taken to another point and you say, "Well, I think it is even more beautiful from this place of revealing than from the other." So my conversation with Christian brothers and sisters often sheds for me a new light upon long-known and precious truths. But over and above all this, I believe that the Holy Spirit does actually come into contact with our spirits, apart from human instrumentality, and that when we are walking by the way, sitting in the house, or in our chamber of prayer, flashes sudden light upon the truth and so we learn what we knew not before and, turning to God's Word, we perceive it to be blest truth that was always there, but which we had not seen until the Holy Spirit opened our eyes! Brothers and sisters, if we do not experimentally know what it is to have the truth of God as it is in Jesus brought to our remembrance by the Holy Spirit, we must not rest satisfied until we do, for this is one of the marks and evidences, as well as one of the *privileges* of the child of God, that the Holy Spirit is his personal teacher. "All your children shall be taught of the Lord," and again and again does the adorable third person of the divine trinity teach us the things of Christ and bring them constantly to our remembrance!

I am sorry that I cannot enter more fully into this point for need of time, but we must now close with the last point which is a question for us all—

IV. HOW FAR HAS THIS OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BEEN PERFORMED IN US?

I will first ask those of you who profess to be *the people of God*. Has the Holy Spirit taught you anything? Is that a hard question? It is one that was asked of old—"Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" I am solemnly afraid that there are some professors who are

content to have been convicted of sin, to have been led to trust in Christ, but who, after that, are utterly indifferent to the Holy Spirit as their teacher. They sit in the house of God, but they do not apply their minds to learn the truth. They pin their faith to somebody's sleeve and are content to believe according to the last speaker they hear, so that they will one day believe one thing, and another day another thing and so are carried about with every wind of doctrine! Brothers and sisters, these things ought not to be! Receiving Christ as a priest, we ought also to receive Him as a prophet. And if we are quickened by the Holy Spirit, we ought also to seek to be illuminated and instructed by Him. Have you and I felt the Holy Spirit at work with us, endearing doctrine and making it more precious to us? Have we, indeed, ever sought His influence, or have we, though professing Christians, lived thoughtlessly in this respect? Do you not think that if we have done so, we have grieved the Holy Spirit? What grieves a man more than to deny the importance of the office and work for which he lives? What should grieve the Holy Spirit more than this, among other things, to forget His office as our instructor and to ignore altogether the great purpose for which He is to be found in the midst of the Christian Church at all times? Surely we should be seeking with all our prayers to pray, "Teach me, O God! And lead me in the plain truth!" And we should long to sit with Mary at the Master's feet. Do you really study your Bibles, my dear brothers and sisters? Why you can scarcely bring out a magazine or a newspaper, nowadays, and make it pay, even with religious people, without a tale! It is one of the signs of the times that feeble fiction reading is as common among Christians as among others, and that our young disciples—young men and women both—must have a sensational novel in a religious form, or they will not read at all!

Time was when Christian women, as well as men, read history, studied the fascinations of science, and cultivated their best qualities of mind and heart, and Christian men in days past, in the Puritan and later ages, sought to be acquainted with solid literature, as well as with the Word of God. But it seems to be the last mark of the degeneracy of God's people that they must have their ears tickled with a straw and cannot read solid truth. You need not wonder that we cannot breed men on chaff, or that they are blown about with every wind of doctrine when this is the food on which they live. There are certain silkworms which grow the color of the leaves they feed on and you may depend upon it that those who live on this frivolous literature will lead frivolous lives, and those who take nothing but these milk-and-water tales will not be likely to have about them anything solid or robust, or anything vigorously real! Do not talk to me of reading such things! Brothers and sisters, when you and I have read our Bibles through so as to find nothing there to interest us, it is high time that we asked God to teach us how to read them! It is a sign of a lack of grace if the Bible is a dry book. It is a dry book, a very dry book, to a graceless soul—but it has more in it than all the rest of the volumes in the world put together! And the more it is studied, the more

will the interest of the student in it increase. Besides, we have such an abundance of other Christian literature that no Christian ought to say he is obliged to read the other poor stuff. We have no time to spare for this, when the soul is starving and dying for lack of knowledge! Let us pray the Holy Spirit to lead us into the Word of God and then give ourselves to its earnest and loving study.

But this question will scarcely refer at all to some now present. My dear hearers, are you among *those who have no interest in these things?*

It is not likely that you should desire the Holy Spirit to instruct you. There are, I fear, some here who have no hope and are without God in the world. The mere statement of the fact ought to excite us all to prayer for such. But, alas, it is so commonly known that there are many out of Christ and without hope, that we do not feel distressed about it as we should. If there were fewer unregenerate sinners than there are, we would probably be more concerned about them. If there were only a dozen unconverted persons in the world, all the Church of God would be praying for their conversion, but because there are many millions of them, they are so common that we do not look upon them with the awe, the tenderness and the yearning sympathy which we ought to feel.

There are some here to whom the Holy Spirit is an unknown person, who have never been made alive unto God by Him and, consequently, cannot desire that they may be instructed by Him. Oh, that the blessed Spirit would come and convince them of their sin in not believing, which is the greatest of all sins—and the very sin of which the Spirit comes to convince men! “He shall convince them of sin because they believe not on Me.” Oh, may He convince them of this sin and then may they understand that there is nothing for them to do, but that Christ has done it for them—and that all they have to do is to receive the finished work, to wear the finished robe, to look to Jesus Christ and to find life in the look! Pray for them, brothers and sisters, that the Holy Spirit may help their infirmities, that they may know Christ and may come to Him! May God bless the gospel to them whenever it is preached! And when they are told that “the Son of man came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost,” may they cry unto Him and trust Him, for this is the vital part of the business and, trusting in Him, they shall enter into eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 9:26-32.**

The Jews thought that God must certainly save them. They thought they had a birth claim. Were they not the children of Abraham? Surely they had some right to it! This chapter battles the question of right. No man has any right to the grace of God. The terms are inconsistent. But that same grace delights to save and bless even the perverse and rebellious who will yield to its blessed power!

Verse 26. *And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, You are not My people; they shall be called the children of the living God.* That in the very same place where their sins made it patent and palpable they were *not* God's people—in that very same place shall men confess that they are the children of the living God! Oh, what has not grace done?

27-29. *Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel is as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Isaiah said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah.* God has a people, then, even in Israel with all its rejection! And He always will have, for He will never make the seed of Abraham to be as Sodom and Gomorrah! He will love His own and glorify Himself in the midst of His people.

30. *What shall we say then? Why, say this—*

30. *That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.* For thousands of years they worshiped brutish idols and blocks and stones. Their philosophy was mixed with filthiness. Their lives were abhorrent to God. Even these, at last, have attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith, for the gospel being preached among the Gentiles, they have believed in Jesus and they are saved!

31. *But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.* Israel followed after the law of righteousness with many ceremonies and external washings, wearing of phylacteries and bordered garments. Alas, poor Israel!

32. *Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.* And God is determined that they that are of the law shall not inherit it! He has made it a sovereign decree that the believer shall be justified and saved, but no one else. They sought it not by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law.

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

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THE OLD TESTAMENT "PRODIGAL"

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*"And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD, He was God."
2 Chronicles 33:12, 13.*

WHEN we wish to recommend a physician to a friend who is very ill, we are in the habit of mentioning certain cures which he has worked. And when we can produce several astonishing instances, we feel that we are going the right way to work to convince the judgment of our friend and to win his confidence in the doctor. Now, it is our impression that very many are anxious to be saved by the grace of God, who, nevertheless, have not dared to trust the great healer of souls. They know that they are in great danger, but they are reluctant to go to "the beloved physician." They are grievously afraid because of the greatness of their sins and they are filled with doubt and unbelief as to the possibility of their salvation on account of their singular sinfulness. Therefore, it struck me that if I could set before them a number of Scriptural instances of wonderful conversions, it might tend to encourage hope in Christ in their hearts and, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, it might be the means of leading them to trust and try our Lord Jesus, out of whose very garments virtue flows. Perhaps, dear friends, as you shall see how the Lord, the healer, has looked on one and another, and restored them from the horrible disease of sin, you, too, who feel yourselves so far gone, may pluck up courage and say, "If He healed others, why should He not also heal me? I, too, will touch His garment's hem and see if He will not make me perfectly whole." How I wish that poor souls knew how ready my Lord Jesus is to save them! Then they would not stay back if they knew how eager He is to have mercy on the guilty! I pine within my soul to lead you to Jesus that you may be blest! That is the desire of my heart in introducing to you the case of Manasseh, whom I select from the Old Testament as a very prominent instance of glaring sin and of amazing grace!

We do not find many of what we can accurately call conversions in the Old Testament. It is a record of a dim dispensation in which we rather see the types of things than the things, themselves, but I should suppose that the priests, if they had been inspired to write what they often heard,

would have been able to tell of many instances of deep conviction which would be made known in connection with the sin offerings and the trespass offerings—and they probably saw many instances of persons who henceforth led a new life and ceased from the sin which they had confessed over the victim's head. Of conviction, confession and conversion, they must have seen a great deal, but records we have none. On this account the story of the madly wicked king who was led to humble himself greatly before God is all the more valuable and it is matter for thankfulness that it is so remarkable! Every item of it reflects glory upon the amazing grace of God and, indeed, compels us to exclaim, "Who is a God like unto You, passing by transgression, iniquity and sin?"

We will waste no time on a preface, but come at once to the life story of Manasseh, and look, first, at *his circumstances*. Then consider him as *a great sinner*. And afterwards, with greater comfort, view him *as a remarkable convert*. First, let us notice—

I. HIS CIRCUMSTANCES.

A man's sin may be heightened by his position, or, on the other hand, the condition in which he is placed may suggest some alleviating considerations which, in all fairness, should be remembered. Now, with regard to Manasseh, we find that *he was the child of an eminently godly father*—the son of a king who, with all his mistakes, was sound in heart towards God. Hezekiah "worked that which was good, and right, and truth before the Lord his God." He was a man mighty in prayer and found deliverance thereby in the hour of great peril through the invasion of Sennacherib. Hezekiah was a man whose life was so precious in the sight of the Lord that in answer to his cries, He gave him a new lease on life and spared him yet another 15 years. It is a great thing for a youth to have a godly father to train his tender mind. And, even though such a parent should be taken away early, yet the privilege is an eminent one. As for Manasseh's mother, we cannot say with certainty that she was a godly woman, but let us hope that as her name was Hephzibah—"My delight is in her"—she, too, was delightful for grace and piety. Isaiah seems to have taken her name and to have applied it to the church—"you shall be called Hephzibah, for the Lord delights in you," and we may suppose that he would hardly have done so unless there had been some sweet associations therewith. Let us trust that Queen Hephzibah was, indeed, God's delight and, if so, Manasseh had the special favor of having two parents who would train him up in the way he should go. Such a happy start in life renders his later sin the more heinous!

But, in all truthfulness, we have to mention, next, that *he was a child born to his father in his later years*, after his life had been lengthened by special license from above. He was the child of his parent's desire—an heir born after the father had expected to die childless and, therefore, it is not at all unlikely that he was a spoiled child. It is very possible that being highly prized, he was also greatly indulged and, if so, he was in special danger. Those children who are doted upon by their parents are

greatly to be pitied, for they are apt to be allowed to have their own way—and a youth's own way is sure to be a wrong one! Fathers, in such cases, are apt to play the part of Eli, of whom we read that his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. It was no wonder that Adonijah disturbed the dying moments of David when we read that, "his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why have you done so?" Nor need we marvel that Absalom almost broke his father's heart if this was the manner of his bringing up! Even though at 12 years of age Manasseh could not have fully developed his character, yet it may have been warped by those early days of admiration and indulgence. Parents, take note of this—and you spoiled children do the same.

Remember that *Manasseh lost his father at twelve years of age*. I do not know a greater trial for a family than for the head of the house to be taken away while the children are young. Just when the guiding, encouraging and restraining power of the father is needed, it is mournful to see it removed. How mysterious it seems to us when a large family loses the wise guide of the household at the very time when his influence is most needed by the growing boys and girls. Too often in such a case the young people have broken away from all restraint and the loss of their father has been the loss of everything. Manasseh, the prince who seemed born under such favorable circumstances for the production of a gracious character, was much to be pitied when the good king, his father, was called away and his tender son was left alone amid flatterers and idolaters!

Remember, too, that *Manasseh was placed in a giddy position as a child*, for he mounted the throne at 12 years of age. A child upon a throne is a child out of its natural place. Such high and hard places are not for boys! Now and then such a child turns out to be a Josiah, the very delight of mankind, but the probabilities are very much against its being so. "Woe unto you, O land, when your king is a child." It is ill for a child to sway a scepter, but "it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." A fierce fire of temptation blazes around a youthful throne. Fawners and flatterers are sure to surround a boy prince, pandering to his worst desires and arousing that part of his nature which most needs to be repressed. No doubt there were good people whom Hezekiah had gathered in his courts, but then they could not flatter as well as the evil party which had been repressed for a while, but still remained strong in the land. Though Hezekiah had set up the worship of God and had done his best to root out idolatry, yet the idolatrous party was far from being extinct and the common people were sadly careless and irreligious! Isaiah, in his opening chapter, describes the condition of the land by saying, "Israel does not know, my people do not consider. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." The nation was not steadfast like king Hezekiah—it worshiped Jehovah when

compelled by royal authority—but it was ready enough to turn aside to its idols. The idolatrous party—which I might liken to the papists and the people who worshiped on the high places; who were the ritualistic party of the day, came around the young king, fawning, flattering and cajoling. By pleasing the taste of the boy-king, and indulging his vices, they undermined in his esteem the orthodox worshipers of God, whom I may call the evangelical school. He yielded himself up readily to their influence and when he was old enough, became the head of the idolatrous party, throwing his whole soul into it and, with all the might of his nature and the force of his authority, labored to stamp out the pure worship of the Most High God and to set up those debasing idolatries which his father Hezekiah had so much abhorred! Look at him, then, as a mere child placed in a condition of great danger, led astray at first and afterwards becoming a ringleader in iniquity.

These are some of the circumstances of Manasseh's life. Now, I have a heavy task and one which saddens me, though it is concerning one who lived so many hundreds of years ago—I have mournfully to describe Manasseh as—

II. A GREAT SINNER.

If you will turn to the Second of Chronicles, chapter 33, and will follow the verses, you will get a view of this atrocious offender. In the second verse we read, "*He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.*" That is a description of his life as a whole. Take his 55 years' reign in the bulk, notwithstanding the repentance of his later years; it is a true estimate of it all to say that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord." He was a son of David, but he was the very reverse of that king who was always faithful in his loyalty to the one only God of Israel! David's blood was in his veins, but David's ways were not in his heart. He was a wild, degenerate shoot of a noble vine!

No, the description of his life is more intensely black than the summary might suggest, for it is said that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel." He seemed to have taken for his models the men whom God condemned to die for capital offenses against His law! How deplorable that one who was cradled in piety must, notwithstanding, not be satisfied until the very scum of society, which God had skimmed off as from the pot and thrown away with detestation, should be his models and his tutors! Yet we have known young men to be doubly perverse—possessed, as it were, by the devil, if not by seven devils at once! We are all depraved, but in some that depravity manifests itself in an extraordinary love of low, coarse society and of everything that is irreligious and unlovely. I have in my mind's eye now—and it makes my heart melt as I remember it—sons of men with whom I have been glad to associate and who were always happy to aid me in the Lord's work, but now their sons find their most congenial company among the drunken and profane, the gamblers and debauchers—and if,

perchance, they see their father's friend, they look aside or slink away, anxious to be unobserved by him, scarcely brooking to have it known that they know the man! This is the unhappiest thing that can occur to us parents. You who have buried your little children; you who have wept so bitterly when your dear babes were snatched from your bosoms may far prefer that sorrow to having your sons and your daughters live to dishonor your name by plunging into glaring sin! Manasseh was a son of this character and could his father have foreseen what he would live to do, he would have preferred death rather than have lived to be the sire of such a monster of iniquity!

It is noted concerning him, in the next place, that *he undid what his father had done*. In the third verse we read, "He built again the high places which Hezekiah, his father, had broken down." I have known many a man who has had no respect for God who, nevertheless, has had such a regard for his father's memory that he would not scoff at things which his father held sacred. But this man had cast off all filial reverence! He cared not what his godly parent might have thought—he gloried in building up what his father had thrown down—and throwing down what his father had built up!

This is a great evil, for a man, in order to be guilty of it, has to do violence to some of the strongest and best instincts of his nature. Is that your case, my friend? Are you doing exactly that which you know would have broken your father's heart? Is your conduct such that your mother would have been brought to her grave by it had she been here? Are you fighting against the Lord God of your father? May the Lord in mercy stop your guilty hand lest the curse of Absalom come upon you! Turn not aside from your father's God! Follow in the godly footsteps of your mother and set not yourself to act contemptuously against that which was your parents' reverence.

Manasseh next sinned in a great variety of ways, for, according to the third verse, he seemed eager to be meddling with all forms of idolatry. He was not satisfied with one false god, or one set of idolatrous rites, but he reared up altars for Baalim and made groves and worshiped the host of heaven. Nor yet content with all this, he adored Moloch and passed his children through the fire in the valley of the Son of Hinnom. He heaped up vile idolatries, not only sending far and wide to find out what were the gods of the different nations, but reviving the old cast-off gods of the Canaanites whom God had destroyed for their crimes! One form of insult to the living God was not enough for him—he heaped together his rebellions! There are men to whom to sin with one hand is not sufficient—they must transgress with greediness. One vice does not content them—they cannot be satisfied to go to hell except with four steeds to their chariot and these they drive like Jehu the furious! They never seem content, except with all their might they are fighting against the Lord and pulling down His wrath upon their heads!

These sins of Manasseh were not merely various, but *some of them were peculiarly foul*. The worship of Baalim and Ashtaroth was associated with such abominations that one is sorry even to have known of them, and especially the *ashera*, or symbols, wrongly translated "groves," were so lascivious that I shall not so much as hint at what they were. Such worship must have unutterably defiled the mind of the worshiper and rendered him fit for vice of the most degrading kind! Think of obscenity made into a religion—vice an ingredient of adoration. O God! That ever man should have come down to this! Worse, still, that a king of Judah and a son of Hezekiah should patronize and ordain orgies which polluted the mind beyond conception! It sufficed not that he adored the sun when it shined, and kissed his hand to the moon walking in her brightness—the sin of star worship was not enough—but he must set up graven images and worship the idols of the Philistines, of Egypt, Assyria and Tyre! The calves of Bethel did not sufficiently provoke the Lord, but the idols of Baal and the lewdness of Ashtaroth must defile the whole land from end to end! Instead of the holy worship of Jehovah, the worship of devils was ordained by the king's authority and Judah's land became a den of abominations!

But Manasseh went to the utmost in evil and *added gross impudence and insult to his crimes*, so as to defy the Lord to His face, for, "he built altars in the house of the Lord, whereof the Lord had said, In Jerusalem shall My name be forever. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord." Oh, the infinite patience of the Most High, that He bore with such a daring insult as this! There were all the hills of Judah and the valleys thereof. Were they not enough for Manasseh's idols and their altars? Must the hill of Zion also be profaned? Was there no spot but that which the Lord had set apart for Himself and of which it had been said, "The Lord is there"? Must Jehovah's own courts be desecrated with the image of jealousy? Must the altars to the hosts of heaven be set up where only the Lord of hosts should have been adored? Yet Manasseh dared to do this, carrying rebellion against the Lord to its utmost extent!

Another proof of his inveterate sinfulness is found *in his treatment of his children*. He was not satisfied with sinning in his own person—his offspring must be handed over to the evil one. "He caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the Son of Hinnom." Moloch is said to have been represented by a great hollow image made of brass, which was heated red hot and filled with fire till the flames came pouring forth from its mouth. Into the red-hot arms of this image some parents placed their babes, so that they were consumed alive—but others, like Manasseh, passed their children between those burning arms, so that they received "a baptism of fire."

Nor is this all. *Manasseh went to extremes in personal, deliberate sin*, for it is said of him that for himself and on his own account, he "observed times"—that is, "lucky" and, "unlucky" days and he "used

enchancements"—those different devices by which men think they can produce certain events or foretell them. "And he used witchcraft and dealt with a familiar spirit and with wizards." It matters nothing whether these things were deceits by which he was duped, or were real dealings with demons—the sin is the same because in the man's intent, forbidden communion was carried on, such communion as is abominable in the sight of the Most High, and to be abhorred by every believer! Whether true or pretended, attempts at necromancy, witchcraft and communion with spirits mark a mind far gone astray from God. Remember that such persons cannot enter heaven, for, "without are dogs and sorcerers," and they are placed with whoremongers and liars who are declared to be shut out of the holy city. Manasseh was eager and greedy in these detestable pursuits—he could never have enough of them. Witches, wizards, familiar spirits, enchantments, all sorts of cheats he trusted in—he who would not believe in God could freely yield his faith to lying wonders! How sad to see a mind capable of thought and reason bowed down at the feet of witches and mutterers of spells! How horrible to see a man making a league with death and a covenant with hell! Still, if a man should have gone this length, he may yet be recovered out of the snare of the devil by almighty grace! Friend, if you have even wandered into this infamous wickedness, you need not despair, for Jesus lives to save the vilest of the vile!

The picture is awful enough already, surely, you say. Yes, but we have other strokes to add, for Manasseh *repeated these sins and exaggerated them each time*. After one forbidden idol had been enshrined, he set up another yet more foul! And after building altars in the courts of the temple, he ventured further and, "set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon, his son, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put My name forever." Thus he piled up his transgressions and multiplied his provocations.

All this while *he was leading thousands with him in his desperate course*—both by his influence and authority he was compelling the nation to blaspheme! The whole land followed its king, save only a remnant cording to the election of divine grace—and these bore all the fury of Manasseh's wrath. The nation was prone to fall into idolatry and willingly went with the court! When the king bade them worship Baalim, they joyfully replied, "So would we have it!" And even when the most polluted emblems were set up for worship, the mass of the people greedily went after the abominations! A few wept and sighed in secret—and spoke often, one to another—but they had no power to alter the sad state of things, for the king was too strong for them. How sad to see a royal personage become a ringleader of iniquity, for princely example is infectious, and its power for evil is boundless. Do I speak to one whose life leads others astray? Are you a man of mark? Are you placed in a

position of influence? Are you a parent with children about you who will inevitably copy you? Are you the foreman in the workshop, or the head of a club, so that what you say and do becomes law to feebler minds than your own? Ah, you have the power to sin a hundred times at once, for you make others commit the sin in which you indulge! Your sin brings forth many at a birth and as by means of mirrors the image of an object can be multiplied, so is your sin reflected in scores of others! The voice of your evil life is repeated by a thousand echoes! Think of this and beware! Why should you destroy others as well as yourself? Do not be guilty of the blood of your neighbors! Do not murder your own children's souls! Consent not to be a jackal for the lion of the pit, or a net in the devil's hand, for if you are such, your sin is infinite!

Nor was this all, for though it is not recorded in the Chronicles, yet you will find in the second book of Kings, at the 21st chapter, that *he persecuted the people of God very furiously*. "Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end of it to another." He was so zealous in carrying out his idolatries that he could not endure the sight of a man who would not bow before his images! He hated those ancient nonconformists, those Protestants, those separatists, those Puritans—and he made laws to put them down so that the worshipers of Jehovah were "stoned and were sawn asunder, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented." We cannot vouch for the tradition that the prophet Isaiah was put to death by Manasseh by being sawn in sunder, but terrible as is the legend, it is not at all improbable. Manasseh had his Bartholomew Massacre and his unholy inquisition! He was a bloody persecutor during much of his long life and left marks of his reign of terror all over the land. Persecution is one of the most heinous of sins and greatly provokes the Most High, for the Lord has said concerning His people, "He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye." Manasseh did, as it were, thrust his finger into the eye of God! This was a heaven-provoking crime! In these days the law does not allow the shedding of innocent blood, but there are people in the world who go as far as they can in persecution. There are modes of torture which can be used against a believing wife, such as will hardly be imagined! Children can be provoked and grievously afflicted by un-Christian parents. "Trials of cruel mocking," are mentioned by the apostle—and they are very cruel and trying, too. We have known persons use towards brothers and sisters, and even towards children, such threats and modes of abuse and such taunts and jeers, that they have made their lives bitter as with heavy bondage! This is against God a very high offense. You cannot anger a man more than by ill-using his little ones! Touch his children and you bring the color into his face, directly, and the man's temper is up—and he who insults, and mocks and grieves God's children will one day find that the Lord will avenge His own elect though He bears long with them!

Only one more touch to finish this dark picture—was there ever a blacker?—and it is this which is contained in the tenth verse—"And the Lord spoke to Manasseh, and to his people, but they would not listen." *Manasseh refused warning.* He did not sin without being rebuked. God did try the bit and bridle upon him, but they were of no use, for this wild horse took the bit between his teeth and dashed on in utter madness! He could not, he would not, bow before the loving admonition of the Most High! This makes sin to be exceedingly sinful, for, "He that being often reproved, hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Without rebuke, a man's sin may be far less than it must be after the rejection of admonitions from the mouth of God! To stifle conscience and refuse loving warning is to incur fearful guilt.

Such was this Manasseh—the very chief of sinners! I feel certain that among those whom I address there is not a grosser sinner than he was. And I might almost say there never lived a worse! He has an evil eminence among the lovers of iniquity, *and yet he was saved by divine grace!* O you who hear these words or read them, never dare to doubt the possibility of your being forgiven! If such a wretch as Manasseh was brought to repentance, surely no one need despair! Now listen to what almighty grace, nevertheless, did for Manasseh, whom we will now think of as—

III. A REMARKABLE CONVERT.

His conversion began, or *was worked at its commencement, instrumentally, by his afflictions.* The king of Assyria came against him and he was unable to resist his assault. Sennacherib, a former king of Assyria, had invaded the land in the days of Hezekiah and the Lord had delivered His people, but there was no God to deliver Manasseh, and so the armies of Assyria overran the land and the royal idolater found his idols fail him. For fear of being captured in Jerusalem, he fled and concealed himself in a thorn brake, but was soon captured, or "taken among the thorns," and led in chains to Babylon. He seems to have been very severely handled by the king, who was, probably, Esarhaddon, king of united Assyria and Babylon, for he is spoken of as taken with hooks, such as large fish are taken with, or held by a ring such as is often passed through the noses of wild beasts. If this is only a figure, it represents Manasseh as regarded by the Assyrian king as an unmanageable beast to be subdued by rigor—even as a bull is managed by a ring in his nose. We are also told that he was loaded with double fetters of brass and was taken down to Babylon, to be kept in a close dungeon. The Assyrians were notoriously a fierce people and Manasseh, having provoked them, felt all the degradation, scorn and cruelty which anger could invent! He who had trusted idols was made a slave to an idolatrous people! He who had shed very much blood was now in daily jeopardy of the shedding of his own! He who had insulted the Lord must now be continually insulted himself. That which he had meted out was

measured into his own bosom! He was the prodigal in actual life, in a far country, where he gladly would have filled his belly with the husks that the swine ate, but no man gave unto him. While fast chained in prison, the iron entered into his soul and his thoughts troubled him. How vain, now, to cry to Baal or Ashtaroth! The stars that peered through the grated bars of his dungeon upbraided him for his foolish worship and the sun and moon took up the tale of rebuke. Familiar spirits were familiar no longer and magic, with its lying wonders, could not release him! No, nor the witches and wizards with their enchantments.

There he lies and fears that there he will lie and rot—but in his extremity, infinite mercy visits him and *his soul finds vent for its misery in prayer*. "He sought the Lord God of his fathers." I admire the historian's words, he had dishonored his father as well as his God, but now he thinks of his godly ancestors and their holy faith. Surely his desire to return to his father's faith bore some likeness to that more spiritual resolve of the prodigal, "I will arise and go unto my father." It has often happened that men have been, by divine grace, the more readily led to God because He was their father's or their mother's God. Human love is thus dissolved in the nobler passion. Manasseh thinks, meditates, considers, reviews his life and loathes himself! He remembers how his father prospered by Jehovah's aid and, perhaps, also remembers the marvelous story of how Jehovah heard his father's prayer when he was near to die and raised him to life again. At any rate, in the dungeon he imitated his father, turned his face to the wall and wept sorely and prayed. "If," he said, "God saved my father's life, perhaps He may forgive my sin and bring me out of this horrible captivity." Thus hopefully he cried unto the Lord! O friend, will you not also cry unto the God whom you have offended? Will you not say, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" Try, I beseech you, the power of prayer!

But notice what went with his prayer, for, O sinner, if you would have mercy of God, it must go with your—"he humbled himself greatly." Ah, he had been a great man before—he was high and mighty Manasseh who would have his own way and dared defy the Lord to His face! But now he sings another song. He lies low as a penitent and begs as a sinner! How would he now use the language of his forefather David—"Have mercy upon me, O God, and blot out my transgressions." There is in the Apocrypha a book entitled "The Prayer of Manasseh," which was probably composed to gratify the curiosity which would like to know how so great a transgressor prayed. Of course, it is spurious, but it contains some good and humble language almost meet for the lips of so great a penitent, though far more coherent and oratorical than his words are likely to have been. What a broken prayer Manasseh's must have been! And what groans, and sobs, and sighs were heard and seen by the great Father of Spirits, as His erring child sought His face in the gloomy cells of Babylon! Let such be your frame of mind, O sinner. Be ashamed of

your sin and folly! Confess it with mourning and abhor yourself on account of it. May the Holy Spirit bring you to this mind!

Brothers and sisters, *the Lord heard Manasseh!* Glory be to infinite grace; the Lord heard him! Blood-stained hands were lifted to heaven, and yet the Lord accepted the prayer. A heart that had been the palace of Satan! A heart which had conceived mischief and brought forth cruelty! A proud rebellious heart humbled itself before God and the Lord pardoned and smiled upon the penitent and, as a testimony of His infinite mercy, He moved the king of Assyria to take Manasseh out of prison and restore him to his throne! The Lord does great marvels and shows great mercy unto the very chief of sinners! O that this might persuade some to test and try this gracious God! Manasseh had not such a clear revelation as you have—you have heard of God in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself—not imputing their trespasses unto them. Let the wounds of Jesus encourage you! Let His intercession for sinners cheer you! God is ready to pardon, and His heart yearn towards you. Come even now and seek His face, you vilest among men!

Now, can you picture Manasseh going back from Babylon attended by a cohort of Assyrian soldiers? The poor believers in Jerusalem have had a little respite while he has been in durance. Perhaps they even ventured to the temple and restored the worship of Jehovah. At any rate, they crept out of the holes and corners in which they had laid hid and breathed more freely. But now it is rumored that the persecuting king is coming back—that the hunter of the souls of men is again abroad! What dread seized the minds of the timid among the godly and how earnestly the brave-spirited steeled their hearts for the conflict! More stoning, more sawing asunder! Can it be that these horrors are to be renewed? The righteous meet and sorrowfully plead with God that He would not permit the light to be quite quenched, nor give over His people like sheep to the slaughter. What a day of foreboding it must have been when the king came through the city gates! But perhaps some of them watched him—and when he passed by a shrine of Baal they noticed that he did not bow! The image of Ashtaroth stood in the high place, but they observed that he turned away his head as though he would not look in that direction! And what was their joy when they afterwards read his proclamation that from henceforth, Judah should worship Jehovah alone! What hanging down of the heads for the ritualistic, idolatrous party—but what joy among the evangelicals that the king, himself, had come over to their side—for now the truth of God and the true-hearted would have the upper hand! What triumph was felt by the saints when the king sent the cleansers to the temple to pull down the carved image! Then went up their hymns and they blessed the Lord with all their hearts, singing, "In Judah is God known! His name is great in Israel! There breaks He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle." O that

such songs might be sung in the church of Christ because of some of you!

Manasseh also *did his best to undo what he had done*, and to restore what he had damaged, for those who are really converted show it practically. Restitution must be made for wrongs done, or repentance is a sham! All the evil we have done we must labor to remedy, or our penitence is only skin deep. That conversion which does not convert or turn the life is no conversion at all. One or two things remain to be said by way of practical address. First, dear friends, *adore divine grace*. Never limit its power, but believe it able to convert the most abandoned! Believe that it can save you! Since our Lord Jesus always lives to intercede for those who come unto God by Him, He is able also to save them unto the uttermost! You cannot have too large ideas of divine grace, for where sin abounds, grace does much more abound!

But secondly, *never turn it into an excuse for continuing in sin*, for this case of Manasseh, with all its mercy, is still a sad one. Though we have seen how grace gave it a good ending, yet, take it for all-in-all, it is a sad case and as a life, Manasseh's was wasted, misspent and full of wretchedness. Although he sought to mend matters, he could not fully undo what he had done. The people were nothing like as eager to follow the right as they were the wrong—and after many years of royal patronage of idolatry it was not easy for the masses to turn around, all of a sudden, and so the people sacrificed on their high places, though only to Jehovah, and their hearts still went after their idols.

The last word is, *seek for mercy, all of you*. Do not neglect it because of its greatness, but rather hasten to receive it! Since we all need more mercy than we imagine, let us cry for it at once in hearty earnest! Let us come to the fountain which is opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and wash therein! Let us, by faith in Jesus' blood, wash and be clean! The Lord make us to do so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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LIFE'S INEVITABLE BURDEN

NO. 3355

A SERMON
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“For every man shall bear his own burden.”
Galatians 6:5.

IN pondering Scripture truth, we must not strain metaphors, nor use figures of speech as though they were literal statements. You have an instance of the truth of this remark in this chapter. In one verse the apostle says, “Bear you one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ,” while in the verse of our text, he says, “Every man shall bear his own burden.” Still, he is not contradicting himself. He would be if he were speaking literally of burdens, but he is speaking metaphorically and, consequently, he uses the figure first in one way and then in another. It may be useful to us, brothers and sisters, to learn never to draw arguments and doctrines from metaphors. Many do and there are many supposed doctrines which really have no better ground-work than mere metaphors. I remember hearing one contending against the chastening of God’s people and he urged that the church was the bride of Christ and that it was impossible that Christ, as the husband of the church, should in any way chasten or strike His own spouse, which would be a very reasonable thing to say of a man. If the metaphor ran on four legs, the argument might have been correct, but as no metaphor is intended so to do, and is only to be understood in the sense intended by the person employing it, the argument is fallacious and valueless! I have heard others say that true Christians are citizens of heaven and, consequently, we ought not to exercise our votes in political matters! This is another piece of utterly illogical reasoning because we might as well say to Christians that they ought not to eat animal food as they form the Lord’s flock, and sheep must not, and cannot, eat animal food! The fact is, the reasoning from metaphor is always risky and sometimes proves quite absurd!

I mention this because I am quite sure that very much of it does prevail in the Christian world and that people use the language of Scripture in a manner in which they would not use the same language if found in other books. The word of God is, however, not to be treated with less, but *more* veneration in our reading and study of it, and yet in the same simple, common-sense fashion as that in which we would treat any

other book. The truth is there are burdens which may be shared and which should be shared. The burden of grief, the burden of pecuniary need, the burden of heart trouble may sometimes be borne, but on the other hand, there are burdens which no man can share with his fellow, nor ought he even to *think* of sharing, but where each man must stand apart and alone before God—and no one can assist him.

Of these burdens we shall speak tonight, and they shall be our first point. Then, lest we should become burdensome to you, we shall offer a few considerations which may tend to take out the weight of the burdens which we must unavoidably carry, each one for himself; and then we shall close by endeavoring to find something practical to be done tonight as the result of the text. First, then, we have to speak of—

I. CERTAIN BURDENS WHICH EACH MAN WILL BE QUITE CERTAIN TO HAVE TO BEAR FOR HIMSELF.

In speaking of the first three burdens which I shall have to mention, I shall address myself to you all, whether saints or sinners, for there are some truths of God which are common to all men as men. And such is the first burden—the *burden of original sin*. The burden of our natural depravity, the burden of our fallen nature, the burden of our constitution which is perverted by evil—these we shall, each one of us, have to carry for himself. It may be said that this is not our burden, but Adam's—but the burden of the father, if he brings the whole household into poverty—becomes the burden of the family and each individual member of it. If the head should ache, it is no use for the hand to say, "It is no business of mine." There is, too, so vital and intimate a connection between the whole body of humanity, between Adam the head, and all the members of the body corporate, that Adam's fall becomes ours, Adam's ruin our ruin and the taint in the blood is to be found in us all. Some of you are "dead in trespasses and sins" and, therefore, this burden is no more a burden to you than the heavy clods of the churchyard are to the bodies that lie beneath them. But if ever you are quickened by divine grace, you will soon find that "the body of this death," as Paul calls *indwelling sin*, is a very heavy burden to battle with and you will have to personally fight out the conflict within your own soul. You will have to call in the aid of divine power, or you will never get the victory, but—mark you—in the conquest of your own corruption, in the overcoming of your own besetting sins and of those evils which are more powerful in you than they are in others because you are constitutionally inclined to them—in that battle you will have to fight for yourselves! You may get some assistance from other people's experience, but still, the struggle and the conflict must be with you.

Young people, never imagine that all the training in the world can rid you of your evil without an earnest struggle on your own part! Don't conceive that a mother's prayers will give you tenderness of conscience

unless you also learn of Christ for yourselves. Do not conceive that the rebukes of a father can conquer that evil temper unless you struggle against it. And if you habitually have a tendency to pride, do not conceive that the preacher's homilies against pride can overcome pride in you! No, in the name of God you must go to the armory and ask for the sword of the Spirit, that you may personally, girded with divine strength, which you may obtain by earnest prayer, overcome in your own soul your besetting sins! In this respect, then, you will have to bear your own burden. I know I have to bear mine and I do not know that any of you could help me. And I believe that each one of you, quickened by divine grace, must feel there is something peculiar about your case—some sin, perhaps, which you would not like to whisper into another's ear; perhaps only a sin of thought, but still it is a burden. I hope it will become more and more a burden to you, for the more burdensome it becomes, the more likely are you to conquer it! But you will have to bear it yourself and in the strength of the Holy Spirit you will have to conquer it, too, and get rid of it. You will have to pluck out the right eye and tear off the right arm. It were better for you remember, to enter into life crippled and maimed than to keep these and be cast into eternal hell! It is for you, in God's name, personally to do battle with your personal depravity!

Each man must, each man alone can bear his own burden here. Again, each man must also bear *his own burden of personal sin* unless, (here comes in the grand and gracious proviso), unless the sin is blotted out or is utterly removed! Every man who has sin to carry must bear his own burden. There is no shifting the sin from you to a sponsor. No fellow creature can stand for you and take your offenses. The Lord Jesus Christ did take His people's sins, as He was their covenant head, surety and representative—and they who are in Christ are free from sin—their sin being utterly removed and having ceased to be, having been cast by the tremendous power of Christ into the depths of the sea, so that if they are sought for, they shall never be found against the Lord's people any more forever! But remember, dear hearer, that if you are not a pardoned soul, you have got a burden to carry, and you will have to bear it. You will have to bear it now, for "he that believes not is condemned already." You will have to bear it when you come to die and you will have enough to do to die having this burden of sin pressing upon your heart. Worst of all, you will have to bear it when your spirit is disembodied and your naked soul is called before your Maker. Ah, it will be a dreadful thing to go there with the blackness and defilement of sin about you! And you will have to bear it, too, in the day of the resurrection and in the solemn article of judgment! And then, last of all, you will have to bear your own burden in the eternal future—and there it will sink you, sink you, sink you beyond all hope of rescue or escape!

Now, while there is life there is hope. "All manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven unto men. If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," but unless the sin is removed, it must remain our own burden forever and forever! You will not get rid of it by joining a church. You cannot be rid of it by passing through rites and ceremonies. It will be no help to you to have been a citizen of a Christian nation, so-called, and to have worshiped in a Christian assembly. "Every man shall bear his own burden." We came through the gates of life into this world alone—we shall go back through the iron gates of death, each man alone. And the judgment, though crowds will be gathered, will be the judgment of so many individuals, each weighed in the scale, alone, either to hear the verdict that they are "accepted in the Beloved," or else to hear it said, "Tekel"—"You are weighed in the balances and found wanting." How I wish that all my hearers would lay this to heart! Do not try to hide away in the crowd, for God will search and bring you out individually and you shall be tested and tried apart from others! If you take ever so many sovereigns to the bank, it is not very likely you will pass one bad one, for they would very soon discover it. That might be done, however, on earth, but it could not be done in heaven! "Every man shall bear his own burden," and if the burden of sin is upon him, it shall crush him beyond all hope!

Once again, while thus speaking to both saints and sinners, "Every man shall bear his own burden" *of the law*. By sin we do not escape from the law. The law of God is binding upon every man of woman born, unless, by being dead to the law through Christ, he escapes from under its yoke and bondage. Now, the believer is not under law. Do not misunderstand me. I mean that he is not under law in the sense in which the sinner is under it. He is not under its condemning power! He is not under law, but he is under grace! The principle of law does not bind him—it is the principle of love which rules and governs his spirit. Now, every man who is under the law is bound to keep it, and to keep it personally. Look, my dear friends—you who have never fled to Christ—look where you are. The law of God is such a law that Adam failed to keep it, though innocent. How, then, shall you keep it while imperfect? It is a spiritual law, a law touching not only your actions, but your words and your thoughts—how can you keep it? And yet, if you keep it not, it brandishes its great whip with the thongs and brings it down upon the conscience with terrible effect. If you keep not the law, remember the sentence, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Happy is the man who has escaped from the territories of the law of God and come into the dominions of divine grace! But so long as we are under the law, its burden is ours and here comes in this grimly solemn truth of God that it is a burden which each man must carry on his own shoulders, but carry it he cannot and,

therefore, it will crush us and the curse of God must come upon us through the law!

And now we shall leave those three points which are common to all men and simply speak to believers of the burdens which they have to carry and which they ought joyfully to shoulder, each man for himself!

And first, my brothers and sisters, when we have been quickened and awakened, we shall find daily necessity for *the confession of sin* and here, "every man shall bear his own burden." A general confession may be very proper in the congregation, but it is only acceptable to God as it becomes an individual and particular confession in the case of each one using the words. Repentance is peculiarly a private and personal grace. Lamentation for sin is a thing for one's own chamber—the husband apart, and the wife apart—the daughter apart and the mother apart. Into confession in its fullness, no two can enter. As far as the sin has been common they may confess together, but in so far as the guilt in each case is personal and particular, so must confession be. My dear friends, let us not hesitate, whatever it may be that is upon our minds, tonight, to come and acknowledge it before our Father, who is in heaven. We do not confess now like condemned criminals who confess before execution because they must—we confess like the returned prodigal, with our heads on our dear Father's bosom, conscious that we are forgiven, quite sure that His love is set upon us and that we shall not be driven from Him on account of sin, but hating sin all the more because of this love—and weeping bitterly because of that wondrous grace which has had such compassion upon us! Let us be very marked in our acknowledgment of sin in private. I believe the Lord often withholds from His people a sweet sense of perfect acceptance until their confession shall be more precise—until they learn to "call a spade a spade," as we say, and so make a clean breast of the matter before the Most High.

Further, my brothers and sisters, there is another burden we have to carry and which we must cheerfully shoulder, and that is *the yoke of Christ*. Jesus says, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me." And then He adds, "for My yoke is easy and My burden is light." We are bound to obey Christ. He is the Captain—we are His soldiers. There should be maintained in the church a sacred military discipline—we should obey spontaneously the commands of our great leader! He is our shepherd, we must keep close to Him—walking in His footprints and delighting in His company. He is the physician—we must follow His prescription, not hesitating, even though the draught He gives is very bitter. Perfect obedience is what Jesus Christ has a right to claim from us! Oh, that He would give us grace that He might receive according to His rights! Is there any duty, my brothers and sisters, which you have not yet fulfilled and which presses upon your conscience? Or is there some other duty on which your conscience is but partially enlightened? Ask for a quickened

conscience and when you obtain it, never tamper with it! Oh, to have a conscience quick as the apple of the eye, tender and delicate, that will not even bear the slightest dust of sin! Oh, to walk before God as Caleb did, of whom the Lord said, "My servant Caleb has followed Me fully." There were some of whom it was said, "They walked before the Lord, but not with all their heart, as did David." May we have the whole-heartedness of the most consecrated towards the Savior and whatever form the yoke of Christ may take, may we count it our highest joy to bear it! Since He carried our sorrow, let us be willing to carry out His commands to their utmost letter, desiring that not so much as a jot or a tittle shall be left unheeded of the Master's will!

Further, brothers and sisters, I think we ought, each one of us, to feel that we have a *burden of prayer* to carry to the mercy seat. "Every man shall bear his own burden" in this respect. I wish we did this in our assemblies. I am afraid that you often let me pray, but some of you do not pray yourselves. I am afraid, too, that private prayer is neglected by a very large number of Christians—not that the form of it is absolutely renounced, but the vigor of it is not maintained. I wish I could say this without a blush concerning myself, but I do feel that very many of us do grievously fail here. We give the Lord some scanty five or ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, whereas our Puritan forefathers prayed sometimes for hours! But it would matter little about the time if we did but give the spirit. It is poor work, sometimes, our praying! Oh, that we wrestled with the angel and prevailed! My brothers and sisters, we have, every one of us, something to take before God in prayer—and we rob the church of our contributions to her treasury of intercession if we do not put our share into it!

Some of you ought to pray for the Sunday school more than you do. Some of you should bear in prayer the burden of the young of the congregation. The preacher has his burden of prayer—a heavy one. My brothers and sisters, the deacons and elders should be—I trust they are—peculiarly men of prayer! They have a burden to carry—a burden of prayer for the church. And you aged fathers in our Israel and you, my dear sisters who are matrons in our midst, it often seems to me to be peculiarly your office to be intercessors for the church. It may be possible that many of you could not preach and could not be very serviceable in many active labors, but you can be the very strength and sinews of war for the church militant by your prayers! No, no—it is not the whole church praying that you are to think of just now, but you, yourself—praying—each man and woman taking his own share of the great common burden which we have to take before the mercy-seat and leave there!

So, too, must each of us take our own burden of *witnessing for Christ*; all saints cannot witness to all truth since nobody knows all the truth of

God but God! Some of our hyper-Calvinistic friends also know it all according to their own understanding—but at any rate we think that nobody else does! Finite minds can only grasp part of the truth. The infinite alone can lay hold of the whole of truth. If we were altogether infallible in our knowledge of doctrine, we should be God, for only God can know all things and know all things thoroughly—know all things without admixture of error. But wherein we do know, each man is called to bear testimony to the truth he does know. There are many things that I do not know—why should I, then, pretend to be a witness to them? But there are some two or three things I do know. I am quite sure about them—and if I do not speak positively upon them, I shall fail to bear my burden before the Lord. And there is some one truth of God, perhaps, my brother, about which you have a little light of God, a little more light than your neighbors. Do not hide the light of God! God does not ever light a lamp to put it under a bushel. If you have received, either by experience or research, any special light which is peculiar to you—spread it that it may be, as it should be, the common property of the church of God, to the glory of God! I wish that Christians in these days thought more of bearing their witness. The Scottish people in years gone by attached great importance to the bearing of witness—testifying—standing out at all costs to give evidence to the truth of God. But nowadays truth is cast into the street as though it were worthless! And Christians will honor a truth and hold it, and yet will put their finger to their lips and say, “For peace’s sake, such a truth is to be unspoken.” No! Peace is precious, but it has its price, and is not to be purchased at any price! Truth first! “First pure, then peaceable”; first the truth of God, and then the peace of God. May we have both, but let us take care that we bear our own burden in witnessing for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, dear brothers and sisters, we have, each one of us, our own burden *in the matter of caring for souls*. You are placed, some of you, as working men amidst working men—your burden is manifestly your own class. Others of you move in other spheres. Do not forget that each sphere has its particular claim. You have ability? You have, then, a burden peculiar to a man of ability. You have wealth? There is a burden there. On the other hand, you live in obscurity. Your utmost sphere is your little children and your one or two rooms. Still remember that circles are prized not in proportion to their *size*, but in proportion to their *roundness*—and so we shall be honored and rewarded by divine grace—not according to the largeness of our sphere, but according to the way in which we have filled it for Christ! We must each bear the burden of our own sphere. Mother, no one else can be a mother to your children and do for them what you should do. Minister, if you are truly sent of God, no one can be a sponsor for you in your ministry—you must take that burden which God has put upon you, upon yourself! And you trader,

merchant, working man—there is something which you, each of you, must do and however earnest all the rest of Christians may be, they cannot, by the surplus of their zeal, if there is any, by any possibility make up for a deficiency in your case! The timber may be very strong in one part of the vessel, but the strength of the timber there is no recompense for a rotten portion in another part of the keel—it must be strong all over. We are all set, as it were, to forge a chain—and if the link that you shall forge is thoroughly strong and well welded, yet if I make a mess of my portion of the work, the chain will be injured all through! Let us remember this and discharge our own work in the strength of God, by the power of His Spirit, and we shall joy in ourselves by the Holy Spirit!

I might thus enlarge upon these burdens, but they all come to the same effect. There is one more word, however, which will be addressed, perhaps, to half a dozen here—probably not so many. Sometimes, upon some men, God casts a burden which He never puts on others. The prophet speaks of “the burden of the Lord.” Probably we have all carried it at some time, but at any one particular time there will not be many who are bearing it. That burden may be something very extraordinary to others, though you have become so familiar with it that it seems ordinary to you. Perhaps tonight something is saying in your soul, “Go and speak to such an one.” Do not violate that monition! Believe me, there is more in spiritual impulses than some people think! You have all read the old story of the Quaker who felt moved to ride into a certain town, some 10 or 12 miles off at the dead of night—and to go to a certain house. He did so. He found the house and knocked at the door. No one came to the door. He knocked again and when, at last, a man came downstairs and opened the door and asked him what he wanted. The Quaker said, “Perhaps you can tell me, for I do not know. The Lord has sent me to you, but what for I know not.” Then the man produced a rope and said that just when the knock came to the door he was in the top room, planning to hang himself. God had evidently sent the Quaker just at that time to prevent him. If you and I were more obedient to these “burdens of the Lord” when they came, we might often do more good than we do. We must not be fanatical—there is a line to be drawn—but at the same time I am afraid we often check sacred impulses, which, if followed, might be fraught with the most blessed consequences! Do you feel called at this time, my dear friend, to a work which you never undertook before? Consult not with flesh and blood! Do not be particular about asking help and assistance. “Every man shall bear his own burden.” Go in the strength of God! If, like Gideon, you need a sign, take it, and when you have it, and your heart has become like Gideon’s fleece, wet clean through; even though it is with sorrow, so that you could wring it out, then go in this your might, for if God has sent you, He will go with you. “As your days, so shall your strength be.” This may be a word to

somebody—I know not to whom—but it was a burden on me to say it—and there I leave it.

Now we turn to the second truth of this theme! And with much greater brevity—

II. SOME THINGS WHICH LIFT THE WEIGHT OF THESE PRESSING BURDENS.

“Every man shall bear his own burden.” It is not pleasant to be talked to all this long time about your being a burden-bearer, but perhaps these things will make it more pleasant. The first thing of which to remind ourselves is this—that it is quite consistent with the truth of God declared in our text, to remind you that Jesus Christ is *the great burden-bearer for all His saints*—that though, on the one hand, you will have to bear your own burdens, yet on the other hand Christ will bear all your burdens for you! Your burden of sin was laid upon Him as the scapegoat for your soul. That you know, and now your sin is put away! And now, tonight, whatever your burden is, come with it to your best friend, the “friend that sticks closer than a brother.” Tell Him the cause of your complaint. The disciples of John, when their master’s head was taken off, took up the body and “went and told Jesus.” Come and tell Jesus what it is that vexes you tonight! It is said of one sick child, “They brought him to Jesus.” Is your trouble a sick child, or is it you who is sick? Or what is it? Bring it to Jesus! All griefs either fly at His approach or else they change to joys! Or if they remain griefs, they minister to us an abundance of spiritual wealth—

**“Come, make your needs, your burdens known—
He will present them at the throne!
And angel bands are waiting there,
His messages of love to bear.”**

You must remember that your burden is easy to bear when Christ is with you. When Jesus Christ has strengthened you with all strength in your inner man and put into you His own omnipotence to be your succor, then shall the burden cease to be a burden to you any longer!

This also may tend to lighten the pressure *that as every man has to bear his own burden, so every man has his own hope*. I would be afraid to change with anybody else. I have sometimes thought, when I have been much desponding, that I wished I had half as good a hope as some of my brothers and sisters, but when I come to think it over—I do not know—I do not know—I would be as happy as the least in the Lord’s family if I knew that I was really one of His, but I really should not like to change with any of the little ones, or the great ones, either, on the chance of their being His. No! I know my own hope and I will keep it!

And, blessed be God, as we have our own burden, *so we have our own joy*. The most miserable and unhappy Christian in the world, when you come to get into his secrets, will tell you—he will let it out somehow—

that he has a secret spring of joy which others have not. In fact, it is to be remarked that those who have deep griefs have generally proportionately deep joys! The man of superficial sorrow generally has superficial mirth—but the man whose heart has been bored through and through has a stream of joy springing up as from an artesian well that cannot be equaled for freshness by the mere land springs of superficial piety! Brothers and sisters, we would not part with our joys nor with our hope. Though we have our sorrows to ourselves, yet we have our joys to ourselves, too! And, thank God, they cannot be taken away from us!

So, too, the Christian has Christ all to himself. I have sometimes tried to think of that. Here is the Lord Jesus Christ, able to save ten thousand times ten thousand sinners—and yet He is all mine! All Christ is mine! Here He is feeding the millions of His saints, and yet there is not a single crumb upon His table but what is mine! Nor a grain of corn in the granary of my brother Joseph but what belongs to me! All Christ belongs to each one of God's people! You have got a burden to yourself, but you have also got God to yourself—think of that! Have you ever remembered that if you were the only creature in the world—the only creature in the universe—if there were no angels and no other men—have you ever thought of what an inspection God would have of you and how He would see you through and through? Well, at this present moment and at all times, you are as much an object of His inspection as if that were the case! For multitudes of objects do not divide the exercise of omniscience upon each one. The infinite mind of God is such that the infinite care of God belongs to every individual throughout the entire universe! Yes, you have a God to yourself! Oh, what infinite supplies you have, Christian! Talk of your expenses! Look at your income! Speak of your poverty! Look at your wealth! You talk of your weakness—now estimate your strength! You can cast the plumb line to the bottom of your sorrows and measure the Atlantic waves of your grief, but you cannot measure heaven above, nor the earth beneath, nor the depths of hell! If you could measure these, God is greater than them all! Oh, why, then, do you despond because of the big burden, when you have peculiar help, peculiar joy, peculiar hope and peculiar strength? Rest in God and be joyful!

Once again, it is true that we, all of us, have a burden to carry, but *then we have not to carry that burden long*. You do not much pity a man who has to carry a load only during the twinkling of an eye. Well, the whole of life is not any more than that! Just think, my dear friends, of eternity—and what is life? Imagine ourselves sitting down in heaven in the midst of eternal blessedness, and what a moment life will seem! We shall know, then, what Paul meant when he said, "These light afflictions which are but for a moment." But for a moment! Oh, pluck up courage, brothers and sisters! You are nearer home than you thought you were and every moment you are getting nearer! We find our horses quicken

their speed when we turn their heads homeward and they drag their loads with speed. Now, your head is homeward, Christian, you—

**“Nightly pitch your moving tent,
A day’s march nearer home.”**

Therefore, be of good comfort and let not the burden gall your shoulders.

Once more. If you have a burden to yourself, remember that *you will have your own place in heaven which nobody else will have*. You have your own sorrows, but you will have your own joys there! I think there is a note in the heavenly song for each one of us to take. I do not suppose that Mary Magdalene sings precisely the same note as the dying thief. There will be her lofty voice taking some of the treble notes and we shall have him, it may be, taking the deeper bass. I believe that if one of us should be absent, the choir of heaven would not be complete. In the noblest orchestra all the instruments and voices are needed for the completeness of the chorus, and so will it be in the orchestra of heaven! Paul says that the saints that are gone before into heaven are not perfect without us—that “they without us would not be made perfect.” That is to say the company would not be complete, but gaps appear. So long as there is one soldier in a squad who has not arrived, the battalion is not completely formed. So we must each get there to perfect, to complete the number of the saints in heaven! Well, then, beloved, as we are, each one, to have a place and portion in heaven, each a mansion to himself or herself, we may well be content to bear our burdens here alone. And now to close. What is—

III. THE PRACTICAL INFERENCE AND RESULT?

I do not know what it may be, but oh, may God the Holy Spirit burn my text into your hearts! I do not want you to remember so much anything I have said—it does not matter about that—you can forget it all! But I do want you to recollect this one truth of God—especially you Christians—that “every man shall bear his own burden.” *There is something for each one of you to do for Christ*. Oh, that notion that the minister can do it, that the united action of the church can do it—it has ruined the Christian church to a large extent! A personal, individual sense of responsibility is what we need—each Christian judging himself daily and hourly as to his capabilities, obligations and indebtedness to his Lord! Brother Minister, you have got your burden to bear. Is there any new work you can undertake for Christ, or any old work that needs strengthening, into which you can throw yourself with greater zeal? Then I pray you do it! My sister in the Lord, you have not done, perhaps, what you might do. Now say in your heart, before you leave the pew, “By God’s grace, I will do whatever I can.” I can look round, round upon you here and see some who are really doing more than I could for a moment ask you to do, for you are “in labors more abundant.”

I thank God that there are such in this church, but then I think of others. Oh, if all were like some, what a church we would be! If all the vines in our vineyard bore such clusters as some of the vines do, oh, how the wine presses would burst with new wine! In the matter of liberality, the preacher must never judge—that is a matter for each man. “How much should you give unto your Lord?” In the matter of service, it is not for us to allot you your work, but what can you do? Now, what will you do tonight” “Oh, give me till the morning,” says one. No! No! We have not an hour that we can afford to waste! Let us serve God today—we will leave tomorrow to care for itself. Now is the accepted time for service, as well as salvation! Serve Him now! Do something to forward His kingdom and honor His name now! The only way to serve Christ in the future is to serve Him in the present, for the future never comes, or, if it does, it ceases to be future and is the living present.

Now I ask you, you who are now washed in His cleansing blood; you who now bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus; you who have lain on His bosom; you who have been kissed with the kisses of His mouth; you who have been brought from under the apple tree and know how sweet His fruit is and how delightful His shadow is; you who are now one with Him, of His flesh and of His bones; you who expect soon to see Him; you who are longing to be with Him and hope to be caught up to dwell with Him, to see Him as He is, and to be like He is—I charge you by the roes and the hinds of the fields, by the lily beds wherein you had fellowship with your Lord, and by the garden of nuts wherein He has revealed Himself to you—I charge you, by His everlasting love, by the love you bear to Him, and by that sweet song you sang just now—

***“For He is mine, and I am His—
The God whom I adore!
My Father, Savior, Comforter,
Now and forevermore.”***

Serve Him now! Serve Him forevermore, and may the Lord bless you and make you blessed; and a great blessing to others, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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DAVID'S SUBLIME CONSOLATION

NO. 3356

A SERMON
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“Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He makes it not to grow.”
2 Samuel 23:5.

NO GOLD but pure gold can stand the fire. And if a man's religion has been a pretentious sham, it is very likely to tumble to pieces under the rough hand of death. There have been a few hypocrites who have been able to brazen it out, even in the last solemn article, but these must always be the few. David, at any rate, was never the man who would play the hypocrite in the last extremity of death. You can see how true, how deep, how thorough his faith in God must have been, for his dying bed was by no means an enviable one. His dying pillow was stuffed with sharp thorns. His was a life which, although it had much of divine grace about it, yet had much of sinful nature, too. He was dying as we might not wish to die in some respects, but his faith triumphed as we may well desire that our faith may triumph, whatever the outward circumstances of our life or death may be! We shall go at once, and without further preface, to consider our text, and notice in turn *the Psalmist-king's grave lament*; and then blessed compensation, *his glorious comfort*. First, then, we shall ponder, and may the Holy Spirit make it greatly to profit every one of us—

I. DAVID'S GRAVE LAMENT.

His house, he declares, was “not so” with God. And the numbers and the power of that house did not grow as he could have wished. Brothers and sisters, there are some troubles that a man outgrows. There are some childish trials connected with our early Christian life which we without effort outlive, and which in due course pass away. We shall not have to feel—thank God!—ever again the special perils of our youth and of our early manhood. When we have passed into riper years, we leave these things behind us. But there are some troubles which accumulate as we grow. For instance, there is the peculiar trouble alluded to in the text. There are, no doubt, multitudes of cares and trials connected with a family of little children, but every parent knows that the trials connected with little children are as nothing compared with the sorrows of those who have grown-up children that cause them heartache and heartbreak.

We could better afford to bury them one by one in their infancy, than that they should live to dishonor their father's name and to blaspheme

their father's God! The mother might be well satisfied to watch over their sick couches night after night and to weary herself as though she labored in the very fire for their sakes. We could well put up with the little mistakes, stubbornness, follies and even sins of their earliest days. But the sting is when, having left our roof, they leave our teaching! When, having gone from our training, they do not abide in it, but plunge into sin and prove to us most sadly that divine grace does not run in the blood, but that natural depravity most certainly does. Now, this particular form of trial accumulates as we grow older. Some of us here have not yet come to it. May God grant that we never may, but I know there are some here whose hairs are plentifully sprinkled with gray, who have this as their daily cross to carry and who look back on all the troubles of their youth and say that they were as nothing compared with this—the house being amiss with God, the children being disobedient—the sons and daughters training up their children, but not in the nurture and admonition of the Lord! This is a trial which comes when the battle of life, as we think, is almost over and when we might naturally expect to take a little repose in the eventide of life, before the dawning of the everlasting morning! This seems to be one of the last thorns that is thrust into our rest. With some it has been a thorn which, as in the case of David, has pierced their heart in its last beats and throbs. I may be addressing some such tonight. At any rate, I am addressing a great many who have need to pray against this trial. Oh, it is a dreadful thing—a terrible thing to look forward to, but what must it be to bear, none can tell but those whose hearts have been wrung by the iron hand of such an affliction!—

***“How sharper than a serpent's teeth it is
To have a thankless child.”***

David had an Absalom and an Amnon, and a Tamar—of whom the less said the better—and outside his dying chamber door there was an Adonijah trying to upset his father's last will and testament. And although Solomon was, in some respects, a great deal better, yet he was not, in those days, all that might be wished.

The fact is that, taken as a whole, they were a bad set. Was it any wonder that they should be such? David had himself very much to blame for it, for polygamy can never by any possibility work well. Jacob's trouble arose out of that and no doubt David's troubles began there, too. And this must have been the sting about it to David, that some of his children could quote their father's example for their sins! Not but what his life had had in it very many virtues, but children will cover their eyes and not observe those things when it does not suit their whim to see them. But if there is a fault in the parent, there is none more quick than the child to spy it out and to make the fall—the mistake of the parent which was pardoned, because wept over—to be the one outstanding mark of that parent's character and in that, alone, to imitate it.

Now, my brothers and sisters, at such a time, when we are stung with such a trouble so near to us—for the troubles of our own house ought always to affect us more than any other—there we get our first comforts

around the family hearth and there we must expect to have our sweetest joys and our deepest pangs! When, I say, we have this affliction and have in it that drop of gall of knowing that we, ourselves, are somewhat responsible for the whole matter and that we cannot throw it upon divine sovereignty, but must take some measure of it to ourselves—oh, it will be glorious faith if still, with all those pangs and griefs in their utmost bitterness, we can say, “Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation and all my desire.” Believe me, it is one thing to read that text, but quite another thing to feel it! And it is one thing to suppose ourselves under these circumstances, rejoicing in the Lord, but quite another thing to come into these depths—these very depths—with God’s waves and billows going over us and yet, by joyous faith, to lift our head out of the waves and sing with bravest confidence in our God!

Now we shall be allowed, since David’s is but one case among many, to show that apart from the family—supposing that to be right—that there may still be other forms of poignant sorrow under which we may labor and in which our only relief will be to triumph in God’s covenant faithfulness to our souls!

The trial to some of us will come possibly *from the church*. The faithful minister makes the church that he serves his family. The earnest deacon, the truly-called elder, considers the church, too, to be his household. The excellent and devoted conductors of the Bible and Sunday school classes will come in the faith and love of sanctified souls to look upon those under their charge as children committed to them as a sacred trust, to train and nurture in Christian life and conduct. And some of us can say, who have known it, that it is a grief that cuts very deep into the soul when the church, or the class, or whatever our circle of service, is not so with God as we could desire! When we think of some who backslide; when we hear of some, as we have heard time and again, who fall into open sin and, worst of all, into cruel unkindness to the very person who was the means of their conversion, but of whom it is not now possible for them to say anything too bad or too unkind because they think they have received further illumination, and have learned something which God grant they may unlearn—whenever these things occur and they occur very frequently in a large church and occur very painfully in a small one—they throw the minister, they throw the Sunday school teacher, they throw the earnest worker of any sort flat on his face, and they make him shed many tears and cry out to God in the bitterness of his soul, “You do not make my church grow; You do not make my church to be as I would have it to be—like Yourself. You do not give me the sheaves which I long to reap, nor the souls to be saved which I long to win.”

It is a great and deep sorrow and it is a great blessing if, at such times, we can come back to this, “Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant.” You know it is that precious doctrine which is meant to keep us quiet when we are succeeding, for the Lord Jesus said

to His apostles when they came back overjoyed and said, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us"—"Ah, nevertheless, rejoice not in this. Do not make this the mainstay of your joy, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Well, when it is not so with us as we would wish, but we have to experience the very opposite, I think that then I can hear our Lord saying, "Nevertheless, be not brokenhearted about this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven, that My covenant with you is everlasting."

Beloved, you may not have either of the two sorrows I have spoken of, but if you are a child of God, you will have fellowship with a third, namely, *the inward state of your own soul*.

In a certain very special sense, *that* is the definite household of every one of us. These powers and passions, imaginings and emotions, thoughts and desires—these are, so to speak, the children of your house, and I am afraid that most of us will have to say, "Although my house is not so with God." I read a book the other day written by a brother whom I very highly esteem and, indeed, reverence for his holiness, excellence and usefulness. But when I found him speaking of himself as living in perfect allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ and perfect love to Him—and as having continued so for 20 years without sin—I must confess that I thought he must either use language in a different way from that in which I use it, or else that he and I must have very different kinds of hearts, for I do not find it as he said! I believe I have sincerely strived to serve my Master, and have served Him so as to have had given me many seals of my service, but I never did serve Him in such a way as to be satisfied with my service! I never could dare to feel content with a prayer I ever prayed, or a sermon I ever preached! I have always cultivated the idea that if I were to feel satisfied, I would be proud—and that if I did feel content, I would be doing wrong—and so I have rather strived against the feeling of being satisfied with anything within me—but have tried to continually feel that I still have enemies to drive out of the Canaan of my heart and corruptions still to subdue, glorifying God for anything that I could see that was gracious, but trying, at any rate, to mourn and lament over what was my own—and there is a good deal of that—and I find, if anything, more of it now than ever, not that there is more, but as we grow in grace I think we perceive it more clearly! A room is not dustier when it is shut up than it is when the sun shines in through the little crevice in the shutter, where the beam of sunlight comes through. There is no more dust in that particular part of the room where the sun shines in than there is anywhere else, and yet how very full of dust that slanting sunbeam seems to be! The room is not more dusty there, but there is more light there than anywhere else. So it seems that the very coming in of light to the soul reveals more and more of the evil things, the spiritual ugliness that yet lurks there and which I fear will be there until the Lord takes us home! It is very pitiable to see so many persons perfectly content to be so very imperfect, sitting down as though they—knowing they cannot here be absolutely perfect—have no desire to "grow in grace,

and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” It does such persons good to hear a sermon on the doctrine of Scriptural perfection! If it does not make them angry with it, it does them good, for it makes them see that there is something better to be obtained in this world than they have ever yet dreamed and so stimulates their ambition! But for all that, I would still like to see a perfect man—and I would like to see Satan, and he have a turn of conflict! And if Satan did not somehow or other get the better of him, I would be mistaken and surprised!

For this I know, that when we are most watchful and most guarded, temptations will still overtake us and surely these men must have some tragically unguarded moments. Ah, brothers and sisters, it will not do! “Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” is as certainly the cry of the Christian as the rest of the sentence, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” It is, none the less, a sorrow to a truly sanctified soul, not to be sanctified perfectly. It is a most bitter grief to conceive that there should be any sin dwelling in him. It is his cross and his burden and, therefore, at such times when the burden is heaviest, it is a gracious thing for faith to be able to say, “Although my heart is not so with God as I would have it and I do not live so near to Him as I could desire, nor serve Him as I wish, yet still, for all that, I am a sinner saved by grace, and He has made with me, unworthy me, an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.”

The beauty of the comfort of the text is that it is set boldly, strikingly, upon so black a foil! In David's case a sorrow of the bitterest kind is associated with a joy of the sweetest description! What I am driving at is this—whether it is family trouble, church trouble, or inward spiritual trouble arising from personal experience, it is the work, boast and glory of faith to be able to see light in the midst of the darkness, to find a way through the sea and a path through the desert—and to sing—“Though this is not what I would have it, nor that, nor the other thing, nor a thousand things, yet has He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure”!

I shall not stay to say anything about the latter part of the verse, namely, about the house not growing. David did not see his family grow in the estimation of the people, grow in strength, grow in numbers. It is a great sorrow not to see our families growing up in piety and advancing in holiness—a great grief not to see our churches making steady progress—and a heavy trouble, most of all, not to see our own hearts growing in love and other divine graces, and so going onward towards ripe maturity of blessed character.

Having thus spoken of David's great lament, we now turn with joyful relief to speak of—

II. DAVID'S GLORIOUS COMFORT.

As I said before, we will only give you a few plain, practical thoughts, praying the Holy Spirit to make them of divine power. The glorious comfort which David found lay in the covenant which God had made

with him. With David it was a covenant of royalty for himself and for his seed, but we believed he also had a further vision of the covenant of grace. At any rate, we of the gospel dispensation must do so, for though we shall not have earthly thrones, yet under Christ's covenant we are made kings and priests unto God!

Now, let us suppose ourselves to be sitting down alone, soliloquizing over all our griefs. There is a burden upon our mind and this thought crosses us—"Yet" I have a, "yet," to set over against my "although." I have a heavy, "although," to mar my prospects, but I have a delightful, inspiring, "yet," to shed its light upon them—"Yet has He made with me a covenant."

Observe, first, that this covenant made with us is a covenant of pure grace. It would scarcely console Adam to think of the covenant under which he was—the covenant of works. It would be very sorry consolation to think of the covenant of works now, for we have all broken it and all that remains to us of its provisions is its curse! But we rejoice to know that that covenant of works is, as far as we are concerned, fulfilled completely by Jesus Christ—and there remains nothing but God's side of it to be fulfilled! Christ undertook our side of it and He declared, "It is finished," when He gave up the ghost. Man's side of the covenant of grace is fulfilled and, therefore, the covenant stands now solely and only as a covenant of pure and unconditional promise on the part of God towards His elect people! A delightful thought is this, for on these terms it is truly a covenant of grace. "I will and they shall—I will give them a new heart, and a right spirit, and they shall walk in My ways. I will purge, and wash, and cleanse them, and they shall be clean." It is a covenant without, "ifs," or, "buts," or, "perhapses," in it because its elements are unalloyed grace—grace, grace, grace, and not a single jot or tittle of merit in it! Now, believer in Christ, you are under such a covenant; a covenant which is all promises to you, and no threats! Ought not this to cheer and comfort you? These dark afflictions—what are they? You can say, as one of old said, "Strike now, Lord, if You will, for I am forgiven! Now do what You will with me, for I am Your child."—

***"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure!
Death has no sting beside."***

Nor has life any, either, for the worst sting is gone, sin is removed and I am saved! Now, Lord, I leave everything in Your hands, making no conditions or stipulations, but will be pleased, or strive to be pleased, with all Your will provides, since I know that the threats are all gone and there remains for me nothing but promises full of boundless mercy which then shall be my heritage!"

The next thought is that *this covenant is made with me*. Beloved, I cannot preach on this as I would, but I pray that the Holy Spirit may bring home to your souls both the power and sweetness of the thought, "Yet has he made *with me* an everlasting covenant." The doctrines in themselves are delightful, but it is the personal interest in and realization of the doctrines that give real delight!. The covenant—oh, yes, that is the

well of Bethlehem—but it is “within the gate.” But a covenant made with *me*. Ah, that is the water from the well rippling at my very lips! I drink it and am completely refreshed! It would be pleasant to hear of a covenant made with ten thousand men that they might be saved, and our common humanity might make us rejoice therein. A covenant made with countless millions might well make us glad to overflowing, but, after all, it is not selfish, but only laudable as the law of self-preservation God has Himself implanted in us, for us most of all to rejoice in our own personal faith in Christ, our personal property in the covenant of which He is the surety! “Yet He has made with me.” You know, sometimes, when I am thinking of God’s mercy, trying to get a grip of my adoption and my acceptance in the Beloved, I find myself crying and at other times laughing. It seems such a wonder that an “heir of wrath” should be made an heir of heaven—an enemy of God made to be His own dear son to whom He has made absolute promises of infinite love and unutterable grace! Surely this ought to make our hearts leap like the heart of a warrior when the battle has come to a close and the victory has been won! How joyous ought to be the Christian’s life! There ought to be a sacred exhilaration, a holy riot in our spiritual life at the thought that God has personally made with us—unworthy, sinful, but pardoned and accepted men and women—“a covenant ordered in all things and sure.”

There is a very poor man in this place, just come from his labor. He has not even had time to go home to wash his face. He is very poor. If you could see his room, there is very little furniture in it and the wages he earns come to a very little. He has been poor for years and years. You, perhaps, would scarcely notice him. He is a mere drudge, a weight lifter, a carrier, one of the despised “masses” and yet God has made with him an everlasting covenant! Why, what a contrast between the parties to this covenant! Here is the infinite and eternal God with all the blazing splendor of His Deity—and He has made a covenant with this poor despised child of poverty and toil! Well, now, if you come to think of it, there is no difference in spiritual need between the crossing-sweeper and the millionaire! They are only two frail mortals, with a little difference in their circumstances and surroundings, but there is no difference when they go to their last resting place, and they sleep in the lap of mother earth! And yet, with either or both, God is ready to make an everlasting covenant—with such insignificant ones, with you and me! Oh, dear Christian brothers and sisters, here is the music of it—“with *me*.” Now, may your faith lay her hand on the dear Savior’s head afresh, look to Christ anew, see His blood flowing for you, wash again and feel that you are clean and then say, “Yet He has made *with me* an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.”

It may increase our joy to remember *the person* who has made this covenant. If the covenant had been made with men, it might have been kept, or it might not have been—for the surest treaties have been broken—and when men have been bound with fetters, the proverb has

not always been proved true, "Fast bind, fast find," but men have slipped through a thousand nooses and have been untrustworthy even when solemn oaths and obligations have been used to bind them down! But God is true, so true that we might take His Word at once, and yet since He knew our unbelief, He has been pleased to give us "two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie that we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us." He has done this, He who has not twice destroyed the earth with a flood, notwithstanding all her sins! He who settled the mountains and fixed the hills in their sockets has said that the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but that His love shall not depart from us, neither shall His covenant be removed from us. He has said it whose power is equal to His truth, whose love, with golden hands, encircles both His power and His faithfulness. He has said it who never knows the shadow of a change, the sun without a parallax and without a tropic. He has said it, the great I AM has made with us a covenant of grace!

Then comes the thrilling truth of God—"an everlasting covenant." We must not, above all things, leave that out! It is the duration of the mercy which is always the great theme of joy to the Christian. I do not know where my brethren get their comfort from, who believe in a *temporary* covenant of grace. I am not disposed to controvert with them because if they like it and can get any comfort out of it, I am very glad that somebody should. But it is a kind of land I should never think of plowing, nor should I ever wish to add to my farm! I shall never be tempted to covet that as Ahab covets Naboth's vineyard. That system of theology seems to me to play fast and loose with divine things and make man stronger than God—and so I am content not to desire its possession. I suppose I am a greater sinner than they and have more need of grace and I come back to my Master's power alone to keep me, rather than depend on my own strength to keep myself. And here are my comfort and joy, that if God has made a covenant with me, He has not done it for today or tomorrow and next week, or even next year, but for all eternity! When the hair turns gray, the covenant will still be young! And when the pulse beats low and the death sweat shall stand on our brow, the covenant will be as full of life as in our early days when first we knew the Lord. It is "an everlasting covenant," and everlasting in the respect of its being made with me, not a covenant which is everlasting, but which changes with persons and is first with one and then with another. "He has made *with me an everlasting covenant.*"

Oh, Christian, rejoice! Do not be afraid of rejoicing in that doctrine of the safety of the saints. Depend upon it, though some have used it to their own destruction and their end shall be terrible for having perverted the truth of God to make it a cloak for sin, yet the children of God have always found that when they are most happy they can be most active! When they feel most safe they are most grateful and when they are most grateful they are most courageous and the most self-sacrificing! Do not be afraid of knowing that you are safe in Christ, for if your thoughts are

troubled about your eternal security, you will not be able to give the integrity of your manhood and womanhood to the cause of God. But if you know that you are saved, if you are sure of it, if you know that your ship can never be driven on the rocks, if you can give your whole selves, body, soul and spirit unreservedly to God, out of no legal motives, but under the divine constraints of gratitude, gratitude to eternal love—you are the man or woman who God the Spirit can make into a fine strong Christian! But if you are forever struggling and striving, now believing, now doubting and thinking that your safety depends on something you can do, and that the whole matter may possibly tumble down—you will get no joy out of your salvation and will forever be a self-seeker of a certain kind. But grasp the truth of God that your salvation is finished once and for all and you can then say, no sing, “Now for the love I bear His name, my whole spirit, my whole time, talents, substance—all shall be laid upon the altar of Him who loved me and gave Himself for me.”—

**“Loved of my God, for Him again,
With love intense I burn—
Chosen of Him ere time began,
I choose Him in return.”**

And now note, very briefly, indeed, that this everlasting covenant *is ordered and sure*. This, too, should fill us with holy musing and sacred exultation. It is so ordered that divine justice is not infringed, while divine mercy is magnified! It is so ordered that the safety of the soul is secured, and yet the soul is delivered from its sin—so ordered that holiness excludes the sinful from heaven and yet the sinful are admitted, having been washed in the precious blood of the covenant. “Ordered in *all things*”—its great things and its little things! Every wheel, and every cog of every wheel was in the mind of the divine artificer and has been placed in its proper position to work out the divine result! Ordered with regard to the past, the present and the future! Ordered with regard to nature and to providence—ordered with regard to my body and my soul—ordered as to the perfection of my divine manhood before the throne of God!

It is ordered in all things and is, therefore, *sure*. It would not have been sure had it not been well ordered, but being well ordered and fixed according to the truest law of God, there is no fear of any division of its parts or any dislocation of its members! It will never be a house divided against itself. You know that when a house has no order in it, nothing can be relied upon. Wills run contrary to one another and discord reigns. But there is nothing of the kind in the covenant of grace. There are no conflicting elements. All the elements are of one kind. Boasting is excluded. Human merit is cast out. It has grace for its Alpha and grace for its Omega. It has grace for its foundation and the topstone shall be brought forth with shouts of, “grace, grace,” unto it. Infinite wisdom planned it, and so the ideas of human fallibility and mistake have been excluded from it. “Ordered in all things and sure.”

Let our souls then fall back upon this truth with the exclamation of David, "This is all my salvation and all my desire." If, indeed, God has made such a covenant with me, then I am saved. I rest upon Christ whom God has said He has set forth to be a covenant for the people—a leader and commander to the people. My dear friends, are you trusting in Christ alone? Is He all your salvation? Is He all your desire? I think that is one of the ways by which to discover the true sons of Zion from those that are not so—by seeing whether Christ is all their salvation! There are some who save a little corner for something else besides Christ. Beloved, it must come to this—if you and I are ever saved—that Christ as He is revealed in the covenant of grace must be all our salvation! He must be made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption! Christ is ALL! Oh, what blessed truth that is! How it drives all priestcraft out of the world! How it makes absurd and profane all pretended soul-saving ceremonies! How it brings us to the Savior, simply and alone to Him, "This is all my salvation"—what Christ has done for me and what God promises to give me as the result of what Christ has done in fulfilling the covenant of grace on my behalf—this is all my salvation!

And now, sinners, you who have never come to Christ, remember that this must be all your salvation if ever you are saved. And does not this cheer you? You thought you were to get some good feelings. You need not. You may come to Christ for them. "Oh," you say, "but I must repent." He is exalted on high to *give you repentance*. It is His work to give you repentance! Come to Him as you are, with nothing of your own, and rest wholly in Him. And you have then, in your soul, the true sign of God's electing love. If you rest wholly upon Jesus, do not trouble your head about either the glorious past or the glorious future, but rejoice now! To lay hold on Christ is to lay hold on everlasting love and to find a resting place that shall last you when the world has melted away like a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is gone forever. Rest in God patiently—with your whole soul relying upon the merit of Jesus—and the everlasting covenant is yours!

And the text closes with saying—"and all my desire." "I do not want anything else to rest upon. But this one thing do I covet—no other source of joy than this." So David seems to say. Ah, but some of you Christian people cannot say, "This is all my desire" Your desire is to make a great deal of money! Your desire is to dress so that people may think you a person of great taste and refinement! Or your desire is to be respectable, or your desire is to be something far away from the thoughts of God! You smile, but it is really not at all a thing at which to smile. It is a great pity that so many whom we would hope to be Christian people do not find their chief delights in God and do not let their desires end in Him. This is a sad, sad thing. If there were a wife here who found her greatest pleasure in somebody else's company rather than her husband's, it would be a very great disgrace to her. And it is a terrible dishonor to a Christian when, in order to get his pleasures, he has to get out of the

circle of communion with Christ! I have heard of such Christians. "Oh," they say, "well, we try to be circumspect and so on, as a matter of duty, but may we not enjoy ourselves?"

Well, but where—where—where? You do not like to say where and I will not press the question, but there are some who enjoy themselves most when they are where Christ would not go—no, where Christ would not have *them* go and where they would not like Christ to come and find them there! Now, question yourselves whether you belong to Christ at all if that is the case, for our sweetest pleasures, if we are true Christians, we find when we are most conformed to Christ, doing His will most conscientiously in His sight, most denying ourselves and most completely giving up our own wills and wishes, after a carnal sort, that the will of Christ may reign in our mortal bodies to His glory! "This is all my salvation and all my desire." Let others roam through the world as they may, but the soul of the Christian is satisfied at home. He can say, in the words of our hymn—

***"I need not go abroad for joy,
I have a peace at home!
My sighs are turned into songs,
My heart has ceased to roam.
Down from above the blessed Dove
Has come into my breast,
To witness there eternal love,
And give my spirit rest."***

So may it be with you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 3:9.**

Verses 9, 10. *What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher: with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways. And the way of peace have they not known.' There is no fear of God before their eyes.* This is a description of man given by prophets in the olden times. "Now," says Paul, "we know that what things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law." So that this is a description of the Jews, a description of the people who had the light of God, the best people that were then upon the face of the earth—and if these are the good people—where are the Gentiles, the bad ones without the light?

19, 22. *Now we know that what things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped and the entire world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets—even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe—for there is no difference. There is no righteousness of works on the face of the earth. The law, itself, describes men as being sinful from their throat to their feet. Almost every member of the body is mentioned and described as being foul with sin! But, says Paul, there is another righteousness on the face of the earth—and that is the righteousness of God's grace, which comes through believing in Christ!*

23, 31. *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also—seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yes, we establish the law.*

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HEEDFUL HEARING

NO. 3357

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 1913.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 23, 1868.

“Take heed, therefore, how you hear.”
Luke 8:18.

IT is implied in this verse that you do hear. A man cannot take heed how he hears if he does not hear at all. Hence, how great is the sin of a vast proportion of the inhabitants of this city who utterly forsake the ministry of the gospel, who never hear it, or hear it but only now and then! We have frequently met with people who, before they came to this house, never attended any place of worship. They were taken there, they say, to be christened, or they went there to be married and they expected to be carried there, or somewhere like it, to be buried, but that was all their church going and all their respect for the worship of God. Unhappy they—to have the light of God and to refuse to see—to have God's diamond lying, as it were, at their very feet, and yet to refuse to pick it up! The day will come when wasted Sabbaths will be a burning accusation against the inhabitants of this privileged, but wicked city! With churches in almost every street, with preachers of the gospel to be found here and there declaring fully the saving truth of God, it shall go harder with the citizens of London than with the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day when the Lord comes to judge the quick and the dead! Do I address Rest!

Do you think how unjustly you are treating your God? There are seven days in the week and He gives you six, but you *rob* Him of the seventh. You are like a man on the highway who met a beggar and seeing him to be in great need—and having but seven pounds in his pocket, he gave the beggar six—and then the beggar knocked him down and stole the seventh from him! He was an ungrateful wretch—and what are you? You shall answer for yourselves.

It is implied, again, in the text that a man hears the gospel, for it does not matter much how you hear if it is not God's message, if it is not the truth of God. The best way to hear a lie is not to hear it at all. The best way to hear preaching that is not according to God's gospel is to hear enough of it to know what it is and then walk off and hear no more. But it is implied that you do hear the gospel and here comes the inquiry—Do those who frequent places of worship invariably ask themselves the question—“Is the preacher a gospel preacher? Does he preach according to the Holy Scriptures? Does he deliver to me the truth of God, or is it a cunningly devised fable or invention of his own?” I fear that the most of

our hearers only ask, “Is he a fluent speaker? Is he a high-soaring rhetorician? Can he pile his words, one upon another? Or is he amusing? Does he use many illustrations and metaphors? Will there be something to interest me?” Ah, but, my hearers, if the bread is poisoned, it is of small concern that the baker makes it up into pretty loaves! If it is not a gospel draught that is given you to drink, it is a small matter to you whether the cup is richly designed or not. Better that you have it in the poorest pot and drink from that, if it is from the river of the water of life, than that you receive untruth out of a golden cup! The chief matter with a hearer when he goes to a town to live and has to inquire, “Where shall I attend on the Lord’s Day?” should be this—“Where can I hear most concerning the Lord Jesus Christ? Where shall I hear a man who can touch my conscience? Where shall I hear the truth that will be quick, powerful and sharp as a two-edged sword to my soul? Where may I hope to be saved? Where may I trust, being saved, that I may be helped on the road to heaven?” All the rest is mere matter of taste, but this is a matter of the utmost importance! Is it the gospel or not? If it is not the gospel, let not your feet tread the floor! But if it is the gospel of Jesus, then “forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.”

But these two things being granted—that we ought to hear, and that it ought to be the gospel—the text graciously counsels us, “Take heed how you hear.” We purpose to handle our theme after this fashion. First, there is *a caution implied in the text*; secondly, there are *rules intended in it*; and then again, there are *strong reasons for it*. First, there is—

I. A CAUTION IMPLIED IN THE TEXT.

“Take heed how you hear.” The caution is that we should not think it a trifling thing to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. “Take heed”—as though you had to stop on the threshold and remember where you are. Take heed, take heed and remember, then, that it is no trifling thing to hear a sermon if it is a gospel sermon! Some think it is a simple work to preach and child’s play to sit and listen. When the great trumpet peals and the dead are awakened, they will think very differently! They will reckon that speech was never put to so noble a purpose as when it was used to bring men to reconciliation with their Maker—and that ears were never used to as good an end as when they were used attentively to hear what God the Lord would speak when He would bid the rebel come to Him and find mercy! The preacher, if he is what he should be, does not think it a light or easy thing to preach. It is said of Luther that he never feared any man and yet he declares that he never preached a sermon without his knees knocking together because he trembled lest he should be guilty of the blood of any of his hearers. This is the great burden of my life, lest I should miss anything that should be profitable to you. Lest, in dealing with God’s Word, I should be like some untaught chemist’s lad who is mixing medicines which were meant for restoring health, but who introduces poisons into them. No! But I would tell you all I know, tell you

all God's Word as I have learned it and speak it honestly, affectionately and plainly, trusting thus to be clear of the blood of all men!

But in proportion as it is solemn work to preach, it is also solemn work to hear. When men enter king's palaces, they become at once respectful, they regard their company, they pay marked attention to the head of the household—and should they not, when they come into the assembly of God's people to join in the worship of the Most High? Should they not, after the same sort, say, "How awe-inspiring is this place where the gospel is preached! It is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven"?

Because, then, it is no light and trivial thing to hear a sermon, take heed how you hear!

Again, *it is no easy thing to hear a sermon well* and hence the appeal of the text, "Take heed how you hear." The fool cannot hear it well. He lets it in one ear and out the other! The mere critic hears it, but without any profit to himself. Multitudes have heard hundreds, possibly thousands of sermons, but they have not been benefited thereby—they have let the golden stream run past them—and not one single drop of the precious treasure have they retained. The art of listening to the preaching of the gospel is one of the highest arts in the world and conduces to the best results! Don't you suppose when you have come up those step, and taken your seats, that you are all ready for the sermon. No! No, it is not so! If you would have good fruit of it, there ought to be as much preparation on your part as on mine. Am I to pray that I may be a blessing to you, and are you not to pray that you may get a blessing out of the words? Are you to come flippantly or even carelessly into these seats and sit down, and then hope to be edified? If so, indeed, you shall usually find your hopes disappointed! Take heed how you hear, because it is not a little thing, nor an easy thing, to listen to the gospel of Jesus!

Take heed how you hear, implies this caution—that it is no light thing to hear the gospel irreverently, for on the bad hearing may hang not only the loss of the blessing which might have come, but the infliction of a *punishment which shall be the greater for careless hearing*. Men never listen to a gospel sermon and remain as they were. They are either bettered by it or—shall I say *worsened*?—if there is such a word. It is not possible that the gospel should have shined on those eyes without either giving light or increasing the blindness. I do not believe that any man has regularly sat under the sound of a gospel ministry for three months without being either sensibly hardened or manifestly softened by it. You know how children's characters are formed, how day after day, and week after week, bring impressions for good or for evil upon their sensitive minds. And it is just the same with ourselves. Every truth of God that passes before the camera of our soul leaves some degree of impression upon the sensitive plate of our character—and we are either blessed by it, or cursed by it, as the case may be. It must be either a savor of life

unto life to us, or of death unto death. It is no light thing to have heard amiss!

But there is also a sweet caution that springs out of the text if you think it over. "Take heed how you hear," *for it may be a blessed thing to hear*, and no one can tell the weight of mercy that may come from the hearing! I have heard of a child who used to lean forward so earnestly to catch every word—he told his mother it was because he had heard the preacher say that if there was a sentence in the sermon that was likely to save one soul, the devil would, if it were possible, be sure to get you to be inattentive while that was being said! Now the boy was right, and there was a great truth in it. If men did but always catch the Word of God, speaking after the manner of men, what chances there would be that that word would be blessed to them! And what a blessing it would be! Why, there may be some here tonight—for there have been such here many nights—who have come in here having had a miserable life of it up till now and their wife and children a more miserable life, still, if it is possible, for they have been frequenters of the ale-house, spending their money in riotousness. But what if they should be sobered tonight by divine grace and get new hearts and right spirits—that would be blessed hearing—blessed for the family, for the wife and children, as well as for the man himself!

There may have come in here some poor desponding men and women, ready to make away with themselves. Oh, perhaps in the hearing, tonight, the joy of the Lord may come to them and they may be saved! Many and many have found out that they were the children of God while they were hearing—found out that Christ was theirs, pardon of sin was theirs, heaven was theirs! And they would never have found it if it had not been for *hearing* it! But while they were listening, God's Holy Spirit opened their hearts to perceive and receive what had all the while been written in the Scriptures!

Oh, may it be a blessed night to some of you while you are here! Pray for it, people of God! "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Let your prayer go up that souls here may so hear the word of the gospel of salvation as being a great message from God and, therefore, may hear it with all their hearts and so listen to it that it may be salvation unto them according to the Master's promise, "Incline your ears and come unto Me: hear and your souls shall live." Now, and at somewhat greater length—

II. THE TEXT IMPLIES SOME RULES AS TO HEARING.

The text is *multum in parvo*—much in little. "Take heed how you hear," means many things. Do not be alarmed when I say that we shall have seven points under this head. That you may remember them, I have put them in the order of the alphabet.

"Take heed how you hear." That is, first, take heed that you hear *attentively*. And it will not burden your memories if I hook on to that word another like it—*retentively*—that heed that you hear attentively and retentively. I have heard of a poor idiot who was an excellent hand, idiot

though he was, at carrying messages. And the way in which he did it was to deliver the message exactly as he had it, word for word. But he had a great peculiarity. While the person told him the message, he always stood with one hand closing one of his ears—and as soon as ever he had got the message, he put the other hand up and closed the other ear so that both ears were shut—and away he ran! When asked why he did it, he said that when the message came he did not want it to get out at one ear—and then when he had received it, he shut the other ear in order that it might not get out that way! Observe, fool though he was, there was wisdom in the action. I wish there were as much wisdom in some who would not like to be called fools, for they hear the truth of God with one ear and it goes out the other! It would be well if they took care not to let it escape them. Have your ears open with keen, attentive listening—and then have both of them shut as being retentive to keep in the truth you have received. But alas, many do not even hear at all. The gospel is being preached, but they are thinking of a thousand other things. Distracting thoughts fill their minds.

We all know how hard it is for the marksman to shoot a running deer. And how difficult it must be for the preacher to strike the running judgment and the moving, restless mind that is preoccupied with other things! But if we can get the whole mind fixed on the subject before us, as it should be, then we may hope to make an impression. Do labor, dear friends, to whomever you may be listening, to put those distractions away—the thoughts of house and home and all besides, while the gospel is operating upon your minds! And when you have heard it, try to store it up and keep it there. If it is good for today, it is good for tomorrow! And if it does not bless you today in the hearing, perhaps God may bless it to you in years to come. We have read of a man who was converted through a sermon, but he heard the sermon 70 years before it was blessed to him! Mr. Flavel had preached it and the man was sitting, 70 years later, under a hedge in the United States. And he recollected that it was 70 years ago that day that he had heard the sermon—and God, then and there, blessed the sermon to him and he was saved! Hear, then, attentively and retentively!

The second point is—*hear believingly* and, as all true belief ends in practice, *hear obediently*. That which we do not accept as being true can be of no service to us, especially in the economy of divine grace—where everything comes to us by faith—and where unbelief restrains the hand of God and keeps back the blessing. Faith, however, as I have said, must always be obedient if it is true. When you have heard the Word, put it in practice at once! What a grand close to a sermon that was after Paul had preached in the streets of Ephesus, when they brought out their books of witchcraft and made a pile of them in the street and burned them before the apostle's face! Ah, it were well if men would bring out their sins, their hard thoughts of God, their fancied self-righteousness and everything

contrary to the divine will. It would be blessed preaching, and blessed hearing, if such were the result—hear believingly and obediently!

Thirdly, hear *candidly and honestly*. Too many are prejudiced against the Word; prejudiced because they do not like the preacher, though I see not why they should not accept the truth, wherever it may be found. A man would prize a jewel, though he found it on a dust heap—and the gospel of Jesus is to be valued, let who will proclaim it! Some make up their mind before they hear that they will not receive it. This is neither honest to the truth of God, nor to themselves. They show not wisdom, but folly here. But many will tell you that they cannot be expected to change their religion, as if they half-felt that if they were to think a little they must do so. Surely that religion that will not bear deep consideration must be a poor, poor thing! No, sir, but hear what is to be said! Judge it by the Word of God. Judge it honestly and when you have done so, if it is not the truth of God, cart it away to the winds! But if it is the truth of God, then accept it and may God bless it to you! It is a pity that men are not more candid in hearing the gospel and in applying it to themselves. How many, if they hear a truth of God, will say, “I wonder how that will suit so-and-so,” and immediately cast their eyes around the place to see if Mrs. so-and-so is there and wonder how she will like it. The old Roman said, “Lend me your ears,” but I may say—keep your ears at home! Hear for yourselves. Constantly this process ought to be going on in the hearer’s mind, “What has that truth to do with me? That promise—is it mine? That threat—ought it to make me tremble? That caution—does it apply to me? That command—am I the man who ought to carry it out? Oh, for such candid, personal applications of gospel truth by each hearer to himself! We should then have blessed results.

I have thus gone through three points. The fourth is—*hear devoutly and hear sincerely*. I reckon that but little good will come of the hearing which some people give when they hear of loaves and fishes being given away. If there are so many loaves to be given away on Sunday, a certain number of poor people will be sure to be there—a vile hypocrisy which cannot be too much condemned! Take heed, dear hearers that none of you ever hear with such low and sinister motives, but that you come to hear the gospel as God’s voice to us and, therefore, as in God’s presence with simple and lowly hearts, desire to know His truth that you may sincerely live it! Never should there be mixed therewith anything so gross and carnal as that which brings some men and women to the house of God.

Why, do not even some of you come merely because it is the custom to go somewhere, or because it looks respectable, as if the Lord’s own worship were to follow and honor the fashion of the day? This is all mischievous and rotten as a motive! If I did not think it were some good to me to come to worship, or that it was my duty to God to do it, do you think I would do it to please my neighbors? No! Let my neighbors please themselves! The honest, upright man in these things remembers that

religion is a *personal* thing and that to be the mere slave of fashion and custom of others is sinful degradation!

Oh, I beseech you lay aside that slavery of men's fashion! And when you do listen to the gospel, let it be with a direct and devout feeling in your soul that you have come to worship God and to hear what the Lord God shall speak to you!

I will not stay on any one point and, therefore, pass on to observe take heed that you hear *earnestly* and, therefore, *spiritually*. Some men get no blessing from the gospel, but who wonders that they do not? They never put their hearts into it. Oh, I think if I were this night under conviction of sin and were seeking a Savior, I would listen with all my heart and soul to the preaching of Jesus Christ! Have you not known times, some of you, when you would have stood in the aisles by the hour to hear of Christ, if perchance you might have got rid of the burden of your sins? Ah, these are the men that get the blessing! But those who are half asleep and in their minds quite asleep, are not likely to receive the Word. How can it come to them with power? What probability is there that it will, when they themselves care not whether it will or not?

And then, dear friends—coming to the letter “F”—take care that you hear *feelingly*, asking the Lord to make the Word cut into your souls! Those get the blessing in whom the Word plows a furrow—not those to whom it is like whipping the water, no impression being made but for an instant. Oh, pray God that you may not get gospel-hardened! Ask Him to make you tender under all threats and to keep you like a well-plowed field that is ready to receive the good seed when it is scattered upon it! Try if you can, and may God's Holy Spirit help you to be warned under the threats, to be cheered by the promises, to be comforted by every good Word of the Lord so that, feeling the power of the Word, it may be life and salvation to you!

Again, “take heed how you hear,” and mind that you hear *gratefully and prayerfully*. It is a privilege beyond all price to live in a land of Bibles, to be brought where the gospel is proclaimed. Thank God for it. Do not be indifferent, lest He take the candlestick out of its place and leave you in the dark. Hear prayerfully! I wish it were a habit with you, when you get home, to take a few minutes in a quiet room and pray for a blessing upon what has been heard. We might expect to see great results if this were your constant practice, to pray after your hearing—and even before—to get the ground ready! And when the seed is sown, to rake it and water it, so that it may have congenial soil in which to take root. Ah, but how many come to hear the gospel and then, all the way home, get into some idle company after the service and whatever Word of God might have been blessed, fails to produce any result, for the evil birds of the air have devoured the seed that fell upon such a hard highway!

May God give you grace to put in practice these seven hints that I have given you. “Take heed how you hear.” And now, lastly, there are—

III. CERTAIN OBVIOUS REASONS FOR TAKING HEED HOW YOU HEAR.

And the first is *because it is God's Word*. Not everything that I say, or that any minister says, is God's Word. Hence you should take heed to separate between what is God's and what is ours. But wherein we speak according to Holy Scripture, it is as much God's Word as if God Himself spoke. And let me remind you that God's Word, whoever speaks it, is a much more solemn matter than a king's word! Where the word of a king is, there is power, but where the Word of God is, though a boy should speak it, there is irresistible power! It is better for you to hear God's Word from your fellow men than it would be to hear it from an angel, for God would have employed angels on such messages if they had been better. But because men can enter with greater sympathy into your feelings, God has not given this ministry unto angels, but has "committed unto us the word of reconciliation." It is better for you to hear it from us than it would be to hear it from one who should rise from the dead, for if not, God would bid them rise from the dead and preach to you. But remember, He would not send any from the dead to preach to Dive's kinsmen.

He said, "They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them." I will go further and say it is better for you to hear the Word of God from a poor preacher than it is to hear it from God, Himself, for men did hear it from God, Himself at Sinai, and they prayed that He would no more speak with them, for the voice was too terrible. "You cannot see God's face and live," but in tender mercy He speaks through the lips of one like yourselves, who has passed through your sinnership, has fled to Jesus and can speak from living experience. Therefore "take heed how you hear," for though it is but a man that speaks, it is more than a king, or an angel, or one risen from the dead! It is, after all, the voice of God, the King of kings, speaking through His ambassador—therefore despise it not!

"Take heed how you hear" *because it is most precious truth which is proclaimed—truth which may save your soul!* The only chance, my unconverted hearer that you have of heaven lies in the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ! Do you know the story? God became man that He might suffer what was due for human sin. And whoever trusts in Jesus Christ, the substitute for sinners, shall be saved! If you rely simply and entirely upon Him, you shall live! Now, that is the gospel. If ever you shall enter heaven, it shall be through that gate. If ever you have true peace, it will be through that precious balm of Gilead. I beseech you, then, despise it not! This treasure is better than gold! No mention shall be made of coral or jewel in comparison with it. Oh, come and buy it without money and without price! But trifle not in that sacred market of a preached gospel in which alone you can buy the salvation of your soul!

Take heed how you hear, *because it is by this gospel that you will be judged*. Paul says that Christ will judge the world and he adds, "according to my gospel." The gospel! The gospel! You have heard that

word till you have grown sick of it, but you shall see that word pointing the sword of justice if you despise it! When God stands and holds out mercy to sinners, if they reject it, surely their destruction shall be the more severe! Oh, my dear hearers, if you understand the gospel of Jesus, I beseech you to so act towards it that you may not be afraid when the big books are opened and the thundering voice of the judge shall read out the history of your life and shall pronounce your final and eternal destiny!

Take heed how you hear, for *many who heard the gospel once are now among the lost*. Terrible reflection! These pews have held some whose spirits are now forever banished from hope! Take heed how you hear, for you may be sitting in such a seat—the successor of such an one—and you, also, may tread in his footsteps, despise the truth of God and so die without hope!

Take heed how you hear, for *there are many nearing the end who will hear no more*.

Among the regrets that too often make dying such stern and crushing work is this, “I knew the gospel, but I did it not. I was told of Christ, but I never trusted Him. I was pressed and persuaded and prayed to give my heart up to Him, but I put off a decision until now! My last few hours have come and ‘tis enough for me to be thinking of the pain I suffer! I have no time to think upon eternal things and do such weighty business with a God who has now come so near to me, dressed in robes of wrath!” Oh, as you will prize your Sabbaths when they are over. As you will value the sermons when you cannot listen to any more of them, think well of them, now, and make this resolution—and God help you to make it in His strength—that you will never again read the Bible, or listen to gospel preaching or gospel talking, without the solemn desire of your whole soul that it may be made a saving blessing to you, that you may not perish while hearing the Word!

Oh, I pray you take heed how you hear, for *there are many in heaven now who never could have been there if they had not heard the Word*. And they were such as you are! Then why should not you find the way there by the same road which they, though wayfaring men, were able to tread without mistake? Children, recollect that—

***“Many dear children are gathering there,
For of such is the kingdom of heaven.”***

There are children in heaven who were saved by hearing the Word in the Sunday school, saved by listening to it from this platform when they were but boys and girls! Dear children, may you trust Jesus and become lambs in His flock. Young men and maidens, there are multitudes of your age who are among the choristers of the skies, making eternal melody before the great white throne, and they came there by hearing of the name of Jesus and trusting in Him! Will you not follow them? They were taken from you—some of you remember them when they died—you sat side by side with them in the class one Sunday, and the next Sunday they were in heaven! Or you watched them fading slowly, like lilies

broken a little at the stalk, and at last they withered. No, they withered not, except to our poor eyes, for they bloomed anew in heaven!

Will you not bloom there, too? If so, listen to the word of Jesus and, above all, accept it, and accept it now! Trust Him whose hands were pierced! Rest in Him whose heart was smitten with a spear! He will save you! He rejects none who yield to Him—yield to Him now! And you, you men of business, 'tis hard work to get you away a little while from the desk and ledger, you are so absorbed and eaten up with many of the business cares of life! And you, working man, so apt to close your ears to anything about another world—yet hear me! There are merchants like yourselves and working men like yourselves who stand among the white-robed host and rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory! They are there, and if you ask them how, they will tell you that they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! They found that precious blood by listening to the gospel with attentive ears, and will you not be found there? Oh, what will it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? Sirs, it will be bad business if you make ten thousand pounds and forever ruin your souls! It will be hard business, you working men, if you toil on, and on, and on, bricklaying and carpentering, and I know not what besides, and yet throw away your souls, your immortal natures! I beseech you, by every grain of sense you have, and all the wits that are within your brains, be wise and trifle not with your souls—your better part, your immortal part! As for your body, the worms will eat it, do what you may with it! But your soul—oh, I pray God that no undying worm may ever feed on that, but may you escape from that danger, safely be sheltered in Christ Jesus and be eternally blessed in Him!

I have given you good enough reasons, then, for taking heed how you hear, but what is needed, is not reasons, but reason, or better still—grace, the grace of God! What is needed is not more argument, but the willingness to yield to those already felt. Oh, yield now to the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus! Look to Him and be saved, I pray you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 TIMOTHY 2: 1-14.**

Verse 1. *You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.* This is an exhortation to every one of us, not only to have grace, but to be strong in it. There are many professors who as long as they are just saved, are content. We are not content with being barely alive spiritually—we do not wish to spend our life shivering with cold, but we seek after comfort as well as existence—and we seek to be in health, as well as to be in life. So should it be with the Christian. He should pray, “Lord, make me strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” Oh, that these words might be not merely an exhortation, but a divine fiat, that as God said, “Let there be light,” so He may say to His children, “Be you

strong,” and then oh, how soon shall the weakest of us leap into immortal strength!

2. *And the things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit you to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.* So then, there is to be a succession of teachers in the church, and these do ill who are always speaking against the ministry of God. Timothy receives his ministry from Paul—he is to commit it to faithful men and these are to hold it in custody to teach to others. But there are some who say that all Christians should be teachers. To which we answer, if the whole body were a mouth, where is the ear? The mouth is, after all, but a vacuum. If the whole body was a mouth, there would be no body at all! If all are to be shepherds, who are to be the sheep? If all are to sow, where are we to find the ground? No, brothers and sisters, we must be careful to pray God to continue the ministry in our midst, for without it we miss many blessings. “The same commit you to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

3. *You therefore endure hardships, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* If you desire delicacy, join not the army. A soldier’s calling is not to be linked with softness—and if you desire ease and comfort, join not the army of Christ, for a Christian’s profession and these go not together!

4. *No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.* So Timothy, as a Christian minister, is to act as the Roman soldier did! It was a law in Rome that no soldier was to plead in court for another as a lawyer, or to act in business for another as a bailiff, or to have anything to do, while a soldier, with either husbandry or merchandise. And so should it be with the men of God who have to preach the Word—and every Christian, indeed! Though he meddles with common things, he is to take care that he is not entangled by them, not to be caught, as it were, as game is entangled in a net. There is a way, you know, of making the actions of common life subservient to the purposes of divine grace. This is the Christian’s business—let him take care that he is not entangled with the cares of this life.

5. *And also, if a man competes in athletics, he is not crowned except he strives lawfully.* There were rules in the Grecian games. When they struck each other, the blow was not to be given except upon a certain part of the body, and if a man fought unlawfully, he could not get the prize. So there are laws, too, for the Christian ministry and also holy regulations for the great wrestling of Christians.

6. *The farmer that labors must be first partaker of the fruits.* This is a law. No man has any right to be a partaker at all till he has first tasted of the fruits of the field. Until we have first tasted that the Lord is gracious, we cannot effectively or properly minister the things of God.

7, 8, 9. *Consider what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel. Wherein I suffer trouble, as an*

evildoer, even unto bonds. But the Word of God is not bound. See how the apostle comforts himself! Here he is in prison, but the truth of God is free! He sits with the chains about his wrists, but the Word of God travels from nation to nation, from continent to continent, like the free spirit that dwells in it!

10. *Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Not that the sufferings of Paul had anything meritoriously to do with the salvation of the elect, but that by his earnest striving and suffering, the word of the gospel was brought to their hearing—faith, then, came by hearing—and so they were saved.*

11, 12, 13. *It is a faithful saying: For if we are dead with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself. Glory be to God, the unbelief of man cannot make God break His promises! Christian, all your unbelief has not made God unfaithful to you! And sinner, though you cast out the promises of God as being good for nothing, yet He will not therefore raise the recompense of reward, for Jesus will save others if He saves not you. "He abides faithful."*

14. *Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. There are some Christians who want to have this exhortation given to them in these days, for they are always striving about words to no profit. Beware of these men, if you would not have your faith staggered!*

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“GRACE AND GLORY”

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“The Lord will give grace and glory.”
Psalm 84:11.

IT is very wise to look within ourselves to discover our own weakness and spiritual poverty, but it is very unwise to be always dwelling upon that weakness and poverty—and to forget that our strength does not lie there, nor are our riches to be found within ourselves! Let us look within to be humbled, but not to be made unbelieving. Look within, so as to be driven from all confidence in ourselves, but never so as to shake our absolute confidence in God. Our text, as it were, beckons us away from seeking the living among the dead, calling us up from searching for precious jewels amid dross and refuse, but directs us to the living God Himself—the overflowing fountain of every good thing, our Father whose arm is not shortened that it cannot save, and whose ear is not heavy that He cannot hear us tonight! He—He—Jehovah, Himself, the infinite, eternal, everlasting, inimitable *I AM*—*He* will give grace and glory, so that though you may think you have no grace, He will give it to you, and though you may fear that you shall never obtain glory, yet He can and will bestow it upon you! He will give grace and glory. The very first word of the text, I say, is a taking us away from leaning upon the broken reeds of our own self-reliance and a calling us away to the rock of our salvation, where we may rest with security!

“He will *give* grace and glory.” That word, “*give*,” also takes us off from our natural legality of self-trust. I think that we are all very apt to go back to the bondage of Mount Sinai. We are like those foolish Galatians! We are often “bewitched,” so that we do not obey the truth of God, but, having begun in the Spirit, we seek to be made perfect in the flesh and, being saved already by faith, we often try to be perfected by the works of the law!

“Tis strange, ‘tis passing strange, ‘tis amazing,” that after having felt the whip of legal bondage, we should wish to go back to the brick kilns of Egypt and to be slaves once more! The text says, “He will *give* grace and glory,” which is the very opposite of wages and puts us on the footing of grace and not on the footing of debt. Oh, it is a blessed thing to see a finger from the sky thus beckoning us away from underneath the quaking mountain, where even Moses confessed that he did altogether fear and quake! It is a blessed thing to be set free from the thunder and lightning, and the voice as of a trumpet, and to be brought to the blood

which speaks better things than that of Abel, and to hear God speaking concerning His great and unspeakable gifts to us!

Now, in the spirit of these two thoughts, let us come to this text, which is very simple, extremely simple, but which is also exceedingly full of comfort if the Lord shall apply it to our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

There are just two great and splendid gifts that God here declares He will bestow. First *the gift of grace*, and then next, *the gift of glory*. We will take the first gift first in our meditations—

I. GOD WILL GIVE GRACE.

To whom will He give grace? Broadly understood, we may say that *He will give grace to His own chosen ones*. So is it in the covenant of grace. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So, then, it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” Grace is a most sovereign thing. God has the right to give it where He pleases and He takes care that the sovereignty shall be seen. Some of His chosen ones have gone afar into sin, but He gives them grace, for all that. Some of them may be on the very verge of destruction and come to the last hour of life—but still, He will give them grace—and there is not one upon whom His electing love has set the broad arrow of the kingdom, marking that man to be a vessel of mercy, who shall pass away without receiving divine grace! This is a broad statement and though there are some that cavil at it, yet rest assured that it is the truth of God!

Another statement we may also make as broadly, namely, that *He will give grace to all those who were specially redeemed by Christ*. As many as Christ has redeemed and purchased by His blood, shall be His, for we hear Him say, “The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” Christ loved His church and gave Himself for it. The chosen are spoken of in this manner, “These are they who are redeemed from among men,” and although the redemption of Christ has its universal aspect very plainly taught in God’s Word, and I hope we shall never try to take away the force of those universal passages—yet there is a special redemption besides. “He is the Savior of all men,” says the apostle, “especially of them that believe.” Now, that special redemption is of such a kind that to all those who are concerned in it, He will give grace. Not one whom Christ has thus redeemed from among men shall perish! Not one of His own blood-bought sheep shall be devoured by the wolf. Not one member of that body of His shall be maimed. Not one part of His bride, the church, shall be destroyed! To every one of these, it is quite certain, He will give divine grace!

And although some think that these two truths of God are not practical, yet are they eminently so, for this, among other things, is one practical result—that we preach with holy confidence, with quiet confidence, that our preaching cannot be in vain since we do not cast the net at a chance, but believe that God will fill it and that when the gospel is preached, it must be the savor of life unto life to many!

“Other sheep have I,” said Christ, “who are not of this fold: them also must I bring,” and therefore do we preach, because they must be brought!

As the farmer sows the corn broadcast, with all the freer hand because he knows there is a predestined harvest, even so do we. And as a fisherman who should have a divine promise that he must catch fish would throw in the net and toil all night cheerfully because he knew he could not labor in vain, so is it with us. We know that if we are steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, this is our comfort—that our labor is not in vain in the Lord! “He shall see His seed! He shall prolong His days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands.” I take the expression of the text, then, without qualification—He will give grace.

But now, coming to ourselves—for we cannot tell, except by marks and evidences, who are those chosen and who are those specially redeemed—it may be said that the Lord will give grace to *every believing soul*. If you will put your whole reliance upon the atonement of Christ, He will give grace to you. Though your faith should be so slender that it seems to you to be nothing but a bruised reed, He will not break your faith, but He will give you grace—and though the spiritual life should seem to be so dim as to be nothing but as smoking flax, He will not quench it, but will give grace. If you believe, though it is with the faith of despondency, you shall have divine grace! If you rest in Christ, though there should be much fear and much mistrust mingled with your reliance, yet He will give grace. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” It says nothing as to how much he believes, nor how little—“He that calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” It does not say how loud he is to call, but if his call is never so faint, yet if he does but call, He shall have grace! “Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” It does not say whether he comes walking, or running, or crawling—if he does but come—he shall not be cast out! If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then of you it shall be said, “The Lord will give grace.”

The same may be said to *every repenting sinner*. If you abhor your sin, if you resolve in God’s strength to give it up, if the sweetness has turned to bitterness, if it is like gravel between your teeth, then He will give you grace, for when you are thoroughly sick of sin and self, then will He give you grace to joy and rejoice in Christ!

The same shall be said of *all those who are prayerful*. He will give grace to all who seek it with earnest hearts through the Savior. At the mercy seat, whether you are a saint or sinner, if you draw near to God in sincere prayer, He has already given you some grace and He will give you more. Every time that you go to God with true-hearted confidence in prayer, put this before you emblazoned in letters of gold, “He will give grace.”

You shall not find that you wait upon God in vain, for He has not said in secret or dark places of the earth, “Seek you My face in vain.” He will, to every prayerful one, give grace.

I might continue these instances as to different characters, but rest assured, dear friend, if you are a believer, and you use prayer and repentance, you shall find His promise true *in all your conditions*. If you go forth to work for God, He will give grace. In the vineyard you shall find Him furnishing you with tools, yes, and giving you strength equal to your day. He will give grace. And if you are laid aside from active service and made to toss to and fro upon the bed that grows harder every hour till the skin is broken and the bed becomes a misery, still He will give grace. Perhaps you are untried at suffering, but He will give you grace. Perhaps you are naturally of an impatient spirit—wait upon Him—He knows how to bring your spirit down one way and lift it up another! He will give grace.

Thus might I continue to take the text from its absolute sense and apply it to all the characters that are pictured in God’s Word as having a part and lot in the blessedness of salvation—and we may say of each of these, “He will give grace.”

But to turn the subject a moment, let us ask *what grace will God give?*

He will give all manner of grace. There is grace not only in fullness, but in all variety treasured up in Christ Jesus. As our needs are many, so the forms in which grace blesses us are many and He will give grace in all these forms! Do you mourn tonight your ignorance of the deep things of God? Do you feel yourself to be like a little child studying His A. B. C. book in God’s great school? Then if you want to understand with all saints what are the heights and breadths, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, He will give you grace! He will give *grace to instruct*. He will make you to know even as you are known. He shall give you His Holy Spirit who shall lead you into all the truths of God and take of the things of Christ and show them to you. He will give *instructing* grace!

Perhaps tonight you are in some great dilemma. There is one difficulty on the right aide and another on the left. There are mountains behind and the rolling sea in front, and you say, “What shall I do?” “Stand still and see the salvation of God,” for He will give you *delivering* grace. If He does not give you money to fill your purse, He will give you grace to help you to bear your poverty. If He does not give you health to bring you off your sickbed, He will give you grace to make your bed in all your suffering, so that you shall bear it and yet rejoice in the Lord always! He will give grace. If you will only wait, you shall have *directing* grace. You shall hear a voice near you, saying, “This is the way; walk you in it.” If you will do as David did when he said, “Bring here the ephod”—that was in order that he might ask of God’s priests what he should do—if you will wait until Christ, God’s great High Priest, takes the sacred Urim and Thummim, He shall be pleased to send the light of God into your soul and you shall have directing grace to guide you on your way! “He that

trusts in his own heart is a fool, but He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.”

But you need, dear friends, perhaps at this moment, not so much instruction and direction as comfort. It may be you are feeling greatly depressed. Your spirits have sunk very low, indeed. Well, He will give you grace. The doctor can give medicine, but God can give grace! A dram of grace is often better than a pound of what the world can give in the form of cordials. Oh, what blessed revivals of spirit God can give to His downcast ones!

I think it is one of the delights of the Spirit of God to comfort mourners. I know it is, for He might, if He had pleased, have taken the name of the instructor, and Jesus might have spoken of Him as the quickener, but yet it is so blessed to recollect that He did not do so, but that the name of the Comforter was especially His because we need most His comfort to strengthen and fortify us for all life’s endurances. We need most the comfort of the Holy Spirit and that is His main business, His gracious occupation—that in which He most delights to act—to comfort all that are tried and mourn!

When a man has many titles, he will naturally choose to be best known by the one which he likes best. And the Holy Spirit uses this name of the Comforter, though He has many more names besides. Oh, you, then, who are troubled and distracted, tossed with tempest and not comforted, Jesus comes, and He says, “He will give you grace,” and if He does this, you need not wish to have your trouble removed, but, like Paul, be quite satisfied with the gracious promise, “My grace is sufficient for you.”

Possibly, however, dear friend, you are *not* troubled tonight. Beware of that! Be thankful and pray that you may not be. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” But it is possible that you now need grace to lead you to make advances in *inward sanctification*—and though this may seem very difficult to you in the position in which you are placed, and burdened as you are with your inward corruptions, yet He will give grace! You have a bad temper? Down with it! “I cannot,” you say. But He will give grace. You have a proud spirit. Away with it! “I cannot conquer it,” you say. He will give grace. You have grown cold of late and lukewarm—you must be revived—you must recover from this backsliding. You say, “How?” He will give grace! Grace is the one thing that is needed to put the Christian into a healthy state of soul! And the promise of the Lord which we are using tonight—and repeating so often in your ears—is just to the point—He will give divine grace. You must never say you cannot be as holy as so-and-so. Never tell me you cannot grow to be as patient as Job, or as believing as Abraham. Job received his patience and Abraham received his believing from God! He is not straitened in His gifts to us. He is as ready to enrich us as He was to enrich those ancient ones. Go to Him with child-like confidence, with this in your mouth, “He will give grace.”

Now, it is not possible for me to state the case of every one of my brothers and sisters now present. You may be lacking in strength or protection, or you may be needing correction and rebuke—but whatever your great need, His grace will meet it and so the promise is suitable to every one of us, “He will give grace.” Come, you poor Hannah, you whose lips move in silent prayer because of some very painful domestic affliction. Tell the Lord what it is! There may be no change in your circumstances, but oh, if He gives you grace, it will seem very different from what it was!

Man of business, you have come here tonight having passed through a world of trouble during the day. You cannot get it out of your mind and somehow you cannot see how the Lord can alter it. Well, He may not, but He will give you divine grace and then the difference will be marvelous!

Thus might I select the trouble of each one, but I am sure that whatever the wound is, this plaster will just fit it. The world’s comfort is described by one of the prophets thus, “The bed is shorter than that a man may stretch himself upon it, and the covering is too narrow for him to wrap himself in it.” Ah, it is not so with my text! Now, stretch yourselves, you that have big troubles. “*He will give grace,*” is a bed quite long enough for you! Now, then, you that are most naked and deprived of warmth—rap this around you—surely this will set your soul a glow—“He will give grace.”

“All necessary grace will God bestow.”

Perhaps you are shivering tonight at the thought of the greatest enemy of all, namely, death! And as you are getting old, perhaps you fear his approach. Well, but friend, He will give grace and though you must die, yet grace will enable you to go through the Jordan singing in its utmost depths, triumphing in the grace which will surely bring you safe to the other side! He will give grace—grace of all sorts to those who earnestly seek it.

But now, again—still shifting the kaleidoscope a little—taking the same thought only putting it in other lights. *In what manner will God give grace?*

Well, dear friends, *He will give it sufficiently.* He will give you as much grace as you need, though certainly none to spare. Each man shall have his omer full of manna every day. There shall be no lack in the Lord’s camp! There shall be abundant grace for abundant temptation or trial. And for those who are in many trials, there shall be grace yet superabundant!

The Lord will give His grace *seasonably.* It shall always come just when we need it—

**“He is never before His time,
He is never behind.”**

Whenever your testing or trouble shall come, your grace shall come, too, and when you arrive at the spot where you will have to put your back down to the burden, there shall the grace be given that will strengthen your back to bear the load! You shall not meet with abounding grace

when you do not require it, but just as your days, so shall your strength be.

God will also send this grace of His *readily*. You shall not have to tug and strain to get it. You shall not have to labor and toil to win it. It shall drop upon you like honey falling from the comb! It shall come as freely to you as the water bubbles up from the great spring. He will be a very present help in time of trouble and be glad to deliver you—as glad to deliver you as you are to be delivered!

And the grace shall come to you *constantly*—not fitfully and only sometimes, but at all times; by night and by day. God shall never cease to bless you, for His mercy endures forever—

“At home or abroad, on the land and the sea,

As your days shall demand, shall your strength always be.”

If the earth should forget the covenant which God made for it with the sun and moon. If seedtime and harvest, and summer and winter should pass away, as they must in the general conflagration, yet still the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but the covenant of His grace shall not depart from you! Grace shall come to you constantly.

But remember one thing. It will come to you *mediately*, that is to say, not direct from God immediately, but mediately through Christ. You shall get your grace from Him in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell. And, in another sense, you shall get it mediately through the use of means. “For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” He will give grace, but you must pray for it! He will give grace, but you must search the Scriptures to find it! He will give grace, but you must observe gospel ordinances—you must not be negligent of baptism or the Lord’s Supper! He will give grace, but you must listen to the Word, and hear, and your souls shall live! He will give grace, but you must get into communion with God and draw near to Him—have your times of quiet retirement, of still meditation, for although the Lord makes the conduit head to flow unto the marketplace, yet He expects His people to bring their pitchers there to get them filled! Though He spreads the table, yet He does not force the food into our mouths! We must come to the table and eat of the dainties which He has prepared. He is very liberal and gracious. Oh, be not straitened in yourselves, for you need never be straitened in Him! So we come back to the text. He will give grace, but we must take care that we go to Him for it in His own appointed way.

But now to close upon this first promised blessing: *Who is it will give grace?* This brings us back in a circle to the spot from which we started. “He will give grace.” Oh, I want so to make each believer cling to his God! He will give grace. You will not get grace from out of yourselves! It will never spring up within us apart from God. He will give grace. You will not get grace merely by using the means of grace, as some do mechanically and who feel quite satisfied when they have had their morning prayer, or have been to the public service, if there is one, and have read their Bible chapter, and so on, their hearts being really asleep all the time. No! You

must go to God, for it is He who gives grace and no one else can! And what a blessing it is that you do not need anyone to help you to come to Him! You can approach Him yourselves, through Jesus Christ! And He has promised, not by a priest, nor by any means of that kind, but by Himself, to give you grace, so that you, tonight, who have not any grace, if you come to God, you will get it! You will not get it by working and praying, and I do not know what, all in themselves, but if your mind can get right to the invisible God and ask Him for grace, He will give it! Depend upon it; no man ever did sincerely seek the grace of God but that, sooner or later, he had it. A man may be a long time seeking and he may anxiously look and not discover what he needs, but though the promise tarry, wait for it—it will come! God is faithful to His promise and He will in due time answer your prayers, for there it is on record, “He will give grace.” Do not blot the promise out of your heart, poor soul, but cling and hang on to it! As a drowning man clings and hangs on to a plank, so do you to this divine assertion, “He will give grace.”

May the Lord apply those remarks, and now let us say a few words upon the second great promise—

II. HE WILL GIVE GLORY.

He will “give grace and glory.” That word, “and,” seems very little as we hear it. It is nothing but a very common conjunction which is used so plentifully that it seems to carry no meaning in it at all! But in this case we would not take ten thousand pounds for these three letters which make this little word, “and.” “The Lord will give grace *and* glory.” Why, He has riveted the two things together—grace and glory! There are many who would like to take that diamond rivet out, but they cannot. The Lord does not say that He will give grace and perdition. He does not say, on the other hand, that He will give glory without first giving grace. He has put the two together—and what God has joined together let no man put asunder!

If we have grace, we shall as surely have glory, for the two are tied up in one bundle. These are twin stars that shine together and if you have shared His grace, then His glory cannot be denied. Grace shall flower into glory as the bulb in the blossom! Grace shall rise as the fountain and glory shall be its spreading river!

If we possess the grace, we shall not perish, but if we have it not, we must perish and never know the glory! It is not possible that those shall be glorified who have not first of all been justified, and then sanctified—and where grace does not reign in our hearts we shall not reign in heaven!

“He will give grace and glory.” Now, the glory that He shall give—oh, that we had the power to see it and to understand it! Eye has not seen, the ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God has prepared for them that love Him! But He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit, “That we may search all things, even the deep things of God.” We do, therefore, know a little of what that glory is. The eye does not, the ear does not, but the

enlightened soul taught of the Spirit of God does know what the glory will be. So far as this we know, that the glory which we who have obtained grace are to receive is *the glory of heaven*—whether heaven may be a place or a state, or both, as is most probable! Whatever may be meant by the streets of shining gold, the gates of pearl, the walls of jasper, chalcedony, and sapphire. Whatever may be indicated by crowns, and palms, and harps of gold—whatever may be meant by the river of the water of life and trees that bear twelve manners of fruits—all this in perfection is the inheritance of those who have grace in their hearts! Oh, you shall have the harps, you shall wave the palms, and you shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God! If there are degrees in glory, as some say, yet this thing is very certain, that the very least of the saints will have glory—and I do not see how the very greatest could have more.

The very meanest, the very doorkeepers, if such there should be in the house of the Lord above, will have glory! And I am sure we can say of heaven that if we may but have the lowest place there, we will bless the Lord to all eternity! The glory that God can give is the glory of heaven!

In the next place, it is *the glory of eternity*. Eternity! Oh, when we begin to speak of that word we know not how to speak! Eternity! Eternity! Eternity! It must expound itself. We are always confusing it with time, and speak of the “countless ages of eternity” as though there were any “ages,” or could be anything like counting in eternity at all, which is of unending duration! Now, the glory which Christ is to give us will be such a glory as that. It will never know a pause, never draw near to a conclusion, never decline and we shall never grow weary of it—nor will it be weary of us. It is the glory of eternity!

Further, brothers and sisters, we are told by the Lord that the glory which He will give to His people is *the glory of Christ*. “The glory which you gave Me I have given them.” Can you conceive how glorious Christ is, not only in His nature originally, but now that He has obtained as a reward, a seat upon His Father’s throne and at His Father’s right hand? Brothers and sisters, whatever glory Jesus may have, He will share it with us, when we shall be like He and when we shall see Him as He is. It is the glory of Christ!

And hence, to crown all, *it is the glory of the Father Himself*, for Christ partakes in His Father’s glory, and even so shall we! Does not your heart long and pant to know by actual enjoyment what this glory is? Oh, to get away from looking in the mirror and to have a view of Christ’s face! To have the clouds and mists all swept away, and in the serene atmosphere of heaven to behold the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off!

Why, this glory is *the glory of perfect nature*—spotless, sinless, incorruptible—a body that can know no weakness, or sickness, or decay! A soul that will not be capable of temptation, that cannot be fretted by care, nor distracted by trouble!

It is *the glory of victory*. The glory which God will give His people is the glory of bruising Satan under his feet shortly, the glory of seeing the arrows and the bow, the sword and the shield of the devil forever broken in pieces! The glory of seeing all the hosts of hell confounded and put to the blush eternally by every one of the saints in whom Christ shall reign forever!

It is *the glory of perfect rest*, perfect happiness and perfect security. It is the glory of the foot upon the rock, with the new song in the mouth and the goings established! It is the glory of the blessed. He who knows what it is when the whole soul shall be as full of happiness as it can hold, shall float, swim, dive and plunge into seas of heavenly rest! It is when it shall not be possible for a man to have a wish ungratified, nor a desire unfulfilled! It is where every power shall find ample employment without weariness, and every passion shall have full indulgence without so much as a fear of sin—

***“Oh, happy hour, oh, blest abode,
I shall be near and like my God!
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy!”***

Do you not again say, “Why are His chariots so long in coming?” Why do You delay, beloved? Be You as a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Beza!

And now, to close. The text says, “He will *give* glory.” So, then, although glory is a reward and is often called so, yet still it is a gift! The rewards of grace are of grace. They are not legal rewards given to us because we deserve them. As one says, Christ first gives His servants grace to serve Him, and then rewards them as if they had served Him in their own strength, though their service, indeed, is His work in them rather than their work for Him! It is a gift then. There is not a soul in heaven that is there by merit. There is not a note of self-righteousness to mar the song of free grace before the throne of God! It is all love, undeserved love, love without limit, love to be extolled throughout eternity!

But it says that He will give glory. Now, *when will He give it?* Ah, would not some of us like to know! If we could get a hold of some prophetic work that would tell us when we were, all of us, going to get this glory, I am sure we should pay the price with great readiness and cheerfulness. But we would be very unwise in so doing—and he is the wisest man who says—

***“My God I would not wish to see
My fate with curious eyes.”***

It is enough for you, Christian, that you will have glory! And I will tell you one thing—you will have it before seventy years’ time. There is very little probability with any one of you who have grown up to manhood or womanhood, that there will be a single exception to that statement! Well, that is not long, and that is the outside! Some of you will have it very soon. Ah, we should not wonder if it came to you before this year of grace has gone that you will have reached the land of glory! Others may be

spared a little longer, but what is the difference in the time? It really seems to be no measurement at all. Life is only a span at the longest, and but a span even at the shortest—that it is much the same as compared with eternity. When we do but get to heaven, we shall wonder that we thought anything about time at all. An hour with our God will make up for all its troubles. Yes, I suppose that but one *sight* of Christ will take away all the taste of the bitters of life from our mouths forever! We shall wonder how we ever could have fretted and worried ourselves with such little things as they were—such insignificant trifles and how these light afflictions which were but for a moment and are not worthy to be compared to the eternal weight of glory—could have exercised such a depressing influence upon our spirits at times! If we could blush in heaven, surely we would blush to think that we have been so impatient with tarrying a little while here!

When shall we come to this glory? Well, we shall come to it *when our work is done*. We shall not be kept out of the wage a moment after it is earned. We shall come to glory when we are ripe for it. When the fruit is mellow, the farmer will gather it in. Some grow mellow soon, but some are naturally sour and they need to be long in the mellowing. We shall get to heaven when we have really been tried in the furnace till there is no more need for the trying—when we have passed through the last crucible and have come out of it wholly sanctified—the process being complete.

This much we know that we shall go to heaven just when God has *purposed it*. The devil himself, with all the hosts of hell, cannot keep us back a moment longer than that! We shall go there just when heaven will be most heaven to us. We shall go there just when we should have chosen to go ourselves, if we had had the wisdom of God to choose for us. We shall go there just when Christ will be ready to welcome us and when we shall know that He has prepared a place for us. Let us be patient awhile then. Only let us hang hard upon this gracious promise, putting the Lord frequently in mind of it, “He will give grace and glory.”

Now, brothers and sisters, one more remark. If the Lord does give grace and glory to some of your friends, do not quarrel with Him about it. He said He would, and when He does, why should we complain? Did you ever see two persons praying against each other? Can you suppose such a thing as a believer praying for one thing and Christ praying for another? Now, listen to them. There is a believer praying over a friend, “Oh, God, spare him! Spare him, I pray You, I beseech You, I entreat You! Spare him and let him yet live here.” Listen! There is Christ praying, too, and He says, “Father, I will that they, also, which You have given Me, should be with Me where I am.” The believer wants his friends to be with him where he is! But Christ says, “Where I am.” Now, when Christ’s prayers and our prayers cross each other in this way, I put it to *you*, which shall win? When we pull one way and Christ pulls the other, what shall our choice be? Surely we shall say, “Oh, Lord Jesus, I would not

compete with You for a moment! No, You have a dearer claim upon my friend than I have, for You have bought him with Your precious blood.”

It is hard to part, but let them go! If He has given your dear children, or your friends, or your partners in life, grace now, when He proceeds to give them glory you may weep, for, “Jesus wept,” but you must not murmur, for that would be to deny Christ’s claim to what He has purchased with His own precious blood!

Oh, that all of you had grace that you might all have glory! Do not hope for glory without grace, but Jesus is willing to give it. Whoever trusts Him shall receive it. May it be the portion of us all, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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PENITENCE, PARDON, AND PEACE

NO. 3359

A SERMON
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“And, behold, a woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed His feet and she anointed them with the ointment.”
Luke 7:37-38.

THIS is a marvelously vivid gospel incident. Every detail is plainly and forcefully set forth, so that we can picture the scene, making it live before us, without much mental effort. And yet, in some respects, there is a great reticence, a divine delicacy, gloriously characteristic of so tender a book as the New Testament. The evangelist—“the beloved physician,” Luke—does not lay bare the minute particulars of this woman’s life’s sins, but delights to dwell rather upon the story of her penitence and its fair fruits, and so makes her to shine resplendently as a wonder of redeeming grace! The symptoms of her soul’s horrible malady he reveals in a single phrase—and that of general description—but upon the details of her gracious cure he delights to dwell.

We will consider the life of this famous penitent, as the Holy Spirit shall help us, under three heads, and notice, first, *her former character*; then, *her deed of love which showed her new character*; and, thirdly, *our Lord’s treatment of her*. Let us very briefly look at—

I. THE WOMAN’S CHARACTER, to begin with, in order that we may see the horrible pit out of which she was taken.

We do not know much about her. Romish expositors generally insist upon it that she was Mary Magdalene, but this appears to other writers to have been quite impossible. Certainly it does not seem probable that a woman possessed with seven devils should follow the trade of “a sinner.” Demoniacal possession was akin to madness and it was frequently accompanied by epilepsy. And one would think that Magdalene was fit to be a patient at an infirmary than an inmate of a reformatory. Some have even been so mistaken as to suppose this woman to have been Mary of Bethany, but this will never do. One cannot associate with the lovely household of Martha and Mary the horrible course of pollution implied in the vice which earned for this woman the special name of “a sinner.” Besides, although both women anointed our Lord, yet the place, the time,

and the manner, were all different. I need not stay to show you the difference, for that is not the point in hand.

This woman was distinguished by the title of "*a sinner*," and her touch was regarded by Simon the Pharisee as defiling. We are all sinners, but she was a sinner by profession—sin was her occupation and probably her livelihood. The name in her case had an emphatic sense which involved shame and dishonor of the worst kind. The city streets wherein she dwelt could have told you how well she deserved her name; poor fallen daughter of Eve, she had forsaken the guide of her youth, and forgotten the covenant of her God. She was one of those against whom Solomon warns young men, saying, "Her house inclines unto death, and her paths unto the dead." Yet as Rahab was saved by faith, even so was she, for grace covers even a harlot's sins!

She was *a well-known sinner*. Ill-fame had branded her so that Simon the Pharisee recognized her as one of the town's unhallowed sisterhood. Her way of life was common town talk—persons of decent character would not associate with her—she was cut off from respectable society and, like a leper, put outside the camp of social life. She was a sinner marked and labeled. There was no mistaking her—infamy had set its seal upon her.

She was one who had evidently *gone a great way in sin*, because our Savior, who was far from being prejudiced against her, as Simon was, and never uttered a word that would exaggerate the evil in anyone, yet spoke of "her sins which are many." She loved much, for much had been forgiven. She was the five hundred pence debtor as compared with Simon, who owed but fifty. It is not difficult to imagine her unhappy story because that story is so commonly repeated around us. We know not how she was first led into evil ways. Perhaps her trustful heart was deceived by flattering words and promises. Perhaps the treachery of one too dearly loved led her into sin and afterwards deserted her to loneliness and shame. Perhaps her mother's heart was broken and her father's head was bowed down with sorrow, but she became bold enough to pursue the sin into which she had at first been betrayed and became the decoyer of others. That long hair of hers, I fear, is rightly called by Bishop Hall, "the net which she was known to spread to catch her amorous companions." She was a sinner of the city in which she dwelt and, though her name is not mentioned, it was far too well known in her own day. She had lived an evil life we know not how long, but, certainly, she had greatly sinned, for her own flowing tears, as well as the Savior's estimate of her life, prove that she had been no ordinary offender. Let equal sinners be encouraged to go to Jesus as she did!

But *all her sin was known to Jesus*. I mention this, not at all as a fact you do not know, but as one which any trembling sinner may do well to remember. If you have fallen into the same vice in a greater or lesser degree, whether others know it or not, Jesus knows all about it. Our

Lord allowed her to wash His feet with her tears, but He knew well what those eyes had looked upon. When He allowed those lips to kiss His feet, He knew right well what language those lips had used in years gone by. And when He allowed her to show her love to Him, He knew how foul her heart had been with every unhallowed desire. Her evil imaginations and unchaste desires, her wanton words and shameless acts were all before the Savior's mind far more vividly than they were before her own, for she had forgotten much—but He knew all. With all her tender sense of sin, she did not apprehend all the heinousness of her guilt as the perfect mind of Jesus did—and yet though she was a sinner, a well-known sinner, and known best of all to the Savior to be such, yet, glory be to divine grace, she was not cast out when she came to Jesus, but she obtained mercy and is now shining in heaven as a bright and special star to the glory of the love of Christ!

When this woman stood in the house of Simon she was *a believing sinner*. We do not know how she became a convert, but, according to the harmony of the gospels, this particular incident fits in just after Matthew 11—that is to say, if Luke has written his story with the intent of chronological correctness—and if the harmonies are right, this passage comes in after the following blessed words, “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 of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls, for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” Did this woman hear this gracious invitation? Did she feel that she was laboring and heavy laden? Did she look into the face of the great teacher and feel that He spoke the truth and did she come to Him and find rest? Doubtless her faith came by hearing—did she hear in some crowd in the street the sweet wooing voice of the sinner's friend? Was this the means of making “the woman that was a sinner” into the woman that anointed Jesus' feet? We are not informed as to the particular means, nor is it of any consequence. She was converted and that is enough—how it came about is a small matter. Perhaps even she, herself, could not have told us the precise words which impressed her mind, for many are most assuredly brought to Jesus, but the work has been so gentle, gradual and gracious that they feel themselves renewed, but hardly know how it came about! On the other hand, from the marked change in her character, it is highly probable that she did know the day, the hour and the precise means—and if so, dear were the words which called her from the ways of folly, sin and shame! I do not suppose that our Savior had, at that time, delivered the memorable parable of the prodigal son, but it may have been some similar discourse which won her attention when she made one of a crowd of publicans and sinners who drew near to hear the Lord Jesus. Pressing forward among the men to catch those silver tones, so full of music, she wondered at the man whose face was so

strangely beautiful and yet so marvelously sad—whose eyes were so bright with tears and whose face so beamed with love and earnestness. The very look of that mirror of love may have affected her! A glance at that holy countenance may have awed her and His tones of deep pity and tender warning—all these held her fast and drew her to abhor her sin and accept the joyful message which the great teacher had come to proclaim! She believed in Jesus. She was saved and, therefore, she loved her Savior!

When she came to the Pharisee's house she was a *forgiven sinner*. She carried an alabaster box in her hand with which to anoint Him because she felt that He had been a priest to her—and had cleansed her. She brought her choicest treasure to give to Him because He had bestowed on her the choicest of all gifts, namely, the forgiveness of sin. She washed His feet because He had washed her soul. She wept because she believed—and loved because she trusted. She was, when she entered the room, in a condition of rest as in her forgiveness, for men are seldom deeply grateful for mercies which they are not sure of having obtained. Though after that deed she rose a step higher and became fully assured of her acceptance, even at her first coming she was conscious of forgiven sin—and for that reason she paid her vows unto the forgiving Lord whom her soul loved.

Our text begins with a, “behold,” and it may well be so, for a forgiven sinner is a wonder to heaven, earth and hell! A forgiven sinner! Though God has made this round world exceedingly fair, yet no work of creation reflects so much of His highest glory as the manifestation of His grace in a pardoned sinner! If you range all the stars around and if it is so that every star is filled with a race of intelligent beings, yet, I think, among unfallen existences there can be no such marvel as a forgiven sinner. At any rate, he is a wonder to himself and he will never cease admiring the divine grace which pardoned and accepted him. What a miracle to herself must this woman have been, for a case like hers she had seen no precedent, and this must have made it the more surprising to her! When your case also appears to stand out by itself, alone, as a towering peak of grace, refrain not from wondering and causing others to wonder. “All glory to God,” may some say, “I, whose name could not be mentioned without making the cheek of modesty crimson, I am washed in the blood of the Lamb! I who was a blasphemer, who sat on the drunkard's bench, who gloried in being an infidel and denied the Godhead of Christ, I, even I, am saved from wrath through Him! I who played a dishonest part, who respected not the laws of man any more than those of God, I who went to an excess of riot—even *I* am made whiter than snow through faith in Christ Jesus!—

**“Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am, I am saved from hell.”**

Let all know it upon earth and let heaven know it—and let the loud harps ring in yon celestial halls because of matchless grace! Behold, then, this woman's character, and remember—however fallen you may have been—the grace of God can yet save you! Now, secondly, let us consider, at some length—

II. THE DEED OF LOVE WHICH INDICATED HER CONVERSION.

Her conduct as a convert was wide as the poles asunder from that of her unregenerate state—she became as evidently a penitent as she had been a sinner. One of the expositors upon this passage says that he cannot so much expound it as weep over it—and I think every Christian must feel very much in that humor. O that our eyes were as ready with tears of repentance as were hers! O that our hearts were as full of love as hers and our hands as ready to serve the forgiving Lord! If she has exceeded some of us in the publicity of her sin, yet has she not exceeded all of us in the fervency of her affection!

Let us notice what she did. And the first of 12 matters to which I shall call your attention is *the earnest interest which she took in the Lord Jesus*. “Behold, a woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table.” She had a quick ear for anything about Jesus. When she heard the news, it did not pass in one ear and out the other, but she was interested in the information and immediately went to the Pharisee's house to find Him. There were hundreds in that city who did not care a farthing where Jesus was. If they heard the general gossip about Him, it did not concern them in the least—He was nothing to them. But when she knew it, she was in motion at once to come even to His feet! Jesus will never again be an object of indifference to a forgiven sinner. If the Lord has pardoned you, you will henceforth feel the deepest interest in your Savior and in all things which concern His kingdom and work among men. Now, if you have to move to any place, you will want to know first, “Where can I hear the gospel? Are there any lovers of Jesus there?” If you are informed about a town or country, the information will not be complete till you have inquired, “How is the cause of God prospering there?” As you look upon your fellow men, the thought will strike you, “How do they stand towards Christ?” When you attend a place of worship, it will not matter much to you whether the edifice is architecturally beautiful, or the preacher a learned man and a great orator—you need to know whether you can hear of Jesus in that place and be likely to meet with Him in that assembly! Your cry will be, “Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed?” If you perceive a sweet savor of Christ in the place, you feel that you have had a good Sabbath, but if Jesus Christ is lacking, you consider everything to be lacking—and you groan over a lost Sabbath. A soul that has tasted Christ's love cannot be put off with anything short of Him—it hungers and thirsts

after Him and any good word about Him is sweet unto the taste. Is it so with you?

Notice, next, *the readiness of her mind to think of something to be done for Jesus*. “When she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster box of ointment”—she was quick and ready in her thoughts of service. She would not appear before the Lord empty, but the resolve to bring an offering and the selection of that offering were quickly made. She would get that alabaster box of aromatic ointment, the daintiest and costliest perfume that she had, and she would anoint His feet to do Him honor. Many minds are inventive for the things of the world, but they seem to have no quickness of thought in reference to the service of Christ—they proceed with dull routine, but never flash out with spontaneous deeds of love. This woman showed an original genius in her love. She was no copier of a former example—her plan of service had the dew of freshness upon it. Mary of Bethany did something like it, but that was afterwards—this was the woman’s own original idea. Her thoughtful soul struck out this new path for itself. We need more contriving, inventing and planning for Christ! See how we act towards those we love—we consider what will please them and plot and plan some pleasant surprise for them. We put our heads together and ask, “What shall it be? Let us think of something new and original.” That thoughtfulness is half the beauty of the act.

Notice, thirdly, *her promptness of action*. She did not merely think that she had an alabaster box to give, but she took it at once and hastened to pour out its contents. Dear friend, you have been saved by grace and you have an alabaster box upstairs which you have long meant to bring down—but it is still there. Half-a-dozen times or more, when you have had your heart warmed by the love of Christ, you have felt that now was the time to bring out the box, but it still remains sealed up! You were so pleased with yourself for having such earnest feelings and generous resolutions that you stopped to admire yourself and forgot to carry out your resolutions! You have done nothing, though you have intended a great deal. Do you not sometimes feel as self-contented as if you had done something wonderful when, after all, you have only mapped out what you *think* you may possibly do at some future time? Indeed, it is a mighty easy thing to make yourself believe that you have really done what you have only dreamed about! This is wretched child’s play and the woman before us would have none of it! She saw the occasion and she seized it. Jesus might not be in her city, again, and she might not be able to find Him for many a day. The thought struck her and she struck the thought while yet the iron was hot and fashioned it into a fact!

Observe, in the fourth place, her *courage*. She knew that Jesus was at the table in the Pharisee’s house. And she soon found Him reclining, in the Oriental fashion, with His feet near the door, for Simon was so uncivil that he was sure to give Him a poor place at the table. Seeing the

Lord, she ventured in. It needed no small bravery for her to enter the house of a Pharisee, who, above all things, would dread to be touched by such a character! In her bad times she had seen the holy man gather up his garments and leave her a broad space on the streets for fear that she should pollute his sacred person! She must have felt, as all penitent sinners do, an inward shrinking from the cold, hard, self-righteous professor of purity! She would have gone anywhere in that city rather than into Simon's house. It must have cost her a great struggle to face his frowns and severe remarks. Perhaps, however, I am wrong. Indeed, I think I am, for she was so full of the desire to show her love and to honor the Lord Jesus that she forgot the Pharisee! Yes, and if the devil had been there, instead of Simon, she would have dared even him in his den, to reach her Lord! Still, there was much courage needed for one so lowly in her penitence to be able to bear the cold, contemptuous look of the master of the house. Conscious that she had been a castaway from society, yet she courageously fulfilled her mission, fearless of cruel remarks and taunting charges. O poor, timid seeking soul, the Lord can also give *you* the courage of a lion in His cause, though now you are timid as a hare!

When, then, the penitent had reached the Master's feet, note well how one grace balanced another and observe *her humility* tempering her courage. Her boldness was not forwardness nor indelicate impertinence—no, she was as bashful as she was brave! She did not advance to our Lord's head, or thrust herself where He would readily see her—much less did she presume to address Him—but she stood at His feet behind Him, weeping. She was probably but a little way in the room. She courted no observation. She was near Jesus, but it was near His feet, and weeping there. To weep at His feet was honor high enough for her—she sought no uppermost seat at the banquet. Ah, dear friends, it is a blessed thing to see young converts bold, but it is equally delightful to see them humble! And they are none the worse for being very retiring if they have been great sinners.

I have been very sorry when I have seen a lack of modesty where it ought to have superabounded. There is more grace in a blush than in a brazen forehead, far more propriety in holy shamefacedness than in pious impudence. Good Bishop Hall says, "How well is the case altered! She was known to look boldly in the face of her lovers, and now she dares not behold the awful countenance of her Savior! She had been accustomed to send alluring beams forth into the eyes of her paramours, but now she casts dejected eyes to the earth and dares not so much as raise them up to see those eyes from which she desired commiseration." Lowliness goes well with penitence. One would not wish humility to be corrupted into cowardice, nor courage to be poisoned into pride. This repenting sinner had both excellences in proper proportion and the two

together put her exactly in the place where a woman that was a sinner ought to be when saved by grace!

We see before us our reclaimed sister looking down upon the Lord's blessed feet. And as we mark her flowing tears, we pause to speak of *her contrition*. She gazed upon our Lord's feet and I wonder whether that sight suggested to her how her feet had wandered—and how travel-worn had become the feet of the Lord, who had sought and found her—

***“She knew not of the bitter way
Those sacred feet had yet to tread,
Nor how the nails would pierce, one day,
Where now her costly balms were shed.”***

But she saw those feet to be all unwashed, for Jesus had been neglected where He ought to have been honored. And she saw therein the memory of her own neglect of Him who had so freely loved her soul. She wept at the memory of her sins, but she wept over *His* feet. She grieved most because she had grieved Him. She wept because she had sinned so much and then wept because He had forgiven her so freely! Love and grief in equal measures made up those precious tears. The divine spirit was at work within her, dissolving her very soul, even as it is written, “He causes His wind to blow and the waters flow.” And again, “He smote the rock and the waters gushed out.” Do you marvel that she stood and wept? Thinking of herself and then thinking of Him, the two thoughts together were far too much for her—and what could she do but both relieve her heart and express it in a shower of tears? Wherever there is a real forgiveness of sin, there will be real sorrow on account of it. He who knows that his sin is pardoned, is the man who most acceptably exercises repentance. Our hymn puts it on the right footing when it points, not to the horrors of hell, but to the griefs of Immanuel, by which our pardon is certified to us as the deep source of sorrow for sin—

***“My sins, my sins, my Savior,
How sad on You they fall!
Seen through Your gentle patience,
I tenfold feel them all.
I know they are forgiven,
But all their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.”***

After admiring this woman's contrition, notice her love. The Holy Spirit took delight in adorning her with all the divine graces and she came behind in nothing—but she excelled in love. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when He translated her act of anointing His feet, expressed it in the one word, “love.” He said, “She loved much.” I cannot speak much with you concerning love, for it is rather to be felt than to be described. Words have no power to bear the weight of meaning which lies in love to Christ. Oh, how she loved! Her eyes, her hair, her tears—herself—she counted all as nothing for His dear sake! Words failed her, as they fail us and,

therefore, she betook herself to deeds in order to let her heart have vent. Alabaster box and ointment were all too little for Him—the essence of her heart was distilled to bathe His feet—and the glory of her head was unbound to furnish Him with a towel! He was her Lord, her all-in-all! If she could have laid kingdoms at His feet, she would have rejoiced to do so! As it was, she did her best and He accepted it.

This love of hers led her to *personal service*. Her hands were the servants of her heart and did their part in the expression of her affection. She did not send the alabaster box to Jesus by her sister, or ask a disciple to pass it to Him, but she performed the anointing with her own hands, the washing with her own tears and the wiping with her own hair. Love cannot be put off with proxy service! She seeks no substitute, but offers her own person! I grant, dear brothers and sisters, that we can serve the Lord a great deal by helping others to serve Him, and it is right and proper to help those who are able to labor better and more widely than we can. But still, it is not right that we should rest content with that—we ought to be ambitious to render tribute to our Lord with our own hands. We cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of doing some little thing for our Beloved Lord. Suppose this loving woman had had a sister who loved the Master even as she did? And suppose, like a loving sister, she had said to her, “I fear it will be too heavy a task for you to face cold-hearted Simon—I will take the box and anoint our blessed Lord and tell Him that I did it for you—and so He shall know your love.” Do you think she would have consented to the proposal? Ah, no, it would not have answered the purpose at all. Love refuses sponsors. She must anoint those blessed feet *herself*. Now, dear friends, you who hope that you have been forgiven, are you doing anything for Jesus? Are you, on your own, serving Him? If not, let me tell you, you are missing one of the greatest delights that your souls can ever know and, at the same time, you are omitting one of the chief fruits of the Spirit! “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” is the question, and if you wish to answer it with proof positive, then go, and with your own hands, feed the Savior’s sheep! Surely you cannot love Him as you should, unless each day has its deed of love, its sacrifice of gratitude!

Observe, next, that *her service was rendered to the Lord Himself*. Read the passage and place an emphasis upon the words which refer to the Lord. “She stood at *His* feet, behind *Him*, weeping, and began to wash *His* feet, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed *His* feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment.” It was not for Peter, or James, or John that she acted as servitor. I have no doubt she would have done anything for any of His disciples, but at this time all her thoughts were with her Lord—and all her desire was to honor *Him*. It is a delightful thing for Christian people to lay themselves out distinctly for the Lord Jesus. There should be more ministering unto Him, more definite aiming

at His glory. To give money to the poor is good, but sometimes it is better to spend it upon Jesus more distinctly, even though some Judas or other should complain of waste—

***“Love is the true economist!
She breaks the box and gives her all,
Yet not one precious drop is missed,
Since on His head and feet they fall.”***

One is glad to serve the church—who would not wait upon the bride for the bridegroom’s sake? One is glad to go into the streets and lanes of the city to gather in poor sinners, but our main motive is to honor the Savior. See, then, how she who was once a harlot has become a zealous lover of the Lord and is ready to wash her Lord’s feet, or perform any service which may be permitted her, if she may work a good work upon Him!

Further, note that what she did, she did very *earnestly*. She washed His feet, but it was with tears. She wiped them, but it was with those luxurious tresses which were all unbound and disheveled that she might make a towel of them for His blessed feet. She kissed His feet and she did it again and again, for she did not cease to kiss His feet, or if she made a moment’s pause, it was only that she might pour on more of the ointment. She was altogether taken up with her Lord and His work! Her entire nature concurred in what she did and awakened itself to do it well. True love is intense—its coals burn with vehement heat—it makes all things around it living. Dead services cannot be endured by living hearts!

Furthermore, notice the woman’s *absorption in her work*. There she stood, anointing His feet with ointment and kissing them again and again. Simon shook his head, but what of that? He frowned and cast black looks at her, but she ceased not to wash His feet with her tears! She was too much occupied with her Lord to care for scowling Pharisees. Whether anyone observed her or not, or whether observers approved or censured, was a very small matter to her—she went quietly on—accomplishing the suggestion of her loving heart!

And *what she did was so real, so practical*, so free from the mere froth of profession and pretense. She never said a word—and why not? Because it was all act and all heart with her. Words! Some abound in them, but what wretched things words are with which to express a heart. As in a glass, darkly, can we see the reflection of a soul’s love in its most passionate utterances?. Actions are far more loud and have a sweeter tone than words! This woman had done with speech, for the time being, at any rate, and tears and disheveled hair and poured-out ointment must speak for her! She was too much in earnest to call anyone’s attention to what she was doing, or to care for anyone’s opinion, much less to court commendation, or to answer the ugly looks of the proud professor who scorned her! This thorough oblivion of all except her Lord constituted, in a measure, the charm of her deed of love—it was wholehearted and entire loyalty which her homage revealed. Now, dearly beloved in the Lord Jesus

Christ, I do pray that you and I, as pardoned sinners, may be so taken up with the service of our Lord Jesus Christ that it may not matter to us who smiles or who frowns! And may we never take the trouble to defend ourselves if people find fault, or ever wish for anybody to commend us, but be so taken up with *Him* and the work He has given us to do, and with the love we feel to *Him*, that we know nothing else! If all others run away from the work; if all discourage us, or if they all praise us, may we take but small notice of them, but keep steadily to our loving service of Jesus! If grace enables us to do this, it will be greatly magnified.

See, dear friends, what divine grace made of “the woman that was a sinner.” Perhaps you thought her worse than yourselves in her carnal state—what do you think of her as a penitent? What do you think of yourselves if you stand side by side with her? Do you not blush for very shame and ask for forgiveness of your Lord for the slenderness of your affection? Lastly, let us see—

III. THE SAVIOR’S BEHAVIOR TO HER.

What did He do? First, *He silently accepted her service*. He did not move His feet away, did not rebuke her, or bid her to leave. He knew that reflections were being cast upon His character by His allowing her to touch Him, yet He did not forbid her, but, on the contrary, continued quietly enjoying the feast of repentance, gratitude and love which she spread for Him. He was refreshed by seeing such grace in one who had before been so far from God. The perfumed ointment was not so grateful to His feet as her love was to His soul—for Jesus delights in love—especially in penitent love! Her tears did not fall in vain—they refreshed the heart of Jesus, who delights in the tears of repentance. The applause of a nation would not have solaced Him one-half as much as this woman’s pure, grateful, contrite, humble love! His silence gave consent, yes, even approval! And she was happy enough to be allowed to indulge herself in expressions of adoring affection.

Then the Lord went a little farther, He turned round and *looked at her*, and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman?” That glance of His must have encouraged her and made her heart dance for joy! As soon as ever those eyes of His lighted on her, she could see that all was right—she knew that whoever frowned, there were no frowns on that brow—and she was filled with supreme contentment!

Next, *the Lord spoke, and defended her triumphantly*, and praised her for her deed! Yes, and He went beyond that and *personally spoke to her* and said, “Your sins are forgiven you,” setting a seal to the pardon which she had received and making her assurance doubly sure! This was a joy worth worlds—

**“Oh, might I hear Your heavenly tongue
But whisper, ‘You are Mine,’
The heavenly word should raise my song
To notes almost divine.”**

She had a choice blessing in hearing from His lips that her faith was firmly based and that she was, indeed, forgiven! Then she received a direction from Him as to what to do—"Go in peace." A forgiven sinner is anxious to know what he may do to please his Lord. "Show me what You would have me to do," was Paul's prayer. So our Lord Jesus seemed to say, "Beloved, do not stay here battling with these Pharisees. Do not tarry in this crowd of cavilers. Go home in perfect peace and as you have made home unhappy by your sin, make it holy by your example."

That is just, I think, what the Lord Jesus would have me say to my dear friends who have followed me in this discourse. You see what grace can do—go home and let your family see it! If any of you are conscious of great sin—and have received great forgiveness—and, therefore, wish to show your love to Jesus, do what is on your heart! But at the same time remember that He would have you go in peace. Let a holy calm abide in your breast. Do not enter into the vain jangling and endless controversies of the hour. Do not worry yourself with the battles of the newspapers and magazines that are everlastingly worrying poor souls with modern notions. Go in peace! You know what you know—keep to that. You know your sin and you know Christ, your Savior! Keep to Him and live for Him. Go home into the family circle and do everything you can to make home happy, to bring your brothers and sisters to Christ and to encourage your father and mother if they have not yet found the Savior!

Home is especially a woman's place. There she reigns as a queen! Let her reign well. Around the hearth and at the table, in the sweets of domestic relationships and quiet friendships, a woman will do more for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ than by getting up to preach! In the cases of men, also, many who long to flash in public had better by far shine at home! Go home in peace and, by a happy, holy life, show to others what saints God can make out of sinners! You have seen what sin and the devil can do to degrade—go and prove what grace and the Holy Spirit can do to elevate—and may many, cheered by your example, come and trust your Lord!

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PLEADING WITH THE INDIFFERENT

NO. 3360

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 1913,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger.”
Lamentations 1:12.

THIS was the lamentation of Jeremiah. As he saw the desolation of the beloved city, as he marked the cruelties inflicted by the invaders upon the Jewish youth, children and maidens, and as he foresaw the long years of bitterness reserved for the captives in Babylon, he felt as if he were a peer in the realm of misery—indeed peerless. He stands foremost, a very emperor of grief, a king of sighs and tears. “Behold, and see,” he said, “if there was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me.”

But may there not have been griefs as great as those of Jeremiah? Is the language that flows from his lips strictly accurate? Like most of the periods which flow from abundant grief, is there not some exaggeration here? If we take the words out of the mouth of Jeremiah and put them into the mouth of Jesus—if we suppose them to be spoken by Him, as, hanging on the cross He did bear the wrath of God for us, then there is no hyperbole, no exaggeration! The words may be read as they stand—and stand as we read them—and their fullest weight shall not outweigh the truth!

This evening two things challenge our attention—an *earnest exhortation*—“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?” And a *solemn question*—“Behold, and see, was there ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me?” First—

I. AN EARNEST EXHORTATION.

The Son of God has become incarnate. He became man out of love to men. But men loved Him not, and though in Him was every perfection, they hunted and hounded Him to death! The story is told four times over by inspired authority in this book, but the mass of mankind feel no concern in it. I come here tonight and I say to many of you—does not the story of Jesus at all interest you? You heard it read just now, did it fall flat and stale upon your ears? Did you say to yourselves, “It is dry work to listen to that; there is nothing there to strike the attention; if I had

taken up a newspaper and had read of some murder, my wits would have been all awakened, but in the hearing of this death of Christ, I feel not at all stirred." Well, then, I ask you—why is this? Why is it so? If there is anything in the entire world that ought to interest a man, it is the death of Christ! Yet I find men, learned men, spending year after year in sorting out butterflies, beetles and gnats, or in making out the various orders of shells, or in digging into the earth and seeking to discover what strange creatures once floundered through the boundless mire, or swam in the vast seas! I find men occupied with things of no sort of practical moment and which, to me, do not seem so wonderfully enchanting. Yet the story of God, Himself, who deigned to become a man and as a man suffered, and bled, and died, is thought to be too small a trifle for minds to dwell upon it. O reason! Where have you gone? O judgment! Where have you fled? Men spend their strength on trifles, but on God incarnate they turn their backs!

It is strange that even the *sufferings of Christ* do not attract the attention of men, for generally if we hear any sad story of the misfortunes of our fellow creatures, we are interested. The newspaper is accounted more than usually interesting which contains full particulars of shipwrecks, the blowing down of houses, murders, shootings, killings and I do not know what! Everybody has felt he could read such a paper as that because it concerned his fellow men—what they had lost and what they had suffered. Everyone stops to hear the tale of the ancient mariner! Even the wedding guest is held while he, with the earnest eyes, tells how he suffered on the wide, deep, stagnant sea. And yet this story of a man who came to our earth with no motive but love, and lived here to do nothing but good, and yet was so despised and rejected as to be nailed to a cross, and there made to die in the midst of jeers, sneers, pains and unknown agonies—this does not interest men! I marvel, and yet I marvel not at the strange indifference of this age to the wonders of Calvary! How is it earth does not stretch out her hands and say, "Come and tell us of the God that loved us and came down to our low estate—and suffered for us men and for our salvation"? How is it that the crowds of this great city do not come and besiege our houses and say, "Tell us yet again this strange, mysterious story of the sufferings of the perfect Son of God"? It ought to interest us, if nothing more! Is it nothing to you, however? Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?

It ought to be more than interesting—it ought *to excite our admiration*. You cannot read of a man sacrificing himself for the good of his fellow creatures without feeling at once that you wish you had known that fine fellow! And you feel instinctively that you would do anything in the world to serve him if he still lives, or to help relatives left behind if he has died in a brave attempt. Who does not esteem, though you never knew him,

the good man at Bethnal Green who perished but lately in the explosion at the firework factory? He rushes in to seek to rescue others and is found, at last, a handful of ashes bewailed by a weeping wife! One felt at once, "There was a man who had a soul beating beneath his ribs." But is no admiration to be given to the Son of God who left a throne of glory without bound and came here below to poverty, to shame, to a life of contempt and toil—and then voluntarily gave Himself up to a death which never could have been inflicted upon Him if He had not given Himself up to die? Jesus Christ had no motive in suffering but the good of men! Nothing selfish ever crossed His soul. Oh, brothers and sisters, it was pity that ruled His heart—pity, and only pity—and while we set up our statues in reverence of men who have loved their fellow men and speak of such-and-such a man as "a great philanthropist," is it nothing to you that Jesus should die for men and shall this greatest of all philanthropists, this first and chief of lovers of the race of men, be altogether forgotten? I would admire Him even if He had not saved me! If I had no share in His blood, I think I would love Him. The life of Christ enchants me! The death of Christ binds me to His cross! Even if I were never washed in His blood and were even cast away into hell, if that were possible, I still feel I must admire Him for His love to others! Yes, and I must adore Him, too, for His godlike character and His godlike sufferings for the sons of men! But why, why is it that such a Christ, so lovely and so admirable, is forgotten by the most of mankind and is nothing to them?

Now, my dear hearers, there are some of you to whom I might put this question very closely. You have heard about Jesus very often. This pulpit is always ringing with His name. And you have admired what Jesus did. I know you have and if any spoke ill of Him, you would be very grieved—and you would be among the first to defend His name! And yet—and yet—is that all? Are you always going to be interested and to admire, but are you never going further? Is it, after all, to come to this, that it is nothing to you that Jesus should die? You have no interest in that death, no part, no lot in the salvation which that death brings to the sons of men! I am afraid that with some of you it will be so all your days. Fifteen years have I preached to some of you—15 years! And if those 15 years have not brought you to Christ, is there any reason to believe that 15 more years will do it? No, I fear that with some of you the harvest is past and the summer is ended—and you are not saved. There was a time when this voice did seem to cut into your soul and the truths of God that were uttered awakened your conscience! But it is all nothing to you now. You could go to sleep under the sound of it and your soul does sleep under the sense of it! What? Will you be lost? Have you resolved to be lost with a Savior lifted up before you? Have you determined that you will

never look to Him who is lifted up to save you from the serpent's bite? Shall Christ, the water of life, never be tasted by your lips? Do you elect to perish of thirst? Shall this bread of life be never eaten? Do you choose rather to starve than to come to Him? No, you tell me you hope one of these days. Ah, but I have no hope of you for any day but today! And I wish you, too, knew that procrastination is of all things fatal. I would sooner that you resolved to be damned than that you only said, "Tomorrow, tomorrow." For if today you resolved upon your ruin, you might be startled at the resolution—and you might be led to see your folly and awakened to amend your steps! But if you always say, "Tomorrow, tomorrow," it will be the will-o'-the-wisp that will tempt you into the fatal troubling situation where souls have been lost by tens of thousands—as yours will be!

Oh, why should I have to be always coming down these steps and into this pulpit, to say over and over and over again to you that Jesus died—and that if you trust Him you shall live? Why should it need to be repeated over and over? Great God of patience, such a story as this ought to be accepted of the heart at once! If You bear with men who reject it, we may well bear with them, too, but, oh, we pray You let them not go too far with Your long-suffering, nor venture too much upon Your patience, lest You lift Your hand and swear in Your wrath that they shall not enter into Your rest because they had the gospel, but they counted not themselves to be worthy of it!

One thing I would say to you, to all of you to whom it seems as yet to be nothing that Jesus should die—that personally to me it *is* something that He should die. It is more than something—it is everything—and I will tell you why. It is much to me that Jesus died, for I know I slew Him. I sang those verses just now and I sang them with some bitterness of soul, I was forced to feel—

“Tis I have thus ungrateful been.”

If it were not that I had sinned, as one of the race, there had been no need for Christ to die. But as it was sin that pierced and nailed Him, I had a share in His death. But then I know another thing—that by that death I am delivered from the very guilt that put Him to death! I have looked to Him and I am forgiven. Fleming tells us in a book of his, that a great culprit had been condemned to be hanged at Ayr. He had been a very great offender, but while he lay in prison, God granted him repentance and he was heard to say continually as they took him to the scaffold, "Oh, but He's a great forgiver! Oh, but He's a great forgiver!" And I have often felt as if I could stand and cry, yes, even dance and say it, "Oh, but He's a great forgiver! Oh, but He's a great forgiver!" My innumerable sins confessed to Him were blotted out, each one, and peace and joy bestowed where all before was fear and trembling! Now,

there are hundreds in this house that could say the same. If I were to ask it, and this were the proper time, there are thousands within this dome who could rise and say, "I, too, can say that it is much to me that Jesus died, for though I slew Him, yet by His death I live, and by the blood which I drew from His veins I have been washed and made white." Now, if it is so much to us, we do sincerely wish, oh, unconverted ones, that Christ were as much to you, for we do think He ought to be! We desire that He should be! We pray that He may be and we tremble, even to horror, lest, after all, He should not be, for if Christ is nothing to you, it will be a hard dying for you, a hard dying—the bed shall be of iron and the pillow shall be cold as ice—and it will be hard passing into a disembodied state! It will be hard coming before God. It will be hard for when your body rises in the day of the resurrection, when the trumpet sounds, and the sepulchers are burst open, and your body, linked to your soul again, shall stand before the flaming throne of Christ! It will be hard for you—oh, so hard—throughout eternity! An eternity without Christ! An eternity without Christ! "Nothing to you, nothing to you," you say now, but how will it be when conscience shall remind you in eternity, "you heard of Christ, but you said He was nothing to you! You listened to earnest admonitions, but you said they were nothing to you." How will this stir the fire? How will this fan the flame? How will this prick your conscience and vex your spirit, that Jesus died, and inestimable mercies dropped from the cross—pardons sealed with blood were distributed freely upon Calvary and broken hearts were healed—and sins were forgiven and the dead were raised and the lost were saved? But it was all nothing to you, nothing to you! Oh, before death comes—and he is on his way to some here present—on his way to meet them soon! Before death comes on the pale horse with hell following at his heels, I beseech you, as you love your souls, look to the crucified and be not satisfied till you can say, "He is everything to me! I slew Him, but He saved me! I looked to Him and I live!"

May God bless this admonition and my heart shall be glad, indeed, if He will but do it. Oh, how little can I do for you, you unconverted ones, and how little can I do for you! When I sometimes get a handshake from some of you, and you say, "Well, I have been hearing you for years, sir, but I am not converted," I look hopefully upon you, but I cannot help, when I get away, reproaching myself in part and saying, "Have I preached to these people as I ought to?" You make me wake up at night to weep about you and to ask myself again and again, "What more can I say? How shall I put it? With what force and power can I deliver it, if perhaps I may reach their hearts?" Oh, I trust you may yet be brought—and God shall be praised and glorified world without end! Now, let us change to a second point—

II. A SOLEMN QUESTION.

The Lord Jesus Christ may be represented here as bidding men see if there is any sorrow like unto His sorrow which is done to Him. Now, observe, that it may be truthfully said that *the sufferings of Jesus were altogether unique and by themselves*. There were never any sufferings which could match His—and never was there such an illustrious sufferer put to such boundless shame. He was the eye of heaven, the very sun and star of the bright world! It was the seraph's bliss to do Him homage. King of kings and Lord of lords was He, and the government was upon His shoulders! And His name was called Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace! All the hallelujahs of eternity rolled up at His august feet! But He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief! And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not. They spat into His face. They plucked off His hair. They blindfolded Him. They struck Him with their fists. They scourged Him. The bloody scourges made the sacred drops roll. They gave Him a felon's death and then stood by and mocked His prayers and made jests about His groans and pangs! Never was one so high brought so low. "Behold and see if there were ever sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me." Never one so innocent, so falsely accused. He had done no evil. He was no rival of Caesar. He said His kingdom was not of this world. Instead of doing evil, He had done boundless good. His food and His drink were to do God's will. His delight was to help the poor, to feed the hungry, to heal the sick. He was all gentleness, all goodness. From both His hands He scattered His bounties lavishly among the graceless sons of men—and yet they said He was guilty of sedition and of blasphemy! He, seditious? He a blasphemer? Lying could go no farther! Bribed witnesses could not be made to agree! The lie was too massive even for those to compass who were willing to have compassed it! Oh, was ever grief like His—to be treated as a felon and put to death as though guilty—when all the while He did no sin, neither was deceit found on His lips!

Remember, beloved, that in our Savior's death there were aggravations of an extraordinary kind. Before He actually came to die, that dreadful night in Gethsemane had broken His already emaciated frame. There He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. In two or three cases, other persons have sweat drops of blood, but they have invariably died. Our Savior did this and yet lived. Oh, how was the bitterness of His soul expressed in that awful overflow which fell upon Gethsemane's soil! Then, remember, He was led, deserted by His friends, without any comfort from His God, to be tried by Herod, by Pilate, by Caiaphas—to be scourged, beaten, probably several times with rods and scourges. God forsook Him—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken

Me?” was the very depth of His agony and without one to pity, one to administer comfort, utterly forsaken, our Savior died with aggravations of agonies that were to be found in no other death!

Still, the singularity of His death lies in another respect. There was never sorrow like the sorrow which was done unto Christ, *because all His sorrow was born for others*. Whatever you and I may suffer, we deserve it and, directly or indirectly, we may trace it to the fact that we are sinners. But He was not a sinner. In Him was no sin and neither suffering nor death could lawfully have been laid upon Him had He not made Himself the substitute for His people. Behold, and see if there was ever sorrow like His sorrow! He bears the sin of many. He is numbered with the transgressors. He stands vicariously to endure what never could have been His if it had not been that He was a surety and stood in His people’s place.

Now, I want your thoughts just one minute. What was it that Christ, as substitute, had to endure? Answer—although it may not have been precisely what we ought to have endured, it must have been something equivalent thereto. Now, what ought one sinner to have suffered? Answer—Eternal misery in hell! What, then, what then must have been the pangs which in Christ’s case stood as the equivalent for the eternal agonies of *one sinner*? But Christ died not for one sinner, but for tens of thousands, for countless multitudes, whom no one can number! Think, then, my brothers and sisters, what must have been the crushing blows which Jehovah laid on Him when those blows were to be an equivalent for the hells of ten thousand times ten thousand of those for whom He suffered! Of course, it were not possible for Him to have endured, even for one, if He had not been God! His Godhead gave Him an infinite capacity for misery and infused a boundless degree of misery into all the pangs He bore. You have no more idea of what Christ suffered in His soul than you have when you take up in a shell, a drop of seawater! What Christ suffered is utterly inconceivable! We are not just to think of Him as dying as another dies. His was a vast soul, so great a soul that it seemed to have all souls within it—and it had the capacity for suffering what all souls might have borne—and the whole of that vast nature which God had given, that wondrous nature which He Himself also essentially possessed—was put forth to make an atonement for human sin. “Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me.”

“Oh, let us now, instead of talking any more, sit down by meditation at the foot of the cross and look up! ‘Tis the King! ‘Tis the King, but He is crowned with thorns! It is the prince of glory, but He is stripped naked to His shame! It is the Ancient of eternal days, but He bows His head to die! He is God, all-sufficient, yet He cries, “I thirst”! He is the angel’s darling,

but He is despised and rejected of men! Hark, He fills heaven with honor! His presence gilds heaven with light, yet there upon the cross He is covered with darkness! And the music about Him is that of His own sighs, and cries, and groans. Was ever grief like Yours? Needless question! Needless question! All but shameful question, for were all griefs that ever were condensed into one, they were no more worthy to be compared therewith than the glowworm's tiny lamp with the ever-blazing sun!

What then, beloved, what then? If Christ is thus alone in suffering, what then? Why, *let Him stand alone in our love*. High, high, high set up Christ in your heart! Now, brothers and sisters you have many objects of your affection, but oh, lift up my lord, your soul's bridegroom, your spirit's well-beloved! Come now, if you have thought well of Him, think better of Him! If you have loved Him, oh, love Him more! Now, ask to have your heart inflamed, as with coals of juniper, which have a vehement heat, and let that heart be all His own! Oh, let there be no such love as your love to Christ! Let it pass the love of women! Let it go beyond a mother's love, a brother's affection, a father's tenderness! Love Him—you cannot match His love to you, but at least seek to let your little stream run side by side with the mighty river!

If Christ is thus alone in suffering, brothers and sisters, let us seek to make Him, if we can, alone in our service. We do not do much for Christ, compared with what we should. Some have learned to give much, but yet what is our giving for such an one as He is? We only give what we can spare—how few of us ever pinch ourselves for Him? He smarted for us and gave up even His very garments for us, but we do not come to that. In the olden times they did—saints, martyrs and Christian missionaries made sacrifice of all and counted it no sacrifice out of love to Him. I wish we had more Marys who would break the alabaster box of precious ointment upon His dear head. Oh, for a little extravagance of love, a little fanaticism of affection for Him, for He deserves ten thousand times more than the most enthusiastic ever dream of rendering! If He is thus, brothers and sisters, so far beyond all others in His sorrow, let Him also be first and foremost tonight *in our praise*. If you have poetic minds, weave no garlands except for His dear brow! If you are men of eloquence, speak no glowing periods except to His honor! If you are men of wit and scholarship, oh, seek to lay your scholarship at the foot of His cross! Come here with all your talents and yield them to Him who bought them with His blood! Come, here, you with much and yet with little—come with hearts so warm whom He loved so well—

***“Here then your music bring,
Strike aloud each cheerful string!
Mortals join the hosts above,
Come and praise redeeming love.”***

The Lord give us such a frame of mind as that, tonight, when we come to the breaking of bread, and His be the glory. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 69:1-21; MARK 15:15-23; LUKE 23:26-33.**

We shall read together at this time a part of the 69th Psalm and afterwards two passages in the New Testament. Although there is no doubt that this Psalm is intended to describe a very large class of sufferers, we think it never had its full meaning perfectly carried out until our blessed Lord and Master suffered at the hands of men. We shall read the Psalm believing that it is full of Christ. It is absolutely certain that we have references here to His advent, His passion and His resurrection.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, a Psalm of David.

Verse 1. *Save me, O God, for the waters are come into my soul.* The waves have not only teased the bank, but they have dashed over the bulwarks and there is a flood within, as well as a flood without.

2. *I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me.* We had this text explained to us last Friday night when the traveler told us he saw a man sink in the mud, almost swallowed up by it, till by a very desperate grasp of the boat, he made his escape. Christ was, as it were, sucked in by the great deeps of His afflictions—as if He would quickly be swallowed up.

3. *I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried.* He had been so long in the garden in that awful agony, with strong crying and tears.

3, 4. *My eyes fail while I wait for my God. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head.* See Him now in the street being led away to Mount Calvary—a vast multitude has congregated there, all eager to see Him die!

4. *They that would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully, are mighty.* They have the Roman soldiers at their backs, while the mob applauds them.

4. *Then I restored that which I took not away.* Christ did not take away our innocence, nor our safety, nor our honor, but He restored them all to us! He has made us clean! He has made us accepted in the Beloved! He has put a crown of pure gold upon our heads and set our feet upon a rock.

5. *O God, You know my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from You.* These words are not applicable to our Lord, except so far as they may refer to *our* foolishness and to *our* sin, which we know were all laid on Him. But one commentator says that He is here speaking according to the manner of the people. They called Him foolish. They charged Him

with sin, but He appeals to heaven, “Lord, You know whether I have been foolish, whether I have any sins or not.” In that sense we might apply it literally to the Savior.

6. *Let not them that wait on You, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those who seek You be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.* “Let not the shame of My cross destroy their faith. Grant unto them such confidence in me that they may take up their cross daily and follow Me, that they may even learn to say with My apostle, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

7. *Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered My face.* It was for His Father’s sake that He might bring honor to Jehovah, that He thus suffered reproach. “Shame has covered My face”—that face which is brighter than the sun and which angels desire to gaze upon!

8. *I have become a stranger unto My brethren.* “Peter says he knows Me not. All of them have forsaken Me.”

8, 9. *And an alien unto My mother’s children. For the zeal of Your house has eaten Me up and the reproaches of them that reproached You are fallen upon Me.* Every hard word that was spoken of the Father fell upon the Son—the iniquities which were rebellions against Jehovah all fell upon the man of Nazareth!

10. *When I wept, and chastened My soul with fasting, that was to My reproach.* That was scandal unto them.

11. *I made sack cloth also My garment; and I became a proverb unto them.* Just as Michal said of David, “How glorious did the king of Israel become in the eyes of his handmaidens!” Out of mockery, so did they reproach Christ, “How glorious was the king of Israel, so daintily arrayed in a peasant’s robe, or stripped naked upon His cross.”

12. *They that sit in the gate speak against Me.* The judges who there dispensed justice. The merchants who there trade their wares. The idlers who were there to loiter, to hear the news—these all speak against Me.

12. *And I became the song of the drunkard.* They made ballads of Him. We may understand that to mean they issued lampoons—every now and then there came out a caricature.

13, 14. *But as for Me, My prayer is unto You, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of Your mercy hear Me, in the truth of Your salvation, deliver Me out of the mire, and let Me not sink: let Me be delivered from them that hate Me, and out of the deep waters.* Imagine you hear your Master as He silently prays this prayer in the streets of Jerusalem—the mobs are hooting, but He is praying—women are weeping, and He is weeping, too.

15-20. *Let not the flood overflow Me, neither let the deep swallow Me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon Me. Hear Me, O Lord, for Your loving kindness is good: turn unto Me according to the multitude of Your*

tender mercies. And hide not Your face from Your servant; for I am in trouble: hear Me speedily. Draw near unto My soul, and redeem it: deliver Me because of My enemies. You have known My reproach and My shame, and My dishonor: My adversaries are all before You. Reproach has broken My heart. This is one of the most extraordinary verses in Holy Writ!

20, 21. *And I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink.* Now, let us read the incidents in the history of Christ, of which this Psalm is a sort of prophecy and exposition.

MARK 15:15-23.

Verses 15-23. *And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led Him away into the hall which is called Praetorium; and they called together the whole band. And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head. And began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews. And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. And they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross. And they brought Him unto the place called Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, the place of a skull. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not.* I shall have to show you that this was given to Him in mercy. The Romans always gave, before crucifixion, a cup of drugged wine, in order to lessen the sensibilities of the victim. In this case there was not only myrrh in the cup, but gall. A second cup of gall Christ did drink, but this cup, being intoxicating, He would not receive—when He had tasted it, He would not drink. He needed the possession of all His faculties—and in their clearest state—in order to do combat with the dreadful powers of darkness.

LUKE 23:26-33.

Luke supplies some particulars which Mark has left out. Turn, therefore, to the 23rd chapter of Luke and the 26th verse. Luke, also, tells us of Simon.

Verse 26. *And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.* Now these are the things which Mark has not put in.

27, 29. *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 breasts which never gave suck. This was accounted a curse, but their curses would seem blessings to them when compared with the curse of the dreadful slaughter at Jerusalem!*

30, 31. *Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall upon us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree what shall be done in the dry? If they do these things while yet the Jewish state is standing, what will they do when that state is broken up? If they do these things to innocent persons—a green tree—what will they do to the unhallowed person, the ungodly and the rebellious who are like dry, rotten trees? How will the flame lay hold on those branches out of which the sap of virtue has long ago been dried?*

32. *And there were also two other, malefactors. It should be “others”—there should be an “s” there.*

32, 33. *Led with Him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Shall we refuse to take up our cross and follow the Lord Jesus Christ? I think not. If any ask us whether we will leave Him because of the fears which may be excited by the world’s frowns, this shall be our answer—let us sing it—with regard to the world and all its temptations—*

***“No, facing all its frowns or smiles,
Counting its gain but loss!
Outside the camp we take our place,
With Jesus bear the cross.”***

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GOD'S VALIANT RIGHT HAND

NO. 3361

A SERMON
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***“The right hand of the Lord is exalted:
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”***
Psalm 118:16.

THIS verse might full often have leapt from the lips of believers in the olden times. This verse might have constituted part of the song of Moses at the Red Sea, for how wondrously did God there overthrow the host of His enemies, when, after dividing the sea, Egypt was swallowed up in it, God, Himself causing the last foe of Israel to be swept away by the mighty waters! “Sing unto the Lord,” they said, “for He has triumphed gloriously,” and by the shores of the Red Sea they knew that “The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.” It was so in the wilderness when Joshua fought with Amalek and Moses held up his hands in prayer. It was so when they smote Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan. Are not these things written in the books of the wars of the Lord, and is it not said, “The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name”? It was conspicuously so in the driving out of the Canaanites. When the people of Israel, untrained for war, marched into the land, they found that their enemies had chariots of iron and they were entrenched in cities that were walled up even unto heaven—but yet all the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites could not stand against the twelve tribes of Israel! They fled before them like chaff before the wind! They were scattered like the clouds before the tempest! “Oh, praise you the Lord and magnify Him, for He cast out the heathen and He planted His people in their own land.” The right hand of the Lord was that day exalted, for His right hand does valiantly!

And was it not so throughout the period of the judges? Time would fail us to tell you of Samson, of Gideon, of Barak and all those mighty men who were as weapons in the hands of Jehovah—javelins cast forth by omnipotence! Truly in those days, also, the right hand of the Lord did valiantly! David, who penned this Psalm, knew this in his own experience, for he smote the Philistines hip and thigh with great slaughter. And long after David had slept with his fathers, others arose and God was with them—and the Lord did mighty deeds. Have you forgotten how the hosts of Sennacherib lay like the sere leaves of autumn when the breath of the archangel had blasted them? Right onward

throughout the whole history of Israel, the foes of God had made headway for a while, for He put His hand, even His right hand, into His bosom. But when the Lord has risen and His people have chanted the solemn Psalm, "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered," then they that hated Him have fled before Him! Into smoke have they been consumed like the fat of rams! Into smoke have they been consumed away! "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

But from those triumphs of physical might over warlike powers we turn our eyes to another field of battle—a spiritual one! And God who was mighty with weapons of war, we find mighty with the sword of the Spirit and with the weapons of the gospel! And we claim the verse which is now before us as a song of the New Testament as well as a chant of the Old! The right hand of the Lord is this day exalted and still it does valiantly!

We shall ask your attention not to a very lengthy sermon, but to these three points:—*The triumphs of the Lord Jesus; the triumphs of the gospel in the church; the triumphs of grace in individual hearts.* To all these and I know not to which one more than another, the text is most appropriate.

I. CONCERNING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE LORD JESUS IT MAY BE SAID, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." He did not come as a man of war, for He is the Prince of Peace. He came not here with sword, shield and buckler, but He came with a body fitted to suffer and with a heart that was made strong to endure. The Christ of God came in lowliness and in shame, to be despised and rejected of men, but for all that He fought great battles in the midst of His weakness and won for Himself wondrous spiritual victories. Observe, dear friends, with holy adoration, how our Lord Jesus Christ met Satan in conflict, not once or twice, but many times! In fact, throughout the Savior's life, the prince of the powers of the air assailed our Master. That was a glorious duel which was fought in the wilderness, and on the lofty mountain, from which those two contending spirits had a view of the whole world; and on the pinnacle of the temple, too. Sharp was the sword of Diabolus when he sought to smite the Savior under the fifth rib and make a full end of His innocence. But oh, how glorious the strokes of the Lord, Himself, with the sword of the Spirit, when He said, "It is written," and yet again, "It is written," and yet again, "It is written," and He chased the fiend away! And then triumphant angels came and ministered to the conqueror amidst the loneliness of the desert. Oh, you spirits, you might have sung that day, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." All through His life our Savior kept His vantage ground. The prince of this world assailed Him, but he made no dent upon His armor, much less wound upon His soul! He was tempted in all points—the darts flew so thick that they assailed Him from head to foot—but He was without a wound at the close

of the conflict! He was tempted, but yet without sin. And you know how it came to the last tug of all in the garden of Gethsemane. Oh, what a wrestling was that, when, as it were, the arch-fiend grappled close with Christ and gripped Him so that—

***“That desperate tug His soul might feel,
Through bars of brass and triple steel.”***

It brought the bloody sweat down the Master's face, but He did not relinquish His hold upon the foe and gave him such a fall that he never shall recover the defeat which he sustained amidst the olive trees of Gethsemane! And on the cross, too, when he rallied his forces for the last time and assailed the Spirit of our Lord with all the malice of his infernal nature, there the great Michael, the true archangel, set His foot upon the dragon's head—and though His heel was wounded—yet He broke that head! And the strength of the power of evil is gone forever! Its monarchy is finally destroyed. “The right hand of the Lord,” though it was a pierced hand, “the right hand of the Lord,” though it had grasped a scepter of reed, “does valiantly”! “The right hand of the Lord is exalted.”

The same might be said, but we should go over the same ground, again, if we spoke of *the conquests which our Lord achieved over sin* in every shape and form. It mattered not how it approached Him—He repelled it! He overthrew it as far as He was personally concerned. And when the sins of His people were laid upon Him, oh, brothers and sisters, how dreadful was that hour, but how ought we to look back upon it with devout thankfulness! When the sins of His people came like an avalanche to crush Him, how gloriously did He sustain the load! With what wondrous power of angels did He suffer the wrath of God which was due for the sins of His people—

***“Bore all incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare.”***

And when He had made atonement forever for all His people's sins and brought in everlasting righteousness for all His chosen, and could say, “It is finished”—when He gave up the ghost—then truly the right hand of the Lord was exalted and the right hand of the Lord had done valiantly! Brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus has this day conquered all our sins! There is not a transgression left to accuse His people! There is no record against them in God's book! He has perfected forever them that are set apart. The work is finished! Salvation is complete! The right hand of the Lord has done for us what we could not have done for ourselves! What the angels of heaven would not have been as foolish as to have attempted, the Lord Jesus Christ has most surely completed for all believers! Heaven rings this day with the joyful songs of His triumphant saints who tell how “the right hand of the Lord is exalted.”

Our precious Lord is to be praised in language like our text for having *vanquished death as well as sin*. Satan and sin He overthrew and virtually therein He conquered death. It did not seem as if He would

vanquish death, my brothers and sisters, when He lay in the grave. The image of death was set as with a seal upon His brow! The Lord of life and immortality seemed, and was as really dead as any of the sons of Adam! The three days passed—the appointed time in which He should be, like Jonah, in the bowels of the earth. But on the third day He could not be held by the bonds of death. I think I see Him, like another Samson who had been bound with cords, awakening from His slumber like a strong man refreshed, and He snaps the bonds of death, for it was not possible that He could be held by them! Then the stone was rolled away from the door of the sepulcher and out He came, resplendent in the glory of His resurrection body! From that moment death has been destroyed! Children of God shall pass through the grave, but they cannot be confined in it. “Oh, death, where is your sting? Oh, grave, where is your victory?” Christ has forever taken away the gates of the Gaza of the grave, carried them far away where Satan can never bring them back, and death cannot restore his stronghold. Glorify the ever-living Christ, for His right hand is exalted!

And the same was conspicuously true in the day *when our Lord left this world and rose to the Father*. Our imagination can hardly depict that scene, when they who received Him after the apostles had lost sight of Him, brought His chariot from on high to bear Him to His throne. Oh, what an ascent was that, when flashed the eternal coursers up the celestial hills. For He comes, mighty to save! He went forth to battle, but He comes back from conquest to wear His well-earned renown. Do you not see at His chariot wheels the bound monsters? They must be dragged to the very gates of heaven and then hurled down again! He has led captivity captive and received gifts for men. Oh, in that day of our Lord's ascending up on high, they who gazed upon the matchless spectacle of the returning King of kings must have said, if not in words, yet certainly in sense, “The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”

In those victories, beloved, you and I have a share. Satan was conquered for us! Sin was overcome for us! Death was bound for us—

**“Hell and our sins obstruct our course,
But hell and sin are vanquished foes!
Our Savior nailed them to His cross,
And sang the triumph when He rose.”**

Believe it and be glad of it! All your enemies are overcome! You still have to battle, but you fight with conquered foes. The dragon who is most dreadful to you carries a deadly wound about him. Your sins with which you have to contend from day to day are virtually slain. They have their death wound—they shall not be able to follow you into heaven. Oh, rejoice in your Lord, conquer in His conquests, be victorious in His victory, overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and give Him all the

glory of your triumph! Now, I pass on to note, in the second place, that our text is very applicable to—

II. THE PERPETUAL TRIUMPHS OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST.

The church began with feeble numbers, with small wealth. I might add, with comparatively little talent, but she was clothed with the Holy Spirit—she was, therefore, mighty! Let us just look at the history of the church a minute or two, that our souls may be comforted with the prospect of the like victories in days to come. When first the church was in the world like a new-born child, the dragon vomited forth torrents with the hope of drowning it. You know the rough weapons with which the world assailed the church at first. The sword was unsheathed, prisons were put into use, the rack, unutterable torments, shame, reproach, every infernal art of persecution was pressed into the diabolical service to put down, if possible, the cause and kingdom of Christ in the world. Now, only think for a minute what became of the continued attempts, *the cruel attempts of the world against the church*, for the result conspicuously shows how the right hand of the Lord was exalted! The more they persecuted Israel in Egypt, the more they multiplied—and it was the same with the church of God. They that were persecuted went everywhere preaching the Word. They might have tarried at home, perhaps, and been corn in the garner, but persecution broke down the door and they were thrown, like handfuls of wheat, broadcast over the nations—and everywhere the precious seed sprang up! It was of no use killing the Christians—it was like the killing of the hydra—the cutting off of one head made a hundred fresh ones spring up!

Young men went to see the martyrdom of saints and as they saw their holy patience, they came to be believers themselves, till dying Christians became the most powerful preachers of the gospel and even the saints that believed were comforted by the sight of the death of the martyrs—they went to see how to die, they went to learn the way to give themselves up for Christ! The anvil never smites the hammer in return, but it breaks many hammers. It wears out the hammer. Here is the patience of the saints. God being in His church, she has borne year after year, and God has forborne to avenge her, but she has triumphed! Her weak, feeble maidens and her illiterate men, her sons and her daughters who lifted not a hand in self-defense, have vanquished those that were armed to the teeth and had the power of imperial Rome and of all empires at their back! “The right hand of the Lord,” amidst the hosts of martyrs who wear the ruby crown in heaven today, “is exalted,” for “the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”

Then, at the same time, the church was sent into the world to *combat with the superstitions which existed* in that age and, brothers and sisters, the superstitions of ancient Rome were very attractive, very venerable.

They had existed through long ages. They were interwoven with the daily life of the people. Poetry, art, philosophy, all lent their power to maintain the old heathenism with which the Christian church came in contact. I have no doubt whatever that the *Pontifex Maximus* of the day, if he had been told that in Paul he saw a rival, teaching a religion which would break down all the old altars and the temples of Rome, would have ridiculed the statement. And yet it was so, for where are the gods of old Rome today? Who worships Jupiter today? Who bows before Saturn, father of the gods? Or who pays reverence to Venus or Diana? These have gone—and what has smitten them and broken them in pieces? The stone cut out of the mountain without hands has dashed them all in pieces and broken their power like potters' vessels! And none shall set up these false gods again. Nor was it so in Rome, alone. In all countries, the church of God has had a complete triumph. Weird superstitions woven with stories of magic which alarmed the multitudes have fled like the birds of night before the rising sun! No form of superstition which the enemy has been able to devise has had power to retain its hold where the gospel has been fully preached. The superstition might seem to stand like the eternal hills, but faith has said, "Who are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain," and the mountain of superstition has melted away! "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

But, my brothers and sisters, the church has been *assailed by heresies within herself* and if anything might have destroyed her, surely it would have been these! I will single out but one—the Arian heresy. You that are well read in church history will know how very potent at one time the Arian heresy was in the ancient church. The divinity of our Lord became almost universally denied! He was a great man, a good man, perhaps the best of men, but they said that He was nothing more. It was a grand day when Athanasius declared that Christ was "very God of very God," and, finding himself alone, yet said, "I, Athanasius, against the world." It did seem an unequal combat, for there were monarchs on the side of the Arians—bishops and the power of the then church, as well as the power of the world! But Arianism—where is it now? The pure faith of God has flung it off like drops of rain that are cast off from the housetops and remain not! There may be some sleeping in the dens and corners of the earth, to hide their ignoble heads, but the heresy is dead for any power that it has in the Christian church. And so shall every heresy die. As the eternal God lives, nothing is immortal but the truth of God—nothing is eternal but the gospel! The right hand of the Lord fights not for a lie, but it is lifted up and His arm is made bare for the truth of His Son Jesus Christ! And all along through the pages of church history this is true—that the right hand of the Lord is exalted, and does valiantly in overthrowing error!

But the church had to suffer from something which excelled heresy because it *was the aggregation of heresy, superstition and apostasy*. I mean the spread of Popery. In the Middle Ages the night was sevenfold. There was scarcely light enough for the anxious seeker to see his Lord! And men were crushed by the Inquisition, by the practice of priestly confession, by the domination of priests, bishops and popes. And if any man had then bewailed the absence of the light, as some few did, and an angel had said to him, "Courage, my son. The day shall come in which all this system shall lose its power and the old gospel shall come back"—I can imagine I hear the weeper say, "If the Lord should open windows in heaven, could such a thing be?" But such a thing was! God found the man and gave him a heart of iron and a brow of brass—and Martin Luther's voice was heard ringing across these waters, saying, "Therefore is a man justified by faith, and not by the works of the law." And other voices took up that strain till in regions where that truth of God was an utterly unknown thing, it became familiar to the peasant at the plow and humble men and women, hiding away from the powers that would have destroyed them, cheered one another with the gladness of that gospel sound! Oh, you know, beloved, how God smote the Church of Rome in those days gone by, and as you read the story of the Reformation, you can say, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted."

Now, I shall not detain you with history. I shall bring you to today, for the truth of the olden times is fulfilled in your ears again this day. *Wherever the gospel is preached, the right hand of the Lord is exalted!* We have seen it and, therefore, we speak what we know. If the gospel of Jesus Christ is faithfully preached, no matter by whom—if it is the whole gospel affectionately declared, prayed over, believingly delivered—it will always glorify God's name! I want you to notice in these days how the Lord's hand is exalted in some respects.

First, in this *respect—in awakening the attention of a negligent people* to the gospel. There is nothing in the world that makes so much stir as preaching Christ! You shall preach anything else you like and the people will sleep. But if you will preach Christ out and out simply, in plain Saxon, as Paul would have Him preached, not with wisdom of words, you shall find the people will come together! I know not why it is, but so it is that even those who dislike the gospel will come to hear it! And though sometimes they set their teeth together and curse the men that preach it, yet they come again—they cannot help it. A gospel preacher has charms coming from his lips that bind themselves around men's hearts. And he holds them captives, unwilling at first and afterwards joyful captives, to the power of the word He preaches! There should be little need of advertisements with a simple, plain, bold gospel preacher. You shall put him down a back street, you shall give him a passage down a court, you shall then do nothing more for him but let him speak to a handful of

people—and the first news you will hear of him is that he is eccentric, that he is extraordinary, that he is a fool, that he is a madman! This is always good news! There is a man of God somewhere about when we hear that noise! Straightway people want to hear this enthusiast, this Methodist, this Presbyterian—and they rush to listen—and then it is that there is power felt by the people! They do not know what it is, but there is a something in it which seems to grip their hearts and hold them! It is nothing other than this—that the Lord has said of Christ that if He is lifted up, He will draw all men to Him! And where Christ is lifted up, people will be drawn to hear. They must hear! We need not ask them to come—they must come!. Where His body is, there will the eagles be gathered together! Where the Savior Christ is proclaimed, there shall they come who need to feed upon a Savior! Does philosophy achieve such a triumph as this? You call it a poor triumph. So it may be in itself, but in its ulterior results it is a very great one. There are wise men on the earth that would give their eyes and ears if they could but get the people to listen to them—but where Christ is not preached, there are generally more spiders than there are human souls. Put Unitarianism in the pulpit and you shall soon find how the pews begin to multiply in emptiness! Little else comes of it. A gospel with no gospel has great power of dispersion, but it has little power of attraction—but the gospel of Jesus Christ soon draws a multitude together and, “the right hand of the Lord is exalted.”

But you will still say this is little, and I shall confess it is comparatively little, but mark you, if the gospel is preached, it does not end in coming and going to hear it, for soon that gospel comes like an eagle from afar and pounces down on men's hearts and makes them a prey to its power! They that came to scoff, remain to pray! They that looked in from curiosity, remain to receive the Savior into their hearts! And those who came from enmity become converted into friends! Oh, how the right hand of the Lord was exalted in the days of Whitfield and Wesley! The stories of these two eminent men have been written lately by many loving pens—and I must confess I am always to read the narratives, however they may be written. Though I have read them many times, I can always read them again. Oh, it was wonderful when the whole land was asleep! The Church of England was asleep in the dark and the Dissenters were asleep in the light—but there suddenly arose up a man who dared to stand upon his father's grave in the churchyard and to preach the gospel! And then there came another, a twin seraph, with equal wings, who went into fields and began to proclaim the strange doctrine of faith as a saving grace, the necessity of regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit! Oh, those were brave days—the days of the early Methodists—when the time of the singing of birds was come and the land was full of the power of the Holy Spirit! And it is just so now. Anywhere where the gospel is preached, and preached with the Holy Spirit sent

down from heaven, there are conversions, there are broken hearts, there are spirits held by Jesus' love, there are glad ones consecrating themselves to the Redeemer's service! "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

And we have seen the truth of this in some of the very darkest parts of London. What a wonderful instance of what God's grace can do can be seen by anyone who chooses to see it in such spots as Seven Dials, where God's love has blessed the earnest evangelist; or in Golden Lane, where a dear brother of our own, labors amidst the poverty and sin of the masses. Why, when I have gone there to see my brothers and sisters meet together, the poorest of the poor—fruit sellers, men that were drunks and blasphemers, women that were thieves and harlots—and have heard them sing the praises of Jesus and rejoice in His dear name, I have felt "the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." And so here and all around! I need not quote instances, for you know them better than I do, of how lions are turned into lambs and ravens into doves, and the most unlikely spots in East London—that were deserts, salt lands and not inhabited, that looked as if they were cursed of God—have been made to rejoice and blossom, as the rose, when the preacher of the Gospel has come into the place and His master with him! Oh, yes, "the right hand of the Lord is exalted." But they say the gospel has lost its power. I read the other day that some of us were the echoes of a dead Puritanism that we were not abreast of the age and were preaching a faith that was practically dead! Sirs, they lie in their throats that say so, and some of them know it, for the gospel is no more dead than they are, nor half as much! It lives and lives in all its energy! And they speak not the truth that dare to say it has lost its force. But it is unphilosophical! Hair-splitters do not care about it! Neological divines toss it out as a thing fit for old women! Glory be to God! If it suits old women, it will suit us and all kinds of people! But inasmuch as it is not philosophical according to their declaration, that word of God is fulfilled in our ears, "The foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Then they turn round and say, "But look at those who preach it—uneducated men—men that are not of the higher classes of society, unskilled in the refinements, not able to always give the original word of the Scripture upon which they preach." Yes, sir, and it would be a difficult task for any man to prove that the early triumphs of the gospel owed a solitary jot to education and learning! In looking at the inscriptions in the catacombs a few days ago, when in Rome, I could not help the observation continually coming to my lips that the early Christians must all, or almost all of them, have been so illiterate as scarcely to have been able to write their own names, for the most common words that are upon the slabs of stone that face the graves of

the early Christians are badly spelt—and there are Greek letters and Latin letters intermingled, showing that they hardly knew how to finish a word in one language, but must piece it out with another, not knowing completely either the one or the other! Yes, but it was because God had put His truth into the mouth of babes and sucklings, and established strength, that when the church had conquered by such humble instrumentalities, and the truths of God had been mighty when preached by such simple men, the right hand of the Lord was exalted, for the right hand of the Lord had done it—not the wisdom, nor the craft, nor the energy of man! God's arm was the more conspicuous because of the feebleness of the instrumentality! Much rather, then, will we glory in infirmities, because the power of God does rest upon us, for He it is that does valiantly! But now I must, in the third place, say a few words, and but a few, for time fails us, upon—

III. THE TRIUMPHS OF GRACE IN INDIVIDUALS.

Let us talk together. You remember, some of you who are this day converted, the time *when first the gospel had power over your soul*. I remember how I fought against it. A mother's tears would not move me, nor a father's earnest rebukes. I heard the gospel, sometimes, and I was a little affected by it, but I threw it off! But I shall never forget when it came with power to my soul. I had no shield that could keep off its darts—the arrows of God found a ready way into my conscience—and they seemed to drink my very blood! My wound rankled and was corrupt. My soul refused to be comforted. Then, as I used to go up to my little chamber and bow my knees in prayer and come down more wretched than when I entered it, when I would search the Word of God to find comfort, but could not find it—then it was that he who knew me might have said, “The right hand of the Lord is exalted in that young man, for he was proud and lofty, and self-righteous, but now he lies in the very dust, and wonders that God lets him live, and marvels that there should be a gospel for him, and can only half believe it true that such a wretch as he should ever be saved.” Oh, I wish the Lord would come with power to some self-righteous ones that are here this afternoon! You are as good as your neighbors? Ah, suppose you are condemned with your neighbors, will that help you? To be lost in company is small benefit. Oh, but you have never done anybody any harm? No, except your God—and you have robbed Him of all the praise that was due to Him! And you have lived in this world just as you might have lived if there had been no God! Oh, proud sinner, I cannot bring you down, but God can! Oh, for a blow from the mighty arm to level you and roll you, biting the dust in shame and self-abasement! Some of us know what that means. May you know it, too, and then you will say, though your heart is breaking as you say it, “The right hand of the Lord is exalted! He is good, but I am evil! He is great and I am nothing! He is infinitely holy, but I am shamefully impure!

God be merciful to me a sinner! God save me for His Name's sake." It is in such a thing as this that the right hand of the Lord is exalted.

But let me talk with you further, you that know the Lord. Beloved, do you remember when you sought to escape from the multitude of your sins? Do you recollect when they compassed you about like bees? You could not count your sins—you had forgotten them—they seemed dead and buried, but they all came to life, again, and they swarmed about you! They buzzed about you at your table. They stung you in your sleep, in your dreams. They stung you at your work. You had no peace because of your sins! And do you remember the place, the spot of ground, where you met with Jesus? Some of us recollect it to a yard. We looked to Him upon the cross and the battle was over at once! One look to Jesus, crucified, and the sins that compassed us about were destroyed in the name of the Lord—and the fires that threatened to devour us were quenched as a fire of thorns through the precious blood of Jesus! Do you remember it? Oh, let your soul go back to *your spiritual birthday*. Ring the bells of your heart, again, and hang out the streamers of your soul for that happy day when Jesus washed your sins away! Oh, beloved, that day beyond all others, the right hand of the Lord was exalted; the right hand of the Lord did valiantly for you! It is a grand picture. I should like to see some artist attempt to sketch it, but he certainly must fail. I would like to hear some poet sing it, but I think that he could hardly reach the dignity of the argument. When Miriam and the daughters of Israel took their timbrels and went forth with the song and the dance to sing because Egypt had been destroyed, and Israel was free, do you know the note in that song that pleases me best of all is this, when they said, "The depths have covered them; there is not one of them left." Why, they looked upon the Red Sea and could not see a trace of their foes! And I think I hear them singing it, "The depths have covered them; there is not one, not one," and they answered each other, "Not one, not one, not one of them left." And so when you and I looked to Christ and saw His atoning sacrifice like a mighty sea roll over all our sins—in that blessed day our spirits sang, "The depths have covered them; there is not one, not one, not one of them left." Every sin is gone, every transgression swallowed up in superabounding grace. "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

The same has been true, beloved friends, in the many cases in which you and I have had *to overcome our troubles*. What sore afflictions have we passed through! Some to whom I speak, it may be, have had mountains of tribulation. Yes, beloved, but when God has been with you, you have stepped from mountaintop to mountaintop without going down into the valley at all!

And, beloved friends, to close all, where there was much room for great enlargement, let me say, when you and I shall come to die—as soon, thank God, we shall, for it is a subject to be treated of with

thankfulness—we shall find *in our dying moments* that “the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.” I might almost say that I came here from the grave, for it is in truth but a day or so since I went to bury one of the holiest men I ever knew and, I may add, the happiest man I ever saw in all my life! He fell asleep at a good old age, but as I stood by his bedside often in his last illness, I envied him. Covered from head to foot, as he said, with the boils of Job and the sores of Lazarus in one—with all his bones aching as though they were out of joint, yet he said to me—“What a happy thing it is to be here.” And I said, “What a happy thing to be upon a dying bed?” “Yes,” he said, “for I am with God, and God is with me, and Christ is mine and I am His, and it is the happiest day I ever lived.” He had often said that in his lifetime, for I never knew him otherwise than rejoicing in his God. But I was glad to hear him, when his eyes were almost glazed with death, say, “It is the happiest day I ever lived.” And just before he died, instead of expressing any regrets at the pain he was feeling, or at his departure, he turned round and said to his dear ones around the bed, “You seem all changed to me from what you were. I love you, but I have reached a higher stage than things that are seen. I have seen the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off—and I have heard words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” And they said, “Can you not tell us something of what you have seen?” He said, “You must pardon me. I am forbidden to tell you. But henceforth, I have done with all things here below, and I am taken up with the joy and glory of my Lord.” “My bliss is so great,” he said, “it kills me! I cannot live much longer through the excess of joy I feel!” In a few short minutes he had closed his eyes and was with God.

The Negro said of his minister, “Sir, he is dying full of life!” So have I seen them die, full of life—the best of life! And I have then thought, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.” Fear not! The last conflict shall be the chief of your victories this side the river! The Lord bless you and make you a blessing. Amen.

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FEARING AND TRUSTING—TRUSTING AND NOT FEARING

NO. 3362

A SERMON

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ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 15, 1867.

***“Whenever I am afraid,
I will trust in You.”***
Psalm 56:3.

“I will trust, and not be afraid.”
Isaiah 12:2.

I INTEND this evening to have two texts, though I shall not therefore have two sermons and so keep you a double length of time! Our first text, which will suffice to begin with, is in the 56th Psalm, at the 3rd verse—*“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.”*

David was one of the boldest of men. From his youth up, he was noted for his courage. As a youth he went, in simple confidence in God, and attacked the giant Goliath. Throughout life there was no man who seemed to be more at home in wars and battles—and less likely to be afraid. But yet this hero, this courageous man says that he *was* sometimes afraid. And I suppose that there are none of us but must plead guilty to the impeachment that sometimes the brave spirit gives way and that we tremble and are afraid. It is a disease for which the cure is here mentioned, *“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.”* When my soul suffers from the palsy of fear, I will lay hold upon the strong one and get strength from Him—and so my fears shall all be cast out.”

To be afraid is, in some cases, *a very childish thing*. We sometimes expect to see our little children frightened and that they will not bear to be alone in the dark, but we are surely not afraid to be there! The more we are afraid, the more childish we become. Courage is manly, but to be afraid is to be like a child. It is not always so, however, for there are some great and sore dangers which may well make the very boldest man tremble.

To be afraid is always *a distressing thing*. The heart beats quickly and the whole system seems to be thrown out of order. There have been known cases of men who have had to endure severe terror for several hours—and their hair has all turned gray in a single night. No doubt, too, there have been diseases which have brought men to their graves

which have been caused by fright. Fear is always distressing and whether it is the fear of outward danger, or fear of inward sin, it is always a terrible thing to have to go mourning because of being afraid.

And to be afraid, too, is always *a weakening thing*. The man who can keep calm in the midst of difficulty is better able to meet it. If he is at sea in a storm, if his mind is quiet, he is likely to steer his vessel safely through the danger. But if he is perturbed and cast down with agitated alarm, we can have but little confidence in him, for we know not where he may steer the boat! A man who is afraid often runs into worse dangers than those from which he seeks to escape. He plunges himself into the sea to escape from the river—and it is as though he fled from a lion—and a bear met him.

To be afraid, then, is generally a very mischievous thing. And though sometimes exceedingly excusable, yet full often it is also exceedingly dangerous. David, however, here gives us the cure for fear, “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.”

I shall not have time this evening to take all the fears and amazements which distress humanity, but there are four or five which we will mention and which may comprehend the others—

I. SOMETIMES WE ARE AFRAID OF TEMPORAL TROUBLES.

If some of you have such a smooth path in life that you are untried in this respect, yet the great proportion of mankind have a hard fight to find bread to eat and garments with which they shall be clothed. And in the lives of the poor, especially, there must often be sad times when they are afraid lest they should not be able to provide things necessary and should be brought to absolute starvation. Such a fear must very often afflict those who are in extreme poverty. And you, too, who are in business, in this age of competition, you are, no doubt, frequently afraid lest, by a failure in this direction or in that, you should not be able to meet your engagements—and the good ship of your business should drive upon the rocks.

Such fears, I suppose, fall to the lot of all young tradesmen when they are starting in business but, perhaps, there are a few older ones who have done longer and rougher work and are quite free from such times of anxious fear.

And, brothers and sisters, even if we have none of these troubles about what we shall eat and what we shall drink, yet we have our domestic troubles that make us to be much alarmed. It is no small thing to see a child sick, or, still worse, to see your life’s partner gradually fading away and to know, as some do, that the case is beyond all medical skill—and that she, who is so dear, must be taken away.

And you wives, perhaps, are, some of you, dreading the hour when you may become widows and your little children may be fatherless. You have often been afraid as you have looked ahead to the calamity which seemed to overshadow you. God has not made this world to be a nest for us—and if we try to make it such for ourselves—He plants thorns in it so that we may be compelled to mount and find our soul's true home somewhere else, in a higher and nobler sphere than this poor world can give!

Now, whenever we are tried with these temporal affairs, David tells us we are to trust in God. "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You." I will just do this—after having done my best to earn my daily bread and to fight the battle of life, if I find I cannot do all I would, I will throw myself upon the promise of God, wherein He has said, "Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." I will believe that my heavenly Father, who feeds the ravens, will feed me, and that if He does not allow even the gnats that dance in the sunbeam to perish for lack of sustenance, He will not allow a soul that rests upon Him to perish for lack of daily bread. Oh, it is a sweet thing, though, perhaps, you may, some of you, think it a hard thing—it is a sweet thing when God enables you to leave tomorrow with Him and to depend upon your Father who is in heaven!

I speak to the tradesman and all who often have to do business in great waters, who seem to go from waterspout to waterspout and over whom all God's waves and billows seem to go—I believe you will find yourselves much stronger to do battle against these difficulties if it is your constant habit to commit all your cares to Him who cares for you. It will all go wrong with us, even in smooth waters, if we do not have God to be the pilot. And as to rough weather, we shall soon be a wreck if we forget Him! I know of nothing more delightful to the believer than every morning to commit the day's troubles to God and then go down into the world feeling, "Well, my Father knows it all." And then at night to commit the troubles of the day again into the great Father's hands and to feel that He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." It is sweet sleeping when you can have a promise for the pillow at your head! You know, perhaps, the good old story which is told of the woman on board ship who was greatly afraid in a storm, but she saw her husband perfectly at peace and she could not understand it. Her husband said he would tell her the reason, so, snatching up a sword, he pointed it at her heart. She looked at it, but did not tremble. "Well," he said, "are you not afraid? The sword is sharp and I could kill you in a moment." "No," she said, "because it is in your hands!" "Ah," he replied, "and that is why I

am not afraid—because the storm is in my Father’s hands and He loves me more than I love you!”

A little child was at play in a lower room and as he played away by himself, amusing himself, about every ten minutes he ran to the foot of the stairs and called out, “Mother, are you there?” and his mother answered, “Yes, I am here,” and the little lad went back to his sport and fun—and was as happy as happy could be—and until again it crossed his mind that his mother might have gone. So he ran to the stairs again and called, “Mother, are you there?” “All right,” she said, and as soon as he heard her voice again, back he went once more to his play. It is just so with us. In times of temporal trouble we go to the mercy-seat in prayer and we say, “Father, are You there? Is it Your hand that is troubling me? Is it Your providence that has sent me this difficulty?” And as soon as you hear the voice which says, “It is I,” you are no longer afraid! Oh, happy are they who, when they are afraid in this way, trust in the Lord!

A second great fear, through which some of you have never passed, but through which all must pass who enter into heaven, is a—

II. FEAR CONCERNING THE GUILT OF PAST SIN.

Do not tell me with regard to temporal troubles that they are sharp and bitter! Believe me, that trouble for sin is far more bitter and keen. Do you remember when God was pleased to awaken you from your long sleep—when you looked within and saw that you were all defiled, full of pollution and all manner of evil? Do you recollect how the thoughts pierced you like poisoned arrows—“God requires that which is pure.” “For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof at the day of judgment”? Do you recollect how it seemed as though hell flared up right before you where you stood and it seemed as though there was only a step between you and death! The terrors of the Lord got hold upon you, and the very marrow of your bones seemed to freeze as you thought about an angry God and of how you, in your sins, without any preparation, could meet Him! Oh, it is not so long ago with some of us but what we recollect being startled in our sleep under a sense of sin! And all day long the common joys of men were no joys to us, and though before we had been sprightly and cheerful like others—yet our mirth was now turned into mourning and all our laughter into lamentation!

Perhaps some of you are passing through this state of mind now. You are now conscious of your old sins. The sins of your youth are coming up before your remembrance. Now, if so, listen to what David says, “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.” Beloved, if you would ever get rid of the fear of your past sins, remember that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to suffer for the sins of all who will trust Him. All the

sins of all His people were reckoned as upon Him and all that they should have suffered on account of those sins, Jesus Christ suffered in their place! The mighty debt, too huge for us to calculate, was all laid upon Him and He paid it to the last farthing! He was sued and summoned at the court of the eternal justice, for the sins of His people were reckoned as upon Him—and all that they should have rendered with hands and feet, and brow and side, He discharged—the whole tremendous debt that was due to God, the debt caused by the sins of all His people were paid by Him!

Now, it is a blessed thing when sin burdens us to fly away to Christ and stand in spirit beneath the cross—and feel that under that crimson canopy, no flash of divine penalty shall ever fall upon us! “Smite me? Great God, You cannot, for have You not smitten the redeeming Christ on my account? Is it not recorded that for those who trust Him, Your Son is both surety and substitute? How, then, can You first sue the substitute and then afterwards sue the person for whom the substitute stood?” Faith thus clings to the cross and feels, no—*knows*—that all is safe! I would God that some of you who are lamenting over the burden of your sins and are pressed down by it, would look to the Son of God pouring out His life and would trust Him, for then your sins would be gone in a moment! Only look on Jesus and though you had committed all the sins that are committable by mortal man, yet Jesus Christ can put them all away! If every form of iniquity were heaped upon you till you were dyed through and through with it, like the scarlet that has been lying long a-soak in the dye, yet let the crimson blood of Jesus come into contact with your crimson sins and they—

**“Shall vanish all away,
Though foul as hell before!
Shall be dissolved beneath the sea,
And shall be found no more!”**

Now, I know it is very easy when we do not feel our sins to trust in Christ, but the business of faith is to trust in Christ when you *do* feel your sins! Brothers and sisters, it would be cheap faith to take Christ as the saints’ Savior, but it is the faith of God’s elect to take Him as the *sinner’s* Savior. When I can see marks of grace in myself, to trust Christ is easy—but when I see no marks of anything good, but every mark of everything that is evil and then come and cast myself upon Him and believe that He can save me, even me, and rest myself upon Him—this is the faith which honors Christ and which will save us! May you have it and such time as you are afraid of sin, may you trust in Christ! A third fear, which is remarkably common, is a—

III. FEAR LEST WE SHOULD BE DECEIVED.

Among the best and most careful of believers this fear intrudes itself, “Lest, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” Lest, after having been united to the church, I should prove to be a dead member and so be cut out of the living vine. All these fears have I met with. One has said, “I fear I was never chosen of God.” Another has said, “I fear I never was effectually called.” And yet a third has said, “I fear I never possessed the repentance that needs not to be repented of.” Still others have confessed, “I am afraid my faith is not the faith of God’s elect.” Very frequently have I heard this, “I am afraid I am a hypocrite,” which is one of the oddest fears in the entire world, for nobody that *is* a hypocrite was ever afraid of it! It is the hypocrite who goes on peacefully, without fear, confident where there is no ground for confidence. But these fears abound and, in some respects, they are healthy. Better to go to heaven doubting, than to hell presuming! Better to enter into life crippled and maimed, than having two eyes and hands, and feet, to be cast into the destroying fire! We cannot say too much in praise of assurance—and we cannot speak too much against presumption. Dread that! Shun it with all your might!

But when you and I are besieged by these doubts and fears—and I very often am—as to whether we are the children of God or not, what is the best thing for us to do? “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.” This is the shortcut with the devil! This is the way to cut off his head more readily than anyway else. Go straight to Christ! Do not stop to argue with Satan. He is a crafty old liar and he will be sure to defeat you if it comes to argument between you. Say to him, “Satan, if I am deceived, if all I have ever known up till now has been only head knowledge, if I am nothing but a mere hypocrite, yet now—

***“Black, I to the fountain fly
Wash me, Savior, or I die!”***

It is a blessed thing to begin again—to be always beginning and yet always going on—for no man ever goes on to perfection who forgets his first love, his first faith and forgets to walk in Christ Jesus as he walked in Him at the first!

Beloved, whatever may be the doubt that comes to you tonight, I beseech you remember it is still, “Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” If you have been a backslider, weep over it. If you have been a great sinner, be sorry for it, but still remember, “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” And, “Where sin abounded, grace does much more abound.” The gospel’s voice is still, “Return, you backsliding children, for I am married unto you, says the Lord.” “Come, now, let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson, they

shall be whiter than snow.” Come, come, come, you doubting ones, trembling and broken to pieces! Come again—a guilty, weak and helpless worm—and cast yourself into Jesus’ arms!

But we cannot tarry upon that. A fourth fear, which is frequent enough to cause Christians much distress, is—

IV. A FEAR THAT WE SHALL NOT HOLD ON AND HOLD OUT TO THE END.

Many thousands of God’s saints are quite unnecessarily troubled with this. Remember that where God begins to work, He does not ask *us* to finish. He always completes His own work. If you have begun the work of salvation, you will have to carry it on, but if God has begun the good work in you, He will carry it on and bring it to its perfection of completeness in “the day of Christ.” Yet there are thousands who say, “Should I be tempted, I might fall! Working as I do with so many others, none of whom fear God, but who sneer and ridicule at divine things, I might, perhaps, turn aside and prove like one of them.” It is very proper that you should have that fear, very proper that you should be distressed at it—

***“What anguish has that question stirred,
If I should also go!”***

But, dearly beloved, what time you are afraid, do not say, “I shall be able to hold out”—do not trust in yourselves, or you will trust a broken reed—but what time you are afraid, renew your trust in Christ! Go with the temptation which you now experience and which you expect to return tomorrow, to the Lord and He will, with the temptation, show the way of escape out of it. I remember a miner who had been a sad, drunken man, and a great blasphemer, but he was converted among the Methodists—and a right earnest man he was! But he seemed to have been a man of strong passions and, on one occasion when he was praying, he prayed that sooner than that he might ever go back to his old sins, if God foresaw that he would not be able to bear up under the temptation, He would take him to heaven at once! And while he was praying the prayer in the prayer-meeting, he fell dead! God had answered him. Now, if you are to be tried in the order of providence in a way that you cannot bear and there is no other way of escape for you, God will take you clean away to where no temptation shall ever come near you! What time you are afraid, put your trust in Him and all will be well!

The last fear I have to mention, and then I shall have done with my first text, is this—

V. THE FEAR OF DEATH.

There are some “who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage.” But Christ came to deliver such—and where Christ

works, He delivers us from that fear! Beloved, do you ever get afraid of death? You do, perhaps, when you feel very sick or when you are very ill and low spirited. You begin to look ahead and you say, “I have run with the footmen and they have wearied me. What shall I do when I have to contend with the rider on the pale horse? My trials have been so great that I have scarcely found faith enough to bear them! What shall I do in the last great trial of the swellings of Jordan?” Now, what ought you to do at the time you are afraid of dying, but to say with David, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in You”? Oh, fear not to die! If you are in Christ, death is nothing! “But the pain, the dying struggle,” you say. Oh, there is no pain in death! It is the life that is full of pain. Death? What is it? Well, it is but a pin’s prick, and then it is over. “Many lie a-dying for weeks or months together,” say some. No! Say they *live*, for ‘tis living that makes them full of pain and anguish, but death ends all that! Death is just the passing through the narrow stream that is the entrance in the fields where—

***“Everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers.”***

To be afraid to die must be because we do not understand it, for if believers know that to die is but to enter into the arms of Jesus Christ, surely they will be able to sing bravely with one good old saint—

***“Since Jesus is mine, I’ll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off this garment of clay!
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory, through death, led the way!”***

What time you are afraid of dying, trust in the living Savior, for in Him are life and immortality! Remember—

***“Jesus can make our dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast we lean our head,
And breathe our life out softly there.”***

He will keep you where you shall sing—

***“Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul would stretch her wings in haste—
Fly fearless through death’s iron gate,
Nor fear the terror as she passed.”***

You shall fear no fear and know no evil because He shall be with you! And you shall find that His rod and His staff do comfort you!

Now, brothers and sisters, I have taken you far, like a guide conducting a number of travelers up the first road on a mountain. And I think we have gathered something even there, but now I want you to go up still higher. I feel as if, in handling this text, we have been traveling third class to heaven, but now I want you to get into the first class!

Hitherto we have been going in a sort of parliamentary train, which will get to heaven safe enough, but I want you now to take the express.

My second text will let you know what I mean. It is in the 12th chapter of Isaiah and the 2nd verse—*“I will trust and not be afraid.”*

This is several stages beyond the first text. David says, “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.” Isaiah says, “I will trust and not be afraid,” which is far better! When David is afraid, He trusts in God, but Isaiah trusts in God, first, and then he is not afraid at all! I told you in the first case that there was disease, and that faith was the remedy, but you know prevention is always better than cure. I have heard of a man who had serious chills and he was thankful to have a medicine which helped him through it. But his neighbor said he should not be very thankful for that, for he had a remedy which prevented him from ever having the malady! So with you who are doubting and fearing—it is a good thing that faith can bear you through it—but how much better it will be if you get a faith that does not have these doubts, that lives above these fears and troubles!

Look! There are two vessels yonder, and a storm is coming on. I see a great hurrying and scurrying on the deck of one. What are they doing? They have a great anchor and they are throwing it out! The storm is coming and they want to get a good hold, for fear lest they should be driven on the shore.

But on the deck of the other vessel, I see no bustle at all. There is the watch pacing up and down as leisurely as possible. Why are they not in a panic? “Ahoy there! Ahoy! What makes you so calm and assured? Have you got out your anchor? Look! Your comrades in the other vessel, how busy they are!” “Oh,” says the watch, “but we had our anchor out a long while ago, before the storm came on and, therefore, we have no need to trouble, now, and hurry to throw it out.”

Now, you who are full of doubts, fears and troubles, you know the way to be safe is to throw out the anchor of faith! But it would be better if you had the anchor of faith already out so that you could trust in God and not be afraid at all!

Let us take the fears which we have already mentioned over again. Faith saves from—

I. THE FEAR OF TEMPORAL TROUBLE.

The man who fully trusts in God is not afraid of temporal trouble. You have read, perhaps, the life of Bernard Palissy, the famous potter. He was confined for many years on account of his religion, and he was only permitted to live at all because he was such a skillful workman that they did not want to put him to death. King Henry the Third of France said to him, one day, “Bernard, I shall be obliged to give you up to your enemies

to be burned unless you change your religion.” Bernard replied, “Your Majesty, I have often heard you say you pity me, but believe me I greatly pity you, though I am no king but only a poor humble potter. There is no man living that could compel me to do what I believe to be wrong—and yet you say you will be compelled—those are kingly words for you to utter!” And he could say this to the king, in whose hands his life was! Bernard was a very poor man. As I have told you, he used to earn his bread by making pottery. And he used to say, in his poverty, that he was a very rich man, for he had two things—he had heaven and earth. And then he would take up a handful of the clay by which he earned his living. Happy man! Though often brought to the depths of poverty, he could say, “I will trust, and not be afraid.”

Take as another example. Martin Luther. They came to Martin one day and they said, “Martin, it is all over with the Reformation cause, now, for the Emperor of Germany has sworn a solemn oath to help the pope.” “I do not care a snap of my finger for both of them,” he said, “nor for all the devils in hell! This is God’s work, and God’s work can stand against both emperors and popes!” Luther was a man who trusted—really, intensely—and because of this he was not afraid. Is not that much better than being afraid, and then having to trust to banish the fear? Now, God is with me, and come what may—

***“Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled.
Now I can smile at Satan’s rage,
And face a frowning world.
Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall—
I shall in safety reach my home,
My God, my heaven, my all.”***

Oh, if we can all get to this brave assurance of faith, happy shall we be in the midst of the worst trouble! Faith also saves from the—

II. FEAR CONCERNING PAST SIN.

He is in a blessed state who is delivered from such fear because he who is not is not afraid. One of you knows a man, perhaps, who has got into debt and who owed a great deal. But some little time ago a friend paid all his debts for him—and he has the receipt! Now, when he walks the streets, is this man afraid of the sheriff’s officer? Does he fear that he shall be arrested? Why, no! He knows he shall not, because he carries the receipt with him! Every man who trusts Christ perceives his own sin, but he also perceives that Christ paid for all his sin. He that believes has the witness of his pardon in himself which he carries with him as a receipt and which eases his conscience and prevents his fears. Oh, if you can but know that Christ died for you! If you can but rest alone in Him

so as to know that He is yours, then all the sins that you have ever committed, though you lament them, shall never cause you a moment's uneasiness, for they are drowned beneath the Red Sea of the Savior's blood and, therefore, you may say, "I will trust and not be afraid." As to that third fear which I mentioned—the fear lest we should be hypocrites, or—

III. LEST THE WORK OF GRACE SHOULD NOT BE RIPENED IN OUR HEARTS—

There is one way of getting rid of that fear entirely! If you take a sovereign across the counter, you may not know whether it is a good one—you may have some doubts about it. But if you get it straight from the Mint, I do not suppose you will have any suspicion of it at all! So when a man asks, "Is my faith right? Is my religion right?" If he can say, "I got it straight from the throne of God by trusting in the blood of Jesus Christ"—then he will know that he received it from headquarters—and there can be no mistake about it! A Christian has no right to be always saying—

***"Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"***

He may be compelled to say it, sometimes, but it is far better for him to come just as he is and throw himself at the foot of the cross and say, "Savior, You have promised to save those that believe! I believe, therefore You have saved me!" I know some think this is presumption, but surely it is worse than presumption not to believe God! And it is true humility to take God at His word and to believe Him.

I think I once illustrated this truth of God in this place in this way. A good mother has two children. Christmas is drawing near and she says to one of them, "Now, John, I shall take you out on Christmas day to such a place and give you a great treat." She promises the same to William. Now, Master John says to himself, "Well, I do not know. I do not know whether my mother can afford it. Or perhaps I do not deserve it. I hardly think she will take me—it will be presumption in me to believe that she will."

But as for little Master William, he is no sooner told that he is to go out on Christmas day than he claps his hands and begins to skip—and tomorrow tells all his playmates that his mother is going to take him out on Christmas day! He is quite sure of it. They begin to ask him, "How do you know?" "Why," he says, "Mother said so." Perhaps they mention some things that make it look rather unlikely. "Oh, but," he says, "my mother never tells lies and she told me she would take me, and I know she will!" Now, which of those children, do you think, is most to be commended—the bigger boy, who raised difficulties and suspected his

mother's word? Why, he is a proud little fellow who deserves to go without the pleasure! But as for his little brother, William, who takes his mother at her word—I do not call him proud. I consider him truly humble—and he is the child who really deserves the mother's fondest love! Now, deal with God as you would have your children deal with you! If He says He will save you if you trust Him, then if you trust Him, why, He will save you! If He is a true God, He cannot destroy the soul that trusts in Christ! Unless this Bible is one great lie from beginning to end, the soul that trusts in Christ must be saved! If God is true, every soul that trusts in Jesus must be safe at the last. Whatever he may be and whoever he may be, if he trusts his soul with Christ and with Christ, alone, He cannot be cast away unless the promise of God can be of no effect! "I will trust and not be afraid."

So, brothers and sisters, it will be with other fears—time fails us to mention them—whatever they may be. May you get into such a blessed state of confidence in the love of God, in the love of Christ's heart, in the power of Christ's arm, in the prevalence of Christ's plea, that at all times you may trust in Him and in nothing, whatever, be afraid!

God bring us all up to this second platform and give us divine grace to stay there—and happy shall you be and have a foretaste of heaven upon earth! Amen.

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WITNESSING AT THE CROSS

NO. 3363

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 17, 1913,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And one of the malefactors who was hanged, railed on Him, saying, If you are Christ, save Yourself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in paradise.”
Luke 23:39-43.

THE dying thief was certainly a very great wonder of divine grace. He has generally been looked upon from one point of view only—as a sinner called at the eleventh hour and, therefore, an instance of special mercy because he was so near to death. Enough has been made of that circumstance by others! To my mind, it is by no means the most important point in the narrative. Had the thief been predestined to come down from the cross and live for half a century longer, his conversion would have been neither more nor less than it was. The work of grace which enabled him to die in peace would, if it had been the Lord's will, have enabled him to live in holiness. We may well admire divine grace when it so speedily makes a man fit for the bliss of heaven! But it is equally to be adored when it makes him ready for the battle of earth. To bear a saved sinner away from all further conflict is great grace. But the power and love of God are, if anything, even more conspicuous when, like a sheep surrounded by wolves, or a spark in the midst of the sea, a believer is enabled to live on in the teeth of an ungodly world and maintain his integrity to the end! Dear friend, whether you die as soon as you are born-again, or remain on earth for many years is comparatively a small matter—and will not materially alter your indebtedness to divine grace! In the one case the great Husbandman will show how He can bring His flowers speedily to perfection. And in the other He will prove how He can preserve them in blooming beauty despite the frosts and snows of earth's cruel winter! In either case your experience will reveal the same love and power.

There are other things; it seems to me, to be seen in the conversion of the thief besides the one single matter of his being brought to know the Lord when near to death's door.

Observe the singular fact that our Lord Jesus Christ should die in the company of two malefactors. It was probably planned in order to bring Him shame and it was regarded by those who cried, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” as an additional ignominy. Their malice decreed that He

should die as a criminal and *with* criminals—and in the center, between two—to show that they thought Him the worst of the three. But God, in His own way, baffled the malice of the foe and turned it to the triumph and glory of His dear Son, for had there been no dying thief hanging at His side, then one of the most illustrious trophies of His love would not have been gained! And we would not have been able to sing to His praise—

***“The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day—
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away!”***

His enemies gave our Lord Jesus an opportunity for still continuing the seeking, as well as the saving of the lost! They found Him an occasion for manifesting His conquering grace when they supposed they were heaping scorn upon Him. How truly did the prophet in the Psalm say, “He that sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision,” for that which was meant to increase His misery revealed His majesty! Moreover, though it was intended to add an ingredient of bitterness to His cup, I do not doubt that it supplied Him with a draught of comfort. Nothing could so well have cheered the heart of Jesus and taken His mind off, for just an instant, His own bitter pangs, as having an object of pity before Him, upon whom He could pour His mercy! The thief’s confession of faith and expiring prayer must have been music to his Savior’s ears—the only music which could in any degree delight Him amid His terrible agonies. To hear and to answer the prayer, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom,” afforded our Lord a precious solace. An angel strengthened Him in the garden, but here it was a man, nailed up at His side, who ministered consolation by the indirect, but very effective method of seeking help at His hands.

Furthermore, the long-continued testimony and witness for Christ among men was at that time exceedingly feeble and ready to expire, but the thief’s confession maintained it. The apostles, where were they? They had fled. Those disciples who ventured near enough to see the Lord, scarcely remained within speaking distance. They were poor confessors of Christ, scarcely worthy of the name! Was the chain of testimony to be broken? Would none declare His sovereign power? No, the Lord will never let that testimony cease, and lo, He raises up a witness where least you would expect it—on a cross! One just ready to die bears witness to the Redeemer’s innocence and to His assured coming to a kingdom! As many of the boldest testimonies to Christ have come from the stake, so here was one that came from a cross and gained for the witness the honor of being the last testifier to Christ before He died!

Let us always expect, then, dear friends, that God will overrule the machinations of the foes of Christ so as to get honor from them. At all times of the world’s history, when things appear to have gone to pieces and Satan seems to rule the hour, do not let us despair, but be quite sure that, somehow or other, the light of God will come out of darkness and good out of evil!

We will now come close up to the dying thief and look, first, at *his faith*; secondly, at *his confession of faith*; thirdly, at *his prayer of faith*; and fourthly, at *the answer of his faith*. First, then, may the Holy Spirit help us concerning this dying malefactor, to consider—

I. HIS FAITH.

It was of the operation of the Spirit of God and there was *nothing in his previous character to lead up to it*. How came that thief to be a believer in Jesus? You who carefully read the gospels will have noticed that Matthew says (Matt 27:44), “The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth.” Mark also says, “They that were crucified with Him reviled Him.” These two evangelists plainly speak of both thieves as reviling our Lord! How are we to understand this? Would it be right to say that those two writers speak in broad terms of the thieves as a class because one of them so acted, just as we in common conversation speak of a company of persons doing such-and-such, when, in fact, the whole matter was the deed of one man of the party? Was it a loose way of speaking? I think not! I do not like the look of suppositions of error in the inspired volume. Would it not be more reverent to the Word of God to believe that the thieves did both revile Jesus? May it not be true that, at the first, they both joined in saying, “If you are the Christ, save Yourself and us,” but that afterwards, one, by a miracle of sovereign grace, was led to a change of mind and became a believer? Or would this third theory meet the case—that at the first the thief who afterwards became a penitent, having no thought upon the matter, by his silence gave consent to his fellow’s reviling so as fairly to come under the charge of being an accomplice therein—but when it gradually dawned upon his mind that he was under error as to this Jesus of Nazareth, it pleased God in Infinite Mercy to change his mind so that he became a confessor of the truth of God, though he had at first silently assented to the blasphemy of his companion? It would be idle to dogmatize, but we will gather this lesson from it—that faith may enter the mind, notwithstanding the sinful state in which the man is found. Grace can transform a reviling thief into a penitent believer!

Neither do we know the outward means which led to this man’s conversion. We can only suppose that he was affected by seeing the Lord’s patient demeanor, or, perhaps, by hearing that prayer, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Surely there was enough in the sight of the crucified Lord with the blessing of God’s Spirit to turn a heart of stone into flesh! Possibly the inscription over the head of our Lord may have helped him—“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Being a Jew, he knew something of the Scriptures, and putting all the facts together, may he not have seen in the prophecies a light which gathered around the head of the sufferer and revealed Him as the true Messiah? Possibly the malefactor remembered Isaiah’s words, “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.” Or, perhaps, the saying of David, in the 22nd

Psalm rushed upon his memory, "They pierced My hands and My feet." Other texts which he had learned in his youth at his mother's knee may have come before his mind—and putting all these together, he may have argued, "It may be. Perhaps it is. It is. It must be. I am sure it is. It is the Messiah, led as a lamb to the slaughter." All this is but our supposition and it leads me to remark that there is much faith in this world which comes, "not with observation," but is worked in men by unknown instrumentalities. And so long as it really exists, it matters very little how it entered the heart, for in every case it is the work of the Holy Spirit! The *history* of faith is of small importance compared with the *quality* of faith!

We do not know the origin of this man's faith, but we do know that *it was amazing faith under the circumstances*. I very gravely question whether there was ever greater faith in this world than the faith of this thief, for he, beyond all others, realized the painful and shameful death of the Lord Jesus and yet believed! We hear of our Lord's dying upon the cross, but we do not realize the circumstances and, indeed, even if we were to think upon that death very long and intently, we shall never realize the shame, weakness and misery which surrounded our Lord as that dying thief did, for he was suffering the pangs of crucifixion at the Savior's side and, therefore, to him it was no fiction, but a vivid reality! Before him was the Christ in all His nakedness and ignominy surrounded by the mocking multitude—and dying in pain and weakness—and yet he believed Him to be Lord and King! What do you think, sirs? Some of you say you find it hard to believe in Jesus, though you know that He is exalted in the highest heavens. But had you seen Him on the cross. Had you seen His marred countenance and emaciated body, could you then have believed on Him and said, "Lord remember me when you come into Your kingdom"? Yes, you could have done so if the Spirit of God had created faith in you like that of the thief! But it would have been faith of the first order, a jewel of priceless value! As I said before, so I say again—the vivid sympathy of the thief with the shame and suffering of the Lord rendered his faith remarkable in the highest degree!

This man's faith, moreover, was singularly clear and decided. He rolled his whole salvation upon the Lord Jesus and said, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." He did not offer a single plea fetched from his works, his present feelings, or his sufferings—he cast himself upon the generous heart of Christ! "You have a kingdom—You are going to it. Lord, remember me when You come into it." That was all. I wish that some who have been professors for years had as clear a faith as the thief—but they are too often confused between law and gospel, works and grace—while this poor felon trusted in nothing but the Savior and His mercy. Blessed be God for clear faith! I rejoice to see it in such a case as this, so suddenly worked and yet so perfect—so outspoken, so intelligent, so thoroughly restful!

That word, "restful," reminds me of a lovely characteristic of his faith, namely, *its deep peace-giving power*. There is a world of rest in Jesus in

the thief's prayer, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." A thought from Christ is all he needed! And after the Lord said, "Today shall you be with Me in paradise," we never read that the petitioner said another word. I did think that, perhaps, he would have said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord for that sweet assurance. Now I can die in peace." But his gratitude was too deep for words and his peace so perfect that calm silence seemed most in harmony with it. Silence is the thaw of the soul, though it is the frost of the mouth—and when the soul flows most freely, it feels the inadequacy of the narrow channel of the lips for its great water floods—

"Come, then, expressive silence, muse His praise."

He asked no alleviation of pain, but in perfect satisfaction died as calmly as saints do in their beds!

This is the kind of faith which we must all have if we would be saved. Whether we know how we come by it or not; it must be a faith which rolls itself upon Christ, and a faith which consequently brings peace to the soul. Do you possess such faith, dear friend? If you do not, remember that you may die all of a sudden, and then into paradise you will never enter! Look well to this and believe in the Lord Jesus at once! And now in the second place, we are going to look at this man's—

II. CONFESSION OF FAITH.

He had faith and he confessed it. He could neither be baptized nor sit at the communion table, nor unite with the church below. He could not do any of those things which are most right and proper on the part of other Christians, but he did the best he could under the circumstances to confess his Lord!

He confessed Christ, first of all, almost of necessity, because *a holy indignation made him speak out*. He listened for a while to his brother thief, but while he was musing, the fire burned and then spoke he with his tongue, for he could no longer bear to hear the innocent sufferer reviled. He said, "Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man has done nothing amiss." Did this poor thief speak out so bravely and can some of you silent Christians go up and down the streets and hear men curse and blaspheme the name of Christ—and not feel stirred in spirit to defend His cause? While men are so loud in their reviling, can you be quiet? The stones you tread on may well cry out against you! If all were Christians and the world teemed with Jesus' praise, we might, perhaps, afford to be silent. But, amidst abounding superstition and loud-mouthed infidelity, we are bound to show our colors and avow ourselves on Christ's side! We doubt not that the penitent thief would have owned his Lord apart from the railing of his comrade, but as it happened, that reviling was the provoking cause. Does no such cause arouse *you*? Can you play the coward at such a time as this?

Observe next, that *he made a confession to an unsympathetic ear*. The other thief does not seem to have made any kind of reply to him, but it is

feared that he died in sullen unbelief. The believing thief made his confession where he could not expect to gain approval, yet he made it none the less clearly. How is it that some dear friends who love the Lord have never confessed their faith even to their Christian brothers and sisters? You know how glad we would be to hear of what the Lord has done for you, but yet we have not heard it! There is a mother who would be so happy if she did but know that her boy was saved, or that her girl was converted—and you have refused her that joy by your silence! This poor thief spoke for Jesus to one who did not enter into his religious experience—and you have not even told yours to those who would have communed with you and rewarded you with comfort and instruction! I cannot understand cowardly lovers of Christ! How you manage to smother your love so long, I cannot tell. Love is usually like a cough, which speaks for itself, or a candle which must be seen, or a sweet perfume which is its own revealer! How is it that you have been able to conceal the day which has dawned in your hearts? What can be your motive for coming to Jesus only by night? I cannot understand your riddle and I hope you will explain it away. Do confess Jesus if you love Him, for He bids you do it and says, “He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in heaven.”

Observe well that this poor thief’s confession of faith *was attended with a confession of sin*. Though he was dying a most horrible death by crucifixion, yet he confessed that he was suffering justly. “We, indeed, justly.” He made his confession not only to God, but to men, justifying the law of his country under which he was then suffering. True faith confesses Christ and, at the same time, confesses its sin. There must be repentance of sin and acknowledgment of it before God if faith is to give proof of its authenticity. A faith that never had a tear in its eye, or a blush on its cheek, is not the faith of God’s elect! He who never felt the burden of sin, never felt the sweetness of being delivered from it! This poor thief is as clear in the avowal of his own guilt as in his witness to the Redeemer’s innocence! Reader, could we say the same of you?

The thief’s confession of faith *was exceedingly honoring to the Lord Jesus Christ*. He confessed that Jesus of Nazareth had done nothing amiss—when the crowd around the cross were condemning Him with speech and gesture! He honored Christ by calling Him, Lord, while others mocked Him. He honored Christ by believing in His kingdom even while Jesus was dying on the cross and by entreating Him to remember him though he was in the agonies of death. Do you say that this was not much? Well, I will make bold to ask many a professor whether he could honestly say that throughout the whole of his life he has done as much to honor Christ as this poor thief did in those few minutes! Some of you certainly have not, for you have never confessed Him at all! And others have confessed Him in such a formal manner that there was nothing in it. Oh, there have been times when, had you played the man and said right straight out, in the midst of a ribald crew, “I do believe in Him whom you scoff and I know the sweetness of that dear name which you

trample under foot,” you might have been the means of saving many souls—but you were silent and whispered to yourself that prudence was the better part of valor and so you allowed the honor of your Master to be trailed in the mire! Oh, had you, my sister, taken your stand in the family—had you said, “You may do what you will, but as for me, I will serve the Lord”—you might have honored God far more than you have done, for I fear you have been living in a halting, hesitating style, giving way to a great deal which you knew was wrong, not bearing your protest, not rebuking your brother in his iniquity, but studying your own peace and comfort instead of seeking the Redeemer’s glory! We have heard people talk about this dying thief as if he never did anything for his Master, but let me ask the Christian church if it has not members in its midst—gray-haired members, too, who have never, through 50 years of profession, borne one such bravely honest and explicit testimony for Christ as this man did while he was agonizing on a cross? Remember, the man’s hands and feet were tortured and he was suffering from that natural fever which attends upon crucifixion! His spirit must have melted within him with his dying grief—and yet he was as bold in rebuke, as composed in prayer, and as calm in spirit as if he were suffering nothing! And thus he reflected much glory upon his Lord.

One other point about this man’s confession is worthy of notice, namely, that he *was evidently anxious to change the mind of his companion*. He rebuked him and he reasoned with him. Dear friends, I must again put a personal question. Are there not many professing Christians who have never manifested a tithe as much anxiety for the souls of others as this thief felt? You have been a church member 10 years, but did you ever say as much to your brother as this dying thief said to the one who was hanging near him? Well, you have meant to do so. Yes, but did you ever do it? You reply that you have been very glad to join others in a meeting. I know that, too, and so far so good! But did you ever personally say as much to another as this dying man did to his old companion? I fear that some of you cannot say so. I, for my part, bless and magnify the grace of God which gave this man one of the sweet fruits of the Spirit, namely, holy charity towards the soul of another so soon after he, himself, had come to believe in Jesus! May we, all of us, have it yet more and more! So much for the confession of his faith. Now a little, in the third place, about—

III. HIS PRAYER OF FAITH.

“Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” He *addressed the dying Savior as divine*. Wonderful faith this, to call Him Lord who was “a worm and no man,” and was hanging there upon the cross to die! What shall we say of those who, now that He is exalted in the highest heavens, yet refuse to acknowledge His deity? This man had a clearer knowledge of Christ than they have! The Lord take the scales from their eyes and make them pray to Jesus as divine!

He prayed to Him, also, as having a kingdom. That needed faith, did it not? He saw a dying man in the hands of His foes nailed to the cross—

and yet he believed that He would come into a kingdom! He knew that Jesus would die before long, the marks of the death-agony were upon Him—and yet he believed that He would come to a kingdom! O glorious faith! Dear friend, do you believe in Christ's kingdom? Do you believe that He reigns in heaven and that He will come a second time to rule over all the earth? Do you believe in Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords? Then pray to Him as such, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." May God give you the faith which set this thief a praying in so excellent a fashion!

Observe that *his prayer was for a spiritual blessing only*. The other thief said, "Save Yourself and us!" He meant, "Save us from this cross. Deliver us from the death which now threatens us!" He sought temporal benefits, but this man asked only to be remembered by Christ in His kingdom. Do your prayers run that way, dear friends? Then I bless the Lord that He has taught you to seek eternal, rather than temporal blessings! If a sick man cares more for pardon than for health, it is a good sign. Soul mercies will be prized above all others where faith is in active exercise.

Observe how humbly he prays. He did not ask for a place at Christ's right hand. He did not, in fact, ask the Lord to do *anything* for him, but only to "remember" him. Yet that, "remember," is a great word and he meant much by it. "Do give a thought to Your poor companion who now confesses his faith in You. Do in Your glory dart one recollection of Your love upon poor me and think on me for good." It was a very humble prayer and all the sweeter for its lowliness. It showed his great faith in Jesus, for he believed that even to be remembered by Him would be enough. "Give me but the crumbs that fall from Your table, and they shall suffice me. But a thought, Lord Jesus, but one thought from Your loving mind, and that shall satisfy my soul."

Did not his prayer drip with faith as a honeycomb with honey? It seems to me as if it laid soaking in his faith till it was saturated through and through with it, for *he prays so powerfully*, albeit so humbly. Consider what his character had been, and yet he says, "Lord, remember *me* when You come into Your kingdom." Note well that it is a thief—an outcast, a criminal on the gallows who thus prays! He is an outcast by his country's laws and yet he turns to the King of heaven and asks to be remembered! Bad as he is, he believes that the Lord Jesus will have mercy upon him! Oh, brave faith!

We see how strong that faith was because he had no invitation to pray. I do not know that he had ever heard Christ preach. No apostle had said to him, "Come to Christ and you will find mercy," and yet he came to Jesus! Here comes an uninvited guest in the sweet bravery of holy confidence in Christ's majestic love—he comes boldly and pleads, "Lord, remember me!" It was strong faith which thus pleaded. Remember, too, that he was upon the verge of death. He knew that he could not live very long and probably expected the Roman bone-breaker to give him, very soon, the final blow! But in the very hour and article of death he cried,

“Lord, remember me,” with the strong confidence of a mighty faith. Glory be to God who worked such a faith in such a man as this! We have done when we have mentioned, in the fourth place—

IV. THE ANSWER TO HIS FAITH.

We will only say that *his faith brought him to paradise*. We had a paradise, once, and the first Adam lost it. Paradise has been regained by the second Adam, and He has prepared for believers an Eden above, fairer than that first garden of delights below! Faith led the dying thief to *be with Christ* in paradise which was best of all! “Today shall you be *with Me* in paradise.” Whatever the joy of Christ, and the glory of Christ, the thief was there to see it and to share it as soon as Christ Himself!

And it brought him paradise *that very day*. Sometimes a crucified man will be two or three days a-dying. Jesus, therefore, assures him that he shall not have long to suffer and confirms it with a, “verily,” which was our Lord’s strong word of asseveration, “Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in paradise.” Such a portion will faith win for each of us, not today, perhaps, but one day. If we believe in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, we shall be with Him in the delights and happiness of the spirit world and with Him in the paradise of everlasting glory. If we commenced to believe at once and were to die immediately, we would be with Christ at once, as surely as if we had been converted 50 years ago! You cannot tell how short your life will be, but it is well to be ready. A friend was here last Lord’s Day of whom I heard this morning that he was ill—and in another hour that he was dead. It was short work. He was struck down and gone at once. That may be the lot of any one of you. And if it should be, you will have no cause whatever to fear it if you now, like the thief, trust yourself wholly in Jesus’ hands, crying, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

The lesson of our text is not merely that Christ can save in our last extremity, though that is true, but that now, at this moment, Jesus is able to save us, and that, if saved at all, salvation must be an immediate and complete act, so that, come life or come death, we are perfectly saved! It will not take the Lord long to raise the dead—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised incorruptible—and the Lord takes no time in regenerating a soul. Dead souls live in an instant when the breath of the Spirit quickens them! Faith brings instantaneous pardon! There is no course of probation to go through! There are no attainments to be sought after and no protracted efforts to be made in order to be saved. You are saved if you believe in Jesus! The finished work of Christ is yours. You are God’s beloved, accepted, forgiven, adopted child! Saved you are, and saved you shall be forever and ever if you believe!

Instantaneous salvation! Immediate salvation! This, the Spirit of God gives to those who trust in Jesus! You need not wait till tomorrow’s sun has dawned. Talk not of a more convenient season. Sitting where you are, the almighty grace of God can come upon you and save you—and this shall be a sign unto you that Christ is born in your heart, the hope

of glory—when you believe in Him as your pardon, righteousness, and all-in-all, you shall have peace. If you do but trust yourself in Jesus' hands, you are a saved soul and the angels in heaven are singing high praises to God and the Lamb on your account! Farewell.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-24.**

Verse 1. *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother.* This brother had been put to great shame. He was beaten before the judgment seat, if you remember, and now he has the great and lasting honor of being mentioned by the apostle with himself. God will honor those who bear dishonor for His name's sake. Be not ashamed even to be beaten for Christ—the stripes are stripes of glory!

2. *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.* The epistles were written to distinct churches, but they have a bearing upon all Christians. Hence the apostle says, "With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." Let us thank God no Scripture is of private interpretation—every promise belongs to all the seed. If you are a Believer, you may freely appropriate to yourselves whatever was said of old to any individual believer, or to any congregation of believers!

3, 4. *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.* Paul is a great preacher of divine grace and, therefore, he is a great giver of thanks. Grace should be followed with thankfulness. "I thank my God." What a beautiful expression! Not only, "I thank God," but, "I thank *my* God." He has God in possession! He has taken Him to be his own forever and ever! Beloved, have we all done the same? Can we say, "I thank my God"? You notice how often Paul, in the first ten verses mentions the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think it is 11 times. He was full of Christ. Not only did he love Christ in his heart, but he had Christ's name continually on his tongue, for he was not ashamed of the sweet name of Jesus Christ! Honey in the mouth, music in the ear, heaven in the heart is that sweet name of Jesus!

5. *That in everything you are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge.* The church of Corinth was a church of all the talents—it was not, however, a church so much of all the graces, and so it was a very poor example for us. I sometimes think that its mode of worship is recorded rather as a warning beacon than as an example to us. It caused, incidentally through the abundance of their gifts and everybody wanting to exercise his gift, great divisions, and there was an absence of humility and love in the church. However, Paul is thankful for what they have.

6, 7. *Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you. So that you come behind in no gift: waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* This is a fine trait in their character—they did look to the Second Advent—it operated upon them, it helped them in many ways. We cannot now mention all the holy uses which lie in the warning for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but it ought to be a good description of all Christians.

8, 9. *Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful.* Blessed is His name that He is. We are often very unfaithful. Man is always so, but “God is faithful.”

9, 10. *By whom you were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.* Where it is not so, the life of piety seems to ooze away. The blessing of God cannot rest upon a church unless we dwell together in unity, and for unity it is necessary that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

11-15. *For it has been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. Lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name.* It may have been an accidental circumstance that he did not happen to have baptized them, but he is glad of it, for he says that in the temper they were in, some of them would have made a boast of it.

16, 17. *And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.* There were other people who could baptize for him. It was enough that he should concentrate all his energies upon that one matter of preaching the gospel—not that he neglected the divine command—but that it was not necessary that he, any more than his Master, should personally baptize, for we read that, “Jesus Christ baptized not, but His disciples.” Not to put a dishonor upon the ordinance, but to let us see that the ordinance does not depend upon the man, but upon that sacred name into which we are baptized—and upon the true faith of the person baptized.

17. *Not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.* A very remarkable passage! Paul could have used the wisdom of words. In some of his epistles he gives us a specimen of his mighty rhetoric. He was a born master of speech. There was a touch of poetry in him and always a high logical power, but he would not use it in his preaching, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. You may do what you like with human wisdom—put a bit into its mouth and try to

lead it into obedience to Christ—but somehow or other its tendency is to rebel against Him!

18-21. *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God. You have only to study the history of the world at the time when Paul was writing, and you will see that the “world, by wisdom knew not God.” It had made itself exceedingly philosophical and sage, but if you weigh its wisest conclusions, you will find that they were only polished folly. There is nothing left us of all the wisdom of that period! Time itself has proved it—no, has disproved it!*

21, 22. *It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign. Some miracle, something that shall attest it in a supernatural way.*

22-24. *And the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Beloved, you know how true this is! It has been a wonderful power in you, and this day it is the only wisdom which you desire to possess!*

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SURVEYING THE FIELD

NO. 3364

A SERMON
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“And I arose in the night, I, and some few men with me: neither told I any man what God had put into my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.”
Nehemiah 2:12.

NEHEMIAH, it seems, prepared himself for action by taking a survey of the necessities of the case. Although he lived before our Savior's day, he certainly acted upon one of our Savior's maxims about counting the cost, lest, after having begun to build, we should not be able to finish. I like to picture to myself that man of God going by moonlight round all the waste places of the city, compelled here and there to dismount by reason of rubbish, clambering over the fallen stones, leaping, sometimes, with agility from crag to crag of the city's walls—getting in his mind a clear idea of all the city's desolation—and feeling in his heart the pressing, heavy weight and burden of the responsibility which God had thrust upon him. If he had begun his work carelessly and thoughtlessly, he might have failed in it, but having begun months before with prayer, having been guided by providence so far, yet even now the very first step he must take is a personal survey of the work and a thorough personal acquaintance with the necessities of the case.

Now, I know that there are here, on the weeknight at the service, many who love the Master and are anxious to do something in His cause. And I thought I might very profitably commend to them the example of Nehemiah in this respect. We shall consider Nehemiah, then, first as a *fine example to those who would seek the good of the church at large*; secondly, a *pattern to any of us laboring in any one distinct sphere*; and thirdly, I think I may apply the same principle in reference to *the personal work which is being done in our own hearts*. And before we conclude our meditation, I may ask you to take a quiet ride around the desolations of your own spirit and so get a clear view of what must be done before you shall become a city inhabited by God to His praise and glory! First, then, dear friends, I suppose I have here, as Nehemiah had, a few men and women earnest, resolved—disinterested men and women who are willing—

I. TO SEEK THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH, OF THE CHURCH AT LARGE.

Such men will allow the word of exhortation when I say to them, first, you and I are in the service of the great church of God and we must, like

Nehemiah, *firmly resolve that we will do it*. Our heart must be set upon this thing. It must not be with us a mere fancy which we have taken up as we might have taken up any other. It must not even be of a spasmodic kind, but our heart must be set towards the church of God because it is the home of our love, the place of our birth, the bride of Christ, and the hope of the world, the pillar and ground of the truth of God! If we have not such a view of the work to be done and a resolve that it shall be done—we certainly shall not succeed in it.

And, my brothers and sisters, we must, like Nehemiah, *be quite clear that we have no sinister motives*, no selfish ends to be answered! Nehemiah was in a high and good position as chamberlain or cup-bearer to the king, but he gave up that and left Shushan to the desolations of Jerusalem—a long and toilsome journey. Even when the city was built, though the place was the beloved of his heart, yet he does not seem to have had any prospect of remaining in it, for the king had set him a time for his return. And though he did stay there 12 years, yet it must have been by successive furloughs that he obtained this absence from the palace, so that he had no selfish objective whatever. If the city were built, he would not dwell in it. And if the temple-glories were restored once more, he would but once look upon them and then return again to the city of his employment and to the palace of the alien king at Shushan.

God will not bless us to the Christian church if we want to make a party to ourselves, or to take to ourselves the leadership. He will not acknowledge us in the work if we are merely seeking our own esteem, good name and fame under cover of zeal for righteousness and for the glory of God. No! There must be a resolution, but the resolution must be based on something better than the objectives of personal aggrandizement. There must be a devotion to God and a complete and perfect dedication and consecration of our souls to the good of the church and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Supposing that we have already, by divine grace, been called into such a condition? Then, further, we must learn, like Nehemiah, *the art of waiting*. He first prayed about Jerusalem, but he did not cease to hope. And when he came to the holy, though wasted city, he did not rush to the work at once, as our hot blood too often suggests to us to do. He knew that “raw haste” was “half-sister to delay.” He was there three whole days in which nothing was attempted. He did not seize a trowel in his hand and hasten at once to work, letting other people come and join him if they pleased, but he rode alone all-round the walls to inspect the damage and to estimate the cost in sacrifice and toil to repair it. We must be eager to labor, but we must also learn to wait. God’s servants will find that their Master does not always give them instant and immediate success, but that He is often pleased to glorify Himself by testing their faith. If you are a soldier, you must not expect to be always in the fight, but must sometimes lie, perhaps for tedious days and even weary months, in the trenches, just as our army had to lie before Sebastopol—worn out with waiting, anxiously wishing for the order to charge. So our

heavenly Lord, our great captain, sometimes teaches us patience, making us wait until the time shall come to do and dare. Fellow Christian, young man or aged believer, I am persuaded you will need to have in the midst of your toil for Jesus, to hear the word, "You must wait. Trust in the Lord and wait patiently for Him."

But after he had waited, Nehemiah set a further example to us. *He felt that he could act alone.* Throughout the whole book of Nehemiah you are struck with the singleness of the man and the potency of his individuality. He is quite prepared, if no one else will rise up to serve God, to serve Him by himself! And yet at the same time *he never refuses the help of others.* "And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem." He who would serve God to any purpose must be willing to serve Him all alone. If you cannot stand the brunt of being forsaken, you will scarcely do to be a soldier of the cross. Those whom Christ will greatly use must learn to be misunderstood, to be misrepresented by their brothers and sisters and in their more daring projects to be looked upon as being perfectly beside themselves. Yet they must count this among the cost and to be still prepared to stand to their work. Paul says, "At my first answer, no man stood with me, but"—sweet and mighty encouragement to your faith if you are alone!—"nevertheless, the Lord stood with me." Now, I think we shall find that it is not easy to couple the independence of a noble mind with the willingness to accept help from the few and the feeble, which at the very first are willing to gather around you. A man is apt to say, "No! I can act alone. These will but hamper me." And yet let us always remember that, though God has usually worked by one man, and though almost all the great wonders of the olden times were accomplished by personal courage and were feats of personal faith, yet at the same time He has frequently been pleased to ally to the one man a company of others, without whom the one man would have been feeble, indeed! Take the case of Gideon. We are told of "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and, of course, Gideon leads the van, but what would Gideon have done without the men that lapped? Those few and feeble folk with their pitchers and their torches must go with Gideon—and God will bless Gideon through them—and the world through the man and those who follow him! We must be willing, therefore, to take any help God may offer to us, and not be very particular about what that help is, so long as we are assured that God has sent it to us. We must be willing to lay aside our individual and sole reliance to come down from the high place of personal independence and work side by side with others, if it is the Lord's will.

Then, further, my brothers and sisters, if you and I should now have in our minds some great work for God, *we must be quite sure that we do not indulge in any boasting.* Oh, great things are going to be done! Oh, the wonderful prospectuses that some people have brought out of wondrous things that were going to regenerate the world—and the only purpose they have served up to now has been to increase the work in

some printing office! Nothing else has come from many of them. And you know there are people who really, by their own talk, should have turned the world upside down by now, but they have not done anything of the sort as yet. Perhaps the time may not yet have come, but with them it seems as if it never will come or could come! Nehemiah says, “Neither told I any man what my God had put into my heart to do at Jerusalem.” You will often find it best not to commit your plans to others. If you want to serve God, go and do it and *then* let other people find it out afterwards. You have no need to tell what you are going to do and, I may add, there is no need for your telling what you have done, for very, very frequently God withdraws Himself when we boast of what is being done. One of the greatest injuries to the revival in the north of Ireland a few years ago was that it was made to be a kind of show thing and people said, “Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts,” and after a while the glory departed—not because the workers on the spot, themselves, desired any such vain-glorying, but because some who were not of a like spirit gave occasion to the flesh in this respect. We must mind and take care that when we work for God, we keep always before us that we are not working as unto men and do not need men’s praise, but unto the Lord is the offering presented and the Lord alone shall have it!

I have not yet come to this midnight ride of Nehemiah’s, but I think it important to mention that he is again a pattern to us in our work for the church of God in that he was *absolutely sure that what he was doing was right*. He speaks of the thoughts and longings that he had as something which God had put into his heart to do. Get quite clear and assured of that, my brothers and sisters, or else go home. If you are not certain that the work you are about was given to you of God, and as positively and distinctly given to you as the work was given to Isaiah when the seraph touched his lips with the live coal from off the altar, you have no business to enter upon the work at all, for your whole strength will lie in a full conviction that your Master has sent you.

And now having brought the man before you, let me exhort you, dear brothers and sisters, if you long for the good of the church of God, to quietly take a walk round about her. Count her towers. Mark her palaces and her bulwarks. Do not go out and take notes and jottings as to what the world says Christ’s churches, or ought to be! Do not go with the view of seeing faults where there are none and railing at Christianity generally. That is a very heathenish practice, into which some persons constantly fall. But go with this solemn intent as before God, “Now, if I am to be serviceable to the church in any large measure, I must know what her present condition is.” My own solemn conviction is that a painstaking, judicious investigation into the present state of the Christian church will have the result of perfectly appalling you! It has been said, and there are abundant facts to prove it, that probably during the last 200 years, instead of Protestantism, taking it in the large sense of the word, making any increase in the world, it has rather been diminishing and that Popery has increased! It is also, I believe, very

certain to any of you that like to read the reports of many missionary societies, that the number of conversions worked under the missionaries abroad is so insignificant that it scarcely keeps up to the number of converts in years past! We have heard of a missionary returning after 12 years of labor and, on being asked if he knew of one heathen being converted under him, said he did not know of one! We feel that the whole field of missionary work everywhere—with but the exception, perhaps, just now of southern Africa and of the labors of some in China—is just simply working without results. Not but what we ought to work all the same if we have no results, for even then we must not fall back.

And the church of God in England is just the same. There is no increase. We know it is a matter of statistical fact that our own denomination, with the exception of London and one Welsh county, has made no progress whatever during the last 12 months. Statistics prove it to be in the same position now as then. The whole mass of Methodism, which was once so potent for good, has, I think, only received 100 increase on the year before—and it is questionable whether they have increased at all. So it is everywhere. New churches are built, but what is the information we get? Why, in several built in the poorer districts, the whole congregation might go into the vestry, and so the buildings are now practically useless, seats without occupiers because some of the preachers are men that cannot be understood by the common people. If they preach the gospel—and often they do not—they preach it after such a dull and lifeless fashion that it is not worthwhile going to listen to it! Now, if this is so, we must get the fact, saddening as it is, well worked into our hearts. The errors of some churches, the division of others, and the general coldness and deadness—oh, if we did but keenly realize these, I am persuaded that many of us would cry day and night unto God that He would make bare His arm in the midst of His own church! We should not go in and out of our pews feeling happy and comfortable because our own church may be prospering and because in our sanctuary souls are being saved—but there should be great searching of heart for the state of Zion! There should go up a weeping and a wailing unto God, until the set time to favor her. Even the set time should come because her children take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof! I would encourage you to get a clear view of the church at large and then, in God's strength, go forward to any work which God has given you for her good.

We shall not need much time, in the second place, to indicate that this is also—

II. THE RIGHT METHOD OF PROCEEDING WITH REGARD TO ANY SERVICE WHICH, IN OUR SPHERE, WE ARE RENDERING TO CHRIST.

Brothers and sisters, I hope you are all working for Christ. If Christ has saved you, can you do otherwise than live to your Savior? If, indeed, your sins are all put away by His precious blood. If you are wrapped in His spotless righteousness and accepted in the Beloved, I do trust that the love of Christ compels you to tell others of the way of salvation, and

to seek to bring in the wandering sheep of the house of Israel! Now, if I am right in my belief that you are engaged in some departments of Christian service, I am sure I shall be judicious in saying to you—*take a thorough investigation of the work in which you are engaged*. If it is to teach a class of children, lay those children on your heart! Think a great deal about them. Think about them by night, as Nehemiah thought of Jerusalem, and remember that they have souls, that those souls are under condemnation—that nothing but the precious blood can deliver them—that if they are not so delivered, sooner or later those boys and girls of yours will perish! Yet said our Lord, “It is not your Father’s will that one of these little ones should perish.” Get that solemn fact thoroughly worked into you. Mothers, fathers, you have children committed to your care. You are longing for the conversion of these little ones. Now I want you to get a full estimate of the character of each child! You have peculiar opportunities of riding around, as it were, your little city. Mark the different constitutions, the special weaknesses and defects of that boy and the blemishes and sins of that girl—and always keep this before your minds—that your children, like the children of others, need the regenerating of the Holy Spirit and the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ! Do not take a light view of sin in your children any more than sin in others’ children. The hate of God against sin is as real and intense in their case as in others until they are born-again! When you sit down to breakfast with them, think, “Ah, my dear child, I shall not meet you in eternity unless you are brought to the cross!” Look the girl in the face, as you see her growing up to womanhood, and say to yourself, “Ah, my Lord! In mercy bring her to sit at Your feet as Mary did, and learn of You, or else she shall be no joy to me, for I must be parted from her in the world to come.”

Take, I say, a full survey of each child’s condition and of its future ruin—and you will be most likely to be a blessing to the child if with your whole heart you are thus earnest and careful.

Now, my dear hearers, most of you are working with me in this place. Let us now go around the walls of this Tabernacle and find you out, as it were. Well, here are a great number of church members—between three and four thousand—all professors of religion! But are all saved? Ah, there is an inquiry! *We know they are not!* We have used our best judgment in this question. We have urged upon them continually to make no profession unless they are sincere, but alas, the sad faces of some and their ultimate departure from the truth of God prove that they went out from us because they were not of us! I know this is one of the worst parts of the wall with me. There is no grief that stings our heart like this, when Demas forsakes Christ, having loved this present evil world, or when some—overtaken by the lusts of the flesh or the pride of life—crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame! It is a mercy when such hypocrites are found out and put away, but oh, it is a grievous injury to the church which they have disgraced!

Then, next, let us think of this. There are a number of people who always occupy these seats. They belong to them—they are *their* seats and they have been sitting in them, some of them, ever since the house was built! And some of them were in the former house and have been under our ministry now for these 13 years. And yet some of them are not saved! A gentleman told me the other day he was surprised to hear that the church was half as large as the congregation—or more, and he said, “That is a very great thing!” “No,” I said, “*that is a very little thing*, for when we were at Park Street the church was larger than the congregation.” That is to say, there were more saved souls among us than there were seats for hearers, so that the members of the church could not all come at any one time. And my soul will not be satisfied until this Tabernacle becomes much too small to hold the church if they were all to come together at one time. I shall be very glad, indeed, if they swarm off and go elsewhere, and form other churches. I shall be most happy if they do that! But still, I shall always be looking forward to seeing all those saved who have sittings here. You know that at Park Street it came to this—on one occasion when a man wanted to take a seat, he came to me and said—I remember him well—“Sir, I understand that if I take a sitting here, I should be expected to be converted, but I cannot count upon that.” “No, my good friend,” I said, “I know not, but still, if you take a seat, let us hope you will be.” “Oh,” said the man, “is that what was meant? I heard somebody say that when persons took seats, you expected them to be saved.” Well, some do, and why should we not? Ought we not to expect that if they hear the gospel preached, God will bless it to them?

We do trust that day will soon come, but meanwhile we may go around this place and say that a great many who have seats here are unblest, unsaved, have no desires after Christ, but are dead while they live!

Well, then, you are painfully struck, in the next place, with the *many casual hearers who come here and are not saved*. It was once well said by someone, that if sinners were scarcer than they are, we would think a great deal more of them! If there were only one unsaved soul now remaining in London, why, the whole church would be awake and in earnest to pray for that one soul! But when I say to you that, Sabbath after Sabbath, these aisles are thronged, and these pews, too, and that yet a very large proportion of the congregation remain unconverted—why, you hear it and you say, “Well, it is a very sad fact”—but it does not impress your hearts! We do not get the same impression of human ruin that Nehemiah got as he rode round Jerusalem. I wish we could. I wish we could think it over, resolve it in our minds and resolve it yet again until it came to be painful to us to think that so many human beings to whom the gospel is preached should remain callous to its influence! And so many to whom Christ, Himself, shall become a savor of death unto death, and not of life unto life!

Thus would I urge each brother and sister here, who is working for Christ, to get a clear view of the needs of the case.

And now, lastly, I shall be happy if I shall be successful in this last point. It will be well for us, individually, to—

III. TAKE A LITTLE JOURNEY AROUND THE CITY OF MANSOUL WITHIN.

Let me speak to every professor here. You say, "I am a believer in Jesus." Well, brother, sister, then you can have no objection to look within, to search your heart! Ride around your soul. How about the tower of prayer? Is that well-kept? Are you much with God in secret? How about the castle of communion? Do you maintain fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ? How about the gate of humiliation? Do you bow before the Lord, humbly acknowledging what you owe to Him, or has pride been pulling down the cornerstone thereof? How about the gate of holy zeal? Is that wide and in good care, or has it been burned with fire and taken away? What about the wall of your love? Does that stand erect as it used to do? Have you not heard of one of old of whom it was said, "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knows it not"? May not that be your case? If you will spend an hour or two tonight when all are asleep; if you should lie awake and commune with your own heart upon your bed, it might be a wondrous blessing to you; if you shall honestly look at yourself, not flatteringly; if you shall determine to know, as God shall teach you, the worst of your case, and if you should desire to see which grace is fainting, which holy passion expiring, which sacred feeling ready to die—oh, it shall be well with you! Examine yourself, whether you are a Christian! This is a duty which cannot too often be performed. Ask the Lord to examine you. Say to Him, "Try my reins and my heart: search my inward soul: see if there is any wicked way in me: and lead me in the way everlasting."

Oh, that some men would be more careful about the garden of their souls! But they let the weeds grow and they see them not! Like the sluggard, they do not want to see what will involve so much toil, but tossing upon the bed of presumption, from side to side, they dream of comforts and consider themselves to be safe, while all the while presumption is stealing away from them all their goods and making their garden to be a wilderness! Come, you slumberer, up! God help you up! Mistake no longer presumption for assurance! Recollect that assurance will stand the fullest examination, but if you dare not examine yourself, depend upon it—you are a presumptuous soul! I suggest this to the professor.

And now I want to suggest the same thing to *some of you who are unconverted*. Some of you, perhaps, who have come in here tonight do not often listen to the gospel and you wonder what I am doing, talking about riding around a city. Well, I want you to *ride around yourselves*, as it were, to take stock of your heart—to make calculations about your present state. Now, I will venture to say that some of you are not happy. You know you are not. You do not seem as if you had anything to live for,

but to work hard at the shop, or to go to business. If you make money, it does not satisfy you. Time was when if you went to the theater, you spent a very glorious night, but now if you go there—well, it seems a very dreary sort of stuff to you—and the enjoyments you once got on with so well are very empty things to you now. I am glad to hear it! I am glad to hear it! I should like you to keep on thinking about this, and you would soon find that, in addition to the world's not satisfying you, you need a great deal more to content you than this world can ever give you! I wish, dear friends, you would think of yourselves, for when we get men to think, the battle is half won! Thoughtless persons are on the outskirts of hell, but thoughtful persons God blesses! Heedless and Too Bold went on and fell over the precipice and were dashed to pieces, but he who, being checked, waked and said, "Where am I? I do not know," and began to look about him, found himself just on the brink of ruin. But he had just time enough to start back and so was saved.

My dear friend, if you are not a converted person, do you not know that all your past life has been a waste? God made you, but you have never served Him! Why, if you make a tool, you expect it to be of use to you. God made you, but you never serve Him. If you keep a dog or a cat, you expect to have some pleasure from the creature. God has been keeping you all these years and what have you ever done for Him? If a man keeps a horse, it does him service, and when God makes a man, it is but reasonable that the man should do Him some service—and yet you have not. So your life has been a dead waste as to its noblest ends. And as for the present—why, that is no better! You are not living as you wish to live, and as *for the future*—no, no, no—do not say, "I won't think about that." Be a wise man and *do* think of it! You cannot escape the future any more than I can. You and I must die—and after death the judgment follows—and an appearance before God. Now, my dear hearer, be bold enough to look ahead. Oh, but you do not like the prospect! Well, but nevertheless gaze upon it, for it will be for your soul's good to know what it is to die without Christ and to rise again without Christ! And when you have got an estimate of that, it may be you will say, "No, I cannot endure this! Jesus, I throw myself into Your arms. Save me, and I shall be saved!" Oh, that men would but take stock of their souls and it would do them good. What a routing-out there is of corners! What long, long hours of extra toil at our great shops to take stock. Nobody thinks of going on in business without taking stock every now and then, or if he did, he would soon find himself in the bankruptcy court. Every good trader knows there must be a stock-taking. Why should not men take stock of their souls? How is it that here they say, "Oh, let well enough alone! I daresay it is all right," and so at last wake up and find themselves eternal bankrupts with nothing wherewith to pay, shut up in the prison out of which they can never escape?

May God the Holy Spirit press home these words so feebly spoken, and if any sinner here shall be led by the sight of himself to tremble before God, let him remember and rejoice that there is life for a look at

the Crucified One! Whoever trusts in Christ is saved! Rest wholly in Him; cast yourself upon Him. As the swimmer gives up to the water, that it may support him, so do you, and thus shall the grace of God that brings salvation appear unto you!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
NEHEMIAH 1: 1-11; 2:1-6.**

Verses 1, 2. *The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left in captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.* This good man was, of course, one of the banished Jews, but he had greatly prospered. He had risen in the empire of Ahasuerus until he had come to be great—even to be one of the chamberlains of the empire. But his heart was towards his poor people—his fellow Jews that were in poverty. Now, whenever God exalts a Christian in a temporal position, he ought not to disown his poor brethren, but his heart should go out towards them to see what he can do for them. It is a shame for any man to forget his country. Does not the Pole still say, “No, Poland, you shall never perish”? And we admire such patriotism. And the same feeling should be in every Christian breast. We should love the church of God even as Nehemiah loved the chosen race from which he had sprung. So when he met with Hanani, the conversation was all about the poor brethren that remained at Jerusalem.

3. *And they said unto me, the remnants that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.* A sad story they had to tell! Ezra had assisted in somewhat rebuilding the temple, but little had been done for the private dwellings and for the walls and public buildings of the city. It was in a sad and wretched state—and the Jews were despised and reproached. Nehemiah was a great man, but he was sorry to hear this. He felt as if he was a fellow sufferer with his poor brethren.

4. *And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.* Was it his concern? Was it anymore his concern than that of other men? Yes, he felt it to be his—and the tender heart which he had towards the people of God made him feel it to be peculiarly his. If nobody else did anything, he must! And, oh, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, whenever you see the cause of God in a sad estate, lay it to heart—weep, lament and pray—feel that you have an interest in it! Christ is your Savior. Of the church you are a part. These blessed interests of sovereign mercy belong to you. Take them to yourself and say, By God’s help, I will lay myself out for the progress of His cause. “I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.”

5, 6. *And said, I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keeps covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His commandments—Let Your ear now be attentive, and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant, which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel, Your servants and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against You: both I and my father's house have sinned.* He seems to act like a priest for God, taking the sin of the people upon himself and confessing it. If they were hardhearted, and would not confess, he would, and pour out his complaint before God!

7-10. *We have dealt very corruptly against You, and have not kept Your commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments which You commanded your servant Moses. Remember, I beseech You, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, If you transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations. But if you turn unto Me and keep My commandments and do them: though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heavens, yet will I gather them from there and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set My name there. Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.* You see what an admirable prayer this is. There is a full confession of sin—an acknowledgment of the justice of God in having punished His people. But then there is a quoting of the divine word—a putting of the Lord in remembrance that He had made such-and-such a promise! That is the very backbone of prayer! If you go to the bank, the main part of the transaction is to put the check—the note of hand—upon the counter. You get no money otherwise! So when you go in prayer, the main part of prayer must lie in pleading the promise, “You have said it. You have said it.” Hold God to His word with a sacred daring of faith. “You have promised. You have declared. Now be as good as Your word.” Then notice another plea he has. He says he is pleading for God’s servants—His redeemed—redeemed by great power! Oh, it should always make us feel strong in prayer when we recollect that God’s people are very dear to Him and He has done great things for them—therefore He loves them and for those whom He loves, surely He will work great deliverances! These are arguments. There ought to be great argument in prayer if we hope to prevail.

11. *O Lord, I beseech You, let now Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name, and prosper, I pray You, Your servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.* That was king Artaxerxes, whom he rightly viewed as a man, for, great as he was—all-potent king of Persia—yet still but a man! Nehemiah consoles himself in the prospect of having to go in before him to ask favor at his hands.

11. *For I was the king's cupbearer.*

Nehemiah 2:1. *And it came to pass in the month Nisan. Three or four months after he began to pray.*

1. *In the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king.* We have in some of the old slabs and carvings some singular pictures of the dainty way in which the kings of Persia and Media were served by their cupbearers. They always spilled a little wine upon their left hand and drank first, for fear the king should be poisoned. So the greatest men of the different provinces of the empire were called by turns to act this part before the king. It was a piece of state ceremony.

1. *Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.* And there was a law—one of those stupid Median laws—that no man was to come before the king with a sad countenance. It was supposed that the king must be so serenely happy, himself, that none might come there unless they were happy, too. Nehemiah had been able to obey this rule, but on this occasion he did not because he could not.

2-6. *Therefore the king said unto me, Why is your countenance sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, and said unto the king, Let the king live forever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchers, lies in waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what do you make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you would send me unto Judah, unto the city of my father's sepulchers, that I may build it. And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him). Who was probably, Queen Esther and, therefore, abundantly agreeable that such a work should be done for her own nation. "The king said unto me."*

6. *For how long shall your journey be? And when will you return? So it pleased the king to send me: and I set him a time.* He was a valued servant. They did not wish to part with him. And if he would go for a time to do this business, yet they took steps to assure he would return. There are some servants that I know of, who, if they were to go away, their masters would not be particularly anxious that they should come back again! It is well when a man is so in favor with God that his piety acts upon his ordinary life and he becomes in favor with men, also. That is a poor, miserable religion that does not make its possessor a good servant. Yes, in whatever station of life we may be placed, we ought to be far more valuable to those round about us on account of our fearing God! May we always be of such a character that if we were gone, we should be missed. "I set him a time."

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PICTURES OF HAPPINESS

NO. 3365

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 31, 1913,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Happy are the people who are in such a state;
happy are the people whose God is the LORD.”
Psalm 144:15.*

SOMETIMES God’s people are unhappy when they ought to be happy. God observes this. Therefore He tells them when they possess the materials of happiness and gives them a description of the peace and prosperity of those who are truly happy men. Thus recollecting the choice mercies which surround them and not attaching so much importance to the little trials of the day, they may become of God’s mind and feel themselves to be as happy as He declares they are. The pure in spirit are said by our Savior to be blessed. They often think themselves to be cursed and feel as if there were no blessing for them. But blessed they are, for Jesus knows whom He has blessed! And though God’s people are sometimes in their own consciences, unhappy; they are a happy people and to be congratulated on their condition notwithstanding. They have reasons for happiness. They have satisfactory grounds for happiness. They have springs of happiness. They have future prospects of happiness. If you are God’s people, you cannot err in exercising faith about this thing. You are numbered with those who are the happiest people under heaven!

The text speaks not only of the persons, but also of the condition of God’s people—a condition which I believe is, to a great extent, parallel to our own as a Christian church. It seems to me that we have, according to the gospel standard of interpretation, all the privileges, all the blessednesses, which, in the verse preceding the text, David ascribes to this happy people. I shall ask you, therefore, to look at these things, that each particular may be an incentive to gratitude. He declares here—

I. THE ELEMENTS OF HAPPINESS.

First, David accounts those to be *a happy people who are in a healthy and vigorous condition*. The sons have “as plants grown up in their youth. And the daughters as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace.” It is a great blessing to a church to have in her midst fruitful, earnest young men, yes! And I will say that whatever their age may be, it is no small measure of a church’s strength to have her sons about her, who, having grown up and become mature in knowledge, mental force and spiritual vigor, bear fruit unto the glory of God!

There has been a tendency in the Christian church to decry instrumentality. But God always has worked by instruments. So far as we know, He always will. When Christ ascended up on high and led captivity captive, the gifts which He received for men were men, apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, and the like. It is no small riches to a church to have in her midst men—teachers qualified to teach and seeking to save as well, to become evangelists—in this way and in any other way, thus aiming to promote the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Ah, unhappy is that church where her sons are all slumbering, where they are all stereotyped in their beliefs and in their several states never make any advance, feeling no throbs of sacred ambition, never caring to come to spiritual attainments, resting satisfied with the lowest possible eminence of divine grace, without any desire to advance to a high degree of love to God! Blessed is that church where her sons seek to grow up and to bear fruit unto God! And not less blessed to have in her midst sisters who are like those pillars we sometimes see in public buildings—beautifully fluted, carved, polished—the very adornment of the structure, placed at the corner, cornerstones that help to cement the entire structure and bind it together! It seems to me to be one of the peculiar gifts of the Christian sisterhood to be the means of holding the entire fabric of the Christian church in sacred love! And though in our belief they ought not to do this by public speech, yet by quiet conversation, active sympathy and the patient endurance and holy tenacity of affection, they may help to keep the church well bolted together, well barred and banded, well cemented, so that the stones of the church shall not be detached, the one from the other. Happy is the church that abounds in Christian matrons and younger women willing to be serviceable for Christ!

If I remind you that this is our happy case, you may, perhaps, think little of it and lightly esteem the cause for gratitude. But were you in some churches where there are not men nor women enough to take the Sabbath school—and such churches I have visited—where there are none, positively none to assist the pastor, where the whole work must be confined to a one-man ministry because the rest of the members do not seem to be alive in the sacred service—if you were members of such churches, you would deplore their lamentable poverty both day and night! God has made it otherwise with us—let us bless His name and, while thanking Him, acknowledge that we are happy to be in such a state!

Next to that the Psalmist describes *plenty as a peculiar pleasure*. “That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store.” Bountiful provision of the gospel! The ministry is to have all things desirable for Christians if they are to be made happy. Unhappy they who can seldom hear a sermon, or who, hearing it, might well have spared their ears the trouble of listening to the words! Thrice happy they who hear the pure truth of Jesus Christ, even though it is spoken in a rough manner and in

a style that has no enchantments for the soft lovers of rhetoric and elocution! If ever you are laid up a while upon a bed of sickness, you may heave a deep sigh for the privilege you scarcely know how fully to appreciate till you lose it, that you can go up to the House of God! I heard but the other day from one who has been unable to worship with us for months such words as these, “Oh, Ziona, Ziona, the loved of my heart, when shall the day return that I shall again rejoice with the multitude that keep holy day and lift up my song with them, and bow my head in the midst of the great congregation?” By your regrets which you will feel when you are thus laid aside, value the privilege while you possess it—the privilege of having an open Bible expounded and of being able to join with the whole company of the faithful in the worship of the most high God! If at any time the Word has been marrow and fatness to you; then think yourselves happy, yes, rejoice tonight, and give to God the gratitude of your souls!

Further, the Psalmist represents *multitude as being a cause of thankfulness*. “That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets.” Sheep are always a favorite type of the servants of the Lord Jesus. I cannot, nor indeed, need I, enter into the illustration—you yourselves understand it so well—but the peculiar blessing is when these sheep are multiplied by thousands and by ten thousands. Alas, for the church when she is satisfied with an increase of one or two during a year! Ah, miserable church that shall be content if the pool of baptism is never stirred by those that profess their faith in Jesus or if at the sacramental table there should be no fresh visitors at the feast of love! Ah, miserable state of religion in which the churches shall think this to be their fit and proper condition and shall say they are comfortable while the world is perishing and none cares for souls! Oh, what a joy it is when every member of a church becomes fruitful in leading others to Christ! I know this is much the experience of my dear brothers and sisters in church fellowship here. The greater number, I believe, are striving to be missionaries for Christ. I wish I could honestly hope that all were so doing. It is to the shame of those who are not doing so that they can sit side by side with earnest Christians and not be more earnest themselves! Yet I thank God and take courage as I remember many of you who, by tears and prayers, and afterwards by earnest labors—some of them of the most self-sacrificing kind—have gone forth to bring others to Jesus, so that from a handful of men we have multiplied and shall multiply yet as the dispensation of God’s grace shall be continued to us!

Now, brothers and sisters, these may not seem to some selfish spirits any great things to rejoice in. But lovers of Christ, who have some of Christ’s likeness in their hearts, will account it a matter for which to clap their hands and indulge in holy mirth when souls are converted! Is it not better to see a sinner saved than to see your purse full or your lands extending? Should it not give you greater joy that Christ is glorified than

that anything, however desirable, should transpire for your own carnal gratification? Let Him reign if I perish! Let the crown sit well upon His head if I am trodden like mire in the street! Let Him be King of kings and Lord of lords even if His poor servant dies forgotten and unknown!

The next blessing mentioned in the Psalm is *the happiness of God's people is their strength*—"That our oxen may be strong to labor." I think here, by oxen, there is mystically and spiritually intended all the workers of the church, but especially ministers of Christ. Paul expressly calls these the oxen—"You shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn." It is a blessed circumstance when those that try to plow any part of God's field are qualified for the work. Whenever I see a man driving a horse with a lead that is too much for it, I thank God it is not my task to have such work as that! A company of people attempting a work for which they are not qualified either by gifts or grace is an unhappy spectacle. If God makes men strong to labor so that their labor is their delight and the service of God is a very recreation to them, it ought to be and it must be a cause of thanksgiving! Perhaps some of you have been refreshed of late. I know my Sunday school teachers can bear me witness. You have had such visitation from God that teaching in the Sunday school has become a greater joy to you than it ever was! There are, I know, others of you whose service to Christ is by no means misery. You go forth to the battle not with dolorous sounds, but with music in your hearts, with a happy beaming of your eyes, with the precision of saints and with the attendant symbols of victory! Be thankful for this, for it is no small blessing when the laborers are strong for their work.

Then comes *the blessing of peace*—"That there be no breaking in, nor going out." No secession fomented by discord. No heresies invading the midst of the happy family and rending asunder hearts that should be as one. If it should ever be your wretched lot to be a member of a church that has been distracted by schism and discord, you will confess that, perhaps of all things in Christian experience, there is nothing that humbles the soul more, nothing that wounds the heart more and that does more mischief to the inner life than personal jealousies and the party divisions they occasion! It is an unspeakable blessing when God keeps so many hearts in holy union! We so easily divide. Our tastes are naturally so different. There are such varieties of circumstance and of temperament among us—some rich, some poor, some lively and cheerful, some gloomy and desponding—it is not likely that a company of men will all agree together year by year without some jarring, where peace rules and there are no breakings forth of the waters of strife! Everyone ought to devoutly bow his head in a gratitude which he cannot express and say, "Lord, with You there is no breaking in nor going out."

The last mercy which David mentions is that of *satisfaction*—"that there is no complaining in our streets." And can we not appropriate this when, instead of hearing the voice of murmuring on the right hand and on the left—murmuring against the preacher, murmuring against the

officers, murmuring against one another—each one is encouraging his fellow to do the work of the Lord and all are unanimous together in this sole regret, that we can't love more, can't work more, can't glorify God more? Oh, this makes a happy church! It is evidence of a people near to God. Theirs is a happy case.

Now, brothers and sisters, these things may have in them little interest for strangers, but they will have, I trust, some force, though I put them thus hurriedly to you who have been with us from the beginning and whose history has proven how God has multiplied His blessings. Unworthy of the least of all His mercies we were and the church was brought low by affliction and sorrow till it seemed as though our name would be blotted out from His Israel and Ichabod was written on our wall—but God turned His hand in mercy upon us! That is 15 years ago. And by the space of these revolving years He has never ceased to bless. We have had no startling phenomena of revival. We have had no excitements such as have passed over different parts of the Christian world. But steadily, as though all had been regulated by an ever-progressing geometry, we have gone on to increase and to multiply—and have been led on from service to service in the name and strength of the Lord God! Not one particle of this is ascribable to human agency, only so far as God may have pleased to use it! The whole of it belongs to God! We then, at least, whatever others may say, ought to keep in the same frame of mind in which we were last Monday evening when we gathered round that communion table, instant in prayer, constant in fellowship, continuing to be happy in blessing and praising and magnifying the Lord!

II. THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS.

The latter part of the text carries us up to higher ground. Happiness, a practical outflow from the favor which God shows, is traced to its source, the God of all grace, and accounted for by the covenant relations into which He has entered. "Yes, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." Now, beloved, our God is the Lord, our God is Jehovah! Let me refresh your memories with this truth of God in two or three of its aspects that you may remember and act in the spirit suggested by them. Our God is the Lord!

He has revealed Himself to us in that character. We knew Him not. We said, "Who is the Lord that we should obey His voice?" When we heard of Him in the preaching of His truth, it only reached our outward ears—we felt no power in our spirits till it pleased God to reveal Himself to us. It was years ago with some of us—it was only a few months with others of you. Oh, I charge you, go back to that blessed day when those blind eyes were opened and when that dead heart began to feel the divine light! Oh, then it was you said, "He is my God." You did not come to Him and ask Him to be your God, but He who gave Himself to you in the eternal covenant before the world was, in the fullness of time, gave Himself to you by His effectual grace, making you willing to accept Him and to kiss

His silver scepter! Yes, you have been changed from an enemy into a friend! Your back is no longer toward your God—

***“But now subdued by sovereign grace,
Your spirit longs for His embrace.”***

Now bless Him for that with all your heart tonight!

Moreover, He is your God because *you have been brought to acknowledge Him as such*. Most of you have been baptized into the name, the one glorious name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—and by that act you declared to all men that you would be dead to all the world besides and alive only to Christ! You came forward years ago, moved by earnest zeal, and you said, “Let others do as they will, but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.” This work of grace led you from believing with the heart to confession with the mouth. I trust that many a time since then you have stood in the gap for God when His name has been dishonored by the ungodly and that you have avowed it in your family and business that you are the Lord’s servant. While others have disregarded His law and oppressed His truth, my soul follows hard after Him unto shame and derision! And I will follow where my Savior leads! Now you are happy to be able to do this.

Happy are the people who acknowledge God to be the Lord! Be happy tonight, then, and show your happiness by praising the name of the Lord in your heart. The Lord has been your God since then, inasmuch as you have believed in Him. In the day of trouble your soul has found peace by confiding in His goodness. When you have felt the weight of sin, you have got rid of that weight by coming to the pardoning God. Oh, the mere professors do not know what it is to take God as He really is! They take Him to be, what shall I say?—to be anything but their almighty sovereign! They take the Lord to be their lackey, to help them in some grievous hour when they can’t help themselves—to be their make-weight, in an emergency to supply a few of their deficiencies. They pick and choose His commands. They will be fruitful enough in duties that bring *them* honor, but they are barren enough in any duties that are sacred—that only belong to God and their own soul. As to outward ceremonies, they can indulge abundantly, but to spiritual religion they are utter strangers! They have never taken God to be altogether their God. Why, that means something more than Master, more than Father, more than King! Oh, do you know what it means? Is He all-in-all to you? That is what Godhead is—all-in-all. Do you take Him to be all-in-all to you, henceforth and forever? Happy are the people that can say that in very truth! It may cause them loss. It may often make their course run contrary to flesh and blood. But if they acknowledge God to be their Lord, so as to give Him entire obedience as His grace enables them, they are pronounced happy by the highest authority—and happy they shall be, come what may!

We have taken God to be our God, not merely to trust in Him, but, to go further, *to enjoy Him*. Have you not had sweet enjoyment with your

God, beloved, when He has brought you to feel that all things around you might be shadows, but that God was true? Have you never so realized God in your little chamber that you forgot there was a world of sin and sorrow, and care—and only remembered Him? Have you never felt as you have come down from that mount of fellowship, that when the atheist said there was no God, you could laugh him to scorn, for your spirit had seen Him face to face and your soul had come into contact with the soul of the infinite God, and you had as truly communed with Him as ever man communed with his fellow, or ever heart had fellowship with heart! Yes, oh, seek this yet again! Yes, let it be your element to live in the enjoyment of communion with God, for those are the happy people who, to the highest degree by inward fellowship, take God to be their God!

And then, over and above that, having enjoyed something of the Lord, we have *taken the Lord to be our God that we may serve Him*. It has been our delight, when we have had opportunities, to try and spread abroad the theme of His great and glorious name. You have chosen to give Him of His substance—I trust you have not held back any of the talent which your Master has entrusted to you. In proportion as any man or woman here answers to the description we have been reviewing—in that proportion shall they be truly happy! If you have but partly trusted and partly communed, and partly served, your happiness may well be shallow. But if you have trusted with your whole heart, leaning your entire weight upon the Lord—and if you have loved with all the power of your passion and communed day by day in closest fellowship with Him—if you have served Him with your whole heart, soul and strength—then happy are you! God declares you such and in the highest degree you certainly shall be such, world without end!

The believer who has thus taken God to be his God is happy because he has a portion with which he never can grow discontented. Men outgrow their books. Students come to look on the volumes they once valued as being worn-out things. Men outgrow their friends—those that were once their superiors, they can outstrip. Men outgrow their substance and their wealth. The comfort they once had in these things they find no longer. The most pleasant pleasures of the world are the first to expire as men advance—especially as they grow old—that which once contented them becomes vanity of vanities in their account! But no man outgrows his God! No soul ever runs at such a rate that he passes beyond the powers that God has given him! No, beloved, but the more our capacities are enlarged and our desires expanded, the more perfectly satisfied are we with the Lord our God! He that has this portion has one that can never be taken away from him. The world did not give it and the world cannot steal it. The devil has tried full often to take away from us our God, but he shall never do that. Time may rob us of our health. The world may rob us of our wealth. Sickness may deprive us of a thousand comforts, but there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord! Our inheritance cannot be alienated—

it is where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal!

Hence the Lord's people are a happy people because they have a portion they can die with. They have a pleasure that can make their dying pillow soft! And they have riches they can take with them through the last grim river—can pass its floods without losing a single farthing of their heritage—no, can pass the flood and land upon the other shore to enter more fully into the bliss which God has prepared for them that love Him!

I wish we were all such happy people! I wish we were, all of us, happy to the fullest degree! If you are not, you may be! If you are not, if you trust in Christ, you shall be, if you come empty-handed and simply take Christ to be your Savior! He never did reject one, yet, and never shall! He will accept you tonight and put you in the same happy case as others of His people. I know there are some here that are hard to comfort, but the Master, I trust, will do it yet, for He releases the prisoners and delights to find out the hard cases and to deal with them! If there is a dungeon door that no key can open, He delights to come with the mighty hammer of His Word and smash the door in pieces and give the spirit liberty! May He do that tonight, and then we will sing together of His pardoning power. Amen!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 103; 1 CORINTHIANS 1:25-31.**

This Psalm is a song of exulting thanksgiving, of overflowing joy and praise! Let each one of us read it as speaking for himself. Let it, here and now, be our own personal tribute of peculiar mercy received by each of us!

Verse 1. *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.* If things without are not joyous, let all that is within wake itself up to praise my God! He will hear me, even though I speak not. If I keep the praise within myself, He will hear the music of my soul. “Bless His holy name.”

2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* Do it again. If you have blest Him once, bless Him again. Does He not multiply to bless you? Bless Him repeatedly, continually! Then never weary of the work. Repeat yourself in grateful praise.

2. *And forget not all His benefits.* Your poor memory has often been the grave of His mercy; but now calls for a resurrection, and let His mercies rise before your eyes, and let your praises rise with them. “Forget not all His benefits.”

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities*—Yes that is done. Tonight you are a forgiven sinner. “All your iniquities,” and they were very many, have gone from you once and for all! Will you not sing about that?

3. *Who heals all your disease*—You are raised up from the bed of pain. What is still better, the Lord is at work with your sinful nature, purging and cleansing you of your corruption—healing you of your pride, your sloth, your unbelief. Will you not praise Him for this? “Who heals”—goes on to heal—continues to heal—“all your diseases.”

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction.* Who has redeemed you with His own precious blood and given you a life above all life—the life of God within you—a *redeemed* life! Oh, by the precious blood that bought you, will you be silent? Will you not sing about redemption? Is it not the sweetest theme to sing about that ever can be imagined?

4. *Who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies.* Treats you like a king! As a king gives to a king, so gives He His mercies to you—crowns you! What? Shall a crowned head refuse to praise Him who crowned it? No! “Bless the lord, O my soul!”

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things.* He might have left you to pine in spiritual hunger, but instead He has fed you—made you to know what is good, to love what is good, to feed upon that which is good—and to rejoice in that which is good! Will you not praise Him for this?

5. *So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.* Oh, you are strengthened! You grow young again, your faith is revived, your hope is brightened, your love has been stirred up and the smoldering flame begins to burn anew with vigor! Will you not bless Him who restores you after this fashion? Surely, you cannot refuse to praise.

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* Let the poor of the earth praise Him for this! Let the despised—those who are trampled on—exult in the fact that God is the executioner of the proud and the executor of the poor. “He executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.”

7. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.* He is a God who makes Himself known! He might have hidden Himself behind His works, instead of which He has given us a revelation—a revelation in the Old Testament which made David sing! But you and I have a revelation in the New Testament—not made to Moses this time, but to great David’s greater Son! Shall we not praise Him for making known His ways and His acts to us in the person of His Son, in a bright and lustrous manner unknown before? “My soul, bless you the Lord.”

8. *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* And should not this make us plenteous in song? So good a God to such great sinners! Merciful—full of mercy and gracious! Full of grace, love and kindness! So slow to anger and so quick to forgive! O my soul, be you slow to murmur! Be you quick to praise!

9. *He will not always chide.* So that even you, who feel His chidings tonight, ought to bless Him because they last such a little while. Such are our faults that if He were always chiding, we could not find any fault with Him. But He will not always chide. He will sometimes. He makes us

know the folly of our hearts when we wander from Him, but, “He will not always chide.”

9. *Neither will He keep His anger forever.* It is very short-lived towards His people. In fact, it is not anger of that sort which He lets loose against rebels, for He has said, “I will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.”

10. *He has not dealt with us after our sins: nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Come, will you not praise Him for this? If He had dealt with us according to our sins, we certainly would not have been in the house of prayer. We would have been now in the house of punishment! We would have been driven from His presence instead of being invited to seek His face! “He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”

11. *For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.* Sing loud, then, and praise Him greatly, for His mercy is so great!—

**“Loud as His thunders shout His praise,
And sound it lofty at His throne!”**

What music can be equal to such mercy as this?—“As high as the heaven is above the earth.” Surely, the best music our lips can give, and better than that, should be offered to Him!

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* Oh, what a mercy this is! In the third verse, you see, He gave us the note upon which here, in the 12th verse, He enlarges—“Who forgives all your iniquities.” How does He forgive them? Why, “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” They were ours! We could not deny them, but He has removed them—taken them right away from us and laid them on a scapegoat. That scapegoat has carried them away—they will never be found again. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” Now comes in the next note. The third verse was, “Who heals all your diseases.” This is what He says of it—

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him.* While they are sick in body and while He looks at them with great tenderness, feeling for them, suffering with them—

14. *For He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust.* He knows that our sickness is but a premonition of that death which will dissolve this mortal frame, which is only kept together by a continuous miracle. It is strange that such a heap of dust as our body is, does not dissolve much sooner. That it should return to the dust from where it came is no wonder. The wonder is that it returns not at once—and it would, were it not for that next mercy mentioned in the fourth verse, “Who redeems your life from destruction.” He is singing about that now. “He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust.”

15, 16. *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more.* Shall we sorrow about this? No, for we

remember that we have another note yet in the fourth verse, “Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.” So He chants that again in the 17th verse.

17, 18. *But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them.* Mercy for ourselves! Mercy for our children! What a blessing this is—that our father’s friend is our friend, and is the friend of our children, too! As David loved Mephibosheth for Jonathan’s sake, so does God still look upon the children of His children and keeps His covenant with them!

19. *The LORD has prepared His throne in the heavens.* Blessed be His name, He crowns us and we are glad that He should be crowned, too! “Who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies.” And here we see Him—who it is that crowns us. “The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens.”

19, 20. *And His kingdom rules over all. Bless the LORD, you His angels—*As if David could not do it well enough, himself, and so he called in the angels to help him! You bright spirits that behold Him day and night and circle His throne, rejoicing with your never-ceasing symphonies, lend me your harps and tongues! “Bless the Lord, you His angels.”

20, 21. *That excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto this voice of His word. Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts.* Sun, moon, and stars, the hosts of heaven, and all creatures that dwell in this lower sphere of whatever form you are, burst forth into song and extol Him! And oh, men—the bests that should be the hosts of God—when you are made willing in the day of His power, go forth to praise Him! “Bless the Lord, all you His hosts.”

21. *You ministers of His, that do His pleasure.* You servants of His, whether you are wind, and rain, and snow, or whether you are intelligent agents, so long as you are doing His pleasure, praise Him as you do it!

22. *Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.* In the spirit of that, I think, we must always sing our hymns of praise unto God. No, more, our whole life should be a Psalm of joyous thanksgiving and thanks-living!

1 CORINTHIANS 1:25-31.

In this chapter the apostle magnifies the cross of His Lord as God’s greatest gift to the world and as the highest glory of God’s self-revelation to men! He praises God that the Corinthian Christians have experienced the saving grace that comes by faith in the sinner’s sacrifice on Calvary. He rejoices, too, that that same grace has taught them to look forward to the Savior’s return in glory. But he is compelled to reprove them for some divisions and rivalries that sprang from their glorying in gifts rather than graces. This leads him to remind them how God had disparaged mere

worldly wisdom by saving mankind by the death of Jesus. And he brings all to a very practical application in the verses that we now ponder.

25. *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* And yet you will perceive that the church is always looking after wise men after the flesh. If it can find these, it immediately cringes before them, and asks these learned doctors to teach it something more than the simplicities of Christ. This is the old disease of the church! May God yet cure her.

26. *For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.* There are a few such. Remember how the Countess of Huntingdon used to say that she was very thankful for that letter “m,” for it does not say “not any noble,” but “not many noble are called.”

27, 28. *But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised has God chosen, yes, and things which are not—Seem scarcely to have an existence, not worth notice, not put down in the list of existences.*

28, 29. *To bring to nothing things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence.* This is what flesh always likes to do. Proud flesh we speak of, and all flesh is such. Flesh has a great tendency to swell, to corrupt—it is easily puffed up—but God will not have it so. What is flesh to God? Did not He make all things? Shall the thing formed boast itself against the former?

30. *But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* In fact, we have everything in Christ! We have in His prophetic office, wisdom. In His priestly office, righteousness and sanctification. And in His royal office, in which He paid the price of our salvation, we have redemption!

31. *That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.* Here is room for glorifying and it is our duty to glory in God. Let us do so more and more!

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DELIVERANCE FROM THE POWER OF DARKNESS

NO. 3366

A SERMON

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***“He has delivered us from the power of darkness.”
Colossians 1:13.***

DARKNESS is used in Scripture to express a great many things. Sometimes it represents *sorrow*. “A night of weeping” is a common expression among us. We speak, too, of, “walking in darkness and seeing no light.” We commonly say to one another that our minds are in a dark and gloomy state when we are surrounded by the fogs and mists of sorrow. Taking it in this sense, how often might we say of our heavenly Father, that, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness”? He has helped us in our temporal difficulties and circumstances, or He has whispered, “As your days so shall your strength be,” and He has turned our night of weeping into a morning of gladness, put away the sackcloth and ashes, and given us the oil of joy! Blessed be His name for all this! Let us not be ungrateful, nor forget the many times when He has turned our mourning into dancing and our sackcloth into scarlet and fine linen.

But darkness frequently signifies, too, in Scripture, *ignorance*. We were once so in darkness that we were blinded. “The God of this world” has blinded our eyes, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine in upon us! “We who were sometimes darkness, are now light in the Lord.” Christ’s mission had for one of its many gracious purposes and ends the taking away of the darkness of human ignorance and the pouring of light upon the intellect of man. I thank God that many of us, though we know comparatively little, do know that whereas we were once blind, now we see! We do know something of ourselves so as to be humbled—and we know, too—something of the gracious God, so as to rejoice that we are saved by Him! God has, therefore, delivered us, in that sense, from the power of darkness. Let us be thankful for that. Pant for more knowledge, but oh, believer, be grateful for what you have! Remember that the little you already know of saving truth is inestimably precious, for to know Jesus Christ is eternal life! And if, on this side of the grave, you never learn any more, yet you know that which should set your tongue eternally in holy motion with a rapturous song of thankfulness to Him

who has taught you such priceless truth! Yes, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.”

Darkness, too, frequently represents *Satan and the mysterious spiritual influence which he exerts upon the human mind*. He is called “the Prince of Darkness.” Darkness seems to be his element. God is the “Father of lights,” but Satan seems to be the father of the gloom and the dark!

Two elements are now at war in this lower world—Christ, the light, the true light, and Satan—sin—thick darkness, a darkness which may be felt—the Egyptian darkness in which we are naturally born and out of which we are not delivered except by the supernatural power of God exhibited through the plan of salvation by His grace! Beloved, we still are tempted by Satan, but we are not under his power! We have to fight with him, but we are not his slaves! He is not our king. He has no rights over us. We do not obey him—we will not listen to his temptations. By the grace of God, we mean, notwithstanding all his opposition, to fight in his very teeth and to win our way to heaven! He “has delivered us from the power of darkness.” Oh, what a mercy this is—that man, such a poor creature as he is, should be able to escape from the power of that master spirit Diabolus, Satan, the destroyer! That was a wonderful moment when, according to Bunyan’s description, Hopeful and Christian found that the key was turned in the lock and that they could get out of Giant Despair’s castle. That was a wonderful moment, I say, when, according to Master Bunyan, the key turned in the great lock which locked the iron gate. To use John Bunyan’s own words, he says, “That lock went damnable hard.” In all the new editions of “Pilgrim’s Progress,” it is put, “That lock went desperately hard.” That is the more refined way of putting it, but John Bunyan meant just what he said and implied that there was a sense of the wrath of God upon the soul of man on account of sin, so that he felt as if he were even near to hell itself! And yet, at such a time, the key did turn in the lock and the Iron Gate was opened. You recollect that just at the moment, old Giant Despair woke up, and was going to pursue the pilgrims and lay hold upon them when he was seized with one of his fainting fits. Oh, what an escape from Giant Despair! And yet this is little compared with escaping from Satan! Satan is the prince of the power of the air—and human despair is but one of his servants, one of the black officers in his infernal regiment! To escape from Satan, himself! Oh, let it be sung in heaven! Let angels who have never fallen help us to sing in triumph over those fallen spirits from whom we have been rescued by divine grace! “He has delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.”

I prefer tonight, however, as we cannot talk about all these things, and the field is so very wide, to consider the word, “darkness,” here, in the

restricted meaning of *sin*. Sin is a tremendous moral and spiritual darkness which has spread over the human mind. But we are told in the text and we have felt it in our personal experience, that “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.”

Let us speak, first, of *the power of darkness from which we are delivered*; secondly, upon *the statement here made concerning it*; and thirdly, of *the inferences which inevitably flow from the statement*.

First, then, let us speak a little upon—

I. THE POWER OF SIN FROM WHICH WE HAVE BEEN DELIVERED—as it is here set forth—under the suggestive image of “the power of darkness.”

What is “*the power*” of darkness? I suppose everyone will admit that it is *a power which tends towards slumber*. It is a composing power. God has given us the night in which to sleep. Whether or not there is any absolute power in darkness to engender sleep, I do not know. But I do know this that it is much easier, when reclining on your bed, to sleep in the dark than it is to sleep in the full glare of the sun. There seems to be some sedative influence about darkness, something which assists a man to fall into a state of inaction which we call, “sleep.” Now, beloved, look upon the race of men; they are under the power of darkness, and in consequence, they sleep. Does not the apostle say to us who are delivered from that power, “Let us not sleep as do others”? “They that sleep,” he says, “sleep in the night,” that being the proper time for sleep—the night with its raven wing seeming to engender sleep—“but let us that are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of love.” If you look abroad in the world, I say, you will see men under the soporific influence of sin given to slumber. Do you believe that men would go on to sin as they do if it were not that sin stupefies them, prevents their using their reason, drowns their conscience and will not permit them to judge accurately concerning things that differ? Why, can you imagine that a man would run the risk of everlasting misery for the sake of a few days of carnal delight if he were not, by some means or other, besotted and made a fool of by sin? Can you conceive that a man would hear the tidings of pardoning mercy through Jesus Christ and be solemnly assured that if he turned from the error of his ways, God would accept and receive him—and that then he would treat that message with levity and go his way, even to ridicule it, if it were not that sin has made him so unreasonable, even in these matters, and made him, if not an idiot, a madman, so that he will not think? He willfully chooses his own mischief, ruins himself and that with a sort of Satanic malice against himself as well as against God—choosing rather to inherit eternal misery than to give up the poor delights of time—choosing rather to feast upon the empty husks of this world than to come and sit down at the table of

mercy and eat and drink of the grace which God has provided! So, then, it is very clear—observation shows it to us and we also have felt it in ourselves—that sin has a soporific, a drowsing, a sleep-giving power! It makes men careless and indifferent. Makes them say, “I’ll chance it! I do not care what the future may bring!” It makes a man go right to the very edge of hell with his eyes blindfolded and his heart like Nabal’s heart—which was turned to stone—careless even of the “terrors of the Lord” and of “the wrath to come”!

But blessed be His holy name! “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.” I hope we do not sleep. “Oh, Christian, if you are careless, if you are asleep, if tonight your heart is heavy and dull, I should like to come and whisper this right into your soul, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.” We are now to be active, earnest, zealous and full of devoted life! If they sleep who are unconverted, they only act according to nature. They are in the dark. They, therefore, sleep. What can they do otherwise? But you are in the light of God, you know that you are saved, you rejoice in Jesus Christ! Oh, sleep not, my brothers and sisters, but seeing that there are but a few hours in your day, work while the day lasts and make it your pleasure and your delight to spend and to be spent in the service of Him! “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.”

A second power of darkness lies in *concealment*. It is the power of darkness to hide things. What a darkness we had last night! Trying to get home from ministering abroad, I thought I would never be able to find my way. One could hardly see one’s hand in that dense fog which encompassed one. Houses and trees that one would have known in a moment and that would have told one where one was, were all concealed. One could see nothing! It would be a very small world, indeed, if it were no larger than what could then be seen. Darkness hides things. No matter how glorious yonder landscape may be as you stand upon the mountain’s brow—if the sun has gone down and if night has spread its wings over the whole, you can see nothing! It may be very well for the guide to tell you that yonder is a silver lake, and there the Black Forest, and that far away are the brows of mountains covered with their eternal snows, but you can see nothing—night has effectually blotted it all out! Now, the power of sin is just like that. It hides from the human mind what that mind ought to see. The man is lost, but he does not know it—he cannot see the rocks that are just ahead. The man has soon to stand before the bar of God and receive his sentence, but he does not know it. I mean his heart does not know it. He trifles on, caring for none of these things. As for the plague that is in him, in his ruined state, he does not believe it. He hears the truth of God that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, but he is indifferent to it and as to the dear and precious things of the covenant of grace, he does not care for them. No

matter how rich may be the mercy, nor how pure the consolation, he knows nothing at all about them, for he is in the dark! It is all dark, dark, dark with him amid the blaze of noon!

I think I may honestly and humbly say that I do try to speak as plainly as any man can speak—and care nothing about mighty fine words—and yet I do not doubt but that scores come into this house and go out of it, saying, “Well, I do not understand it!” How could they? They are under the power of sin which makes the plainest truth perplexing and hides from their eyes that which the merest babe in grace can plainly see!

But, beloved, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.” Now we can see, blessed be His name! The first sight we had so alarmed us that we almost wished we could not see! It was a sight so terrible, but when, afterwards, we looked to Jesus upon the cross and found there was life for that look at the crucified One—and when since then we have learned to look continually to Him and to find in His wounds our healing, and in His death our life—oh, I hope we are thanking God every moment of our existence that “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.” Now we can see in Him our Father, who was once to us, “the unknown God.”

Now we can see in Jesus, to whom we were once strangers, our own dear elder brother. Now we can look at the river of death without being alarmed at it, for beyond it we can see the turrets and pinnacles of the new Jerusalem glittering with jasper and with carbuncle—and we are anticipating the happy day when we shall sing with the saints above! Sweet thought is it that with these eyes of ours, we shall see our Savior! Yes, He has delivered us from the concealing power of darkness!

In the third place, darkness has a *depressing and an afflicting power*. Are you not all conscious, if you are shut up in a dark room that your mind seems to sink in the dark? Why, our little children, who are the simplest specimens of humanity—and let us know the truth at once—can hardly be punished more severely (though I hope we never do so punish them, for it would be very wicked to do so) than by being shut up in the dark! They cannot bear it, cannot endure it, and at first, when the little one even goes to bed in the chamber alone in the dark, it feels afraid. What must not those persons have suffered who were shut up in the dungeons at Venice—dungeons below the watermark of the canal, where not a ray of light, perhaps, did ever come, except by the jailer’s candle—shut in there, hour after hour, unable to know the day from the night, but finding it one long and dreary night! The cruel oppressor would not have thought of it unless he had known that the darkness was so uncongenial to us that it depresses our spirits. Now, when some men have eyes given to them and can really see, sin is like darkness to them. Of course, it is not to some of you. A blind man sees as well in the dark

as he does in the light, but as soon as ever you get eyes, God begins to deal with you till you feel that sin is darkness to you! Oh, what darkness is this! Well do some of us remember when we walked in the darkness of our sin. We tried to kindle a fire and to light ourselves with the sparks of our own good works, but we failed in every attempt and we would have been in the thick Egyptian night even now if it had not been that He delivered us from the power of darkness! Now, we know that we still, alas, sin, but it does not fill us with despair because there is an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous!

Now, we come to our Father every night, and bowing low in reverence before Him, we mourn that we have sinned during another day, but we do not mourn with a hopeless sorrow, for we remember that—

***“There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”***

We know that when we were plunged into that fountain, our foulest stains were cleansed right away and now we give thanks unto the Father who has delivered us from the depressing power of sin! Oh, Christian, if you are downcast tonight about this, if you cannot say the text in this sense, go to your heavenly Father, pray to Him and ask Him to enable you to look to Christ just as you did at first! Perhaps you have too many good works of which to boast—and that is why you are so depressed. Throw them all away and come, now, as a poor, empty-handed sinner, having nothing to which to trust but the finished work of Christ! You may depend upon it, that doing this, your peace will yet be like a river because your righteousness, being Christ’s imparted to you, will be like the waves of the sea. Then shall you sing, “Thanks be to Him who has delivered us from the depressing power of darkness.”

I cannot dwell upon these points, though they are all interesting, but must now notice, fourthly, that there is what I may call *the fascinating power of darkness*. It is strange, but it is true, that there are many who love darkness. I said just now that this was contrary to nature, and so it is in one sense. Unfallen nature could not bear darkness, but fallen nature loves it! Hear what God says about it, “Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.” Night is the time of the world’s merriment. Then the thief steals out to do his deeds of evil. “They that are drunk, are drunk in the night,” and then is the time for “wantonness and chambering.” As the apostle says, it is the hour of evil! Darkness seems to be attractive to some men. Strange is it, but it is so. The fascinating power of sin is just like the fascinating power of darkness. I have sometimes thought that sin might well be compared to those serpents which fascinate their prey. It may be some poor little animal—the snake looks and looks, and the little creature, instead of running

away, looks at those bright, sparkling eyes till the poor hare, or rabbit, or whatever it may be, instead of escaping, stands as though it were a statue, perfectly tranquil and fascinated with the glare of the serpent's eyes! And then in a moment the snake darts at it and devours its prey! So is it with sin and there are some here, perhaps, who are under its fascinating power tonight. They know, for they have often been told, that sin is their deadly enemy—and yet it is so pleasant, it is so enchanting, so enticing! As they picture the wizard as being able to strike men into stone, or able to make them do his will, so does sin seem to do and then, at last, it destroys the man who once found pleasure in it! It is a cupbearer to you and comes with smiling face, holds out the sparkling goblet and says, "Drink, my Lord! See the beaded bubbles sparkling on the rim! Drink! For it moves itself aright and sparkles. Drink! And it shall put a flush into your veins and make your blood tingle and leap and let you know a thrill and a joy you have never known before!" And when you get the cup to your lips, you may not be able to take it away again, though, as you drink, it will scald the lips and throat and burn the very vitals! And as you drink on, especially if you drink of the cup of lust, you shall feel another thrill that shall make the very bones rot, and the very marrow to decay till you wish you had never been born and curse bitterly the day in which you came into this world to be partaker of a poison so terrible, so loathsome, so like an ante-past of hell! Oh my God! Grant that if there are any young men or women here who have already drunk of that cup, that by Your help they may dash it down once and forever! But it is fascinating, fearfully fascinating—and when once a person begins to drink of it, it is seldom that he stops until he drains the very dregs of eternal ruin! But thanks be unto God, for "He has delivered us from the power of darkness."

It cannot fascinate us now. I know you, you fair witch! I know you, you painted harlot! Though you might have deceived me once, I know you now! My Savior has shown me superior charms. He has taught me the mischief that comes from loving the world and the things thereof—and now you tempt me in vain! I hope there are many here who can say, "He has delivered us from the fascinating power of sin, from the power of darkness."

I cannot stop on this point, however, but must notice the fifth thing. There is about darkness *an emboldening power* to some men. Darkness makes the child afraid, but it makes the evil man bold! It is in the dark that the lion comes out after his prey and all the beasts of the field go forth to get their food. The sun would frighten them, but boldness comes to them with the darkness. And oh, there is a wonderfully emboldening power to some men in sin! Perhaps, my dear friend, you have come in here tonight, but you have said this afternoon that which you would not

have said 10 years ago! Ah, young woman, you have already done that which you would have shuddered to have done only 12 months ago! Ah, merchant, you have already entered into a doubtful transaction which you would have scorned some months back! You see, you did wrong by little, and as you did one wrong, you got courage to do another, and another, and another! There is the darkness of sin over your minds—you have grown bolder in sin, but that is a poor courage which depends upon the darkness—it is, in fact, the darkness of Satan! It is because of his supreme darkness of mind and spirit that Satan is the boldest of all spirits in contending with the God of heaven and earth. Beware of the brow of brass! It is a grand thing for a Christian to be like a pillar of iron against evil, but it is a mark of reprobation to become like an iron pillar against God and against His truth—and some men do become such. They sin until their sin engenders a second nature!

At first, when sin catches us in its net, it is with the tiniest spider's cobwebs that can scarcely be seen. And they seem as though you could break from them in a moment. Then they become silken bonds—then firmer, still, until a man seems to be enveloped in a tangle of cables—and every cable hardens and becomes as iron or triple steel until at last there is no escaping, for sin gathers daily force until it gets a monstrous power over men! Men will now say and laugh at a thing which once made them shudder! And do an action and then wipe their mouths and say, "Aha! Aha!" An action which once he would no more have thought of doing than trying to mount without wings above the skies! Hazeal said, "Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?" And yet, dog or not, he did the very thing he thought it impossible for him to do! Now, I trust if we have been delivered from the power of sin in this respect, that we are no longer to be found doing wrong—and that if we *have* done wrong, we are humbled on account of it. Then should we be contrite and broken in spirit—and instead of boasting, snapping our fingers, and saying, "It is nothing"—we should go to our beds ashamed, or go to our Father's face blushing, mourning, weeping and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" What a blessed thing it is to have a broken heart! Thank God for a tender conscience, and if you have one, never tamper with it. Oh, young man, never tamper with a tender conscience! It is such a blessing to have it. Oh, cultivate it, and pray the Lord to make your heart more and more tender concerning sin that you may hate it with a perfect hatred! He has delivered us from the power of sin.

Once more, and I shall leave this point. Darkness seems to have about it a kind of *prophetic* power. If we were not warned by our astronomers when an eclipse was coming, I have no doubt that half the world would be dreadfully frightened as soon as the sun became darkened. People would say to one another, "The judgment is coming." That is their general thought. If the day gets unusually dark, they think something

horrible is going to happen and they want to know whether this is not the time when the judgment may be expected, and so on. Darkness seems to be a prognostication of evil. Such is sin. My dear hearer, if you hear the voice of sin, it tells you in your sober moments—it cannot help telling you—that there is a judgment to come. “Be sure your sin will find you out.” “God will bring every work into judgment.” For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account at the last day. But the Christian knows that to him the darkness of sin prognosticates nothing of the kind! He stands beneath the cross of Christ and he knows that sin spent itself upon Jesus upon that cross so that it might not touch, for a single moment, the soul that believes in Jesus! Now, notwithstanding everything, the Christian can say, “I am forgiven. I am a monument of grace. I am a sinner saved by blood! I rejoice that for me sin has been put away and I am, therefore, saved.” Thus, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.”

Now, I shall need your attention for a little upon the second truth of God found here, which is—

II. THE STATEMENT HERE MADE CONCERNING THE POWER OF DARKNESS.

Observe that, in the first place, it is *a statement full of assurance*. “He has delivered us.” Paul does not say he hopes so, but definitely asserts, “He *has* delivered us.” Brothers and sisters, can we speak in the same positive manner? Let us not be content unless we can, for if we have believed in Him, “He has delivered us.” If, indeed, our trust is in His finished work and perfect righteousness, then He has delivered us! It is not a matter of argument, or a thing about which to raise a debate—it is so—it must be so, for every soul that is in Christ, He has delivered from the power of darkness and translated into His own kingdom!

Observe, again, it is a statement *full of intelligence*. The person who uttered it knew what he was saying. He was a sound divine, for he says, “*He has* delivered us.” He does not say, “We have got out of it somehow,” but, “*He has* delivered us.” I wish some persons could have much clearer notions than they have about who it is that saves. If salvation comes of man—well, say so! And if sinners save themselves by all manner of means, give them the credit, the glory, the praise of it! But if it is God who saves, then let Him have the sole and perfect honor for it! “Salvation is of the Lord.” Sinner, you should not try to save yourself! You cannot do it! If you could, why did Christ come to save you? Your salvation does not rest in your hands. “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” All the matter of salvation rests with the eternal Father, through Jesus Christ. He is the Alpha and the Omega of our salvation. The person who wrote this verse, then, it seems, was a

sound divine, for he ascribes the glory where it ought to be ascribed. “He has delivered us.”

Then, next, it is *a statement full of gratitude*. If you look at the connection, you find it says, “Giving thanks unto the Father.” What a delightful grace gratitude is! It is such a heavenly thing to be thankful. I wish we spent a little more time about it, being dissolved by God’s goodness, looking at all that He has done for us and at all our demerit, which renders that love the more wonderful! What joy is there in gratitude—to fall speechless at the foot of the cross and feel the thanks we cannot speak, or to stand up and sing, “Blessed be His name,” or to tell others the loving-kindness of the Lord and to say, “He has dealt graciously with me and He will deal graciously with me.” Brothers and sisters, be much in the sacred and holy palace of gratitude! You cannot have anything that will more strengthen you for service than holy thankfulness to God for His favors. We might have said a good deal more upon that last point, but we leave you to say it to yourselves! And so we will close with the third truth of God that shines here, namely—

III. THE INFERENCES THAT MAY BE DRAWN FROM THIS STATEMENT.

The first inference is a doctrinal one, but as I have already touched on this, I only briefly hint and then leave it. Here it is. Deliverance from the power of sin is as much the work of God as deliverance from the guilt of sin! Where we look for justification, there must we also look for sanctification, for as we are justified through Jesus Christ, we must also expect to receive sanctification from a heavenly source. We cannot receive the one blessing through the spirit and the other through the flesh. We would infer from the text, speaking doctrinally, that in order to our sanctification and our deliverance from the power of sin, we must look to our heavenly Father, altogether and alone.

The next evidence is *experimental*. “He has delivered us.” Now, then, I ought to feel in my soul that I am so delivered—and if I do not so feel—I ought to be wretched until I do feel it because this has been the experience of every true Christian sooner or later. He has delivered us from the power! We may be in darkness sometimes, but it shall not have power over and enslave us. Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace. Let the experimental inference then be, “I am resolved to be happy, yet I will—I will rejoice in God, for He has delivered.”

The next inference is *practical*. If we are delivered from the power of darkness, do not let us put ourselves under its power again, and do not let us temporize with it. You would fancy, from the actions of some professors that they were not delivered from the power of darkness at all, but were only helped to keep away from some conspicuous sin. When I hear some people talk about fox-hunting Christians, card-playing

Christians, Christians who are never at prayer-meetings, Christians who have no zeal for souls, it seems to me that they might just as well talk about angels who are not in heaven, or angels who never obey the voice of God! Why, these are sham Christians! They are not genuine Christians—they are of the world and do the things of the world! We may conclude that their hearts and natures are worldly, for if they were spiritual, they would love spiritual things, and their hearts would be engaged in spiritual exercises. Brothers and sisters, the grace of God has not come into us merely to keep us away from some few notable vices, but to deliver us altogether from the power of darkness! And if I can sometimes go into sin—just occasionally by way of pleasure—it proves that I am a stranger to the deliverance which Jesus Christ gives to His really called and regenerated people!

And now the last inference is *a hopeful* inference. If He has delivered us from the powers of darkness, He will deliver us all the way through! If He has done this great thing for us, what will He not do for us? If He has delivered us from the tremendous power of sin, He will certainly deliver us from the power of death! If sin is taken away, why need we fear? Has He delivered us from the power of darkness? Then He will certainly help us in our daily troubles. Did He give His own dear Son to put away our sin—and will He not give us bread and water? If He has covered our souls with the beautiful robe of righteousness that Christ has woven, will He let us lack for ordinary raiment? Oh, let us be of good cheer! The good God of grace cannot be a bad God of providence! He who feeds us so well on heavenly bread cannot starve us for lack of bodily bread! He has delivered us! We have already received the greatest mercy—and you may be quite sure of the smaller ones! When Sir Francis Drake was overtaken by a storm in the Thames off Greenwich, “What?” he said, “afraid of a storm? Been round the world three times and afraid, now, of being drowned in a ditch? No!” And surely we who have circumnavigated a whole world of discipline and trouble over whose heads the waves and billows have rolled; we do not mean to be drowned in this present trouble! Do you, my dear friend? You shall not perish in this ditch! You shall get safely home! He who has delivered you from the power of darkness will never withdraw His hand and help until He brings you within the pearly gates, puts the crown on your head, the palm branch in your hand, the snow-white robe on your shoulders and the new song of everlasting joy in your mouth, even praise forevermore! Be of good courage, then!

And then there is this inference for some of you who are not converted. *If God has delivered us, why should He not deliver you?* Why, some of us who have been delivered seemed very unlikely to ever be delivered! We did not want to be! We loved darkness rather than light

and yet He delivered us from it. We were, some of us, very hardhearted. Some of us had plunged very deep into sin. There are some here who are wonders of divine grace! They were once wonders of sin and yet the love of God looked them up and brought them out—fetched them from the bar of the gin palace, fetched them out of the theater, brought them even from the brothel, some of them, and washed and cleansed them and made them sit among God’s people, love His ways and rejoice in His dear name! And why should not God do the same with you? I know 20 reasons why He should not, but I will tell you one thing He has said, “Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” So if you come to Him, He will not cast out even you!

The way to come to Him is to trust Him. That is, trust Christ to save you and it is all done, and you are saved! That is the great work. When a soul, sensible of sin, sees that Christ, by His blood, made atonement and comes and throws himself upon that sacrifice of the cross, then sin is pardoned! Then because the sin is pardoned, the forgiven sinner is grateful and he says, “I will not go on in this sin.” So he puts it away and he is led into a life of holiness by the mercy of God. Oh, that we could all say in the words of the text—and if we cannot all say it tonight, I hope we shall soon be able to do so—“Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and has delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.”

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PAUL AS A PATTERN CONVERT

NO. 3367

A SERMON
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“However for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.”
1 Timothy 1:16.

IT is a vulgar error that the conversion of the apostle Paul was an uncommon and exceptional event and that we cannot expect men to be saved now-a-days after the same fashion. It is said that the incident was an exception to all rules, a wonder altogether by itself. Now, my text is a flat contradiction to that notion, for it assures us that, instead of the apostle as a receiver of the long-suffering and mercy of God being at all an exception to the rule, he was a model convert, and is to be regarded as a type and pattern of God’s grace in other believers. The apostle’s language in the text, “for a pattern,” may mean that he was what printers call a first proof, an early impression from the engraving, a specimen of those to follow. He was the typical instance of divine long-suffering, the model after which others are fashioned. To use a metaphor from the artist’s studio, Paul was the ideal sketch of a convert, an outline of the work of Jesus on mankind, a picture of divine long-suffering. Just as artists make sketches in charcoal as the basis of their work—which outlines they paint out as the picture proceeds—so did the Lord, in the apostle’s case, make, as it were, a picture or outline sketch of His usual work of grace. That outline, in the case of each future believer, He works out with infinite variety of skill and produces the individual Christian, but the guiding lines are really there. All conversions are, in a high degree, similar to this pattern conversion. The transformation of persecuting Saul of Tarsus into the apostle Paul is a typical instance of the work of grace in the heart.

We will have no other preface, but proceed at once to two or three considerations. The first is that—

I. IN THE CONVERSION OF PAUL, THE LORD HAD AN EYE TO OTHERS, AND IN THIS PAUL IS A PATTERN.

In every case the individual is saved, not for himself, alone, but with a view to the good of others. Those who think the doctrine of election to be harsh should not deny it, for it is Scriptural—but they may to their own minds soften some of its hardness by remembering that elect men bear a marked connection with the race. The Jews, as an elect people, were chosen in order to preserve the oracles of God for all nations and for all

times. Men personally elected unto eternal life by divine grace are also elected that they may become chosen vessels to bear the name of Jesus unto others. While our Lord is said to be the Savior especially of them that believe, He is also called the Savior of all men—and while He has a special eye to the good of the one person whom He has chosen—yet *through that person* He has designs of love to others—perhaps even to thousands yet unborn!

The apostle Paul says, “I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.” Now, I think I see very clearly that *Paul’s conversion had an immediate relation to the conversion of many others*. It had a tendency, had it not, to excite an interest in the minds of his brother Pharisees? Men of his class, men of culture, who were equally at home with the Greek philosophers and with the Jewish rabbis, men of influence, men of rank, would be sure to enquire, “What is this new religion which has fascinated Saul of Tarsus? That zealot for Judaism has now become a zealot for Christianity—what can there be in it?” I say that the natural tendency of his conversion was to awaken inquiry and thought and so to lead others of his rank to become believers. And, my dear friend, if you have been saved, you ought to regard it as a token of God’s mercy to your class. If you are a working man, let your salvation be a blessing to the men with whom you labor. If you are a person of rank and station, consider that God intends to bless you to some with whom you are on familiar terms. If you are young, hope that God will bless the youth around you. And if you have come to older years, hope that your conversion, even at the eleventh hour, may be the means of encouraging other aged pilgrims to seek and find rest unto their souls. The Lord, by calling one out of any society of men, finds for Himself a recruiting officer who will enlist his fellows beneath the banner of the cross! May not this fact encourage some seeking soul to hope that the Lord may save him, though he is the only thoughtful person in all his family—and then make him to be the means of salvation to all his kindred?

We notice that *Paul often used the narrative of his conversion as an encouragement to others*. He was not ashamed to tell his own life story. Eminent soul-winners, such as Whitefield and Bunyan, frequently pleaded God’s mercy to themselves as an argument with their fellow men. Though great preachers of another school, such as Robert Hall and Chalmers, do not mention themselves at all, and I can admire their abstinence, yet I am persuaded that if some of us were to follow their example, we would be throwing away one of the most powerful weapons of our warfare! What can be more affecting, more convincing, more overwhelming, than the story of divine grace told by the very man who has experienced it? It is better than a dozen tales of converted Africans and infinitely more likely to win men’s hearts than the most elaborate essays upon moral excellence! Again and again, Paul gave a long

narrative of his conversion, for he felt it to be one of the most telling things that he could relate.

Whether he stood before Felix or Agrippa, this was his plea for the gospel. All through his epistles there are continual mentions of the grace of God towards himself—and we may be sure that the apostle did right to argue thus from his own case—it is fair and forcible reasoning and ought by no means to be left unused because of a selfish dread of being called egotistical! God intends that we should use our conversion as an encouragement to others and say to them, “Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will tell you what He has done for my soul.” We point to our own forgiveness and say, “Do but trust in the living Redeemer and you shall find, as we have done, that Jesus blots out the transgressions of believers.”

Paul's conversion was an encouragement to him all his life long to have hope for others. Have you ever read the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans? Well, the man who penned those terrible verses might very naturally have written at the end of them, “Can these monsters be reclaimed? It can be of no use whatever to preach the gospel to people so sunken in vice.” That one chapter gives as daring an outline as delicacy would permit of the nameless, shameful vices into which the heathen world had plunged! And yet, after all, Paul went forth to declare the gospel to that filthy and corrupt generation, believing that God meant to save a people out of it! Surely one element of his hope for humanity must have been found in the fact of his own salvation—he considered himself to be, in some respects, as bad as the heathen, and in other respects even worse! He calls himself the *foremost* of sinners (that is the word) and he speaks of God having saved him foremost, that in him He might show forth all long-suffering. Paul never doubted the possibility of the conversion of a person, however infamous, after he had himself been converted! This strengthened him in battling with the fiercest opponents—He who overcame such a wild beast as I was can also tame others and bring them into willing captivity to His love!

There was yet another relation between Paul's conversion and the salvation of others, and it was this—*It served as an impulse*, driving him forward in his lifework of bringing sinners to Christ. “I obtained mercy,” he said, “and that same voice which spoke peace to me said, “I have made you a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name among the Gentiles.” And he did bear it, my brothers and sisters! Going into regions beyond that he might not build on another man's foundation, he became a master builder for the church of God. How indefatigably did he labor! With what vehemence did he pray! With what energy did he preach! Slander and contempt he bore with the utmost patience. Scourging or stoning had no terrors for him. Imprisonment, yes, death itself, he defied—nothing could daunt him! Because the Lord had saved *him*, he felt that he must, by all means, save some. He could not be quiet. Divine

love was in him like a fire and if he had been silent, he would, before long, have had to cry with the prophet of old, "I am weary with restraining." He is the man who said, "Necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." Paul, the extraordinary sinner, was saved that he might be full of extraordinary zeal and bring multitudes to eternal life! Well could he say—

***"The love of Christ does me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men!
With cries, entreaties, tears to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave.
My life, my blood, I here present,
If for Your truth they may be spent!
Fulfill Your sovereign counsel, Lord!
Your will be done, Your name adored!"***

Now, I will pause here a minute to ask a question. You profess to be converted, my dear friend. What relation has your conversion already had to other people? It ought to have a very apparent one. Has it had such? Mr. Whitefield said that when his heart was renewed, his first desire was that his companions with whom he had previously wasted his time might be brought to Christ. It was natural and commendable that he should begin with them. Remember how one of the apostles, when he discovered the Savior, went immediately to tell his brother? It is most fitting that young people should spend their first religious enthusiasm upon their brothers and sisters. As to converted parents, their first responsibility is in reference to their sons and daughters. Upon each renewed man, his natural affinities, or the bonds of friendship or the looser ties of neighborhood should begin to operate at once, and each one should feel, "No man lives unto himself."

If divine grace has kindled a fire in you, it is that your fellow men may burn with the same flame! If the eternal fount has filled you with living water, it is that out of the midst of you should flow rivers of living water! You are blessed that you may bless—whom have you blessed? Let the question go round. Do not avoid it. This is the best return that you can make to God—that when He saves you, you should seek to be the instruments in His hands of saving others! What have you done? Did you ever speak with the friend who shares your pew? He has been sitting there for a long time and may, perhaps, be an unconverted person—have you pointed him to the Lamb of God? Have you ever spoken to your servants about their souls? Have you broken the ice sufficiently to speak to your own sister, or your own brother? Do begin, dear friend.

You cannot tell what mysterious threads connect you with your fellow men and their destiny. There was a cobbler once, as you know, in Northamptonshire. Who could see any connection between him and the millions of India? But the love of God was in his bosom and Carey could not rest till, at Serampore, he had commenced to translate the word of God and preach to his fellow men! We must not confine our thoughts to the few whom Carey brought to Christ, though to save one soul is worthy

of a life of sacrifice—but Carey became the forerunner and leader of a missionary band which will never cease to labor till India bows before Immanuel! That man mysteriously *drew, is drawing and will draw* India to the Lord Jesus Christ! Brother, you do not know what your power is! Awake and try it!

Did you never read this passage—“You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him”? Now, the Lord has given to His Son power over all flesh, and with a part of that power Jesus clothes His servants. Through you, He will give eternal life to certain of His chosen—by you and by no other means will they be brought to Himself! Look about you, regenerate man! Your life may be made sublime. Awaken yourself! Begin to think of what God may do by you! Calculate the possibilities which lie before you with the eternal God as your helper! Shake yourself from the dust and put on the beautiful garments of disinterested love to others and it shall yet be seen how grandly gracious God has been to hundreds of men by having converted you!

So far, then, Paul’s salvation, because it had so clear a reference to others, was a pattern of all conversions. Now, secondly—

II. PAUL’S FOREMOST POSITION AS A SINNER DID NOT PREVENT HIS BECOMING FOREMOST IN GRACE AND, HEREIN, AGAIN, HE IS A PATTERN TO US.

Foremost in sin, he became also foremost in service! Saul of Tarsus was a *blasphemer* and he is to be commended because he has not recorded any of those blasphemies. We can never object to converted burglars and chimney-sweepers of whom we hear so much, telling the story of their conversion. But when they go into dirty details, they had better hold their tongues! Paul tells us that he was a blasphemer, but he never repeats one of the blasphemies. We invent enough evil in our own hearts without being told of other men’s stale profanities. If, however, any of you are so curious as to want to know what kind of blasphemies Paul could utter, you have only to converse with a converted Jew and he will tell you what horrible words some of his nation will speak against our Lord! I have no doubt that Paul, in his evil state, thought as wickedly of Christ as he could—considered Him to be an impostor, called Him so, and added many an opprobrious epithet. He does not say of himself that he was an unbeliever and an objector, but he says that he was a blasphemer, which is a very strong word, but not too strong, for the apostle never went beyond the truth. He was a downright, thorough-going blasphemer who also caused others to blaspheme. Will these lines meet the eye of a profane person who feels the greatness of his sin? May God grant that he may be encouraged to seek mercy as Saul of Tarsus did, for “all manner of sin and blasphemy” does He forgive unto men!

From blasphemy, which was the sin of the lips, Saul proceeded to *persecution*, which is a sin of the hands. Hating Christ, he hated His

people, too. He was delighted to give his vote for the death of Stephen—and he took care of the clothes of those who stoned that martyr. He hauled men and women to prison and compelled them to blaspheme. When he had hunted all Judea as closely as he could, he obtained letters to go to Damascus, that he might do the same in that place. His prey had been compelled to quit Jerusalem and flee to more remote places, but “being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them unto strange cities.” He was foremost in blasphemy and persecution! Will a persecutor read or hear these words? If so, may he be led to see that even for *him*, pardon is possible! Jesus, who said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” is still an intercessor for the most violent of His enemies!

He adds, next, that he was *injurious*, which, I think, Bengel considers to mean that he was a despiser. That eminent critic says—blasphemy was his sin towards God, persecution was his sin towards the church, and despising was his sin in his own heart. He was injurious—that is, he did all he could to damage the cause of Christ and he thereby injured himself. He kicked against the pricks and injured his own conscience. He was so determined against Christ that he counted no cost too great by which he might hinder the spread of the faith! And he did hinder it terribly—he was a ringleader in resisting the Spirit of God which was then working with the church of Christ. He was foremost in opposition to the cross of Christ!

Now, notice that he was saved as a pattern, which is to show you that if you also have been foremost in sin, you also may obtain mercy as Paul did! And to show you yet again that if you have not been foremost, the grace of God, which is able to save the chief of sinners, can assuredly save those who are of less degree! If the bridge of grace will carry the elephant, it will certainly carry the mouse! If the mercy of God could bear with the greatest sinners, it can have patience with you! If a gate is wide enough for a giant to pass through, any ordinary-sized mortal will find space enough. Despair’s head is cut off and stuck on a pole by the salvation of “the chief of sinners.” No man can now say that he is too great a sinner to be saved—because the chief of sinners was saved 1,800 years ago! If the ringleader, the chief of the gang, has been washed in the precious blood, and is now in heaven, why not I? Why not *you*?

After Paul was saved, he became a foremost saint. The Lord did not allot him a second-class place in the church. He had been the leading sinner, but his Lord did not, therefore, say, “I save you, but I shall always remember your wickedness to your disadvantage.” Not so! He counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry and into the apostleship, so that he was not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles! Brother, there is no reason why, if you have gone very far in sin, you should not go equally far in usefulness! On the contrary, there is a reason why you *should do so*, for it is a rule of grace that to whom much is forgiven, the same loves much—and much love leads to much

service. What man was more clear in his knowledge of doctrine than Paul?

What man more earnest in the defense of the truth of God? What man more self-sacrificing? What man more heroic? The name of Paul in the Christian church stands, in some respects, very next to the Lord Jesus! Turn to the New Testament and see how large a space is occupied by the Holy Spirit speaking through His servant Paul! And then look over Christendom and see how greatly the man's influence is still felt—and must be felt till his Master shall come! Oh, great sinner, if you are even now ready to scoff at Christ, my prayer is that He may strike you down at this very moment and turn you into one of His children—and make you to be just as ardent for the truth as you are now earnest against it, as desperately set on good as now you are on evil! None make such mighty Christians and such fervent preachers as those who are lifted up from the lowest depths of sin and washed and purified through the blood of Jesus Christ! May grace do this with you, my dear friend, whoever you may be.

Thus we gather from our text that the Lord showed mercy to Paul. That in him, first, it might be seen that prominence in sin is no barrier to eminence in grace, but the very reverse! Now I come to where the stress of the text lies.

III. PAUL'S CASE WAS A PATTERN OF OTHER CONVERSIONS AS AN INSTANCE OF LONG-SUFFERING.

“That in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.” Thoughtfully observe the great long-suffering of God to Paul. He says, “He showed forth all long-suffering.” Not only all the long-suffering of God that ever was shown to anybody else, but all that could be supposed to exist—all long-suffering—

**“All Your mercy's height I prove,
All its depth is found in me,”**

as if he had gone to the utmost stretch of his tether in sin—and the Lord had strained His long-suffering to its utmost!

That long-suffering was seen, first, *in sparing his life* when he was rushing headlong in sin, breathing out threats, foaming at the mouth with denunciations of the Nazarene and His people. If the Lord had but lifted His finger, Saul would have been crushed like a moth! But almighty wrath forbore and the rebel lived on. Nor was this all—after all his sin, the Lord allowed mercy to be possible to him. He blasphemed and persecuted at a red-hot rate—and is it not a marvel that the Lord did not say, “Now, at last, you have gone beyond all bearing, and you shall die like Herod, eaten of worms”? It would not have been at all amazing if God had so sentenced him. But He allowed him to live within the reach of mercy, and better still, He in due time actually sent the gospel to him and laid it home to his heart. In the very midst of his rebellion the Lord saved him! He had not prayed to be converted, far from it! No doubt he

had that very day along the road to Damascus profaned the Savior's name and yet mighty mercy burst in and saved him purely by its own spontaneous native energy! Oh mighty grace, free grace, victorious grace! This was long-suffering indeed!

When divine mercy had called Paul, *it swept all his sin away*, every particle of it—his blood shedding and his blasphemy, all at once, so that never man was more assured of his own perfect cleansing than was the apostle! “There is therefore now,” he says, “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” You know how clear he was about that—and he spoke out of his own experience! Long-suffering had washed all his sins away. Then that long-suffering, reaching from the depths of sin, lifted him right up to the apostleship, so that he began to prove God's long-suffering in its heights of favor. What a privilege it must have been to him to be permitted to preach the gospel! I should think sometimes when he was preaching most earnestly, he would half stop himself and say, “Paul, is this you?” Especially when he went down to Tarsus, he must have been surprised at himself and at the mighty mercy of God. He preached the faith which once he had destroyed! He must have said many a time after a sermon, when he went home to his bedchamber, “Marvel of marvels! Wonder of wonders, that I who once could curse have now been made to preach—that I, who was full of threats and even breathed out slaughter, should now be so inspired by the Spirit of God that I weep at the very sound of Jesus' name and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord!”

Oh, brothers and sisters, you do not measure long-suffering unless you take it in all its length from one end to the other and see God in mercy not remembering His servant's sin, but lifting him into eminent service in His church. Now, this was for a pattern, to show you that He will show forth the same long-suffering to those who believe! If you have been a swearer, He will cleanse your blackened mouth and put His praises into it! Have you had a black, cruel heart, full of enmity to Jesus? He will remove it and give you a new heart and a right spirit! Have you dived into all sorts of sins? Are they so shameful that you dare not think of them? Think of the precious blood which removes every stain! Are your sins so many that you cannot count them? Do you feel as if you were almost damned already in the very memory of your life? I do not wonder at it, but He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! You have not gone farther than Saul had gone, and therefore, all long-suffering can come to you and there are great possibilities of future holiness and usefulness before you! Even though you may have been a street-walker or a thief, yet if the grace of God cleanses you, it can make something wonderful out of you! Full many a lustrous jewel of Immanuel's crown has been taken from the dunghill! You are a rough

block of stone, but Jesus can fashion and polish you and set you as a pillar in His temple!

Brother, do not despair! See what Saul was and what Paul became—and learn what you may be! Though you deserve the depths of hell, yet grace can lift you up to the heights of heaven! Though now you feel as if the fiends of hell would be fit companions for such a lost spirit as yourself, yet believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall one day walk among the angels as pure and white as they! Paul's experience of long-suffering grace was meant to be a pattern of what God will do for you—

***“Scripture says, ‘Where sin abounded,
There did grace much more abound.’
Thus has Satan been confounded,
And his own discomfit found.
Christ has triumphed!
Spread the glorious news around!
Sin is strong, but grace is stronger!
Christ than Satan more supreme!
Yield, oh, yield to sin no longer,
Turn to Jesus, yield to Him—
He has triumphed!
Sinners, henceforth Him esteem.”***

Again—

V. THE MODE OF PAUL'S CONVERSION WAS ALSO MEANT TO BE A PATTERN. And with this I shall finish. I do not say that we may expect to receive the miraculous revelation which was given to Paul, but yet it is a sketch upon which any conversion can be painted. The filling up is not the same in any two cases, but the outline sketch. Paul's conversion would serve for an outline sketch of the conversion of any one of us. How was that conversion worked? Well, it is clear that there was nothing at all in Paul to contribute to his salvation. You might have sifted him in a sieve without finding anything upon which you could rest a hope that he would be converted to the faith of Jesus! His natural bent, his early training, his whole surroundings and his life's pursuits all lettered him to Judaism and made it most unlikely that he would ever become a Christian. The first elder of the church that ever talked to him about divine things could hardly believe in his conversion. “Lord,” he said, “I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem.” He could hardly think it possible that the ravaging wolf could have changed into a lamb! Nothing favorable to faith in Jesus could have been found in Saul—the soil of his heart was very rocky, the plow could not touch it and the good seed found no root-hold. Yet the Lord converted Saul and He can do the same by other sinner, but it must be a work of pure grace and of divine power, for there is not in any man's fallen nature a holy spot the size of a pin's point on which grace can light! Transforming grace can find no natural lodging in our hearts—it must create its own soil, and blessed be God, it can do it, for with God all things are possible! Nature contributes nothing to grace and yet grace

wins the day! Humbled soul let this cheer you! Though there is nothing good in you, yet grace can work wonders and save you by its own might!

Paul's conversion was an instance of divine power and of that alone, and so is every true conversion. If your conversion is an instance of the preacher's power, you need to be converted again! If your salvation is the result of your own power, it is a miserable deception from which may you be delivered! Every man who is saved must be operated upon by the might of God the Holy Spirit—every jot and tittle of true regeneration is the Spirit's work! As for our strength, it wars against salvation rather than for it. Blessed is that promise, "Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power." Conversion is as much a work of God's omnipotence as the resurrection—and as the dead do not raise themselves, so neither do men convert themselves!

But Saul was changed immediately. His conversion was once done and done at once. There was a little interval before he found peace, but even during those three days, he was a changed man, though he was in sadness. He was under the power of Satan at one moment and in the next he was under the reign of grace! This is also true in every conversion; however gradual the breaking of the day, there is a time when the sun is below the horizon, and a moment when it is no longer so. You may not know the exact time in which you passed from death to life, but there was such a time, if you are, indeed, a believer! A man may not know how old he is, but there was a moment in which he was born. In every conversion there is a distinct change from darkness to light, from death to life, just as certainly as there was in Paul's. And what a delightful hope does the rapidity of regeneration present to us! It is by no long and laborious process that we escape from sin! We are not compelled to remain in sin for a single moment. Grace brings instantaneous liberty to those who sit in bondage. He who trusts Jesus is saved on the spot! Why, then, abide in death? Why not lift up your eyes to immediate life and light?

Paul proved his regeneration by his faith. He believed unto eternal life. He tells us over and over again in his Epistles that he was saved by faith, and not by works. So is it with every man! If saved at all, it is by simply believing in the Lord Jesus. Paul esteemed his own works to be less than nothing and called them dross and dung, that he might win Christ and so every converted man renounces his own works that he may be saved by grace alone. Whether he has been moral or immoral; whether he has lived an amiable and excellent life, or whether he has raked in the kennels of sin, every regenerate man has only one hope—and that is centered and fixed in Jesus alone! Faith in Jesus Christ is the mark of salvation, even as the heaving of the lungs or the coming of breath from the nostrils is the test of life. Faith is the grace which saves the soul and its absence is a fatal sign. How does this fact affect you, dear friend? Have you faith or no?

Paul was very positively and evidently saved. You did not need to ask the question, “Is that man a Christian or not?” for the transformation was most apparent! If Saul of Tarsus had appeared as he used to be, and Paul the apostle could also have come in, and you could have seen the one man as two men, you would have thought them no relation to one another. Paul the apostle would have said that he was dead to Saul of Tarsus, and Saul of Tarsus would have gnashed his teeth at Paul the apostle! The change was evident to all who knew him, whether they sympathizes in it or not. They could not mistake the remarkable difference which grace had made, for it was as great as when midnight brightens into noon. So it is when a man is truly saved—there is a change which those around him must perceive. Do not tell me that you can be a child at home and become a Christian, and yet your father and mother will not perceive a difference in you! They will be sure to see it. Would a leopard in a menagerie lose his spots and no one notice it? Would an Ethiopian be turned white and no one hear of it? You, masters and mistresses, will not go in and out among your servants and children without their perceiving a change in you if you are born-again! At least, dear brother or sister, strive with all your might to let the change be very apparent in your language, in your actions and in your whole conduct. Let your conversation be such as becomes the gospel of Christ that men may see that you, as well as the apostle, are decidedly changed by the renewal of your minds!

May all of us be the subjects of divine grace as Paul was—stopped in our mad career, blinded by the glory of the heavenly light of God, called by a mysterious voice, conscious of natural blindness, relieved of blinding scales and made to see Jesus as one all in all. May we prove in our own persons how speedily conviction may melt into conversion, conversion into confession and confession into consecration!

I have done when I have inquired how far we are conformed to the pattern which God has set before us. I know we are like Paul as to our sin, for if we have neither blasphemed nor persecuted, yet have we sinned as far as we have had opportunity. We are also conformed to Paul’s pattern in the great long-suffering of God which we have experienced. And I am not sure that we cannot carry the parallel farther—we have had much the same revelation that Paul received on the way to Damascus, for we, too, have learned that Jesus is the Christ! If any of us sin against Christ, it will not be because we do not know Him to be the Son of God, for we all believe in His deity because our Bibles tell us so. The pattern goes so far—I would that the grace of God would operate upon you, unconverted friend, and complete the picture by giving you like faith with Paul. Then will you be saved as Paul was! Then, also, will you love Christ above all things, as Paul did, and you will say, “But what things were gains to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellence of the

knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.” He rested upon what Christ had done in His death and resurrection, and he found pardon and eternal life at once and became, therefore, a devoted Christian!

What do you say, dear friend? Are you moved to follow Paul’s example? Does the Spirit of God prompt you to trust Paul’s Savior and give up every other ground of trust and rely upon Him? Then do so and live! Does there seem to be a hand holding you back and do you hear an evil whisper saying, “You are too great a sinner”? Turn round and bid the fiend depart, for the text gives him the lie. “In me, *first*, has Jesus Christ showed forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on His name.” God has saved Paul. Back, then, O devil! The Lord can save any man, woman or child and He can save me! Jesus Christ of Nazareth is mighty to save and I will rely on Him. If any poor heart shall reason thus, its logic will be sound and unanswerable. Mercy to one is an argument for mercy to another, for there is no difference, but the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him!

Now I have set the case before you and I cannot do more. It remains with each individual to accept or refuse. One man can bring a horse to the trough, but a hundred cannot make him drink. There is the gospel—if you want it, take it—but if you will not have it, then I must discharge my soul by reminding you that even the gentle gospel—the gospel of love and mercy has nothing to say to you but this, “He that believes not shall be damned.”—

***“How they deserve the deepest hell,
That slight the joys above!
What chains of vengeance must they feel
Who break the bonds of love!”***

God grant that you may yield to almighty love and find peace in Christ Jesus!

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“Your judgments are a great deep.”
Psalm 36:6.

CONSIDER the word, “judgment,” in whatever light you please, this sentence is true. There is much of mystery connected with the terrible calamities which afflict the earth, devastate nations, destroy cities and sweep away the relics of the past. There is much of mystery about the judgments of God upon the wicked in this life—how they prosper for a while and are suddenly cut down—how they grow fat like oxen and then are taken away to the shambles. The judgments of God regarding the wicked in the world to come are also “a great deep,” not to be spoken of with levity. A solemn subject is that of the future punishment of the ungodly—“a great deep,” a deep where some, I am afraid, speculate so deeply that the risk they run is imminent—they may drown themselves in hell.

But I prefer tonight to take the text as it may refer to *God’s dealings with His own people*. He deals with them in judgment, not, I think, as a penal offense, vindicating the inflexible justice of the law by the terrible vengeance He inflicts on the transgressor as He will deal with the wicked at the last dread assize. I mean not that. I rather interpret it of the salutary discipline and painful chastisements of God’s hand which are called “judgments” in Scripture. They do not come by chance, nor upon us at all merely as a matter of sovereignty, but they are sent in wisdom, because God judges them to be necessary. They are weighed out to us with discretion—given to us by prudence. It is a sweet name, I think, for affliction—not that I look upon affliction as a judgment upon me for sin, which I cannot do, now that I have seen sin punished in Christ, but I look at my afflictions as being sent to me according to the all-wise judgment of a kind Father, not at all without consideration, but always according to His infinite wisdom and prudence, dealt out in measure and at proper times, according to the infinite judgment and wisdom of God. In a word, they are called, “judgments,” not because they are judicial, but because they are judicious!

Now, these dealings of God with His servants, always wise and prudent, are frequently like great deeps. This evening I shall simply work out three or four thoughts which arise out of that metaphor.

I. THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE ARE OFTEN UNFATHOMABLE.

We cannot discover the foundation or cause and spring of them. Some of God’s servants who are earnestly desirous to provide things honest in

the sight of all men, though they are industrious and energetic and use proper prudence, do not find themselves able to prosper in trade. They are thwarted in all their purposes. There seems to be a kind of fatality connected with all their enterprises. If they do but touch a business or a bargain which will turn into gold with the traffic of others, it melts under their hand into dross. Now, it is not always that this can be explained. "Your judgments are a great deep"—a matter to be perceived as a fact, but not to be explained by reasoning.

Sometimes in a family a dear child is born and is a great comfort to its parents. It seems, indeed, to be sent in love, to heal some old wound and to make the house happy! And then just as suddenly as it came, it is removed. Why? Ah, here, again, is another deep which a mother's anxious heart would like to fathom, but which it is not for her to explore. It is a great deep.

Children will be spared to us and just when they are ripening to manhood and womanhood, and we hope to see them settled and established in life, it happens—as it happened to one of our beloved friends in this church this afternoon—that we have to stand at the open grave, and say, "Earth to earth, dust to dust." Why God takes away the holy and the good, the amiable and the lovely when they appeared to be most useful, we cannot understand. It is a great deep.

Oftentimes, too, it happens that when a man is surrounded by his family and all his household are dependent upon his exertions with a business just beginning to prosper, while he bids fair to live for many years, he is cut down as in a moment—his wife is left a widow—his children are orphans. He seems to be taken away at the very worst time, just when he could least be spared. The anxious wife may say to herself, "Why is this?" but she can only say in return, "I cannot comprehend it, it is a great deep."

I might thus go on recounting instances, but they have transpired before us all in our lifetime. And if they have not occurred to us yet, they certainly will. Trials and troubles will come upon us quite beyond our measuring line. We shall have to do business in deep waters where no plummet can by possibility find a bottom! "Your judgments are a great deep."

But why does the Lord send us an affliction which we cannot understand? I answer, *because He is the Lord.* Your child must not expect to understand all his father does, because his father is a man of ripened intellect and understanding, and the child is but a child. You, dear brother, however experienced you may be, are but a child, and compared with the divine mind, what intelligence have you? How can you expect, therefore, that God shall always act upon a rule which you shall be able to understand? He is God, and therefore, it becomes us oftentimes to be dumb, to sit in silence and feel and know it must be right, though we equally know we cannot see how it is so.

God sends us trials of this sort *for the exercise of our divine graces.* Now, is there *room for faith?* When you can trace it, you cannot trust it. If you can understand all that He does, there is room, then, for your

judgment rather than for your faith and for your reliance on His judgment. But when you cannot understand it, submit yourself to Him! Say, "I know that God is good. Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him; though I walk in darkness and see no light, yet shall not an unbelieving word cross these lips, for He is good and must be good, become of me what may." Oh, then it is that faith is faith, indeed—the faith that brings glory to God and strength to your soul! Here is room, too, for *humility*. Knowledge puffs up, but the feeling that everything is beyond our knowledge, that we are nonplussed and cannot understand—the sense of ignorance and incapacity to understand the dealings of God—brings humility to us and we sit down at the foot of Jehovah's throne. Beloved, I think there is hardly a grace which the Christian has which is not much helped by the deeps of God's judgments. Certainly love has frequently been developed to a high degree in this way, for the soul at last comes to say, "No, I will not ask the reason—I will not *desire* the reason—I do so love Him! Let His will stand for a reason. That shall be enough for me. It is the Lord—let Him do what seems good to Him." We love not those whom we are always bringing to book and questioning about all they do, but when love comes to perfection it admires all, it believes all to be right and to be perfect. And so, when love comes to perfection with reference to the most perfect God, then it is that everything that is done is endorsed without examination—everything, even though it is shrouded in darkness—is believed in without a question. It must be right, for You, Lord, have done it!

Many other reasons why God calls His people thus to feel His judgments occur to me. One I may give, then I will leave this point. *We have sins which we cannot fathom*, dear brothers and sisters, and it is little marvel, therefore, if we have also chastisements which we cannot fathom! There are depths of depravity within our heart that call for other deeps, as deep calls unto deep, and there are consequences of sin within us which we are not able yet to reach, consequences that are following us in secret and damaging us in very vital point. It needs that the medicine should be of a searching kind to follow the disease into the recesses of our soul where understanding cannot pry. Some of those deep judgments are like secret, potent, subtle medicines, searching out certain secret devils that have found their way into the caverns of our spirit and hidden there. Perhaps an affliction which I can understand is meant to direct my attention to some known sin—but it may be that the trial which I cannot understand is dealing deadly blows against a mortal ill, which, if not thus destroyed, might have been solemnly prejudicial to my own spirit.

I leave that thought with you—expect that God's judgments will sometimes be unfathomable. In the next place—if God's judgments are a great deep—

II. THEN THEY ARE SAFE SAILING.

Ships never strike on rocks out in the great deeps. Children, perhaps, may fancy that a shallow sea is the safest, but an old sailor knows better. While they are off the Irish coast the captain has to keep a good

look out, but while he is crossing the Atlantic he is in far less danger. There he has plenty of room and there is no fear of quicksands or of shoals. When the sailor begins to come up the Thames, then it is that there is first one sandbank and then another, and he is in danger, but out in the deep water, where he finds no bottom, he is but little afraid. So, mark you, in the judgments of God. When he is dealing out affliction to us, it is the safest possible sailing that a Christian can have. "What?" says one, "trial safe?" Yes, very safe. The safest part of a Christian's life is the time of his trial. "What? When a man is down, do you say he is safe?" "Yes, for then he need fear no fall! When he is low, he need fear no pride. When he is humbled under God's hand then he is less likely to be carried away with every wind of temptation. Smooth water on the way to heaven is always a sign that the soul should keep wide awake, for danger is near! One comes at last to feel a solemn dread creeping over one in times of prosperity. "You shall fear and tremble because of all the good that God shall make to pass before you," fearing not so much lest the good should depart as lest we should make an ill use of it and should have a canker of sloth, or self-confidence, or worldliness growing up in our spirits! We have seen many professed Christians who have made shipwreck—in some few instances it has been attributable to overwhelming sorrow—but in ten cases to the one, it has been attributable to prosperity! Men grow rich, and of course, they do not attend the little chapel they once went to—they must go somewhere where a fashionable world will worship! Men grow rich and immediately they cannot keep to that road of self-denial which once they so gladly trod. The world has got into their hearts and they need to get more. They have got so much and they must get more! An insatiable ambition has come over them—and they fall—and great is the sorrow which their fall brings to the church! Great the mischief which it does to the people of God!

But a man in trouble—did you ever notice a real child of God in trial? How he prays! He cannot live without prayer! He has got a burden to carry to his God and he goes to the mercy-seat again and again. Notice him under depression of spirits. How he reads his Bible! He does not now care for that lighter literature which beguiled him many an hour before. He needs the solid promise, the strong meat of the kingdom of God! Do you notice now how he hears? That man does not care a fig for your flowers and your fine bits of rhetoric—he needs the Word of God! He needs the naked doctrine. He needs Christ! He cannot be fed on whims and fancies. He cares a great deal less about theological speculation and ecclesiastical authority—he needs to know something about eternal love, everlasting faithfulness and the dealings of the Lord of Hosts with the souls of His people, of the covenant and of the suretyship engagements of Christ! Ah, this is the man who, if you notice him, walks tenderly in the world. He walks holding the world with a very loose hand. He expects to be often in the way, and hopes to be up out of the way, for the world has lost its attraction for him!

I say again, God's judgments are a great deep, but they are safe sailing, and under the guidance and presence of the Holy Spirit, they are not only safe but *they are advantageous*. I greatly question whether we ever grow much in grace, except when we are in the furnace! We ought to do so. The joys of this life with which God blesses us ought to make us increase in grace and gratitude, ought to be a sufficient motive for the very highest form of consecration, but, as a rule, we are only driven to Christ by a storm—the most of us, I mean. There are blessed and favored exceptions, but most of us need the rod, must have it and do not seem to learn obedience except through chastening—the chastening of the Lord! Here I leave that second thought. Thirdly, God's judgments are a great deep—

III. BUT THEY CONCEAL GREAT TREASURE.

Down in those great depths, who knows what there may be? Pearls lie deep there—masses of precious things that would make the miser's eyes gleam like a star. There are the wrecks of old Spanish galleons lost these centuries ago, and there they lie, huge mines of wealth, but far down deep; and so with the deep judgments of God. What wisdom is concealed there, and what treasures of love and faithfulness and what David calls, "very tenderness," "for in very tenderness," he says, "have You afflicted me." There is as much wisdom to be seen in some of the deep afflictions of God—if we could but understand them, we would see as much wisdom in them as in the creation of the world! God smites His people artistically. There is never a random blow. There is a marvelous degree of skill in the chastening of the Lord. Hence we are told not to despise it, which, in the strongest meaning of it, means that we are to honor it! We honor the chastisements of our parents, but infinitely more the chastisements of God. "For they verily chastened us for a few days after their own pleasure, but He for our profit," and there is a way of chastening us for profit.

Now, brothers and sisters, I said there were treasures concealed in the great deeps which we cannot yet reach, and so in the great deeps in which God makes us to do business there are great treasures that we cannot come upon at present. We do not, perhaps, as yet, receive, or even perceive, the present and immediate benefit of some of our afflictions. There may be no immediate benefit—the benefit may be for hence and to come. The chastening of our youth may be intended for the ripening of our age. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." The affliction of today may have no reference to the circumstances of today, but to the circumstances of 50 years ahead! I do not know that that blade required the rain on such a day, but God was looking not to February as such, but to February in its relation to July, when the harvest should be reaped. He considered the blade not merely as a blade and in its present necessity, but as it would be in the full corn in the ear. There are certain marks that an artist makes upon the block that you cannot see the reason of as yet—and they spoil the apparent likeness of the block and marble to the image which you know he wishes

to produce—but then those lines are to be worked out, by-and-by! They are scratches now, but they will be lines of beauty soon, when he comes to finish them. So, a present trial may even lame us for present service, damage us—I will even go the length of saying—for years to come and make us go groaning and brokenhearted, so as to be of comparatively little service to the church and of very little joy to ourselves. But then afterwards—afterwards as Paul puts it—it bears the peaceable fruits of righteousness in those that are exercised thereby. Why will you not let the Lord have time? Why will you be in a hurry? Why will you stand at His elbow and perpetually say, “Explain this today and show me the motive and reason of this in this present hour”? A thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night! The mighty God takes mighty time in which to work out His grand results! Therefore, be content to let the treasures lie at the bottom of the deep for a while. But then faith may see them. Faith can make the deep translucent till it sees the treasure lying there—and it is yours and though you may not at this hour be able to be at it—yet you shall have it, “for all things are yours.” Everything that is stored up in the great deep of the eternal purpose, or in the deep of the manifest judgment, everything there belongs to you, O, believer! Therefore rejoice in it and let it lie there till such a time as God may choose to raise it for your spiritual enrichment. God’s judgments are a great deep—

IV. AND THEY WORK MUCH GOOD.

The great deep, though ignorance thinks it to be all waste—a salt and barren wilderness—is one of the greatest blessings to this round world! If, tomorrow, there should be “no more sea,” although that may one day be a blessing, it would not be so today, but the greatest of all curses! It is from the sea that there arises the perpetual mist which, floating by-and-by in mid-air, at last descends in plenteous showers on hill and vale to fertilize the land. The sea is the great heart of the world—I might say the circulating blood of the world! We must have it. It must be in motion. Its tides, like a great pulse, must be felt, or the world’s vitality would cease. There is no waste in the sea—it is all needed. It must be there. There is not a drop of it too much. So with our afflictions which are Your judgments, O God! They are necessary to our life, to our soul’s health, to our spiritual vigor. “By all these,” said one of old, “do men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit.” Rising up from my trouble is the constant mist which is afterwards transformed into sacred dew, which moistens my life. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted,” said David. “Amen!” say all the afflicted ones. A thousand sick beds shall bear witness to the blessedness of the trial. A thousand losses and crosses that have been borne by the faithful now help the sweetness of the harmony of everlasting hymns in the land of the blessed. “Oh, blessed cross,” said one, “I fear lest I should come to love you too much! ‘Tis so good to be afflicted!” May God grant to us that at all time, instead of trying to fathom the deep, we may understand that it is useful to us and be content. Lastly, if God’s judgments are a great deep—

V. THEN THEY BECOME A HIGHWAY OF COMMUNION WITH HIMSELF.

We thought at one time that the deep separated different peoples—that nations were kept asunder by the sea. But lo, the sea is today the great highway of the world! The rapid ships cross it with their white sails, or with their palpitating engines they soon flash across the waves. The sea is the world's great canal—a mighty channel of communication. And so, brothers and sisters, our afflictions—which we thought in our ignorance would separate us from our God—are the highway by which we may come nearer to God than we otherwise could! They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business on the great waters, these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. You that keep close in shore and have but small trials, you are not likely to know much of His wonders in the deep—but if you are made to put out far to sea, where deep calls unto deep and the noise of God's waterspouts astounds the spiritual mariner, then it is that you shall see God's wonders—wonders of faithfulness, wonders of power, wonders of wisdom, wonders of love! You shall see them and you shall rejoice to see them! These troubles shall be as fiery chariots to bear you up to God. Your afflictions, wave upon wave, shall wash your soul, like a tempest-tossed boat, nearer to the haven. Oh, but this is a blessed thing when God's judgments bring us nearer to Him! Old Quarles has a quaint idea when he represents God as swinging a flail in judgment—he says if you would get away from it, you must get close to His hands, and then you are out of the reach of the swing of the blow. Get close up to God and He will not smite! Get near to God and the trials cease!

You know, trials are sometimes weights to keep men down, but you have seen many a machine in which one weight going down lifts another weight up. And there is a way by faith of adjusting the consecrated pulleys so that the very weights of your affliction may lift you up nearer to God! The bird with a string and a stone to its feet cannot fly and yet there is a way that God has of making His birds fly even when they are tied to the ground! They never mounted till they had something to pull them down! Never ascended till they were compelled to descend! They found the gates of heaven not up there, but down here! The lower they sank in self-estimation, the nearer they came to the everlasting God who is the foundation of all things!

Thus, brothers and sisters, I have brought you to the last thought—may the Holy Spirit bring you to make it your own. May God's deep judgments lead you to deeper communion.

Dear child of God, you that are in trouble tonight, the voice of that trouble is to you—get nearer to God! Get nearer to God. God has favored you, favored you with an extraordinary means of growth in His grace. To use Rutherford's simile, He has put you down in the wine cellar in the dark. Now begin to try the wines on the lees well-refined. Now get at the choice treasures of darkness! He has brought you on to a sandy desert—now begin to seek the treasures that are hid in the sand. Believe that the

deepest afflictions are neighbors always to the highest joys and that the greatest possible privileges lie close by the darkest trials. If the bitterer your sorrow, the louder your song at the last—there is a reason for that—and that reason faith may discover and experience live upon.

May God bless the tried ones here! But there are some here, perhaps, who are in trial and have no God to go to. Poor souls! Poor souls! Poverty and no God! Sickness and no God! A life of toil, and no heaven! A slavery of penury on earth and then driven forever away from God's presence! Oh, how pitiable! How pitiable! Pity yourselves and remember that it need not always be so. You may have a heaven, you may have present bliss. Here is the gospel—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Oh, if you can but trust Him who bled upon the cross, you shall have comfort for your present trouble! You shall have pardon for your past, present and future sins! The Lord bless each one of you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 73; 37:1-10.**

TITLE, "A PSALM OF ASAPH." He was a great singer, but he could not always sing. In the first part of the Psalm he felt rather like groaning than singing—and you shall find that those who sing the praises of God the sweetest, sometimes have to hang their harps upon the willows and are silent. The strong temptation through which Asaph passed is one which is very common. You find another account of it in the 37th Psalm. It may help your memory to notice that it is the 37th and the 73rd Psalm (transpose the figures) which are both upon the same subject—the temptation caused to the people of God by the prosperity of the wicked.

Verse 1. *Truly, God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.* It must be so. Whatever argument my soul may hold about it, I will set that down, to begin with as a certainty—"Truly, God is good to Israel." He cannot be unkind or unfaithful to His own people! It cannot be possible, after all—however things may look—that God is a bad God and a bad Master to His own servants!

2. *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped.* Am I, then, one of His people or not? I know He is good to them, but how about myself? Perhaps some here will never question themselves in that way, and if they were led to do so, they would think it was of the devil. I do not think so. I think it is rather of the devil to keep us from questioning ourselves. I remember what Cowper said—

***"He that has never doubted of his state,
He may—perhaps he may—too late."***

Let us delight in full assurance, but let us keep very clear of presumption and that assurance which cannot bear self-examination is presumption, depend upon it! When a man declines to search himself and test himself, there is something doubtful, if not rotten in his estate—and it is time he began to say, "As for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had well near slipped." This is how it came about—

3. *For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.* I know that wicked men are fools. Asaph and David had often said that before. Yet says he, “I was a greater fool, still, that I was envious of these fools—when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

4, 5. *For there are no pangs in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.* Many of them keep up a hypocritical profession through a long life and die in a stupefaction—so that conscience never awakens and they pass out of the world loaded with guilt—and yet talk about being accepted before God! How can this be? Where is the justice of it?

6. *Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain.* As kings wear chains of gold, so is their pride to them.

6. *Violence covers them as a garment.* They are not ashamed of it. They get to be so bold in sin that they wear it as an outside cloak!

7. *Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.* Superfluities! They never have to ask where a meal will come from. They have more than they need.

8. *They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens.* Such big mouths—such blasphemous words—have they, that they attack God Himself! There is nothing too high for them to drag it down—nothing too pure for them to slander. “They set their mouth against the heavens.”

9. *And their tongue walks through the earth.* Like the lion seeking its prey, they take long walks in their slander. Nobody is safe from them.

10, 11. *Therefore his people return here: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?* God’s sorrowing children have to drink of the bitter cup while these proud ones are eating of the fat of the land!

12-14. *Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all the daylong have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.* When Asaph got into this unbelieving state of mind, it looked as if all his care of his character and all his desire to serve God were wasted, for the wicked prospered, while he was chastened! It is a strong description which he gives of his state. “All the daylong have I been plagued.” Not by the half-hour, but by the whole day—plagued and weeping as soon as he was out of bed—chastened every morning! He almost seemed to be sorry that he was a child of God, to be so roughly handled. He almost, but not quite, wished that he could take the portion of the wicked, that he might enjoy himself as they did and might prosper in the world as they did.

15. *If I had said, I will speak thus, behold, I would have offended against the generation of Your children.* That was very wise of Asaph. He thought, but he did not speak. Some persons say, “You may as well out with it.” You may as well keep it in! No, a great deal better—if you have it in your own heart, it will grieve yourself—but if you speak it out, you will grieve others. If you wear sackcloth, brothers and sisters, wear it round

your own loins, but do not wear it as your outside garment. There is enough sackcloth in the world without your flaunting it before everybody else's face! If you must fast, remember your Master's words, "You, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast." He gave us that precept in order to avoid Pharisaic ostentation, but we may also follow it from another motive, namely, that we may not spread sorrow in the world. There is enough of depression of spirit, enough of despondency, enough of heartbreak without our saying a word to increase it among the sons of men—

***"Bear and forbear, and silent be—
Tell no man your misery,"***

lest you bring another into it, unless, indeed, you meet with a strong man who can help you. Then you may tell your sorrow to get relief. But tell it not to the children.

16. *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.* "Too painful" to keep it. "Too painful" to speak it out and grieve other people.

17. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood their end.* Asaph went to his God. He got to Christ, whom he foresaw, for the person of Jesus Christ is the sanctuary of God! Some people call these buildings sanctuaries. They have no authority for so doing. "God dwells not in temples made with hands." He may have done so under the Old Covenant, but not now. Christ is the sanctuary of God and when we get to Him and come into fellowship with God in Him, then we begin to learn something! "Then understood I their end."

18. *Surely You did set them in slippery places.* There they are—on a mountain of ice, bright and glittering! Up aloft, where others see, admire and wonder at them. But oh, how dangerous their pathway!

18. *You cast them down into destruction.* They are not left to slip, but a hand overthrows them—flings them down from the heights of their prosperity to the depths of unutterable woe!

19, 20. *How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes, so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.* As if God slept today and let these images of prosperity exist as in a dream, but by-and-by He wakes. His time of judgment comes and where are these prosperous men? They have gone. The "baseless fabric of a vision" has melted into thin air and "left not a wreck behind." It is not. It is gone!

21. *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.* I felt a heart-pain. I felt my whole nature go amiss, as if there had been calculi causing the deepest possible misery in my reins.

22. *So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You.* I saw no farther than a goose! Like a beast that cannot look into the future, I judged these men by today—by the pastures in which they fed and the fatness which they gathered there. "I was as a beast before You." Now notice the splendid connection of these two verses. I will read them again—the 22nd and the 23rd. "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before You."

23. *Nevertheless I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand.* What a strange mixture a man is! And a godly man is the strangest conglomerate of all! He is a beast and yet continually with God. View him from one side—he is ignorant. View him from the other and he has an unction from the Holy One and he knows all things! View him from one point of the compass and he is naked, and poor, and miserable! View him from another quarter and behold he is complete in Christ and “accepted in the Beloved!” They know not man who do not know that every true man is two men!

24. *You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.* I, the fool that envied fools, yet, “You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.”

25. *Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.* Now he has got out of the temptation! He is not going to seek for prosperity that he may rival the wicked in their wealth. No! He sees that in having God, he has all he needs. Even though he should continually be plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning, his portion in God is quite enough for him. He will not murmur anymore!

26. *My flesh and my heart fail.* I see what a poor thing I am. I allowed my flesh and my heart to get the mastery over me and I got caught in this trap.

26, 27. *But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For, lo, they that are far from You shall perish: You have destroyed all them that go a whoring from You.* A strong word, but none too forcible, for every heart that seeks delight away from God is an unchaste heart. It has got away from true purity even for a moment in pouring out its love upon the creature.

28. *But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works.*

PSALM 37. Verse 1. *Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity.* A common temptation. Many of God’s saints have suffered from it. Learn from their experience. Avoid this danger. There really is no power in it when once the heart has come to rest in God. But it is a sad affliction until the heart does get its rest. “Fret not because of evildoers.”

2-4. *For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the LORD.* Make Him your delight, and take care that you do really delight. Feel a fullness of joy in Him.

4. *And He shall give you the desires of your heart.* Because when the heart delights in God, then its desires are all such as God can safely grant. He does not say to every man, or even to every praying man, “I will give you the desires of your heart,” but, “Delight yourself in the Lord,” and then He will.

5. *Commit your way unto the LORD.* Give it up to Him to rule it, and to guide you and lead you in every step. “Commit your way unto the Lord.”

5, 6. *Trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday.* It is better to trust our character with God than with the ablest counselor. Scandal may pass over a fair name for a while and cloud it, but God is the avenger of all the righteous! There will be a resurrection of reputations, as well as of persons at the last great day. Only we must commit it to God.

7, 8. *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil.* A fretful spirit soon comes to be an angry spirit—and when we begin to be jealous of evildoers; we are very apt to become evildoers ourselves! Many an honest man has snatched at hasty gain because he was envious of the prosperity of the unrighteous. And then he has pierced himself through with many sorrows in consequence. But “fret not yourself in any wise to do evil.” There is an old proverb that it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright. Therefore, when you are in temporal trouble, ask the Lord to fill you with His grace, for then you will stand upright, and by-and-by, you shall be delivered.

9. *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.* If there is anything good to be had here, men that wait upon God shall have it! If there is any grain of wheat amidst these heaps of chaff, believers that trust the Lord shall find them!

10. *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be.* How transient are their joys! Their wealth which they accumulate, the beauty which they think is upon their estate—all this is but as the painted colors of the bubble, which is scarcely seen before it vanishes. Will you envy this? Will you envy a little child his playthings, which will be broken in an hour? Will you envy a madman the straw crown which he plaits and puts upon his head when he thinks himself a king? Oh, be not so foolish! Your inheritance is eternal and you are immortal! Why should you envy the creature of an hour? “For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be.”

10. *Yes, you shall diligently consider his place.* His mansion, his house, the grand figure that he cuts in society.

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MAN HUMBLLED, GOD EXALTED

NO. 3369

A SERMON

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“And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.”
Isaiah 2:17.

THIS is the case when God visits a nation with *terrible judgments*. When the Jews were led away captive into Babylon, the great men of the land were bound in chains and treated as common slaves. And as they marched across the weary wilderness, the iron entered into their souls. Then was the loftiness of their spirit bowed down and the haughtiness of the king and the princes, who laughed at the prophet, was laid low.

So also when God is pleased to send *famine* upon a land, then again man has to humble himself. It is not easy to say, “I am my own. Who is Lord over me?” When the barn is empty and when the wine vats no longer burst with new wine. Famine is a wondrous leveler—and when the king of Samaria went through his straitened cities—where women had eaten their own children in the straitness of the siege, I think there was none brought so low as the king—none so humbled as the highest and none so base as the haughtiest!

It is so, too, when *pestilence* comes. With equal foot, it kicks at the door both of the palace and of the cottage. Then the prince must mourn because his first-born dies—and majesty must sit in weeds when desolation is in the palace.

God has wondrous ways of making men feel that they are but dust, but when nothing else can serve His turn He will sweep whole dynasties away, as men remove an anthill when it has become a nuisance. Yes, He will shake mighty nations, and make “eternal cities,” as they were called, only to stand as the memorials and the wrecks of greatness! The Lord, in all the works of providence hitherto, if you analyze the pages of history, you will find has been constantly bringing down high looks and making the haughtiness of man to be humbled. Indeed, this seems to be God’s great work! And if any man should say to me, “What is God doing?” I would answer, “He is lifting up the lowly and he is casting down the proud! He seems always to be engaged in this, as though it were His natural work and He delighted in it—the taking down of those nests that

were built among the stars—and the stooping in the almightiness of His love to pick up the beggar from the mire and set him among the princes, even among the princes of His people.”

What is thus constantly being done in His providence will be continued to be done until the haughtiness of man shall be completely driven away—until in this world there shall be no place for any majesty, but the majesty of the King of kings—until beneath the cape of heaven there shall be but one name before which men shall bow, one throne which alone shall be august in men’s minds and only one name by which all the families of the earth shall be named! “In that day,” when all the earth shall be filled with His glory, as the waters cover the sea, it shall be said, “He has thrown down the high looks of man and the Lord, alone, is exalted!”

But I want to come to something more distinctly personal to ourselves. This text is certainly true, though in so applying it we may seem to be wresting it from its original setting and connection, it is certainly true in *the economy of grace*. Man in all matters of religion and in all his dealings with God, is proud, but it is amazing how apparently humble men will be when they worship false gods. They will cut themselves with knives and roll themselves in the mire. We have known some votaries to kneel before the representation of the Virgin Mary and lick the very pavement with their tongues by way of penance—and perform the most degrading rites in honor of their false gods. Man seems to be humble enough in his dealings with a false deity, but as soon as ever he comes to deal with the true God, the first things that have to be got out of him are his pride, his high looks, his haughtiness~ Oh, strange is it that before the Majesty of heaven a worm of the dust should think himself great, and that in the blaze of the infinite purity of the thrice-holy God a mass of corruption like man should fancy himself to be good! But so it is! One of the greatest works of grace in the heart is to humble our pride.

Going now into this subject with as much brevity as possible, we shall observe, in the first place, that—

I. THE PLAN OF SALVATION, ITSELF, AIMS AT THE BOWING DOWN OF THE LOFTINESS OF MAN AND AT THE EXALTATION OF GOD.

This is very apparent to us at once when we remember that *there is no plan of salvation at all for man except as a sinner*. The plan of salvation necessarily considers man as needing salvation and as being lost. Its very first promise is forgiveness, which implies sin. It begins to talk with man of pardon and justification, which implies guilt and a lack of righteousness. If there is anybody here that is not a sinner, there is nothing in the Bible for him! As old Wilcox well observes, “Christ can save everybody except the self-righteous.” He came into the world to save sinners, but not the righteous. He is the physician for any form of

disease, except that form of disease which consists in not being diseased. "The whole," says He, "have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." If you are a sinner, there is some relation between you and Christ. But if you proudly say in your heart, "I am better than other men. I am not as the thief, or the harlot. I need not wash in the fountain which they need so much, for I am clean." I tell you, man or woman, there is no Christ for you, no pardon for you, no justification for you, no heaven for you! Your self-righteousness, like an iron bar across the gates of paradise, shuts you out forever! Your good works can do for you what your sins need not do—they may ruin your soul forever by making you too proud to come to Christ. The plan of salvation appeals to men as sinners! It comes to them on no other terms but as sinners—and thus it is evidently meant to bring down man's high looks.

Moreover, it not only treats men as sinners, but *as dead sinners*. There is not a complimentary word to human nature within the covers of the Bible. It says, "You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins"—and this was said of New Testament saints who had warm praise from the apostle Paul! They had been originally dead. If you want an image of human nature, you will find it in the rottenness of Lazarus when he had been dead four days! The gospel comes to give life to the dead! It comes to deal out everlasting life to those who have lost it and could never have obtained it except as a gift from heaven. Now, is not this humbling to the high looks of men? What? Must it be so—that I must see, "Death," written upon all my hopes, upon all my doings, upon all my willings? Must all these be written down as being dead things? It must be so. And if you do not know this, you do not know vital godliness as yet, for the grace of God deals with you in your natural estate as being lost and utterly ruined and undone!

Another humbling point in the plan of salvation is that *it distinctly informs the sinner that the way of salvation is in no sense or manner in himself, but is altogether in another*. It tells him that if he is saved, his salvation is entirely the work of Him who, though He was God, yet condescended to become man that He might lift manhood up into companionship with Godhead! It says the sinner, when he prostrates himself upon his knees, "Your prayers are well enough, but they avail not with the eternal Father to put away sin. Blood! Blood! Blood must flow, not tears alone!" It tells the sinner that all his merits and his good works cannot obtain salvation for him. It bids him look to Christ and mark the crimson currents as they spring from those matchless wounds, that mouth of mercy, those gates of paradise, those fountains of immortality, those sources of all our richest treasure and abiding peace! It tells the sinner that the head that once was crowned with thorns must be

crowned with the glory of His salvation, if he is saved at all, and that the man who was despised and spat upon when here below must be honored and adored above by him as his Savior, and his only Savior, or there is no salvation for him! This, too, has a tendency to bring down the high looks and to lower the haughtiness of man.

Perhaps, however, there is nothing in the gospel which grates more upon some men's pride, touching, as it were, the very marrow of their bones, than the doctrine, not only that man is a sinner, and a dead sinner, and is saved by the work of another, but that *the very will to be saved is determined not so much by himself as by God*. I do not know a text that makes a sinner grind his teeth more than this one—"So then, it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." You remember that amazing expression of the Savior's, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." "You have a will. You are responsible. You are free agents, but that will of yours, you have so wickedly set against Me that you will not come unto Me that you may live! You refuse Me—you will not accept My grace—you will sooner starve than come to the feast of mercy." Many a man has turned on his heel and said, "I will not hear this any longer," and then we are reminded of those who left the Master because of certain truths of God which He taught, and we say, "Will you also go away?" Oh, you who have had your haughtiness brought down, I believe you will be swept out of that idea and will acknowledge that you never came to Christ of your own free will, but only of sovereign grace. You do not deny it, for you are always conscious of it, that unless your will had been moved by sovereign grace, and constrained by the blessed interposition of the divine Spirit, you were as obstinate as the heifer unaccustomed to the yoke, kicked against the pricks and would not come to Christ that you might have life! Now, this part of the plan of salvation tends to bring down high looks.

There is another point which I must notice and which is not always understood, but it is a mighty bringer-down of high looks, viz., the understanding of this—that our *depraved nature is not in the plan of salvation supposed to be either improved or improvable*. Are you startled at such an assertion? Well, if you have read the Word of God, you will have found plenty of warrant for it. All that God Himself can do for your depraved nature as it now stands is to kill it and let it be buried when dead! The ordinance of baptism is intended to set forth this very truth of God—that you must be dead and buried to the old life, and the new and true life that you are henceforth to live does not spring out of the ashes of the old, like the phoenix out of the ashes of the departed one, but is an emanation of the Holy Spirit! "Created anew in Christ Jesus." It is not that the carnal man is ever reconciled to God, for it is plainly declared that it is "enmity against God," and cannot be reconciled! The carnal

mind cannot even understand spiritual truth! The carnal mind knows not the things which are of God, for they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. The process by which a man is practically saved is this—a new nature is put into us! That new and incorruptible nature immediately begins to contend with the old Adam, “the body,” as Paul calls it, “of sin and death.” This causes a conflict, a conflict which is constantly maintained, and which at certain times is extremely intense and makes the subject of it to cry out, “Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Or, “From this body of death, this death which has taken such a tangible form as to be to me a realizing tangible thing—a very body of death—who will get me rid of it?” He does not ask that it may be improved, but that he may be delivered from it! He does not ask that it may be changed, but that a new nature may come in and trample it down and rise superior to it!

Oh, brothers and sisters, how humbling this is! To think that all Christ found in me when He met with me was so utterly good-for-nothing that all He could do with it was to bury it—and all the life that I had when Christ met with me was in His sight such death that He had to quicken me with an entirely new life—and to make the old life die daily! Happy, happy day when it is completely dead and gone and the new life, delivered from the bondage of corruption, shall rise into glory! Now, this is a humbling doctrine. I am, however, persuaded that it is both a doctrine declared in God’s Word and a doctrine verified by human experience, so far as that experience is Christian experience. All this is intended by our gracious God to bring down the high looks of man and to humble the haughty and the proud.

But now, in the next place, while the plan of salvation aims at this—

II. THE FIRST WORK OF SALVATION ALSO SECURES IT TO A VERY LARGE EXTENT.

When the grace of God comes into a man, it comes with an axe in its hand. It does not come at first to build up, but to pull down. I think we should beware of being too suddenly filled with strong confidence and assurance. I do not say beware of too suddenly believing in Christ! That is a blessed thing and is a sinner’s present business. When the Holy Spirit gives faith—joy and peace come immediately. But I believe that, as a general rule, God strips before He clothes, and when He means to build a house for His own indwelling, He does what every wise architect does—He first digs out the deep foundations. An early work of grace in the soul is *conviction of sin*. We who speak to hundreds and thousands of souls—for we speak without exaggeration when we say we have seen thousands of souls under conviction of sin—we observe this, that conviction of sin is a wondrous puller-down. When a man begins to feel his sin lying heavy

upon his heart, when his iniquity is continually before him, as David puts it in the 51st Psalm, then his high looks are gone. Have you ever seen a rich man in the anguish of conviction? You would not know him from a beggar then! His purse-pride has gone! All his wealth gives him but little comfort. “My sin! My sin! My sin!” he says. “Would to God I were as poor as the paupers in the workhouse, if I were but rid of my sin! What is my wealth while I have my sin?”

Have you ever seen the man of knowledge, the man who knows everything, the sharp, quick, critical man, who takes everybody up and thinks he can set all the world right—have you ever seen him under a sense of sin? He feels himself to be a fool at once, and would sit down on a bench with the infant class in a school if there he might learn of a Savior, being content to give up all his wisdom and to be a babe in Christ! And have you ever observed the man who was naturally of a high and haughty disposition, who reared up among his fellows—have you ever seen how he acts when God’s hand is on him? Why, he would hide himself anywhere—and he envies even the meanest and most obscure of the children of God! Once get a sight of sin, and those things which now prop us up will all give way and we shall be beggars in the face of all the world when once we see how exceedingly sinful a thing our sin is! Some of us have passed through this season of deep penitential humbling before the Lord and we can bear our witness that when the Lord casts us down, there is nothing that can lift us up but the hand of the Lord Himself! For when we did try to rise, our wings melted like the wax wings of Icarus and we fell to the ground broken in pieces.

But if conviction humbles, let me say that *conversion humbles* a great deal more! It is thought, perhaps, by you that as soon as you find pardon you will not be so humble as you were. Distrust the pardon that does not humble you! Be persuaded that the forgiveness which does not make you lie low in the dust is no forgiveness at all, but a mere fancy of your infatuated heart! When the Lord pardons a sinner, that sinner feels that he could sink and go out of sight. As soon as Peter’s boat began to fill, it began to sink—and as soon as our boat gets full of mercy it begins to sink! Peter, too, said, “Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man.” And so we feel as if the abundance of God’s mercy taught us more than ever a sense of sin. I do not think that a sense of sin is such a heart-breaking thing as a sense of mercy, for sometimes a sense of sin is attended with a despair which steels the soul and makes the mind hardened against God. A criminal may know himself to be guilty, very guilty, but yet if he feels sure that there is no mercy for him, he is like a hunted stag at bay which turns upon its oppressors and fights for dear life. But when a man is conscious of guilt, and then receives a free pardon from his offended God, then he knows not what to do! He is

broken in heart, first with his unworthiness, and next with the mercy of God! God compares His word in one place to a hammer, and in another place to a fire. Now, why are the two put together? Why, because there are some rocks, which, after a line of fire has been made across them, will crack readily in a fissure as soon as the hammer is used! Now, the hammer of conviction, when it comes upon the cold heart, frozen with despair, may break that heart, but oh, when the fire of God's love comes and the hammer, too, then surely the rock gives way and our stubborn will flies into pieces before the Lord, broken by His fire—

***“Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found.”***

Some say they do not believe this point. If there is anyone of you who has passed through conviction of sin without soul-humbling, I pray God to show you that such a conviction of sin as you have had is not the work of His Spirit! If you have not been led to see this, then, whatever you may have seen of the corruption of your own heart, you have not seen yourself aright. And, on the other hand, if, in coming to Christ, you have been able to keep anything with which to feed your pride, anything in which you can glory, anything of which you can say, “This is mine. This is not Christ's. This came from my own good nature and excellent disposition and not from the Most High”—then you have need to go to Christ again, for you have never yet been to Him aright! All that our unregenerate nature spins must be unraveled. All the pottery that unregenerate nature burns in her kiln shall be broken as with a rod of iron! But that which comes from Christ is grounded, bottomed, and stayed upon the rock of eternal mercy! That shall stand, and only that! Oh, this is indeed the way in which God, in the hearts of His people, brings down the loftiness of man, lays low his haughtiness and makes the Lord, alone, to be exalted! Thirdly—

III. THIS SAME WORK IS CARRIED ON IN THE AFTER-WORKS OF GRACE.

I cannot single out all these—it would take too long for this evening—but let us just pick out four of the works of grace in a Christian in his advance in the spiritual life.

The first is *his growth in grace*. I am sure that as the Christian grows in grace, he grows in humility. Or, at any rate, if there is a growth which is not accompanied by a deeper sense of unworthiness and feebleness than existed before, then it is a supposed growth, not a real one! The farmer is very glad when he sees his root plants growing upwards for a time. He likes to see the green leaf, but he will shake his head to the boy who is pleased with the green leaf only. “Oh,” he says, “I want to see it grow downwards as well as upwards—I want the root—that is the most precious thing.” If it does not grow in the root, in the underground part,

it is but of little value to him. It is well for the Christian, when he has plenty of humility and when he can spread out the very roots of his life and draw up nourishment from the precious Word of God. We must grow in humility! It was remarked by an excellent divine that growing souls think themselves nothing, but that grown saints think themselves *less* than nothing, and I suppose that when they are fully grown they fail to find language in which to express their sense of insignificance! The apostle Paul, I suppose, committed an error in grammar when he said, "Less than the least of all saints." It may be bad grammar, but it is precious truth! Everyone who has come to such knowledge as the apostle—and I am afraid there are not many of us who have grown to that!—can truly say that he is "less than the least of all saints." As the Lord then enables us to grow in grace, brothers and sisters, our proud looks will come down and God will be exalted!

In the next place, *if the Lord Jesus Christ shall favor us with communion with Himself*, it will have the same result. You have sometimes, in happy moments, been with the Savior on the Mount. We scarcely like to speak of these things here, but we have had times when, before we were aware, our souls made us like the chariots of Amminadib. But no chariot of Amminadib could have set forth our rapture! We have had such fellowship with Jesus that, though these eyes have never seen Him, yet we have been conscious of His presence, joyful and sure that He was near! He has kissed us with the kisses of His lips—His love has been better than wine. Now, no man ever came out of the place of communion proud. If there is one thing that always goes with it, it is a prostration of spirit in the presence of the precious Savior! See Jesus and be proud? Impossible! Lean your head upon that bosom and be exalted? Impossible! You will feel, when you have seen the Lord that henceforth you must blush to think that you are so little like He and love Him so little. This is another way in which God brings down our high looks—it is a very blessed way of doing it—may He use it more and more!

A third way of bringing down our high looks *is really to make His children practically active*. It is thought by some that activity and usefulness have in them a strong tendency to lift us up in pride. I suppose they have, but I believe that idleness has far more—that nobody is so proud of his strength as the man who has never tried it and that very likely some of those gentlemen who are so apt to pray for the workers lest they should be exalted, and who sit down and do nothing themselves—are much the prouder people of the two! Let me say to you, brothers and sisters, that of all the temptations that the workers have, they are not so often tempted to pride as they are to some other things. Take the preacher, for instance, who has to preach twice a day and be the pastor of a multitude of souls. Well, he succeeds upon some one

occasion, but he has no time to cradle himself upon that because the trumpet sounds for another battle—and he has to feel that he needs fresh strength! He cannot lift up the banner, for he has to sharpen his sword again! When nightfall comes, he has still some work to do for his Master and the first ray of the morning's light sees him still busy. He has no time to congratulate himself upon what he has performed! He is compelled to—

***“Forget the steps already trod,
And onward press his way.”***

I should prescribe to any Christian here tonight, who feels tempted to pride, to attempt some great work for Christ that is a little above his present strength! And when he has done—to let him try something a little above even that! And if he can do that, to go still further! If you always have something on hand more than you can do, and which puts a strain upon your faith and upon your earnestness, I believe it will be one of the best cures for pride and one of the best things, through God the Holy Spirit's power, to make you see your own insufficiency and to bring your haughtiness down.

Well, dear brothers and sisters, so base are we naturally that the fourth way of bringing us down is the most common one—not by communion with Christ, nor by activity, so much *as by affliction*. Must it always be that? Must it always be that? They are bad children who always need the rod, but there are some Christians who seem as if they never would obey without it! “Be you not as the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle lest they come near unto you.” Oh, what hard mouths we have and with what a sharp bit of affliction are we driven—and how we champ that bit, sometimes, and would gladly get it out of our mouths! And if we could do so, we would dash on to our own destruction! The only way that God has to keep us right is to give us, every now and then, a touch with His whip. Blessed be God for it! It is hard to bear, but oh, how profitable it is! Blessed be God for slander! It cuts us to the quick, but oh, how beaded with blessings has it been to us! Blessed be God for depression of spirit! We have groaned under it, some of us, till our life has become a burden to us—but if we had not been so depressed when alone, we would never have been able to bear the prosperity which God has given us abroad! We thank His blessed name, for by all these means, in some way or other, the loftiness of man shall be brought down, the haughtiness of man shall be made low and the Lord alone shall be exalted!

Let us look forward to the works of grace which are yet incomplete, but which are soon to be completed. Let us anticipate the day when the Spirit of God shall complete His great work—when the old nature in us

shall be utterly conquered and when the new nature, born of God—shall reign in its greatest vitality and fullest development!

Then shall we be, before the eternal throne, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness and decked with the jewels of our perfected salvation! Then, indeed, shall every haughty look be gone and every proud thought be banished! And in that day the Lord alone shall be exalted! Then shall our one song be, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be the glory. Unto Him who loved us and loosed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God, unto Him be glory forever and ever." I shall not detain you much longer, but we ought not to leave this subject without mentioning yet another truth of God that our text suggests.—

IV. THE EFFECT OF THE WORKS OF GRACE WHICH GOD DOES IN HIS CHURCH AT LARGE IS TO BRING DOWN THE LOFTINESS OF MAN.

Dear friends, we believe, and some of us believe it very firmly, that God is going to visit our churches with a revival. We have seen indications of the coming blessing. In connection with this one church and it is but an instance of several others, the very presence of this multitude on a Thursday evening is, to some of us, one of the most hopeful signs that there is a spirit of inquiry growing! And on Monday evenings I see the greater part of this area filled with people who come only to pray. I am not conscious of having stirred you up particularly of late, but I have seen a very marked change over the whole face of things. Why, for the last two or three months, our friends who keep the gates outside, although we have always had as many as we could by any process hold, yet find themselves now compelled to shut the gates in the face of hundreds and even of thousands—although before we scarcely knew where to put those who came within the walls, yet there were not so many sent away! The mass who come here has become perfectly astounding to us all. We can hardly realize it. We think it is a good sign if they are willing to hear—and when they will come and even tread upon one another in their desire to hear the gospel! But a better sign than that is that last Tuesday week, that day of fasting and of prayer, left an impression on the ministers present which they can never forget. And last Tuesday, when we met in our association, the ministers present all said, "Why cannot we have such a day of fasting and prayer?" Ah, indeed, why not? We all agreed that there should be such a day. Then when the delegates and representatives of most of the Baptist Churches in London came, they said, "Cannot we come?" Well, we had not thought of that. "Oh," they said, "you cannot keep us out! We should like to consecrate a whole day to fasting and prayer." "Yes," we replied, "we are right glad to find your hearts so warmed to it." Some asked if all the deacons and elders of Baptist churches could not come, and they were

told, “Yes, certainly.” And I believe that on Monday, the 5th of November, you will find us by hundreds met together to spend the day, from ten until six, in humiliation and prayer to God for a blessing!

This came so spontaneously, without any plan or proposal, everybody desiring it, that I took it at once as being a token for good! I am glad that the good old Puritan preaching and fasting has come back to our churches. There are certain demons that afflict mankind that will not go forth without prayer and fasting, and when many are not only willing, but eager to spend a day entirely for this, it is a good sign! God never sets us praying and longing without meaning to bless us, only here is the point—as sure as ever God blesses us, He will be sure to take us down. We are mistaken if we think He is going to bless us for our own exaltation! If any of you want a blessing for your own self-glorification, you will be wonderfully mistaken! If I, as your pastor, should ask for the conversion of sinners that I might be able to say, “Oh, there are so many added to the church in a year,” I shall not get it, or if it should come, there will come with it some stinging rebuke that will make the soul cry out to God! You must mind that God is in it and then we shall have the blessing! And the only thing that will hinder it is our getting any sinister motive, or any idea that we can exalt *ourselves*! I say, brothers and sisters, that if we seek God’s blessing for the mere extension of our denomination, we shall seek it from a wrong motive. We must seek it for God’s glory and for that only, for the Lord will bring down our high looks as well as the high looks of other people! And the more He loves us, the more will He be sure to do this, for what He will not tolerate in sinners, He will not bear in His saints. What I cannot put up with in strangers, I will never endure in my own friends, and so will the Lord chasten His people if they are proud and haughty. Let us then wait and expect to receive a blessing, but let us also expect to be humbled by it. Lastly—

V. WHERE DEEDS OF MERCY DO NOT PROVE THE TRUTH OF THIS, DEEDS OF JUSTICE WILL CONFIRM IT.

I will say but a few sentences, but let them be caught by your ears and seized by your hearts. In this house tonight there are some of you who are not reconciled to God by the death of His Son. You have never humbled yourselves and taken the Lord’s Christ to be your only hope. Now, mark this—if you will not come down by grace, you must and shall come down by judgment! You will be humbled, sinner, if not to penitence, then to remorse! If not to hopeful conversion, to hopeless despair! Every high look shall be brought down in the day when He shall sit upon the great white throne and call the quick and the dead to judgment. “Rocks, hide us! Mountains, fall upon us! Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne!” Who said that? Why, the very man

who once said, “Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men are.” Yes, sirs, and the very man who once said, “Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?” He it is who now cries, “Hide me, hide me from the accusing face.” Behold, you despisers, wonder and perish! If you will not be humbled at the cross, you shall be humbled at the throne of judgment! If mercy wins you not, judgment shall subdue you! If you will not bend, you shall break! He who will not melt in the fires of love shall be consumed in the furnace of wrath! Oh, my hearer, what a dread alternative is this! “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little! Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him!”

There is a wonderful power in humiliation. Ahab humbled himself and though it was not with a saving humility, yet the curse did not fall upon him as it would have done. Even in a natural humiliation there may be some withdrawal of temporal chastisement, but if the Lord shall give you true brokenness of heart, remember it is written, “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” There is not one word in the Bible against a humble soul. There is not one curse against a sinner who feels his need and comes empty-handed! Come, poor needy one, poor helpless one, you ruined sinner, without any hope of yourself, you bankrupt sinner, come—

***“Tis perfect poverty alone,
That sets our soul at large.
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.”***

When we have done with self and with all self’s hopes, projects and plans—and trust only in the finished work of Jesus—then may we rejoice, for we are saved and saved eternally!

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OUR LEADER THROUGH THE DARKNESS

NO. 3370

A SERMON
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 AT THE MILD MAY PARK CONFERENCE, 1890.

***“Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of His Servant?
 Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the
 name of the LORD and rely upon his God.”
 Isaiah 50:10.***

***“Behold I have given him for...a leader.”
 Isaiah 55:4.***

I DESIRE to speak to you, dear friends, not only of Jesus as our leader, but of following Him *in the dark*. Can you see Jesus in the dark? Yes. We sometimes see Him better in the dark than in the light. If you will go outside in the daytime and look up, you will not be able to see a single star. But if you will get into the bucket of a well and go down into the darkness, very soon you will behold the stars. To descend may sometimes be the shortest way to ascend. Certainly, to suffer is the road to the land where there is no suffering—and to be in present darkness may be the nearest way to eternal light. All light, but that which comes through Christ, Himself, hinders rather than helps our sight of Him. He is best seen by His own light. Begone, sun! Begone, moon! Begone, you candles! He is the Sun of Righteousness and where He is, there is light enough! All earth-born light hinders the vision of His face. I fear that many, trusting in the greatness of their mental light, have become blind to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Blessed is he who sees Christ by Christ—the crucified in the light of His five wounds—the risen one by the brilliance of His own life!

Darkness—can it fall upon a child of God? He is a child of light—shall he walk in darkness? Not in darkness in the sense of ignorance, sin and death, but in the sense of gloom and sorrow! Saints may have much of it. The heir of heaven sometimes knows a midnight. But if he is with Jesus, following Him as his leader (and that is my topic), then he is in a safe condition. The words of one of our songs are ringing in my ears—

***“Anywhere with Jesus!
 Anywhere with Jesus!”***

Better in the dark with Jesus than in the light, yes, than in heaven, itself, without Him—

***“Not all the harps above
 Can make a heavenly place,
 If Christ His residence removes,***

Or but conceals His face.”

Give us Christ and we will make no hard terms about darkness, or light! Only let us be with Him and it is enough. “Forever with the Lord” is only another word for glory everlasting!

Adam, I suppose, was created in the daylight and he wandered about in the garden enjoying his God and the fair works which surrounded him. When night came on, darkness was a new phenomenon to him. He must have wondered at it, but since he had no sin, his childlike trust in God would not permit him to be afraid. He laid himself down to rest without a fear. It was a memorable night for him. In the dark he lost something, but the loss was a great gain. In the morning, when he woke up, he found someone there—the very one he needed. She was there, whom the Lord had made for him, since, “it was not good that man should be alone.” So have you and I found the darkness coming on and we have been distressed for a moment—but when we have thought of God we have found rest. Then we may have lost a good deal in the darkness, as we thought, for we were conscious of an inward pain taking away what we thought to be a vital part of ourselves—but when we came out of the gloom into the morning light, a joy was ours which we had not known before—a joy that has been our companion and our comfort to this very day! Brothers and sisters, I have lost nothing by the darkness. I say, “I,” for everyone must bear witness for himself. I believe every child of God can say the same. Do not the dews fall at eventide? Could we bear the perpetual shining of the burning sun? Is not the morning freshness so great a joy that it compensates us for the night by which we reach it?

As I thought over my theme, “Jesus, our leader in the dark,” I began to fall in love with the dark. There are two parts to my subject—if one seems gloomy, the other is bright enough! Following Christ is a lightsome theme! The darkness may be very dark, but I say I have almost fallen in love with it when Jesus comes to me therein and makes it His pavilion! Rutherford declared that the cross which he carried for his Lord at last came to be so dear to him that he was half jealous of it, lest he should begin to love the cross with a love rivaling his love to his Lord! Darkness of soul in itself is horrible, but the rich fruit it has brought to us has made us cease to dread it. We now can thank God that the evening and the morning make up the day—and the evening is as much a part of the day as the morning. The nights of our lives are as rich as the days. The agony is as useful as the rapture. The depression is as instructive as the exaltation. Let us think, then, of—

I. THE DARKNESS THAT CHRISTIANS MAY KNOW.

Well, surely we may say, first, that in some respects we are always in the dark while here below. We must wait with patience “until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.” Our Lord here on earth may be said to have been always in the dark in comparison with the glories which He left, in contrast with the bliss that He has reassumed. To be here at all,

was to Him to be in the dark. The ever-blessed Son of the Father was away from the home country and its splendor—he was among sinners and His heart was pained with human sin, His ears were vexed with ungodly speeches, His eyes were filled with tears because of obstinate rebellions! He was all tenderness and yet His soul was among lions. It must have been a constant trial to His holy, sensitive spirit to have dwelt in the midst of sinners. So in a certain sense we, also, are always in the shade compared with what is coming. “It does not yet appear what we shall be.” He is coming! He is coming! The axles of His chariot are hot with speed. He cries, “Behold, I come quickly.” When He comes, the glory of His presence will make the greatest joys that we have ever known to seem but twilight, as compared with the full day of His appearing! If His life was so truly in darkness, we must not wonder if our lives are the same.

We are not, however, dependent upon natural light any more than He was. If a Christian can only be happy when his feelings are right, I should be afraid that he is trusting in his feelings! If you are only confident when your frames are delightful, I should be afraid that you are resting in your frames and feelings! Faith is a principle which has its root, deeper feelings. We believe whether we see or not. We believe whether we feel or not. We believe in Christ upon the testimony of the Father concerning Him—that testimony is enough for us even if there are no attendant signs. Our happy experience of salvation is a pleasant confirmation of the Word of the Lord! And when it seems to fail us, we still believe. God is not changed because we tremble! Christ is not altered because we are in fear! The ground on which we stand for salvation is not our attainments, nor our experiences, nor our communions. We stand upon the finished work of Christ in which we believe, whether it is dark, or whether it is light. The young Christian will say, “I believe that I am saved because I am so happy.” He is no more correct than the old Christian would be if he should say, “I believe that I am saved because I am unhappy.” Let me explain myself. The value of feeling depends upon its *cause*. All happiness in the young man is not a proof of piety. He might be happy if he had received a large legacy, or had been invited to a party of pleasure. All unhappiness in the old Christian is not good evidence of grace—by no means would such an assertion stand! And yet, if we sigh and cry because of the abominations of the city, we have therein a strong evidence of our being on the side of Christ and righteousness. If we mourn our imperfections and lack of spotless holiness, our very sighing and crying are proofs of heavenly life and salvation! The heart is clean, and the course of the soul is heavenward when the heart can never be satisfied with anything short of perfect holiness.

Had we not been quickened, and quickened to a high degree, too, we would have been content with dim signs of holiness. But now nothing but perfection will content us—we are unhappy when even the least mist comes between us and God—and these feelings prove how much we love Him and how our very element is to dwell in unbroken communion with Him. We are not dependent, therefore, upon happiness or unhappiness as the ground of our confidence. Christ loved me and gave Himself for me—this is the rock upon which I stand! He died effectually for every soul that trusts Him. I trust Him and this is the token that He has redeemed me from my sins. I am His. Here is my rock of refuge! I stand on Christ's righteousness, be it dark or light. The ground of a Christian's faith is not moved in the least degree by the time of his spiritual day, or the state of wealth in his experience. Could we sit forever on the top of Tabor, we would be no safer than if we were made to dwell always in the Valley of Humiliation, longing for brighter days. Christ! Christ! Christ! In Him we are safe!

Yet, dear friends, there are glooms which fall to the lot of some of God's best people. I would have you beware, my brothers and sisters who have made a great advance in grace, and are very joyful in the Lord, of judging your fellow Christians. I have noticed with sorrow on the part of some, whose shoelaces I am not worthy to unloose, that, nevertheless, they are hard towards the lambs and the lame of the flock. Because they have not reached your own high attainments, do not condemn them! If you have strong faith, you may condemn unbelief, but do not condemn weak believers, who may have beautiful points of character, although they are as yet mere babes in grace! Have you never heard of the strong cattle, of whom the Lord said, "Because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns till you have scattered them abroad; therefore will I save My flock and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle." Beware lest you become proud of your attainments and unkind to those beneath your level! I believe that there is such a thing as being so long in the light that you do not believe that others are in the dark. Or, if they are, you judge them to be weak and foolish and you are apt to scold them. Brother, you cannot scold the darkness into light! A little sympathy will do far more than what you are pleased to call *faithful* upbraiding. That word, "faithful," sometimes means "cruel."

None can doubt that some excellent children of God are often in gloom through *bodily sickness and weakness*. There are forms of sickness which bring no depression with them. You might suffer from them through life and never be saddened. But there are certain forms of disease which touch not only the bone and the flesh, but also the mind. The pain of the mind encroaches upon the spirit and the spirit is darkened with trouble. "Oh, but they ought not to be troubled." Granted, but they *are* troubled, and I have noticed this—that your very strong

men, yes, and your very strong ministers, too, who can say rather sharp things about the weak—and may be justified in saying them, yet, nevertheless, are not themselves beyond incurring the same rebukes! Great teachers may not make good sufferers. When the hot iron touches them, it is another thing from what it seemed to be. It sounds fine for them to say that we ought not to be cast down, but ask their wives what these strong men are like when their head aches, or their heart is out of order! When nights grow long and weary with sleeplessness, do they show all the faith of which they now speak? Ah, brothers, the flesh is weak!

But our Lord knows all about sickness—“He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.” No form of sickness is beyond the sympathy of Jesus. Nothing is sweeter or more reviving than His fellow feeling. One does not know how sympathy works so effectively, but it does operate marvelously. A little girl said to her mother, “Mother, poor widow Brown has asked me to come in every day and see her. She says that I comfort her so! Mother, I don’t know anything that I do to comfort her. I would wipe all her tears away if I could, but when she sits and cries, I go and put my cheek against hers and I cry, too. And she kisses me and says that I comfort her.” Just so. One poor human being can cheer another by fellow feeling, but how much more can Jesus do it! Oh, to feel your Master’s tears drop on your cheek! When you are weeping, then you read that “Jesus wept.”—

**“In every pang that rends the heart
The man of Sorrows had a part.”**

Another cause of great gloom is frequent with us—it is *bereavement*. I will not say much about it, lest I needlessly draw up the sluices for many a widow, or wifeless husband or fatherless child. How often does the mourner judge that he has laid the best part of himself in the grave! However dear they were, they could not stay with us—perhaps, because they were so good that it was necessary that Christ should have them away from earth. He prayed for them, “Father, I will that they be with Me where I am”—but we kept on praying the other way—“Father, we will that they be with *us* where we are.” Our Lord’s prayer conquered ours! It should do so, for they were more His than ours since He had bought them with His blood. We should never pray against our Lord, but when we do, may His prayer always have the preference, as it will. Yet bereavement has brought many a Mary and Martha very low.

“Jesus wept” at the grave of Lazarus. Here, too, we see that the Master is near akin unto us. I believe that if we want to know the weeping Savior, we must weep. We always see our Lord, to a great extent, like ourselves. If we are pilgrims, He comes to us as a wayfarer, as He did to Abraham. If we are in conflict, like Jacob, He comes to wrestle with us. If we are in trouble, He meets us, like Moses, at the burning bush. If we are soldiers, like Joshua, He meets us as captain of the Lord’s host. If

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are in the furnace, the Son of God makes the fourth in the fire! As we are, so does He become, that as He is, so may we become! Our bereavements are a part of the way in which we see and follow our Lord.

And *poverty*, too. Many of you have never known poverty. I do not wish that you should, for poverty is a very heavy cross to many of the children of God. It hinders them when they would give to the Lord's cause and hampers them in their work for Him. This, perhaps, is not so lamentably true as they think. When poverty involves crushing toil, long hours of labor and scarcely enough bread to keep body and soul together, then it is, indeed, a burden. Dire poverty has hung like a cloud over many a child of God. There is a poverty which the poets love—it dwells in a thatched cottage whose porch is overgrown with woodbine. Perhaps if the poets had rheumatism through the wind blowing through the decaying walls, they might not sing of it quite so sweetly. But in London we have a poverty that has neither porch nor woodbine—poverty that has no cottage, but a single room where scarcely the decencies of life can be preserved. Beloved, if you have to suffer from this gloom, remember that the Son of Man had not where to lay His head.

Another gloom has shadowed many here present in their measure and upon some, in special, it has loomed tempestuously. It is the cloud of *slander and reproach*. If you have preserved your garments unspotted; if you have sought nothing but the glory of God and yet you find everything that you do misrepresented, your words misconstrued and yourself abused—this is truly a trial. Slander is no bed of roses, nor a test to be desired but, oh, how easy is it then to see Jesus and how sweet it is to follow Him! “He was despised and rejected of men.” If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, they have not left another name that is bad enough for us! We might in very modesty wish to have a name a little lower than our Lord's, guided by the same motive which made a great saint consider ordinary crucifixion too great an honor, and therefore, entreated to be nailed to the cross with his head downwards! Would you not be content to be called something worse than Beelzebub? Might you not gladly accept such a name as winebibber and madman, that you might come in behind your leader? “Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself,” and then sing—

***“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach may be,
I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
For You'll remember me!”***

Gloom also falls upon the Christian in *time of desertion*. I do not know whether Judas had sons and daughters, but I have seen several persons who bear a family likeness to that son of perdition. “He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me,” is a sentence often repeated. “It was not an enemy that reproached me—then I could have borne it—

but it was you, a man my equal, my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together and walked unto the house of God in company.” This, also, is an oft-told tale. Yet fret not too much because of ingratitude, fickleness and treachery. Is it not written, “Cursed is he that trusts in man”? All men are liars! Can you not be content to take the inevitable? Your Master had His Judas. Shall not you have yours? “Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.” It may be so with you all the more because you desire to be faithful to your Lord.

The worst cloud of all, I think, is *deep depression of spirit* accompanied with the loss of the light of God’s countenance. Sickness, poverty, slander—none of these things are comparable to depression! “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?” Do you know what exceeding heaviness means? I pray that you may have but very little of it, but if you do have it, remember Him who said, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Those words were once a great comfort to a child of God dying in despair. Though an eminently gracious man, he was in the dark. He could not find his God and he knew that he was soon to pass into eternity. I do not think our heavenly Father often puts His children to bed in the dark, but if He does, they will wake up in the light of God in the morning! This man of God said to the minister who visited him, “O sir, although I have trusted Christ for years and have served His cause, I have lost Him. What will become of a man who dies feeling that God has deserted him?” The wise pastor answered him, “What became of the man who, just before His death, cried, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ Is He not on the highest throne of Glory even now?” The sick man’s mind was lightened in a moment! He began to say, as the Lord Jesus did after the dark sentence, “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit,” and he died in peace. Yes, God loves His people quite as much when He leaves them in the dark, as when He sets them at His right hand in the light! Measure not God’s love by His providences, nor even by His manifestations of them. Measure it by the gift of the only-begotten, for Jesus is the only measure of the immeasurable love of God our Father! Yes, a child of God may be in depression for many a year. Timothy Rogers was the victim of despondency for many years and yet he came out into the light and then wrote his experience in his memorable book, *Trouble of Mind*, which has been of great service to others in like condition. I hope that none of you will wish to be in soul darkness. Some trembling people acquire a sort of perpetual palsy of fear. They have become so shut up in doubt that they are afraid to come out of it into the light of faith. Come out of your hiding places, you troubled ones! Do not make yourselves one line lower in spirits than you can help! But if you should be long in depression and that depression should turn to despondency, and that despondency should curdle into despair, believe in God! Say with Job, “Though He

slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” If I cannot see His face with delight, yet in the shadow of His wings will I rejoice!

I come now to the more especially practical part of my sermon.

II. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH THIS DARKNESS IS PERMITTED.

There were three aspects of the darkness which our Lord endured in which we should resemble Him. First, He was in darkness *for education*. “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.” Our Mediator went to school and His schoolbooks were “the things that He suffered.” Do we learn much out of any other books? Is not our best schoolmaster the one named adversity? Are not our best schoolbooks printed in the old black letter? We make but small account of any other. Our Lord Jesus learned obedience. Some people, when they get into the dark, think that they can make no progress, but must lie still. Say not so! Our greatest progress should be made in the dark. We should grind most when the wind blows hardest. A friend of mine went to Australia and on board of his ship there were a number of gentlemen of different degrees of ignorance, one of whom was a complete greenhorn. He had never been to sea before. I do not think he had been anywhere else. When it came to be night, he said, “Where do they put up tonight?” My friend said, “What do you mean?” He replied, “You do not mean to say that they will go on sailing in the dark?” “Certainly,” replied my friend. But the other said, “Why, they may run into something, for they cannot see their way.” “No,” my friend answered, “and they will not see their way till we get to our destination, unless they touch at the Cape! And they will travel as fast in the night as in the day.” So they did. Who but a fool would have thought otherwise?

Growth in divine grace must go on in the dark, as well as in the light. I have been told that plants do most of their growing at night. Surely, Christ’s plants grow very fast after a period of darkness which has been sanctified to them. I half wish for some friends that I know that they might have just a day or two of darkness. I hope I am not unkind. I know one who would wish to sympathize if he could, but he has never had an illness. And when he does sympathize, it is a remarkable thing that he should be able to do it. You think of him with wonder, as you would think of an elephant picking up a pin! He does it, but it seems out of his line—it does not come to him naturally. Our Lord learned *obedience towards God* through His sufferings. If you think of it deeply, it was a very great lesson for Him to learn. The ruler of heaven and earth, whose will was law, had to learn obedience! He speaks, and legions of angels fly at His commands—and yet He has to learn to obey! Now that He is here on earth, in the fashion of a man, He becomes an obedient servant. Have you and I ever learned that lesson? It is not every Christian that has learned obedience of the commonest sort. I know some Christians who would think it dreadful to obey ecclesiastically. “Obey them that have the rule over you,” is not a pleasant Scripture to them. They will have no

pastor. Nobody ever was set over them. I am sure I am devoutly grateful that I was not, for it would be a very uncomfortable office to guide such unruly spirits! Obedience is one of the lessons of wisdom which this age needs to learn, for everybody must be master or mistress nowadays. We all desire to rule and we all feel that we could do it far better than the present leaders are doing! He who has the least wisdom and has failed in business half a dozen times, is the very person who believes himself to be the most fitted to be Prime Minister! We do not love obedience, but we have to learn it. The rod is our teacher's instrument—this darkness, this heaviness, is pressing us into true service. We are now to follow Jesus in the dark by learning obedience as He learned it. The Lord prosper us in this!

We have next *to learn sympathy*. I have hinted at that already. "We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Our glorious elder brother learned sympathy by suffering! By His passion He learned compassion. Whenever we suffer, let us regard it as a part of our education and so follow Christ closely to learn of Him, as He learned of the Father. See yonder text, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; and you shall find rest unto your souls!" First we come to Him by faith and He *gives* us rest. That is one sort of rest. Then, by obedience, we take His yoke upon us and we learn of Him, and we find rest—another degree of rest. The one is given and the other is found, but there is no finding the second rest except with the yoke upon our shoulders and learning of Christ!

Education in the dark helps to keep us from self-dependence. I sometimes sing—

***"If today He deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He tomorrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within—
All to make us
Sick of self, and fond of Him."***

The angel wrestled with Jacob. We usually speak of Jacob's wrestling with the angel. I suppose that he did so wrestle, for there cannot be a wrestle at all without two being in it. But the main point of the conflict was that the angel wrestled with Jacob. What wrestling God has had with us to get our self out of us! We are such Jacobs—we are plotting, scheming—and crafty. God would beat us down as to this fleshly wisdom and when He has laid us low as Jacob and made us lame, then He will knight us, and we shall come off the field as prevailing princes of Israel! The death of self-dependence is the joy and triumph of faith! And this often comes through darkness. God bless the darkness, then, for our education—and may we follow Christ by complete obedience to God!

I spoke of three things. The second is for *usefulness*. Our Lord went into the dark to save the guilty sons of men. We cannot follow Him in the central darkness, where all the storm clouds gathered, for that was substitutionary. Into that awful winepress, where He went alone as our sacrifice, we would not think of intruding! But nevertheless, there is a cup of which He has said—"You shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall you be baptized." We have no atonement to make. "It is finished." Yet for the ingathering and saving of the elect of God, it is necessary that the church of God, in many of its members, should pass into the darkness.

I will tell you a story. It shall be none the worse because it is of myself, for we are gathered here to bear and hear personal testimony. One Sunday I preached a sermon from this text—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" What I then spoke was in the agony of my heart, for I felt that I was, myself, for a while, forsaken. Such was the sorrowful dread of my spirit.

I could not tell why I should have been made to feel in this way. I was not sick. I could see no physical cause. I had not wandered from God and I could see no moral cause. But after the sermon there came into the vestry a man of about sixty, whose very hair seemed to stand on end and his eyes were bright with a strange luster. He took my hand and stood and held it, and wept. I looked at him and I saw that I had before me a man dazed, if not crazed. "Birds of a feather will flock together." It struck me that he was a madman and I was not much mistaken. Then he said to me, "Nobody ever preached my experience before! I have now been for years in a horrible gloom of great darkness and could not find God, but this morning I learned that I was not the only man in the thick darkness, and I believe that I shall get out." I answered, "Yes, that was the reason why I was put into the dark, that I might help you. And now that I know the reason, I am already out of the prison!"

I had many interviews with that man. I piloted him back from the gulf of insanity. I was enabled, by God's grace, to lead him into joy and peace, so that he could resume his daily calling. The Lord's servants have to experience many things which are not so much for themselves as for usefulness towards others—and we ought to be content to have it so. You cannot help a man if you know nothing about him and therefore, the Lord sends you into many a thick wood and dark valley that you may meet with His own redeemed in their wanderings. If you did not know the wilderness, how could you act as a guide through it? So it is for usefulness that God calls us there—and as Jesus went there to save, let us learn from Him the great grace of self-sacrifice!

I have done when I have added the third thing. Darkness may come over the soul that we *may give glory to God*. Our Lord Jesus passed through the darkness that He might glorify the Father's name. The lesson which He set before us was that He still believed. Read the 22nd

Psalm. See there the faith of the much hunted “hind of the morning.” He goes back to his early infancy, when God cared for him. “You are He that took me out of the womb.” He goes back to ancient history—“Our fathers trusted in You: they trusted, and You did deliver them.” Read that Psalm carefully and mark that the sufferer’s faith never failed him. Dear friends, can your faith stand in trial? “I have great faith,” says one. Yes, there was a staff that stood by a brook and looked at the reflection of his antlers in the water, and said, “What fine horns I have! My friends in the herd no sooner hear the bay of a dog than they take to their heels. But I, with such fine horns, will fight any dog, or, for that matter, any pack of hounds! Let them come up and they shall see what my horn can do.” So he said—and he was a fine fellow, was he not? Landseer might have been proud to sketch him! That is the very picture of a man full of untried faith. Presently there was heard the yelp of some poor puppy—and where was our stag? His heart was not as strong as his horns and his legs were carrying him far away from the dog! So it is with untried faith. You must not be sure of it for a moment. Fear will destroy it in the day of trouble.

Our Lord had abundant and abiding faith. I will only quote one instance of it—His faith in prayer to God in Gethsemane. There are two parts in that wonderful prayer of His in the garden. “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” We dwell too exclusively upon the full surrender at the end—please notice the prayer itself. “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” When you are in the dark, go to God and plead with Him to take the gloom away! Ask Him to take the cup from you—and be bold to go as far as your Lord did—which is a very long way, indeed, for He said, “If it is possible.” Go to that length! I would encourage the child of God in the dark to “possess his possessions,” to make real use of promises and expect help. We do not always trust God as being what He declares Himself to be, but sometimes if we would but do so, our darkness would come to an end! I remember in my own case, after a period of continued pain with little sleep, I sat up, as best I could, one morning in my bed, in an agony of pain—and I cried to the Lord for deliverance. I believed fully that He could deliver me then and there, and I pleaded my sonship and His Fatherhood. I went the length of pleading that He was my Father and I said, “If it were my child that suffered so, I would not let him suffer any longer if I could help him. You can help me. And by Your fatherly love I plead with You to give me rest.” I felt that I could add, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” But I did the first thing, first—I pleaded with my Father and went first where Christ went first, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.” I shall never forget my success in this appeal! In real earnest I believed God to be my Father and threw myself upon Him—and within a few minutes I dropped back upon the pillow, the pain subsided, and very soon I slept most peacefully. God

loves us to believe Him and to plead earnestly with Him, for even if He does not think it best to grant our request, He will be pleased for us to go on to number two, and with full submission cry, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

You can hardly prove that you have any will to surrender if you have not first brought it before the Lord in fervent prayer! Pray about the matter up to the hilt, and then sheathe the prayer in submission, if it is not the Lord’s will. O brothers and sisters let us learn this last virtue! Faith healing is grand but faith enduring is grander! Glorify God by believing that His will is right and that the strokes of His rod are kind. Use both edges of the sword of faith! Believe for deliverance *from* sorrow, or for deliverance *in* sorrow. Anyhow, honor the Son by fully trusting Him. This is the way to follow your leader, who said, “I will put my trust in Him.”

Oh, that the Lord our God may be with you all in the hour of darkness! If it is not so now, may it may be very soon! I would have you lay by these truths of God in store for future use. When one is very happy, the suspicion lurks at our feet that this is too good to last. Therefore, the poet of experience said—

***“We should suspect some danger near
When we perceive too much delight.”***

Let it, then, be settled in your minds that you will trust only in the Lord and keep your expectation only upon Him. Come fair, come foul, come wind, come rain, come hail, come tempest, or come all the brightness of a fruitful summer, it shall make no difference to us, for ours is not the confidence which changes with the weather, but that which has its foundation among things eternal and immutable—

***“And when your eye of faith is dim,
Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim!
Still at His footstool bow the knee
And Israel’s God, your strength shall be!”***

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TWO CHOICE BENEDICTIONS

NO. 3371

A SERMON
 PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1913,
 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
 ON THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 26, 1867.

“Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, on this wise you shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless you, and keep you: the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.”
Numbers 6:23-27.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.”
2 Corinthians 13:14.

IT seemed to me that as this was the last of the Thursday evenings of the dying year and I should no more meet some of you who only come here on Thursday evenings during this year, it would be well for us to close the year as our Master closed His life on earth, with a benediction—and oh, it will be a rich enjoyment in the year to come if, by God’s grace, we shall be able to grasp and make our very own the precious things which are here presented to the whole redeemed family of the living God! I shall begin, therefore, first of all with—

I. THE AARONIC BLESSING.

This was pronounced at the close of the public tabernacle service when the people were about to separate, the one from the others. It is said by the Rabbis to have been only spoken at the morning sacrifice, but not in the evening because, say some, the old faith of the few gave them the early blessing. But it remained for Christ to come in the eventide of the world, at the end of time, to give us the evening blessing, the blessing of the great, eternal, evening Sacrifice.

It is worthy of notice that the word, Jehovah, which is put in capital letters in our English version, occurs three times—three blessings—and each time the word has a different accent in the original Hebrew. And the Rabbis, although they did not know the meaning of it, or pretended not to know, yet all agree that there is some significant mystery therein. The word would not be accented thus differently unless there were some different shade of meaning intended. I believe we have here the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. “The LORD bless you and keep you.” Is that

the blessing of the Father? “The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.” Is that the blessing of the Son? “The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” Is that the blessing of the great forgiving Holy Spirit? I think it is very likely. At any rate, this threefold blessing from the Jehovah, whose name is mentioned three times, may direct our thoughts to the glorious Trinity, the Trinity in unity, whom we cannot understand, but on whom our faith rests and in whom our love finds delight and repose!

Let us look at these three blessings. “*The LORD bless you and keep you.*” When we bless God there is nothing more than well-saying and well-wishing. But when God blesses us, it is well-doing! We cannot bless God in the sense of giving to Him so as to add to His riches or to His glory, for He is the infinitely great, the inconceivably glorious and nothing that we can do can add to Him. We can only bless Him by expressing our thanks to Him, paying to Him our reverent love. “The LORD lives, and blessed be my Rock.” “Blessed be the name of the LORD from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.” But when God blesses us, I say, it is well-doing! He blesses us in our very creation and much more in our new creation. It is a blessed thing to be born, but a much more blessed thing to be born-again! He blesses us in our food—but much more in giving us Christ who is the bread to keep alive and nourish our soul’s best life! We are blessed in being clothed, but infinitely more blessed in being wrapped about in the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is a blessing to be a member of a kind, loving, happy family—but it is an unspeakable blessing to be a member of the family of Christ and adopted into the family of God!

What a blessing it is, my brothers and sisters, to have sin pardoned, to have righteousness imputed, to have sanctification worked in us—in short, to enjoy all the privileges and benedictions of the New Covenant! Now, I think some of us can say, “God has blessed us, oh, how richly.” Blessed us sometimes when we did not perceive the blessing, for many of God’s mercies come, as it were, in at the back door of our house. We do not see the mercies, and when we do, we are too often ungrateful and forget them. What blessings we have received in trouble—in deliverance from trouble—in sustaining us in it! Oh, what blessings have we not had? Some of you, perhaps, have had very remarkable mercies during the year. Now, while the blessing is pronounced, “The LORD bless you,” let your reply be, “The LORD has blessed me!” This will encourage you to expect that He will continue to do the same. And what blessings, my dear friends, may we hope will be in store for us during the coming year? Many troubles, I have no doubt, are in store for us. If we were to have a telescope here this evening and we could look through it and see the

future, those would be very foolish who looked! He would be the wise man who said—

***“This will set my heart at rest—
What my God appoints is best.”***

For if that telescope were here and you were trying to look through it, you would be sure to breathe on the glass with your hot breath—and in your anxiety you would see nothing but clouds and darkness—whereas, very likely, there would be nothing of the sort there. Leave that matter with your God! The future, though it may possibly have trial and trouble, will still be blessed if you are God’s servant. One thing there is of which you can be quite confident—He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Another thing will also be fulfilled, “As your days, so shall your strength be.” You are very poor, are you? Yet, at any rate, none can rob you of this assurance—“Your bread shall be given you: your water shall be sure.” If you are fearing many trials, this promise is your special fortifying—“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” You have God’s word for it, “Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God.” If, during the next year, it is appointed unto you to die, you may still say, “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” “The LORD bless you.” As I say that to each believer here, knowing that the Lord will so bless you, may your soul look forward, not with dread, but with hope! “The LORD bless you” was the wish of the priest under the old law, and it is always the nature of God to confirm what He bids His servants desire. “The LORD bless you.”

Now, observe the blessing which is said to spring out of that, “The LORD bless you, *and keep you.*” And no small mercy it is to be kept by God! Where would we be if He did not keep us in a moral and spiritual point of view, yes, and in a natural point of view, too? It is God that keeps our lives from death and our bodies from perishing. Perhaps, during the past year, some of you have been kept when in storms at sea, or when you have been upon a railway, or when you have passed through places infected with disease. It is no small privilege to hear the Lord say, “He will give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways: they shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” The Lord has blessed us and kept us in that sense during the past year. Oh, brothers and sisters, what a privilege to be kept from falling into sin! He is ill-kept who is his own keeper! He is worse kept who has his brother for his keeper! But he is splendidly kept

who has God to be his shield on his right hand, his glory and his defense.

During the past year we have seen some high professors put out like candles and the foul odor of their fall has filled the church with nausea and depression. We have known some who were like bright stars who have turned out to be only meteors—and their once dazzling brilliance has suddenly died out in greater gloom. Why are we still kept? We have had enough temptation to cast us down! Enough tinder here, inside our hearts, to have made a great blaze! How is it we are still unburned and walking in the paths of righteousness?

Must we not say, “The Lord has blessed us and kept us”? Let us, then, without reserve, commit our souls to Him for the future. Let us not fancy that we shall not fall. Oh, that is a thought that is very apt to twine itself around us like a serpent! “I am not so giddy as some people! I am not at all likely to do what some young people have done and get into this sin, and that sin. I have had so much experience, I shall be able to stand!” That is the very man that is likely to fall! We are never so weak as when we think we are strong, and never so strong as when we know we are weak and look out of ourselves to our God! Distrust self, then. There would not be such a supplication as, “The LORD bless you and keep you,” if you did not need keeping. Trust in God for your help. If you fear temptation, let this be your prayer, “Lead us not into temptation,” and if you trust in God, you will pray, “Deliver us from evil.” You will be tempted during the year that is soon coming, but He will, with the temptation, make also a way of escape. He will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able to bear! You shall go through the wilderness leaning on your Beloved and you shall not slip, though the way is ever so smooth, nor trip, though the road is ever so rough. You shall be upheld, for God is able to hold up in perfect safety those who stay themselves upon Him. “The LORD bless you and keep you.” Holy Father, we breathe the prayer to You as we read this blessing! Pronounce it upon us now by the mouth of Your own dear Son, and let us now and until life’s latest hour be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!

Now, take the next blessing bestowed, through Aaron, upon the people. “*The LORD make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.*” I understand by the expression, “The LORD make His face to shine upon you,” His being completely reconciled to us. As they would say in the Hebrew, a man’s face frowned, his countenance fell, when he was at enmity or angry with another. But when he was his friend and genial towards him, then his face revealed it, it began to beam or shine! Now, this is the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is through Him that God’s face is made to shine upon us. The Lord would have no favorable regard

towards a sinner as such while his sins still lay upon him because of impenitence and lack of faith. The Lord's love might come to him as an elect creature, but viewing him merely as a sinner, he would be the subject of divine disapprobation!

But when the sinner is washed in the blood of Christ, when the sinner is justified through the righteousness of Jesus, then the Lord looks upon him with pleasure. That very man who was an heir of wrath becomes a child of love! and he who would have been driven from God's presence with, "Depart, you cursed," is established in Christ's heart with "Come, you blessed." Now, dear friends, I hope many of us have already received, during the past year, this great blessing, "The Lord make His face to shine upon you." Don't you feel that you have, tonight, to look up to God and do not feel any fear? You know that He is not frowning upon you! He is reconciled unto you—you are reconciled unto Him. You may say, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed." And you are persuaded that as God looks upon Christ, and upon you in Christ, you are well-beloved in Him. Well now, as it has been, so it shall be, for if God once makes His face to shine in the sense of His favor, He never takes that favor away! You may not see it. You may think He is angry with you, and in another sense, He may be, but legally, and so far as concerns the law and its power of condemnation, there is not a single thought of anger in the mind, or feeling of displeasure in the heart of God towards any one of those who rest in Jesus!

You are accepted in the Beloved. God sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel. As He looks upon them in His Son, He sees them without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

"*The LORD make His face to shine upon you.*" Well, and what springs out of that? Why this, "*and be gracious unto you.*" Because God is thus favorable towards us through His dear Son, divine grace comes to us. And what a great, all-comprehending word is that! Grace! It has many meanings and includes a whole universe of blessing! Grace—it is the free and undeserved favor of God! Grace—it is the mighty operation of that favor, effectually working in them that believe! Grace—it is that which enlightens us to see our lost estate—that which leads us to see the all-sufficiency of Christ! Grace—this works faith in us, gives us love to God! Grace creates our hope, carries on the work within our souls and completes it, too! Grace—it is a term so comprehensive that I would need the whole of this evening, yes, and longer, too, to enumerate the mighty catalog comprised and packed, as it were, in this golden casket of the word, grace! "The LORD be gracious unto you." Well, now, beloved, He has been gracious to us in the past. Oh, the grace of God to me!—

***"Oh, to grace how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be!"***

Can you say the same? Look at what a sinner you have been and yet how favored! Look at your backslidings! Look at your ingratitude and yet His mercy does not cease—

“Oh, to grace how great a debtor!”

Let your hearts say it, if your lips do not. And now, beloved, He will be gracious to you in the future as He has been in the past. Every mercy received is a pledge of mercies yet to come! He knew what He was doing when He began with us, and therefore, He will not leave off. If He had meant to destroy us, He would not have shown us such things as these. The great master worker would not have built the house so far if He did not mean to finish it. All His previous grace and glory will be wasted and evaporate if He should not complete His redeeming work. Therefore, I am sure that after advancing so far with His glorious purpose, He will finish it, and if necessary, in the teeth of men and devils! He has begun and His right arm, which always goes with His grace, will surely carry it through to the end. “The LORD make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.”

But now, thirdly, “*The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.*” Is this the voice of the Holy Spirit? Whether it is so or not, does not greatly matter to us tonight. “The LORD lift up His countenance upon you.” Does not this mean, “The LORD give you a conscious, a delightful sense of His favor”? Wishing to see a difference—I will not insist upon it—wishing to see a difference, I put the second blessing as meaning God’s being reconciled. But the third blessing as meaning God manifesting that reconciliation and giving His children the enjoyment of His favor. Now, God’s people do not always have this—it is not always sunshine. “The evening and the morning were the first day,” and there is evening as well as morning in the day of God’s people. God always loves His people, but His people do not always know it. Because of their sins, they do not always enjoy it. Oh, what a blessing it is when the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in the soul—when we can say, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” When we get out of these mists and fogs and can see the sun once more shining clear and bright, beloved, it is heaven on earth! It is the true ante-past of heaven above, when the Lord lifts up His countenance upon you! I have no doubt the original allusion is to a father whose child has done wrong and he says, “Now, sir, get out of my sight, you have grieved and vexed me. You shall not see my face.” The child goes upstairs to bed—anywhere out of his father’s sight. And after a while, when the father hears he has been penitent and sees his tears, he smiles again upon him, gives him a kiss and presses him to his heart. May God the Holy Spirit give us just that! May every one of us have it!

We have, some of us, had it during the past year. We grieve to confess that we did backslide, but when we returned again, we found Him just as willing to receive us as at the first and He lifted up His countenance upon us once again! We said, “Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation,” and He did so! We asked Him to take away His wrath from us, and we found that “His anger is but for a moment.” When weeping came to us for a night, joy appeared in the morning. It will be just the same with us during the next year. If we transgress and repent, and return to Him, we have an actual promise that He will forgive us. Now, what says the text? “The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” There is no peace like the peace which we have with God, and no peace with God like that which comes from a sense of His assured love! And belief in Christ for the pardon of sin gives us the blessing of non-condemnation. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” But this sense of non-condemnation may sometimes be destroyed through weakness of faith. We may be brought very low and our peace may be disturbed, but when we come back to the cross, and look once more to Him who died there, He is our peace and we see in Him that our peace is made with God—and then our peace becomes like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea! I think it would be impossible for me to describe peace. You must feel it to know it. Peace with God is like that clear shining we sometimes see after a heavy shower of rain. With the thunder and lightning it seemed as if heaven would be torn in pieces and all the earth shaken, and then, suddenly, it is all over and the sun shines forth! There is a rainbow with its many colors on the clouds, and all the flowers lift up their drooping heads, each one loaded with a gleaming benediction—and all the earth fragrant and smiling and seeming to steam forth the incense of gratitude! Now, after the storm of the conviction of sin, when the Spirit of God comes, it is as quiet and peaceful as that. And after a storm of trouble—and I know what that means—after a hurricane of trial, we can take all our distresses and cares and lay them down at God’s feet and feel that we need not care about them anymore!

But if my Father did not undertake them, I would not, for I cannot. He has promised He will, if I cast my cares upon Him. You sometimes walk out of this place when God has blessed your soul and feel, “Now, I do not know what may happen, and really I do not care what does. My heart is resting on my God—I have left it all to Him and I am sure it will be right, whatever may come.” Like Jonah, you may lose your gourd, but you cannot lose your God! You may see dark weather before you, but still you can go to Him who cannot fail you—and there shall your soul have repose. Now, that is the peace of God which passes all understanding, and therefore, it must surpass all expression. The peace of God which

can only be known by the man who enjoys it—a peace which the world does not give and cannot destroy, but which heaven, itself, can work in the soul! Now, may we have this blessing, “The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”

If we stopped here tonight and went no further, provided we got these blessings and fed upon them, it would be quite enough. Let me just read that text again clearly. “The LORD bless”—now the next word is the very pith of it, and let it be read now to each one of you, my good sisters and brothers, you who are young in years and young in divine grace, never mind who it is, so long as you are resting upon Christ—Jesus, the great High Priest, speaks from the eternal glory and He says, “The LORD bless *you*.” “Oh, but I do not deserve it!” Just so, but, “the LORD bless *you*.” “I am so unworthy, I am so backsliding!” Yes, but the Lord Jesus Christ knows all, covers all. We will read it, then, “The LORD bless *you—you*, and keep *you*: the LORD make His face to shine upon *you*, and be gracious unto *you*: the LORD lift up His countenance upon *you*, and give *you* peace.” Oh, have you got that worked into your very hearts? It will be like a bundle of myrrh that you may keep in your bosom and it will sweeten your soul the whole year round, making you to know that you are blessed in and of the Lord who made heaven and earth!

Now, I shall ask your attention for a little while to the second blessing, that spoken in God’s name by the apostle Paul, in the second Epistle to the Corinthians. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” Here we have—

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT BENEDICTION.

This second blessing is precisely like the first as to its essence and substance. But there is some little difference as to the expression and circumstance. The first thing that strikes me in reading it through, as it almost always does when I pronounce it, is this—you notice *it begins with the Lord Jesus Christ*. The Lord Jesus is the second person of the blessed divine unity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—but this benediction begins with the Son of God. Why is that? In the order of doctrine and fact, all infinite blessings begin with the Father. He is the fountainhead of creation. He is the fountain, Christ the channel and the Holy Spirit produces the grand results. Father first, Son next, Spirit third. But in the order of experience—the order in which the blessing comes—it is always the Son first. “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” Not the Father first, but the Son first! What a sinner learns to comfort him first is not that the Father loves Him. No. He learns first of all that Jesus Christ died for sinners because God loves Him—and so he puts his trust in Him. The first thing a poor believer gets, then, is grace through Jesus Christ. After that, perhaps, he may sometimes think that God the Father has no love

towards him, but as he begins to read his Bible and to experience more of divine grace in his heart, he finds that God the Father is full of love. So, then, he goes on and gets the love of God the Father. And when he knows this, perhaps he often wonders what communion may be of, and fellowship. And when he hears some of those delightful hymns which we sing at the Lord's Supper, he thinks he shall never get to them—to talk with God, to have communion with Christ—but, by and by, as the Lord leads him on, from being a babe, he grows to be a man and he gets into communion with the Holy Spirit. Babes in grace know “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” But as they grow they discover “the love of God our Father.” And as they grow still more, they come to “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.” The three things are put in the order of experience, not in the order of fact, nor the order of doctrine.

Having noticed that, just observe the three blessings as they come. “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, “though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be made rich.” You know His great poverty—you know His great grace which brought Him from yonder starry heavens to lie in a manger, to live in obscurity for 30 years and to die upon the cross in pains that cannot be told. Now, grace comes to us through Christ, and therefore, it is said, “by His grace.” He is the golden pipe through which it all flows. Believing in Him, we receive the mercy of God! Coming through Him to the mercy-seat, we obtain unnumbered favors by virtue of our union with Him. As the branch derives sap and then fruit from the vine, we derive grace from Him. He is to us the channel of all the good gifts of our heavenly Father. “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with you all.*” Be with you all—it is not in the singular—it is not to each one. It is, “with you *all,*” because the genius of the gospel is expansive. You notice the Redeemer's prayer. It is not *My* Father. No, but “*our* Father which are in heaven ” And the gospel's benediction, though it is personal—blessed be God for that—yet it is also expansive—“be with you *all.*” We are to think of all our brothers and sisters. When we get a blessing, we are to look upon ourselves as part of the divine family. When we come together to break bread, we do not come, each one alone—though it would be the Lord's Supper if only one man were there—but we come there in humble fellowship, one with the other! “Eat, drink you all, of this,” said Christ. “Take, eat, this is My body.” He would have all His disciples come there and partake. And so with this blessing of the grace of Jesus Christ—may it be with you all!

Has it been with us all during the past year? There are not so many here tonight as usual. May I, therefore, put the question to each one personally? Has it been with you—and you—and you? Have you, my hearers, known daily the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? Have you stood

by faith at the foot of the cross and felt that you rested your all on Him? If so, I know you possess His grace. He it is who has given you power to trust Him wholly and absolutely. All the grace there is in His great heart and mind belongs to you!—

***“Plenteous grace with Him is found,
Grace to cover all our sins.
May the healing streams abound,
Make and keep us pure within.”***

May it be with you all!

Next comes *“the love of the Father.”* It is from the love of God that everything blessed and blessing springs. We must not imagine that Jesus Christ died to induce His Father to love us—a very foolish and pernicious idea that! God the Eternal Father always loved His people and Christ has removed the sin which restrained the shinings of the most glorious manifestations of that love—but He loved before Christ died. You know you can boast—

***“‘Twas not to make the Father’s love
Towards His people sure,
That Jesus came from realms above!
‘Twas not the pangs He bore
That God’s eternal love procured,
For God was love before.”***

That fountain sprung up eternally! It was a well that needed no digging. Oh, dear friends, I trust we know what the love of God means. Has it not been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us? We shall know it in years to come, for where it once takes possession it never departs. Once in Christ, in Christ forever! In Christ’s love you have begun a banquet which will never end. “May the love of God be with you all,” is meant for all God’s people. But is that love present with all? If you have not tasted God’s love, you do not know what life, true life, means. The richest, the most celestial, the most transporting joy that mortal mind can know is a full assurance of the love of God! Dear hearer, do you love Christ? Can you answer the question, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” Then, if you have love for Christ, pure and true love and trust, if it is the fruit of God’s love to you, then be of good cheer! May the love of the Father be with you all your days!

Then comes *“the communion of the Holy Ghost (Spirit).”* That is a very ugly word—“Ghost.” A better translation of the original Greek word would be, “Spirit.” “Holy Spirit,” and I sometimes wish that we always called Him by that name. It is far more expressive. The word, “ghost,” bears such a strange and weird meaning, now, that it were better in this connection entirely to abandon it! The word, “communion,” means not only the Holy Spirit coming to us and having converse with us, but

communion means co-partnership. When the churches in Macedonia made a collection for the poor church in Judea, Paul called the collection, “communion,” because by means of giving money to the church in Judea they had a fellowship, something like having all things common—that is the perfection of fellowship!

Now, the Holy Spirit, if I may use the expression, has all things common with God’s people. He gives to them all things. “He shall lead you into truth.” What the Spirit knows and teaches us, we are able to bear. He knows the mind of God. He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. He gives us to participate in all that He possesses. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of peace. He gives us peace. He is the Spirit of holiness and sanctification—rather, He is the Spirit of light—He kindles light in our souls. He is a sacred fire. He baptized the church in fire. Everything that the Holy Spirit is and has, He is and has for the Church of God and in common with the church of God! Now, what an unspeakable blessing this is, to enter into a sacred co-partnership with God the Holy Spirit! To talk with Him, to live with Him, to feast with Him, to have Him to be ours and for us to be His! Now, may such a communion as this be with us! I question whether we have ever got up to the fullness of this.

I think I told you the other evening the story of a good woman who was a little distressed in her mind and who, in reading the passage, “Your Maker is your husband,” said, “Now, I won’t be distressed any longer. When my husband was alive, I took care to live up to my income and now I will take care to live up to my heavenly husband’s income.” Oh, I wish to get hold of living up to God’s income, for all He has is given to His people! What rich lives we would have if we were to participate in all that He has! We would be continually feeling His power in our souls. Have we done this? May each one of you say, “Lord, give me to know the communion of the Holy Spirit all my days, until I shall be taken up to dwell where You reveal Yourself without a veil between!”

Now, in closing, you see the difference between the two benedictions is this—the second blessing is really *exhibited*, the first a little veiled—something like Moses, when his face was too bright for the people to look upon, he put a veil upon his face. So the blessing Aaron pronounced is not so distinct or clear as the apostolic blessing. Note, again, that the blessings in the second benediction are *deeper*—they are traced up to their source in the Triune Godhead, “Grace, love and communion.” The one is a deep, the other a great deep. Note, yet again, that they are wider. The blessings of the Old Testament are individual and personal—to “you.” The blessings in the New Testament are to the Corinthian church and to all the churches—“with you all.”

In the first case there was a confirmation and in the second case there is one also—"Amen," which is the divine confirmation of this benediction.

But I notice in the apostolic benediction there is one thing which there is not in the first, namely, *the communion*, that is, the privilege—the privilege which comes to a child of God in this age of bliss when Christ is fully revealed. Did you ever notice that when John was born, an angel appeared to his father, Zacharias, to announce that Christ was come? No sooner did that bell begin to ring to tell that Christ was coming, than what happened? The greatest blessing was about to be pronounced, and therefore, the smaller blessing had to be silenced. When Zacharias came out, he was expected to bless the people, but what did he do? He could not speak a word—he was speechless and he beckoned with his hand—and that morning the assembly went home without the benediction! The priest could not pronounce it. Now, I dare say they said one to another, "What a strange thing it was. We always had that benediction before, 'The Lord bless you, and keep you,' but this morning the priest could not speak a word." You and I know what that means. We must stop that one because there is a better coming! God seemed, as it were, to give notice to His people, "I am about to hush the voice of Aaron because Melchisedec is coming. I am about to stop the sound of the symbolic, because the real priest is coming. I am about to hush the voice of Zacharias because the Son of God is now to appear and declare that the fullest blessing of Jehovah will rest upon His people."

Now, let us go our separate ways tonight, guided home, I trust, safely and rightly. And let us feed upon and make our soul's bread the two precious texts that have been before us. And I am not afraid but that you will be like those who went out to gather the manna—you shall each have enough! He who needs much shall have in abundance and he who requires little shall have no lack. Let us close by singing the blessing and go our way to turn all life into a song of gratitude for God's rich benedictions! Amen.

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CONVERSION AND CHARACTER

NO. 3372

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors opened, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do yourself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas. And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house. And they spoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”
Acts 16:24-34.

THE work of God at Philippi went on very quietly and successfully in the hands of Paul and Silas. It was the commencement of the gospel in Europe and very auspicious were its circumstances. The good work was intimately connected with prayer-meetings, which for this reason should always wear a charm for Europeans.

Godly women met together for devotion. Paul spoke to them and households were converted and baptized. The work went on delightfully, but the devil, as usual, must put in his foot! To any who judged according to the sight of the eyes, it must have seemed a most unfortunate circumstance that a poor woman having a spirit of divination came in Paul’s way. It was a sad ruffling of the gentle stream of prosperity when, on account of his casting the demon out of her, the apostle and his companion were dragged by the mob before the magistrates, shamefully beaten and thrown into prison. Now the preacher’s mouth would be stopped, as far as the people of Philippi outside the jail gates were concerned. No more of those delightful prayer-meetings and Bible readings and opening up of the Scriptures. Surely there was cause for the deepest regret. It might have appeared so, but like a great many other incidents connected with Christian work, the

matter could not be judged by the outward appearance, for the Lord had a secret and blessed design which was being answered by the apparent disaster! Servants of Jesus Christ, never be discouraged when you are opposed, but when things run counter to your wishes, expect that the Lord has provided some better thing for you! He is driving you away from shallow waters and bringing you into deeper seas where your nets shall bring you larger draughts. Paul and Silas must go to prison because a chosen person was to be converted in the prison who could not otherwise be reached!

No, it was not only one person who was to be saved, but eternal love had fixed its eyes upon a whole house! The members of this elect family could by no other means be brought to Christ but through Paul and Silas being cast into prison! And, therefore, into prison they must go—to do more by night in their chains than they could have done by day if they had been free—and to bring to Christ some that would be more illustrious trophies of the grace of God than any they could have gathered had they been preaching in the streets of Philippi! God knows where it is best for His servants to be and how it is best for them to be! If He foresees that they will do more good with their backs scarred than they would have done if they had escaped the flagellation, then their bodies must bear the marks of the Lord Jesus and they must rejoice to have it so! Brothers and sisters, we do not like the sick bed—we would not choose aching limbs—especially those of us who are of an active disposition and would be perpetually telling out the love of Christ! And yet in our temporary imprisonment we have seen the Lord's wisdom and have had to look back with thankfulness upon it. Oh, children of God, your Father knows best! Leave everything in His hands and be at peace, for all is well. May the Holy Spirit work quietness of heart in you.

Our subject is the jailer of Philippi, and first, we shall say a little as to *what kind of man he was before conversion*. Secondly, we shall consider *what was the occasion of his conversion*. And then, thirdly, we will notice *what sort of convert he made* when the grace of God brought him to Jesus' feet.

First, then—

I. WHAT SORT OF MAN WAS THIS JAILER BEFORE HIS CONVERSION? He is a remarkable instance of the power of divine grace, but he ought not to be spoken of as a notably great transgressor, for of this there is no trace, whatever! He was, like ourselves, full of sin and iniquity, but we find no record of anything especially bad about him. I see no reason why Mr. Wesley should so severely stigmatize him as he does in his lines—

***“What but the power which wakes the dead
Could reach a stubborn jailer's heart,
In cruelty and rapine bred,
Who took the ancient murderer's part?”***

***Could make a hardened ruffian feel,
And shake him over the mouth of hell?"***

On the contrary, we shall be able to show that the jailer's salvation is an instance of the grace of God saving one of an admirable moral character, one in whom there were most commendable points—a man of such regularity and decision that he was not so much saved from vice as from self-righteousness! I take it, from the little we know of him, that he was a fine specimen of stern Roman discipline—a *man full of respect for those in authority and prompt in obedience to orders*. He was a jailer and he had to act, not on his own responsibility, but on the command of others, and this he scrupulously did. When we read, "having received *such a charge*," we infer that he carefully followed the tenor of his orders and attentively observed the weight which the magistrates threw into them. He, therefore, thrust the apostle and his friend into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. You can see that he was thorough-going in obedience to authority, for afterwards, although he might have liked to retain the apostle and Silas in his house, yet, when the magistrates sent him word, he spoke to his beloved guests as an official was bound to do, waiving, in some respects, the friend, and tersely saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now, therefore, depart and go in peace." It strikes me that he was an old soldier—a legionary who had fought and done rough work in his younger days and then settled down, appointed on account of his good behavior to the important post of governor of the jail of Philippi. With his family about him, he occupied himself in attending to his duties as a jailer and carried them out with the strictest regularity. For this he is to be commended—for it is expected of men that they be found faithful.

I say, then, that I regard him as an instance of a man whose mind was molded according to the Roman type, a person subservient to discipline and strict in obedience to rule. I grant that there was a little harshness about his fulfilling the orders concerning Paul and Silas, for he seems to have "*thrust*" them into the dungeon with some violence. But we cannot object to their being placed in the inner prison, or to their feet being made fast in the stocks, because his orders were that he should keep them safely—and he was only doing his best to secure this. He was not responsible for the order of the magistrates and when the prisoners were brought to him fresh from the lictor's rods with a strict charge, what was he to do but to obey it to the letter? He did so and does not deserve to be called a ruffian for it. His ruling idea was that he was a servant of the government and bound to carry out his instructions—and was he not right? Such men are very necessary in government employ—I cannot tell how public business could be done without them.

Notice that before he went to bed he saw that the prison doors were all fastened and the lights put out. Even Roman jailers were open to bribes

and though lights had to be extinguished at a certain hour of the night, it was still possible to burn your lamp if you placed a little oil upon the jailer's palm. But there was no lamp in the jail of Philippi, for when the keeper, himself, needed a light, he had to call for it. All lamps were out at the proper time and all chains were on every person—for the narrative says that, by the earthquake, "Every man's chains were loosed," which they could not be if they were already unbound. The inmates were all secured in their cells and the whole building was in due order. This shows that the keeper of the prison attended to his business thoroughly, nothing turning him aside from the most correct observance of his instructions.

Well, all being shut up, he has gone to bed and is fast asleep, as he should be, in the middle of the night, so as to be fit for *his morning's work*. But what happens?—

***"Paul and Silas, in their prison,
Sang of Christ, the Lord arisen!
And an earthquake's arm of might
Broke their dungeon gates at night."***

See how every timber in the house quivers and he awakes out of his sleep! What is his first thought? To my mind, it is fine to observe that he has no terror for himself or family, but at once rushes from his room to look to the prison below. Seeing the prison doors open, he was alarmed. He does not seem to have been in any alarm about his wife and his family, though the earthquake must have shaken the rooms in which they were, but his one concern was his prison and its contents. Under the seal and authority of the Roman Emperor, he was bound to keep the prisoners safe—and when he wakes, his first thought concerns his duty. I wish that all Christians were as faithful in their offices as this man! When as yet he was unenlightened, he was *faithful to those who employed him*. It is a grand thing when a man, placed in an office of responsibility, has his work so much upon his mind that if he starts up in the middle of the night and finds the floor under him reeling with an earthquake, the main thing he thinks about is the duty which he has engaged to fulfill. It ought to be so with Christian servants, with Christian trustees, managers and confidential clerks—and indeed with all Christian men and women placed in offices of trust! Your chief concern should be to be found faithful—it was so with the jailer.

Now notice, as he finds the prison doors open, this stern Roman *fears that he shall be disgraced*, for he feels sure that the prisoners must have fled. Naturally they would escape when the doors were open and as he could not confront the charge of unfaithfulness in his office, he drew his sword in haste and would have killed himself. For this proposed suicide he is to be most severely censured, but still note the stern Brutus-like fidelity of the man. He cannot endure the charge of having allowed his prisoners to escape, but would rather kill himself. Is it not singular that

this Philippi was the place where Cassius committed suicide? Where Brutus also slew himself? Here this man would have added another name to these who laid violent hands upon themselves—and all because he feared that he would lose his character? He preferred death to dishonor. All these things show that he was a man sternly upright and determined to perform his duty. I am always doubly glad when such men are saved, because it does not often happen—such persons too often wrap themselves up in the sense of having walked uprightly towards their fellow men. And because after the lapse of many years, they stand high in public esteem and everybody says the country never had better servants, they are apt to forget their Master in heaven and their obligations to their Lord—apt to have a blind eye towards their own shortcomings and to be little inclined to sit as little children at the feet of Jesus, unless some wondrous deed of divine grace is worked upon them! Hence we admire the grace of God which brought such a man trembling to the apostle's feet!

The jailer was *a person of few words*. He was not a great talker, but a prompt actor. We only know three things that he said. First, he called for a light. And next he cried, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" a terse, laconic question—respectful, earnest, to the point, having not a word too much or too little in it. His other speech to Paul was of the same order when he said, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now, therefore, depart and go in peace." You would not expect a jailer to use very flowery language—he was accustomed to measure his syllables when he spoke to his prisoners, never uttering a word beyond the statute in that case made and provided. Thus he had acquired a hard, businesslike style of speech. Men of such a type are often cold as so many statues. We find it hard to warm their hearts, and therefore, we bless the grace of God which made this man's heart to burn within him and snapped the bonds of cold routine, so that, after his conversion, he feasted the ministers of Christ and rejoiced with all his house!

It may be well to make one more remark. It is evident that he was *a man of action, of precision and decision*. Once let him know what is to be done, and he does it! He acts as a man under authority having wardens under him. He says to this man, "Go," and he goes. And he acts mechanically as his superiors command him. He was a man who, I suppose, opened the prison doors always to a minute at the right time in the morning for those who went out to exercise, measured out the meals of the prisoners to the ounce and shut up the cells and put out the lights exactly at the fixed hour at night. I see it in him. Precise obedience is his main point. When he was bid to believe, he believed. He was also immediately baptized. What he lacked in speech, he made up in deeds. He obeyed the Lord Jesus immediately, then and there. I love to see a man brought to Christ who has orderliness and decision about him.

Some of us are rough beings, needing a deal of combing to bring us into shape. But certain others are shapely after their way from the first and all that they need is spiritual life. When the divine life comes, their habits are in beautiful consistency with the inward law of obedience and holy order. Still, it is not often that persons of this class are saved, for these very orderly people frequently think that they have no sin and so the warnings addressed to sinners do not come home to them. For instance, a man says, "Never since I took my position as manager of my master's business have I wasted an hour of his time, or a shilling of his substance." This is well, but the devil is ready with the suggestion, "You are a good and faithful servant. What need have you to humble yourself before Christ and seek His mercy and grace?" It is a most blessed thing when this tendency is overcome. I see the divine splendor of grace as much in the conversion of the faultless moralist as in the repentance of Manasseh, or of that woman who was a sinner, of whom we spoke a little while ago. It is as hard to deliver a man from self-righteousness as from unrighteousness, as difficult to deliver one man from the frostbite of his own orderliness as to save another from the heat of his unbridled passions. Converts like the jailer are very precious and very sweetly display the love and power of God! Now, secondly—

II. WHAT OCCASIONED THE JAILER'S CONVERSION?

The narrative is short and we cannot, therefore, get much out of it. I think, however, that we are warranted in believing that this man had received some measure of instruction before the earnest midnight cry of, "What must I do to be saved?" Perhaps the often repeated testimony of the Pythoness had been reported to him, for it must have been a matter of general notoriety throughout the town of Philippi that this woman, who was supposed to be inspired, had testified that Paul and Silas were "servants of the Most High God." It is also very possible that when he was fitting on the irons to these holy men and roughly thrusting them into the inner prison, their quiet manner, like sheep at the slaughter, and perhaps their godly words, also, may have carried information to his mind. What he saw and heard did not savingly impress him, for he showed the apostles no sort of courtesy, but, as I have already said, was somewhat harsh with them. "He thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks," so that at that time he had no belief in their mission and but small respect for their character. He felt, it is clear, no compunction, for he went up to his chamber and fell asleep—nothing of any importance was on his mind, notwithstanding what the apostles may have said to him. A young divine in a flowery sermon described the jailer as converted through hearing Paul and Silas sing at midnight. A very beautiful picture he made of it, but it had the drawback of being untrue, for the jailer did not hear them sing. "The prisoners heard them," for they were all down in the vaults under the jailer's house, but it is

clear that the keeper of the prison did not hear them, for he was asleep until the earthquake startled him.

I have also heard it said that he was converted through fear of death—a most ridiculous remark, for how could he be afraid to die who was going to kill himself? No, he was too brave a man to be moved by terror. He was afraid of nothing but of being suspected of neglect of duty. He was a soldier without fear and without reproach, dreading dishonor infinitely more than death! He was a stern disciplinarian and thought little of his own life or the lives of others. He would have ridden in the charge of Balaclava, with all the rest of them, bravely enough—

***“His not to reason why—
His but to dare and die.”***

You can see that it was not fear that brought him to the feet of the apostle. I do not doubt that some are brought to Christ by fear of death, but one is a little suspicious of such conversions—for he who is frightened to the Savior by fear of death may possibly run away from Him when he perceives that his fear has no immediate cause.

Others, too, have thought that he was made to tremble because he was afraid of being brought before Caesar for permitting his prisoners to escape. That fear may have hurried him into the desperate intent of suicide, but it was not the cause of his conversion, for all distress upon that point was gone before he cried out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” In fact, he came to Paul and Silas because that fear had been banished by hearing the calm and brave voice of the apostle as he said, “Do yourself no harm: we are all here.” It was not even a fear of censure from the magistrates which compelled him to tremble, for that, also, had been removed by finding the prisoners still in their cells. And though the whole of these things together make up the circumstances of his conversion, they cannot be put down as the cause of it, since this last, especially, had ceased to operate upon him when he fell trembling at the apostle’s feet.

What was it, then, which led to the jailer’s faith and baptism? I answer, partly the miracle that the doors were opened and the prisoners’ chains loosed by an earthquake. And coupled with that, the fact that none of them had escaped. What gladness filled his bosom! He would not be arraigned, after all, for being unfaithful to his trust. How strange that the prisoners were all there. What a conflict was there in his spirit! What anxiety and what sudden quelling of his alarm! There was no need to commit suicide lest he should be blamed, for there was nothing for which to blame him. What deliverance for him! An awful power was abroad and yet it had taken care of him. A mingled feeling of mystery and gladness created astonishment and gratitude in his bosom. He could not make it out, it was so singular—he had been brought to the verge of a precipice—and yet was safe. “Do yourself no harm: we are all here,” rang out like

music in his ears! He felt a solemn awe of those two prisoners whose voices had reassured him. Their voices had been to him as the very voice of God sounding forth along those corridors out of the innermost cells. Their bold, truthful, confident, calm tones had astonished him! He had seen before something very singular about those two men, but now the very tone in which they conveyed to him the glad intelligence which banished his worst fear filled him with deep reverence towards them—and he feels that no doubt these men are the servants of the Most High God, and therefore, he calls for a light, breaks in upon their darkness and brings them out.

While this was transpiring, he was brought very near to the world to come by the fact of the sword having been so near his breast, by the earthquake that had started all the stones of the dungeon, by the singular power of God miraculously holding every freeman as fast as if he had been bound and by the presence of men whom he perceived to be linked with deity. This nearness to things unseen caused him to look over his past life. He was calm, despite the confusion of the night, for he was not a man to be frightened. But conscience, which in him was quick and prompt, from the very habit of obedience, reviewed his past life, judged it and condemned it—and he felt that he was a lost man because of his multiplied shortcomings before the living God, whose servants were there present. For this reason he cried out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” It was none other than the blessed and eternal Spirit, unfolding before him his life which he had thought to be so correct, making him to see the evil of it and striking him down with a sense of guilt and a dread of consequent punishment! So far we trace his convictions to an awakened conscience visited by the Spirit of God.

His full conversion grew out of the further instructions of the apostles. That answer was very like his short question in fullness of meaning—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.” This was condensed gospel for him. And then followed a blessed commentary upon it, when the apostle spoke the word of the Lord both to him and to all his house. All this lit up his mind, which was already willing to receive the truth of God, a mind which, from the very habit of obedience, was quick and prompt to accept the sway of the Lord Jesus. He received the Word of God in the love of it most sweetly, God the Holy Spirit blessing it to him while he listened. There was plain teaching and a simple heart to receive it—and the two together made quick work of it and made resplendent that strange midnight which was, henceforth in that house, regarded as the beginning of days!

Now, dear friend, I want you to thank God for the circumstances which surround any man’s conversion, for all things are well ordered. If the Lord has been pleased to call you by His divine grace, do not begin judging your conversion because the circumstances were not very

remarkable! And do not suspect your friend's sincerity because there was no earthquake in connection with his new birth, for the Lord may not be in the earthquake, nor in the wind, nor in the fire, but in that "still small voice" which calls the heart to Jesus! The matter is not how you came to Christ, but are you there? It is not *what* brought you, so much as *who* brought you. Did the Spirit of God lead you to repentance? Are you resting at the cross? If so, then, whether, like Lydia your heart was gently opened, or, like this jailer, you were startled and awakened, and thus made to perceive grand Truths to which you had been a stranger before—it does not matter as long as Christ is believed in and your heart yields itself to His blessed sway! Our third point—and may the Spirit of God help us in it—is to notice—

III. WHAT SORT OF CONVERT THIS MAN MADE.

First, you are quite sure he made a very *believing* convert. The gospel command came to him—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house"—and he did believe, believed firmly, without raising questions or discussions, without delays, or hesitations! How many there are among those whose conversion we seek after who meet us always with a, "but." We put the truth of God plainly and they reply, "Yes—but—" Then we go over it again and put it in another shape, and they still say, "But." We tell them that salvation is by believing in Jesus Christ and they answer "*but.*" This man, however, had no, "buts." He was told to believe and he did believe—and who would not—who knows how true the gospel is? Who will not believe what is true? Who will not rely upon that which is divinely certified? Why should we reject what thousands have proved to be true by a gladsome experience? Ah, unbelief, what an enemy you are to multitudes who hear the gospel! But you were utterly cast out of the jailer—he heard the command to believe, and though he had received slender instruction, he nevertheless believed unto eternal life. He was a convert full of faith!

Next, what a *humble* Christian he was. He fell down at the feet of the servants of God, not feeling himself worthy to stand in their presence. And then, though their jailer, he took them up into his house and waited upon them with gladness. The man who is really born-again does not demand the best seat in the synagogue, nor disdain to perform the meanest service. It is poor evidence of a renewed heart when a man must always be the fore horse in the team, or else he will do nothing at all! He who knows the Lord loves to sit at Christ's feet—the lower the place, the better for him. He is even glad to wash the saints' feet, yes, he thinks it an honor! If you Christian people must dispute about precedence, always fight for the lowest place! If you aspire to be last and least, you will not have many competitors—there will be no need to demand a poll, for the lowest seat is undisputed. Humility is the way to a peaceful life—and the

jailer began to practice it in his behavior to his prisoners, who were now his pastors!

What a *ready* convert he was! In that one midnight he passed through several stages—hearing, believing, baptizing, service, rejoicing and fellowship—and all within an hour! No long waiting for him! I wish more converts were like he. What slow coaches we have to deal with. You travel by broad-wheeled wagon to heaven, even you who rush along by express train in the world's business! Yes, you must attend to the world, and my Lord and Master may wait your convenience, as Felix puts it! But this should not be. As soon as you know what your Lord would have you to do, every moment of unnecessary delay is a sin! The jailer had been prompt in other duties and he was just as decided with regard to divine things! He was such a convert as we like to have in our churches to set an example of quick obedience to the great captain of our salvation. Soldierly habits sanctified by grace are greatly needed in the church of God—would God we saw more of them!

Then see what a *practical* convert he was! “He took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and set meat before them.” All that he could do, he did at once, and his wife and children were all busy to help him. It is not easy to fit up a feast in the middle of the night, but the good wife did her best—cold meats were brought forth from the stores and such good cheer as they had was set out so that the two good men, who, no doubt, needed refreshment, were sufficiently supplied. I think I see that midnight festival even now! How the young children caught up every word which was spoken by the holy men and how glad they were to see them at their table! They all believed and were all baptized, and therefore they were all eager to do something for the men of God. How pleased they were to fetch the good men up into the best parlor—how eager to put them into the easiest chairs and let them sit in comfort, or recline at their ease. They did not wait till morning, but showed kindness without delay! This is the sort of convert the church needs—one who delights to serve the Lord and is no sooner converted than he sets to work in his own hearty way! May the Lord send us scores of such conversions!

Friend, have you ever done anything for the Lord or His cause? “No, sir. Nobody has set me anything to do.” What? Live in these busy times and *need* somebody to find you Christian employment? Why, you are not worth setting to work! He who lives in a great city and cannot find something to do for God had better not get off his knees till he has asked his Lord to have mercy upon his lazy soul! Here are people dying all round us, and being lost forever through ignorance, drunkenness and sins of every kind—and yet a young man of 21 stands up and says that he cannot find anything to do! You are idle. You are very idle! Does not Solomon say, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your

might?" You need not open your eyes to find good work to do, only put out your hand and there it is! For the love of Jesus, begin to serve Him as this jailer and his wife and family did!

Notice, again, that they were very *joyful* converts. He "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." The apostle was happy that night. His poor back was smarting, but his heart was leaping within him! And Silas, too, who had shared the scourging, he also shared the joy! How lovingly the jailer looked upon his two instructors, how tenderly he washed their stripes. As he had thrown them into the inner prison, so he brought them into his own house. What overflowing joy was in his heart! I think while he was waiting at the table, he would, every now and then, stop and wonder at what divine grace had done! Would he not ask the apostle to teach him that Psalm which had been sung below stairs? I am sure he would have sung heartily had he known that hymn which you so much delight in, wherein each one declares—

"I am so glad that Jesus loves me!"

Joy ruled at that midnight feast, and well it might, for the prison had become a palace and the jailer an heir of heaven!

This man was an *influential* convert, for, through this conversion, all his house was led to believe. And he was also a *sensible* convert, which is worth notice, for it is not every Christian that is wise and prudent. Some zealous people are in a hurry to give up their secular callings. Such would say, "I cannot be a jailer any longer. I must give it up." A Roman jailer would have much to do which would grate upon Christian feelings, but there was nothing positively wrong in the office. Somebody must be jailer and who so fit for the post as a man who knows the Lord and will, therefore, manifest a gentle, humane spirit? Who so fit to have poor creatures entrusted to him as one who will not swear at them, or treat them roughly, but who will seek their good? Why, I think if a man wanted to be a missionary to those who needed him most, he might desire to be a jailer, for he would be sure to get at the very people who most require the gospel! The Philippian convert was in his right place, and instead of saying, "Ah, I must give up my situation and live with Christian people," he was wise enough to stay at the jail and abide in his calling.

Observe that when the magistrates tell him that Paul is to go, he does not violate their order out of zeal for the faith. He had no right to keep Paul as a guest in his house against the magistrates' will, or he would gladly have retained him. But being bound by his office and by the fact that his apartments were part of the jail, when Paul was told to go, he said to him, "Now, therefore, go in peace." The words look somewhat curt, but no doubt he uttered them in such a kind and courteous manner that the apostle quite understood him. Then Paul went down to Lydia's house and I dare say the jailer came down to see him there, so

that if they could not meet at the jail without breach of regulations, they could meet at Lydia's hospitable abode. He was quite right in maintaining the discipline of the jail and his sincere affection for the apostle at the same time.

My own belief is that he and Lydia were ever afterwards two of the kindest friends that the apostle ever had—and were chief among those who contributed of their substance to his necessities. Paul took no money from any but the Philippians. Though other churches offered to contribute, Paul declined. But when the Philippians sent to him once and again, he accepted their gifts as a sacrifice of sweet smell. He said within himself, "All the family send this gift. All Lydia's household and all the jailer's household are believers, so that no member of the family will grudge what is sent to me." One likes to see brought into the Christian church those who will continue in their business and make money for Jesus Christ and lay themselves out to serve the Lord in a practical fashion. Many a man gets into a pulpit and spoils a congregation who, if he had stuck to his business and made money that he might help the poor, or aid the cause of missions, or support the church of God, would have been more truly serving the great cause. He was a sensible convert, this jailer, and I rejoice in him!

And now, if I have been addressing anybody not a jailer, but a person in a position of trust, and if you have a feeling that you have done faithfully, I am glad of it. I am not going to dispute your claim to integrity towards man, nor to undervalue honesty and faithfulness, but oh, remember, you need to be saved! Notwithstanding your moral excellence, you will be lost unless you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Do see to this. May the Holy Spirit lead you at once to accept the gospel of grace, for you need it even as others. May you become a firm believer in Jesus, and may the church find in you a willing and earnest helper.

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MAN'S SCORN AND GOD'S SUCCOR

NO. 3373

A SERMON

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*"My friends scorn me; but my eyes pour out tears unto God."
Job 16:20.*

WE know that Job's sorrows were recorded, not for his honor, but for our profit. We are told to consider the patience of Job and truly we might often be sustained, cheered and comforted if we would but look upon that patriarch in the depths of his grief. We are "born to sorrow" and if our cup is not embittered with it tonight, we must not expect to be long without a taste of the gall in our mouths.

There is one particular sorrow, however, which appertains to the early days of our spiritual life, concerning which I intend to speak tonight. It is the sorrow caused by the scorning of us by our friends. This becomes a very little sorrow to us in later days, but at the first it is a "trial of cruel mocking," and a very severe one. I suppose the advanced Christian at last can even come to "rejoice in tribulations" of this sort—he counts it to be an honor—he rejoices and is exceedingly glad when men say all manner of evil against him falsely for Christ's name's sake. But at the first there is nothing, perhaps, more staggering to the young Christian than to find that his "worst foes" are they of his own household and that they who should have cherished and nurtured in him the piety which is so excellent a flower, do their cruel worst to nip it in the bud!

Without further preface, therefore, we shall try, as the Holy Spirit shall teach and help us, to speak to you upon *a very common trial*, "My friends scorn me." And then, yet again, meditate on *a remarkable resort and exercise*, "But my eyes pour out tears unto God." First, then, let us think upon—

I. A VERY COMMON TRIAL.

"My friends scorn me." What is it they do? They *scorn* me. I shall apply the text tonight to scorn on account of religion. It is lately, my dear young friends—I address myself particularly to you—it is lately that you have been impressed. It is lately that you have considered your ways. There has been an evident alteration in you. You have become of a serious cast of mind. You are now a seeker—you desire salvation. For this reason your friends scorn you. Perhaps they say that you are so miserable that they cannot bear your company. Probably the remark is correct and you feel it to be so, but they do not know that this misery of yours will end in perfect joy. They do not comprehend this rough plowing of your soul, which is preparatory to the joyful harvest. They do not

understand that the good physician often uses the lancet and opens wide the wound before He comes with His downy fingers to close it and to heal it. You are miserable and you might expect them, therefore, to be the more gentle with you and to help your faith as much as possible, but instead of that, they continually tell you that your company is altogether unbearable—and so they scorn you. Meanwhile, they also insinuate that the attention which you are now paying to religious matters is with a sinister motive and design. They say that you are a hypocrite! They cannot understand that there can be such a thing as religious sincerity. To them it is all hypocrisy. They suppose that all those who seek to live godly lives in Christ Jesus are merely making a pretense with a view to some personal advantage. Do not be surprised if they insinuate that you “cant,” if they mimic any tone that may be peculiar to you—if in any and every way possible they throw in your face the insinuation that you are false and hypocritical. And, perhaps, they also twit you with your faults, which are, alas, too many—and are near the surface—and so very easily visible to them.

The old proverb says, “It is easy enough to find a stick with which to beat a dog,” and it is very easy for our friends with whom we live to rake up some fault of ours, to exaggerate it, and then to strike us as hard as they can with it! Very difficult, indeed, would it be for us to live so as to give them no such opportunity. Even when most careful, our very carefulness is sneered at as sanctimoniousness! And if we are particular, then we are severe, rigid, and worst of all, “Puritanical.”

So that, do what we will, we must expect to have faults laid at our door. This is hard to bear. Your friends, in this respect, scorn you. And all the while they also tell you that, make what pretenses you may, it is not at all likely that any good will come out of your religion. It is, they say, an old wives' fable and a cunning story. They have never proved the power of it in their own souls—they know no better, and therefore, they tell you to eat, drink, and be merry—fools as they are to think that this poor flesh and blood ought to have the first care before the soul that is born for better things! Fools, I say, as they are, to think that it ever can be wisdom to live for this little span of time and to forget eternity, which knows no end! Yet they will tell you to live while you live, that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, to snatch the present joy. They say, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die and leave the spirit-world and the land that is to be revealed to those speculative minds who may care for such things!” And so, with a hoarse laugh, they would dismiss religion from you, or persuade you, if possible, to forget it. But, my dear friends, you cannot forget it, for if God is dealing with you! His arrows stick fast in the soul. When the Spirit of God comes to deal with a man, if all the devils in Hell and all the sinners on earth should laugh around him all day long, it would only drive the shafts deeper into his soul! He who has never felt the power of the world to come is easily driven out of his profession, but he who has once been plowed and harrowed by the mighty plowman of conviction can never forget it! I recollect when my

sins lay heavy upon me. I would not have been ashamed to have stood up before a parliament of kings and said that I knew sin to be exceedingly sinful, and that I thought that the sentence of my condemnation had gone forth from God. Yet, as to having any Scriptural thoughts, they were squeezed out of me by the rough hand of my conscience. I knew that sin was evil before God and that sin would destroy my soul. How could I doubt it when the hot sweat of horror stood on my brow at the thought of my past life? Doubts then soon fled to the winds! Ah, if God is so dealing with you, sore as the trial is, of being mocked by unbelieving friends, you will bear it and will come out of the ordeal none the worse! But still, meanwhile, I remind you that Job himself had to say, "My friends scorn me."

Who are these people who scorn you? They *are your friends* and that makes it the harder to bear. Caesar said, "Et tu Brute?"—"And you, Brutus? Do you stab?" So, too, one of our Lord's sharpest griefs was, "*He that eats bread with Me* has lifted up his heel against Me." It is hard for a young Christian to be persecuted by the father to whose judgment he has always looked up with respect. Harder still is it for a Christian woman to find the partner of her bosom steeled against her for the truth of God's sake. Oh, how they can get at our hearts, these husbands and these wives of ours—and if they happen to be enemies of Christ, what wounds they can make! "My friends scorn me." You would not mind if it were merely the workpeople in the shop. You could escape from them, but you cannot escape from your own family. You would not mind it if the ribald herds around you mocked and taunted you, but some of your friends are people of excellent character in all points but one! One thing they lack, but the other things they have in such a degree that you almost blush to think that they excel you—and then it is very difficult to have a jeer from such. You had hoped that they would sympathize with you, instruct you and encourage you—but the very people to whom you looked for assistance have turned against you! One thing let me say—if those who have thus scorned you are merely "friends," and are not related to you, they prove that they are *not* true friends—part from their company, I pray you!

But if they are those with whom Providence has united you with such bonds, that you must look upon it as being a part of the cross which you have to carry, well, then, you must take up that cross daily, even though it is a heavy and painful one, that you may follow your Lord and Master, Jesus Christ! When the three holy children were cast into the furnace, it was at least out of doors and away from their dwelling. And but for God's rescue it would have destroyed them. But to have a furnace indoors and to have it always blazing—to go home every night into that furnace and to feel each day that the coals are heaped upon you, and still to hold on and refuse to bow the knee to evil, but still remain the true servant of Jesus Christ—oh, the ordeal is terribly severe! Job said that his enemies scorned him and why should you be allowed to escape, or expect to come

off better than Job? I do trust that this will be in the nature of a good thing for you. It will make you feel less dependent upon an arm of flesh. It will drive you to God and I am sure that those make the strongest Christians who have to come out most distinctly and separately from their fellows. It is the very best enjoyment. The Covenanters tell us in their lives that the happiest seasons they ever had were among the bogs, swamps, mountains and the brown heath of Scotland when Claverhouse's dragoons were after them! Then Christ seemed doubly precious to them, when the world had cast them out on the heath. Oh, there is no talk with Christ so sweet as that which He gives His people when they walk up the bleak side of the hill with Him, with the snow blowing in their teeth! Then He covers them with the mantle of His love and lets His soul out in springs of love, comfort and delight to them! Some of you who do not have persecution might almost wish to have it that you might know those dear delights, those intimate communing which Christ gives to His people in the day of battle and in the time of torment! Your friends may scorn you, but "there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother." Come to Him and He will not scorn you, but will be your great Comforter!

Your friends scorn you, but why do they do so? They do it you know not why. If it is on account of religion, I think I know the philosophy of it. They scorn you because *you are different from them*. I saw a canary light on the roof of a house opposite to a window where I was standing—and in almost a second afterwards some 30 or 40 sparrows surrounded it and began pecking away at it—and the reason was very obvious. It was of a different color from themselves. If it had been a sparrow, of their own dark, smoky, dusty hue, they would have let it alone. But here was a golden-winged stranger from the sunny isles and they must persecute it! And so, if you are a bird of paradise, you will find that word of the prophet to be true, "My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird—the birds round about are against her." So you will find the birds round about you—the ravens, hawks and vultures—against you. You are not understood, you know. If you are a true Christian, you cannot be understood! The greatest puzzle to a worldly man is a Christian! He is moved by motives which the worldling cannot understand. He is influenced by fears and hopes to which the worldling is a total stranger. They did not know your Lord—why should they know you? They crucified the Lord of glory, not understanding that He was God, and so "it does not yet appear" what you are, nor does the world value you at your proper worth. Do not be astonished at it—it is partly malice and partly ignorance that leads men to scorn you! If, my dear friend, you are a thorough-going Christian, you must not expect to escape scorn! Your life is a standing protest against the lives of others! You fear God, and they do not. You cannot live as they live. You cannot talk as they talk and when they note even your silence, it becomes provoking to them! If the world could have its way, it would not have a Christian living in it. "No," the worldlings would say, "That man is a living provocation to our

conscience—he thrusts thorns into our pillows and will not let us rest.” I am thankful if this is the case with you. And if so, it accounts for very much of the scorning which your friends pour upon you; I will not dwell upon the subject, however; you will have to find out the reason probably in your later experience.

But now, what is *the best thing for you to do* if your friends scorn you? Well, do not defend yourself! Do not get bad-tempered about it. Do not answer them. The best reply is, in most cases, complete silence. Only speak when you are quite sure that it is better to speak than to hold your tongue. Never give scorn for scorning. Remember that a worldly man may resist evil if he will, but Christ says to his friends, “I say unto you, resist not evil, and when you are smitten on one cheek, turn the other also.” I know that many of those good old non-resistance texts are looked upon as being quite out-of-date—as part of the Bible that is not to be preached. Well, when I get information from the skies that the text is to be covered over or silenced, I will say nothing about it—but as long as I find it there, I must say to you that that which men of the world call “pluck” and “fine spirit” very often comes only from the devil! Why are there fights and wars? They come from your own lusts. The Christian’s only answer to the persecutor is the answer of the anvil to the blows of the hammer. He bears them, bears, bears them and breaks the hammer by bearing them! This is how the Christian church triumphs. She has never made a good hand at carnal weapons. It was an ill-day for our Puritan sires when they took up arms. It did religion no good in this land but I believe, threw it back for a long time. It is for the Christian church to suffer and to suffer on in confidence and in faith, and to make the world see that the anvil will outlast a thousand sets of hammers and will triumph when they are all broken to dust! You, dear friends, especially will find it to be your wisest, as well as the most Christian course, to bear everything that is put upon you and to make no return except by being kinder and more generous than ever towards those who are most unkind to you!

Let me say, however, take care that you do not give any cause of offense. It is very easy for a man to make a martyr of himself when it is not his religion, but his particular way of holding it that brings on the martyrdom. Some people, really, are so ferocious in their convictions, so grim in their conscientiousness and so continually obtrusive that if they are persecuted, it is their *manner* that is persecuted and not the gospel which they profess to hold! Do not give people an opportunity of opening their mouths against you, but pray God to make you very wise, so that, as in Daniel’s case, they may find nothing against you, save only touching the Lord God whom you worship. And then, that being done, if you are still scorned by your friends, look upon it as coming from God’s hands and that will very much soften it. Ask the Lord what is His purpose in it, what lessons He has to teach you. It may be it is to keep your pride down, or to strengthen you for some future conflicts or labors

in His cause. And when you have waited upon Him for direction, rejoice and be exceedingly glad that you are permitted to suffer at all for Christ's sake and so in patience you shall possess your souls. Walk uprightly before God, live as Christ lived, and, my dear friend, the day will come when you shall have outlived all this enmity and when those who now mock you will respect you. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." At such a time, it may be some will be won by your gentleness and your holy conversation to become Christians, too, and what a joy that will be to you!

Now, I know that what I have been saying does not belong to a great many of you. But still, I must sometimes take texts which will apply to these special cases, especially as just now there are many who have been saved at the Agricultural Hall, and here, and elsewhere, and to whom the struggle for conscience' sake is quite a new thing. And a word or two by way of comfort to them I am sure you will not grudge. And now we shall turn to the second part of the sermon, and we find the patriarch engaged in—

II. A REMARKABLE RESORT AND EXERCISE.

His friends were scorning him, but he did not answer them. He had a sharp word or two, certainly, but still the direction of his mind and the bent of his spirit went another way. He thought of God, and forgot them. Herein is wisdom. When you are perplexed with a trouble, when you are mortified by some wicked person, do not let that thing always fret you. Have you ever noticed how you may torment yourselves with some little thing if you like? There is a fly in the room and that fly may be almost as much a trouble to you as though it were an eagle if you let its buzz be always in your ears. And if you keep on thinking about that buzzing fly, you can magnify it into a big dragon with wings. But if you forget it, and go on with your writing or your needlework, the fly may buzz away 50 times as much, but it will not trouble you! It is a very blessed thing, when, having a care which you cannot get over, you take it to God in prayer and so get over it. I will tell you what I have sometimes done with some of my difficulties. I have turned them over—I have looked at them in all shapes and ways—I have considered every way of getting over them. I have been vexed, troubled and distressed for the time, and at last I have come to feel, "Well now, I cannot do anything with this. It is a hard shell—I cannot crack it. But I have frequently been enabled by grace to deliberately take that matter and put it upon the shelf and say, "By God's grace I will never think about that again as long as I live—I have done the best I could with it, Lord, and if it does not get right, that is now Your business and not mine—I will be done with it forever." Sometimes you will find that the trouble will get right as soon as you leave it alone. It is just your meddling with it that makes the difficulty. You do not see that at the time, but as soon as you just get out of the way, the whole thing becomes right at once! God's wheels of providence grind much more accurately than any of the wheels of our mental calculations. And when we are altogether out of joint, then it is that God comes in and shows us

what His wisdom and power can do. Leave, then, the scorning friends, and betake yourselves to your God!

It is a very great mercy, let me say, that we may go to God when we are cast out by our friends—that if there are no other ears that will listen, God's ears will always listen—and that if in all the earth there should not remain a sympathizing heart, there is the heart of the man, Christ Jesus, still to be appealed to! And we shall never appeal to the sympathies of the Son of God in vain. Oh, my brothers and sisters, when every other door is shut, the door of God's grace is always open! Let all other ports be blocked, your vessel can always run into that one harbor which all the devils in hell cannot close—the harbor of infinite love and unfailing care. "Trust you in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." In your darkest seasons, your very worst times—fly to your God and He will deliver you!

It seems from the text, however, that all Job could do was to pour out from his eyes a flood of tears. The word, "tears," is not in the original Hebrew, but it is put into the translation, as it is supposed to give simpler sense to our ears. His "eyes poured out," however, by which he meant that he did not so much pour out tears as his very heart, itself. As that grand old expositor, Joseph Caryl, says, "Job's heart was hot within him and the steam of his fierce trouble distilled itself in drops of tears which fell upon the ground." It was *Job's inmost soul that he poured out before God*. Now, there are many kinds of tears, but the best kind are those described in the text, "tears unto God." What a capital sermon somebody might make out of that! "Tears unto God"! Tears not poured out to men, nor unto the earth, nor unto myself, but unto God! Tears put into His bottle. Libations poured at the foot of His altar. Tears wept for God—for God to see, for God to hear, for God to think upon—for God to accept. Not tears for tears' sake, but tears like those of the penitent, tears in the privacy of one's loneliness, tears only unto God! I hope, dear friends, there are some among us who know the meaning of these tears. Some of you, I trust, are even now pouring forth the tears of repentance. Oh, those are blessed tears, tears of repentance that are tears unto God! It sometimes falls to my lot to have to talk to people about their sins. Sometimes they wish that I should do so and when I have tried to set their sins in their true light, tears have come. There have been tears because the offense has damaged the young man's character; tears because it injured the young man's friends; tears because a mother was grieved. Well now, when I have seen all these tears, I have been glad of them, such as they were, but they are not all the tears that we need. If you can only get one tear because the sin grieved *God*, it is worth a whole bottleful of the other tears! To see sin in the light of God's countenance is to truly see it. David hit the nail on the head when he said, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." My dear hearer, you may be very sorry that you did wrong because it brought you into trouble. You may be very sorry, indeed, because you cannot take the

position in life which you once occupied—but that is not a repentance that can serve you before God! But if you are sorry to think that you have grieved God. If, like the prodigal, you say, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Your sight”—these are tears unto God and are such as He receives!

The next kind of tears unto God are *the tears of desire*. I wish these were more frequent. Those are the prayers that prevail with God which are well salted with tears. I am afraid that the most of us do not pray as we should, but if we want to prevail, like Jacob, we must remember that Jacob wrestled with the angel and then he prevailed. Weeping, which reveals the soul's wrestling, will often do what nothing else can in bringing us great benedictions.

We have all felt the power of tears over our own feelings and affections, but the power of tears over God, who shall describe it? The blood of Jesus secures all He wills, and when our tears look towards and plead the blood of Jesus, then those tears cannot be refused.

My dear hearers, if you cannot get peace, do not cease praying until you have obtained it. If you long for your sins to be pardoned and have been praying a long time for this—it may be for weeks or months—pray again tonight and do not give up praying until you know you have prevailed with God. Can you bear to perish? Can you endure to be cast away? If you cannot, then be importunate! Lay hold upon the horns of the altar and let this be your vow, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” Then, when it comes to tears, you will get it. When it comes to your very soul being poured out before God, then shall God say unto you, “Your sins are forgiven you. Go in peace.”

Once more. These tears may be *tears shed on behalf of others*. We would prevail for the salvation of others if we thought more of their cases when on our knees, and worked our souls more thoroughly into tempests of sacred and holy passion on their behalf. We cannot expect to see our children saved unless we can weep over them. We must not expect to see our congregations blessed unless our soul bleeds for that congregation. And when I say, “tears,” I do not mean those drops from only the eyes, for some of us could not cry if our souls depended on it, and yet we may, though we let fall no watery tears, shed some of the best tears—tears dropping like sweet-smelling myrrh upon the altar of the all-seeing God! Oh, we must get to feel that we cannot let men die! We must get to feel as if we should die ourselves if they were lost! We must feel so desperately in earnest about it that we cannot sleep, nor go our way in peace unless such-and-such persons be turned unto God and find peace in Jesus! If this is our spirit, we shall have our desire and we shall see our beloved ones saved.

Thus, then, it seems that Job, instead of dealing with his enemies, spent his time in dealing with his God, and as words failed him, he took himself to the more potent rhetoric of tears and so melted his way into God's heart, resting by faith upon the merits of the Redeemer who was

yet to come! Do the same, my dear friends, and God will give you the blessing you need!

But some of you say, "I would never think of weeping before God! I have no dealings with God." No, but He will have dealings with you. If you should not now repent of your sins, you shall repent someday, but that shall be when repentance is too late! Tears of repentance here on earth are signs of divine grace, but tears of sorrow in hell are only signs of bitter and destroying remorse! "There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Oh, may God the Holy Spirit convict us of sin here and now, while there is a hope of mercy, that we may fly to Jesus' wounds, be washed in His blood and be saved—for if not, rest assured that we shall be convicted of sin one day when sin can never be pardoned, but the undying worm of self-accusing shall gnaw at our consciences forever, and forever and forever! Ah, my dear hearer, do not boast because you cannot repent! Do not play the fool after that fashion, but rather ask God to break your heart of sin and so help you to repent! A tender conscience is such a blessing that you may well bemoan yourselves until God bestows it. Remember, however, that Jesus Christ can give a tender heart. It is one of the blessings of the covenant of which He is the surety. "A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them. I will take away the stony heart and give them a heart of flesh." Plead that covenant promise! And if you plead it now, believing in Jesus and trusting in Him, you shall get that new heart! You shall get a heart that can weep before God and so you shall be accepted through the righteousness of Jesus and your tears and your supplications shall prevail!

I may never speak to some of you again, but oh, I should like to leave that thought with you that to suffer for Christ is honor and that to weep before the Lord is the truest pleasure! But if you have despised in your heart those that are persecuted, remember that day when Christ shall come, and all His holy angels with Him! If you laugh at Christians now, you will no longer laugh, but lament then! Your song then—or rather wail—shall be very different from the one you sing now. Oh, may you now, while yet life lasts, and the day of mercy is not over, seek Jesus, cast in your lot with His people, take up His cross, that by and by you may wear His crown, suffering now—if necessary—in sharing His reproach and shame, that then you may be delighted with His glory!

The Lord Himself grant it to every one of you! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 22:1-22; SONG OF SOLOMON 1:1-7, 2:1-7.**

PSALM 22.

Stand and look up at Christ upon the cross and look upon these words as His. He Himself is the best exposition of this wondrous Psalm.

Verses 1, 2. *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent.* Gethsemane!—there is the key—a prayer unanswered at that time—“If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” It was not possible. He must drink it. “In the night season I am not silent.”

3. *But You are holy, O You that inhabit the praises of Israel.* No hard thoughts of God, even when He was forsaken. A forsaken Christ still clings to the Father and ascribes perfect holiness to Him.

4-6. *Our fathers trusted in You: they trusted, and You did deliver them. They cried unto You, and were delivered: they trusted in You, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and not a man: a reproach of men, and despised of the people.* How low did Christ descend for our sakes not only as low as man, but still lower! Never was godly man forsaken of God, and yet Jesus was—so He is lower than we are while He hangs upon the tree “a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”

7, 8. *All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that He would deliver Him, let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.* Was not this just what they said at the cross? Ah, little did they know that He saved others—Himself He could not save, because a matchless love held His hands there, as with diamond rivets.

9, 10. *But You are He that took Me out of the womb: You did make Me hope when I was upon My mother's breasts. I was cast upon You from the womb: You are My God from My mother's belly.* He remembers His wonderful birth. He was God's, indeed, from the very first.

11. *Be not far from Me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.* They have all gone. Peter and all the rest have fled. There is none to help. And there stand the Scribes and Pharisees and the great men of the nation.

12-14. *Many bulls have compassed Me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round. They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water.* All dissolved—nothing could hold together—quite spent and gone.

14. *And all My bones are out of joint: My heart is like wax.* He felt the inward sinking fever brought on Him by the wounds He had upon the cross. “My heart is like wax.”

14-16. *It is melted in the midst of My body. My strength is dried up like a potsherd: and My tongue cleaves to My jaws: and You have brought Me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed Me.* There they are—the cruel multitude—thrusting out the tongue and hooting at Him. “For dogs have compassed Me.”

16. *The assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me.* The hind of the morning is now surrounded by the dogs. He cannot escape.

16, 17. *They pierced My hands and My feet. I may count all My bones: they look and stare upon Me.* Horrible, to the tender, modest soul of

Jesus, were those vile stares of the ribald multitude as they gazed upon Him.

18-22. *They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture. But be not You far from Me, O LORD: O My strength, hasten You to help Me. Deliver My soul from the sword; My darling from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth: for You have heard Me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare Your name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise You.* The sun that was darkened, now shines again. The Savior's griefs are over. A calm is spread over His mind. He is about to say, "It is finished!" and His heart is comforted. We leave that passage there.

SONG OF SOLOMON 1.

Now, concerning our love to Him, let us read a few verses of the Song of Solomon, first chapter. You have been introduced to the Beloved, red with His own blood, but never so lovely as in His passion.

Verses 1, 2. *The song of songs, which is Solomon's. Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.* No name. Is any name needed? What name is good enough for Him, our best Beloved? He plunges into the subject through excess of love! He forgets the name. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth."

2, 3. *For Your love is better than wine. Because of the savor of Your good ointments Your name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love You.* There is such a sweetness in the name. It is not like a box of ointment shut up, but like a sweet perfume that fills the room. For the merits of Jesus are so sweet that they perfume heaven itself! It was not on Calvary alone that that sweet ointment was known—it was known in the seventh heaven!

4. *Draw me, we will run after You.* We want to get near to Christ, but we cannot. "Draw me," we cry, "we will run after You."

4. *The king has brought me into His chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine: the upright love You.* The wine shall help us to remember Him tonight when we come to His table, but we will remember Him more than wine.

5. *I am black, but comely, O you daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.* A strange contrast is a believer. He is black in himself, but he is comely in Christ. In himself he is foul as the smoke-dried tents of Kedar—but in his Lord he is as comely and rich as the curtains of Solomon!

6, 7. *Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother's children were angry with me: they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept. Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?* A few verses of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

Song of Solomon 2:1. *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.*
So He is, and much more than that—

**“Nature, to make His beauties known,
Must mingle colors quite unknown.”**

So rich is He—rose and lily both in one—

**“White is His soul, from blemish free,
Red with the blood He shed for Me.”**

2. *As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.* His church stands out like a fair lily in a thorn-brake—separate and distinct—often suffering, standing where she does not wish to be, but all the lovelier by contrast. But if Christ praises His church, she praises Him again.

3, 4. *As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.* So full of joy is she that she can bear it no longer. She seems ready to faint with bliss!

5-7. *Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am love sick. His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me. I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem—*By every lovely, timid, tender, chaste thing—

7. *By the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, till He please.* If I have fellowship with Him—if I am near His cross—if I am drinking in His love, oh, do not hinder me! Do not call me away! Do not break the spell, but let me go on with this blessed daydream, which is truer than reality, itself, till I see Him face to face, when the day breaks and the shadows flee away!

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SIN'S TRUE CHARACTER

NO. 3374

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

“Exceedingly sinful.”
Romans 7:13.

INTO the connection of these words our time, which is very short this evening, will not permit us to enter. It was something like this—Paul was showing that the Law could not make a man holy and he observes that he had, himself, found that when the Law came into his heart, it excited in him a desire to act contrary to its precepts. There were some actions which he would not have thought of performing until he found that they were forbidden—and then immediately he felt a desire to do them at once! To this a grave objection was raised. This were to make the Law aid and abet sin! Not so, replies the Apostle—it was not the Law that made him sin, for the Law is good—but it was the sinfulness of his heart that could thus turn that which was good into an occasion of evil. He further showed that this was the very design of the Law as given by Moses—to make clear how sinful sin was. The purpose for which it was sent was not to make men holy, but to make men see how unholy they were! It was not the cure of the disease, much less the creator of it, but it was the *revealer* of the disease that lurked in the constitution of man!

Now, what I want to call your attention to is that Paul here calls sin, “exceedingly sinful.” Why didn’t he say, “exceedingly black,” or, “exceedingly horrible,” or, “exceedingly deadly”? Why, because there is nothing in the world so bad as sin! When he wanted to use the very worst word he could find to call sin by, he called it by its own name and reiterated it—“sin,” “exceedingly sinful.” For if you call sin, black, there is no moral excellency or deformity in black or white. Black is as good as white and white is as good as black. And so you have expressed nothing. If you call sin, “*deadly*,” yet death in itself has no evil in it compared with sin. For plants to die is not a dreadful thing, rather it may be a part of the organization of Nature that successive generations of vegetables should spring up and, in due time, should form the root-soil for other generations to follow. If you call it, “*deadly*,” you have said but little. If you need a word, you must come home for it. Sin must be named after itself! If you need to describe it, you must call it, “*sinful*.” Sin is “exceedingly sinful”

The text may suggest a broad argument and a special application. Our endeavor shall be to show you, then, that sin is in itself, “exceedingly sinful” and yet there are some signs of which it may be said with peculiar emphasis that they are “exceedingly sinful.”

I. SIN IS IN ITSELF “EXCEEDINGLY SINFUL.”

It is rebellion against God and “exceedingly sinful” because it interferes with the just rights and prerogatives of God. That great invisible Spirit

whom we cannot see, whom even our own thoughts cannot encompass, made the heavens and the earth and all things that are—and it was His right that what He made should serve His purpose and give Him Glory. The stars do this. They jar not in their everlasting orbits. The world of matter does this. He speaks and it is done. The sun, the moon, the constellations of Heaven, yes, and the terrestrial forces, even the billows of the sea and the ravings of the wind—all these obey His behests. It is right they should. Shall not the potter make of the clay what he wills? Shall not he who uses the axe, fashion what he chooses for his own pleasure? You and I, favored in our creation—not inanimate clods, not worms having only sensations, without intellect—we who have been favored with thought, emotion, affection, with a high spiritual existence. Yes, with an immortal existence—we were especially bound to be obedient to Him that made us. Ask your conscience, do you not feel that God has rights towards you? Ask yourselves, if you make or preserve anything, call it your own and it is your own—do you not expect it to answer your end, or do your bidding? Why have you forgotten Him that made you? Why have you spent your powers and faculties for anything but His Glory? Ah, it is “exceedingly sinful” when the crown rights of Him upon whose will we exist are ignored, or impudently contravened! Yet according to the part we take in sin, we trample on His edicts and set at nothing His jurisdiction.

How exceedingly sinful is *this rebellion against such a God!* Muse on His attributes and consider His majesty, for He is not merely infinitely powerful, wise, all-sufficient and glorious, but He is supremely good! He is good to the fullest extent of goodness! He is a God whose Character is matchless! Not like Jupiter, to whom the heathens ascribed every vice, nor like Juggernaut, the bloody god of Hindustan! He is a pure and holy God whom we worship! Jehovah, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises. Now, it is conceivable that if God were some vast Being who had a natural right to our service, yet if His Character—(forgive, great God, the supposition!)—were severe without pity, rigorous without clemency, harsh without forbearance, there were some pretense why daring spirits should lead a rebellion against the oppressor. But our Father, God, the great Shepherd-King—who shall frame an excuse when we, for a single moment, revolt against Him, or lift a finger against His will? It were Heaven to serve Him! The angels will tell you this! It were bliss to do His will. The perfect spirits all proclaim this! Ah, sin is base, indeed, a rebellion against a monarch's gentlest sway, an insurrection against parent's most tender rights, a revolt against peerless benignity! Oh, shame on you, Sin! You are, indeed, “exceedingly sinful!”

What an aggravation of the sinfulness of sin is this—that *it rebels against laws of which all are just!* The table of the Ten Commandments contains not one commandment but what is founded upon the essential principles of right. If a law were proclaimed in England which violated the principles of equity, to break that law might be the highest duty! But when the laws of our country are just and right, it is not only an offense against the natural power of the State, but an offense against the understanding and the conscience of right when a man breaks such a statute! God's Laws have not only the Divine Authority, but they have also this recommendation, that they are all harmonious and adapted to the rela-

tions of our being. Was it not the State of Massachusetts that at first passed a resolution when they were about to make statutes, that they would be governed by the Laws of God until they found time to make better? Will they ever find opportunity to make better? Could any man strike out a clause and improve it? Could he add a sentence and mend it? No! The Law is holy, just and good! And, rightly understood, it naturally forbids evil and simply commends good—only good! Oh, Sin! You are sinful, indeed, that you should dare to revolt against that which in itself is right and just, virtuous and true!

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters—this may touch some of us to the quick—sin is “exceedingly sinful” *because it is antagonistic to our own interest, a mutiny against our own welfare*. Selfishness is a strong principle in us all. That which is good for us and personally advantageous should be regarded with tenacious attachment and were we wise, would be pursued with strong enthusiasm. Now, whenever God forbids a thing, we may rest assured it would be dangerous. God’s commands are just like those notices, more suggestive of kindly warning than of stern prohibition, which we see upon the park waters in the days of frost, “Dangerous.” God simply tells us that such-and-such a thing is fraught with peril, or it leads to destruction. What He permits or commends will be, if not immediately, yet in the long run, in the highest degree promotive of our best interests. God does but, as it were, consult our well-being and prosperity when He gives us Laws. Doesn’t it seem a vicious thing, indeed, that a man will recklessly dare to slight himself in order to sin against his Maker? God says to you, “Do not thrust your arm in the fire.” Nature says, “Do not do it.” And yet when God says, “Do not commit fornication or adultery, do not lie, do not steal”—when He says, “Draw near to Me in prayer, love Me,” these commands are in themselves as naturally wise as the injunction not to thrust your hand into the fire, or the counsel to eat and drink wholesome food when hunger and thirst require! Yet we spurn these commands. Like a child that is bidden not to drink of the poison cup, but will drink of it. Like a child that is refused the sharp tool lest he cut himself. And he will cut himself—not believing in his father’s wisdom, but credulous of his own judgment because the cup looks sweet, it must be harmless—because the edged tool glitters, it must be a proper plaything! Know it, man, you do, when you sin, cut and tear yourself! Who but a madman would do that? If you neglect to do the right, you neglect to feed yourself with that which nourishes, and to clothe yourself with that which is comely! Who but an idiot would lend himself to such folly? Yet sin has made us such idiots and such madmen and, therefore, it is “exceedingly sinful!”

Sin, if we rightly consider it, *is an upsetting of the entire order of the universe*. In your family you feel, as a father, that nothing can go smoothly unless there is a head whose discretion shall regulate all the members. If your child should say, “Father, I am determined in this family that, whatever your will is, I will resist it, and whatever *my* will is, I will abide by it and always carry it out if I can,” what a family that would be! How disorganized! What a household! Might we not say, what a Hell upon earth? There sails tomorrow a ship from the Thames under command of a captain, wise and good, who understands the seas. But he has

scarcely reached the Nore before a sailor tells him that he shall not obey, that he does not intend either to reef a sail, or to do anything aboard the vessel that he is bid to do. "Put the fellow in irons!" Everybody says it is right. Or a passenger coming up from the saloon informs the captain that he does not approve of his authority and, throughout the whole of the voyage he intends to thwart him all he can. If there is a boat within hail, put that fellow on shore and do not be concerned if he lands in a muddy place! Get rid of him somehow! Everybody feels it must be. You might as well scuttle the ship and cut holes in her sides, as tolerate for a moment that the rightful central authority should be unshipped, or that every man should determine to do what is right in his own eyes! The happiness of everybody on board that vessel will depend upon order being kept. If one man is to do this, and another to do that, you might almost as well be shut up in a cage with lions, as be in such a vessel! Now, look at this world—it is but a floating ship on a larger scale—and who ought to be Captain here but He who made it, for His mighty hand alone can grasp that awful tiller! Who can steer this gigantic vessel over the waves of Providence—who but He? And who am I, and, my Hearer, who are you that you should say, "I will ignore the Lord High Admiral! I will forget the Captain! I will rebel against Him"? Why, if all do as you do, what is to become of the whole vessel, what of the whole world? When disorder is introduced, confusion, sorrow, dismay and disaster will be sure to follow!

If you want proof that sin is exceedingly sinful, *see what it has done already in the world*. Lift up your eyes and survey that lovely garden where every beautiful creature, both of bird and beast, and every flower of unwithering loveliness, and everything that can delight the senses are to be discovered in the sunlight. There are two perfect beings, a man and a woman, the parents of our race— then enters sin. The flowers are forthwith withered, a new wildness has seized upon the beasts, the ground brings forth her thorns and thistles and the man is driven out in the sweat of his face to earn his daily bread! Who withered Eden? You did, accursed Sin! You did it all! See there—but can you bear the sight?—clouds of smoke, rolling pillars of dust, the sound of clarion, the yet more dreadful boom of cannon! Listen to the shrieks and cries! They flee—they are pursued—the battle is over! Walk over the field. There lies a mangled mass of human bodies cut and torn, riddled with shot, skulls splintered with rifle balls, pools of blood! Oh, there is such a scene as only a fiend could gaze on with complacency! Who did all this? From where come wars and rumors but from your own lusts and from your sins? Oh, Sin, you are a carnage-maker! Sin, you cry, "Havoc," and immediately let loose the dogs of war! There had been none of this had you not come. But the spectacle multiplies in our vision. All over the world you have but to wander and you see little hillocks more or less thickly scattered everywhere. And if you analyze the dust that blows along the street and interrogate every grain, it will probably tell you it was once a part of the body of some man who in generations past died painfully and rotted back to mother earth! Oh, the world is scarred with death! What is this earth today, but a great Aceldema—a field of blood, a vast cemetery? Death has worm-eaten the world through and through. All its surface bears relics of

the human race. Who slew all these? Who slew all these? Who, indeed, but Sin? Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death!

Should your venturous wings of imagination dare the flight to a land that is full of confusion and without any order, I scarcely dare ask you to follow me, nor if you *could* follow, would I venture to lead the way across the stream that parts the land of mortals from the regions of the immortals! Across that valley of the shadow of death, you might look on the gloomy region of wretched souls where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched—if you dared to peer into that dismal pit that has no bottom, that place wherein spirits condemned of God are put away forever and forever from all light of hope and restoration! But you shudder even as I shrink back in very horror from that place where God's wrath burns like a furnace—and the proud that do wickedness are as stubble—and the nations that forget God are forever consumed! Who lit that fire? Where is he that kindled it? It is Sin! Sin did it all. No man is there except for sin. No man that ever breathed was ever cast away except as punishment most just, for sin most grave! Sin is, indeed, “exceedingly sinful.” Not even now have I reached the climax, nor must I venture the description. The worst phase is neither death nor Hell. But on Calvary's tree the Lord, Himself, who loved us and came to earth to bless us, proved the sinfulness of sin when Sin nailed Him to the tree and pierced His side. And sinners, rejecting Him with many a jibe and sneer, exclaimed, “We will not have this Man to reign over us.” In the agonies of Jesus, in the shame and spitting, in the woes and anguish that He endured, we read the sinfulness of sin, written as in capital letters, that even the half-blind might see! Oh, Sin, murderer of Christ, you are “exceedingly sinful!” My time has failed me, or I had meant to have enlarged upon—

II. SOME PARTICULAR SINS THAT ARE EXCEEDINGLY SINFUL ABOVE ANY ORDINARY TRANSGRESSION.

I mean sins against the Gospel. I will just give the catalog, that everyone here who is honest with himself may search and see whether he is guilty. To reject loving messengers sent from God, godly parents, earnest pastors, affectionate teachers—to reject the kind message that they bring and the yearning anxiety that they feel for us is “exceedingly sinful!” To resist the loving Gospel which talks to us only of mercy, pardon, adoption and redemption from Hell and exaltation to Heaven—to reject that is “exceedingly sinful!” To resist the dying Savior whose only motive in coming to earth must have been love, whose wounds are mouths that preach His love, whose death is the solemn proof of love—to despise, to neglect, to ignore Him—this is “exceedingly sinful!” To sin against Him after having made a profession of loving Him. To come to His Table and then go and sin with the ungodly. To be baptized in His name and yet to be unjust, dishonest, unrighteous—this is “exceedingly sinful!” To be numbered with His Church and yet to be of the world. To profess to be His followers and yet to be His enemies—this is “exceedingly sinful!” To sin against light and knowledge. To sin knowing better. To sin against conscience. To push conscience to one side. To do violence to one's better self. To sin against the Holy Spirit, against His admonitions, warnings, promptings, invitations—this is “exceedingly sinful!” To go on sinning af-

ter you have smarted. To continue to sin when sin costs you many pains and difficulties. To push onward to Hell, as if riding a steeple-chase, over post, and bar, and gate, and hedge, and ditch—this is “exceedingly sinful!”

Some of you here, tonight, are in this, exceedingly sinful. Oh, How I have pleaded with some of you! I have cried to you to come to Jesus. I have warned some of you again and again. If I am called to make answer at the judgment bar, I must say, “Amen,” to the condemnation of many of you! I shall be obliged to confess that you knew better—that some of you drink when you know how wrong it is! That some of you can swear. That some of you are thieves. Some of you sin with a high hand and yet I scarcely know why you come to this Tabernacle again and again and again! You love to hear my voice and yet you cling to your sins—your sins that will surely damn you! Let me be clear of your blood! I will not mince matters with you or talk with you as if you are all saints when I know you are not—and as if you are all going to Heaven, when, alas, many of you are still swiftly spreading your wings to fly downward to Hell! Oh, may God arrest you, or otherwise the brightness and the light in which you sin will make your sin the darker and the plainer—and the warnings you hear will make your condemnation the more overwhelming when it comes!

But why must it come? Why will you die? Why are you set on sin? Why do you love mischief? I see often in the gas-light of my study poor gnats come flying in if the window is but ajar—and how they dash against the flame—and down they fall, but have scarcely recovered strength before up they fly again unto their destruction! Are you such? Are you mere insects, without wit, without knowledge? Oh, you are not, or else were you excusable! Come to my Savior, poor Souls! He is still willing to receive you! A prayer will do it. Breathe the prayer! A broken heart He will not despise. A look at Him will do it. A faint glance at Jesus pleading for you will do it! Holy Spirit, make them give that glance! Oh, by Your Irresistible Power, compel them to look and live! Oh, it shall be! God be thanked, it shall be! You shall look tonight and God shall have the Glory! And though you are “exceedingly sinful,” yet shall you, through the precious blood, be fully forgiven—and I hope exceedingly grateful for the great forgiveness which Jesus brings! The Lord bless you, for His name's sake. Amen.

[The original title of this sermon is “SIN'S TRUE QUALITY.”]

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51; ROMANS 7:7-25.**

PSALM 51.

There are many sweet notes in Christian music, but to my own heart there is none so soft, tender, sweet as the note of repentance. Full assurance rings out her clarion trumpet strain and we ought to be able to send it forth, but sometimes we are unable. Conquest over sin gives us Miriam's timbrel to dance to and it is well, but everyday use commends me to the harp strings of penitence! We ought always to be able to play on

those strings. They always fit our guilty fingers. They are always sweet to the ear of the Most High. Mr. Rowland Hill used to say that there was one friend of his whom he could not take to Heaven and whom he thought he would regret to leave—and that was sweet repentance. I suppose when God wipes every tear from our eyes we shall not be able to weep for sin, but until then—

**“Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,
And after none but Thee—
And then I would—(oh that I might!)—
A constant weeper be,”**

for these bitter sweets—these sweet bitters—are almost the choicest of our sorrow joys or joyful sorrows that we have this side of Heaven! Thus David sings.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness, according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* And really, Brothers and Sisters, if we cannot feel that we have need to say, “Have mercy upon me,” and if, indeed, this is not the habitual language of our soul, there must be something more wrong about us than even open sin! Not to be able to confess sin and not to be able to mourn it is one of the direst states of sin—in which even sin can be found—but to be able to say from the very soul, “Have mercy upon me—blot out my transgressions,” indicates that there is a soundness still in us by Divine Grace. Do you notice what a quick eye David has here for the softer attributes of God? Did ever any man put words together more pleasantly? “According to Your loving kindness”—“according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.” God never looks more beautiful than when He is seen through a tear! If, under a sense of sin, you see Him as the strangely forgiving God, oh, how pleasant a God He is, and how our hearts love Him!

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* It is not the punishment. The child of God has got away from the legal fear that dreads the punishment. The sin—the *sin*—is that which he loathes and hates. “Lord, get rid of it. I seem to need double cleansing. Wash me! Wash me thoroughly! And when You have done that, cleanse me, for there are stains that washing will not get out. Try fire, Lord, if water will not do it, but somehow wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.* It is thrown out on the surface. Health comes back when the disease manifests itself by an outward eruption. It is when you do not acknowledge it—it is when it is not before you—when you cannot perceive it—will not confess your sin—it is then that it is at the heart-strings killing you, murdering you! Confessed sin has the teeth taken out of it, but sin that is not felt and known, and still is there, breeds the canker of self-conceit and pride—and is deadly to the heart.

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* For in sin, this is the essence of it—that it is sin against God. You cannot get the worldly man to feel that. “I have done no hurt to my neighbor. I have not injured society.” But how different it is with the

child of God! It is against *God* that he has sinned. What if he has never left his chamber—if he has never done an action or said a word? Yet that proud heart of his that rebelled when he was full of pain—that murmuring spirit that would not accept the Lord's will—that is enough to lay him in the dust—and he mourns it and confesses it. "Against You, You only, have I sinned."

5. *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me.* It is not merely that I sinned, but I am sin! I am a lump of sin—a heap of iniquity—by nature so. It is not merely in me, but it is me—my very self! It is in my blood, my bones, my marrow. O God, can You cleanse me from this?

6. *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.* And sin is a lie, and sin is folly. God desires truth and wisdom. Can He give us both of these? Yes, and He will—only let us acknowledge the untruthfulness and confess the stupidity, and put ourselves into His hands for His Infinite Grace to deal with us and He will yet do it. "In the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom."

7. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* "With hyssop." Just as the priest took the bunch of herbs and put it into the basin full of blood, and stirred it round and round till he soaked the hyssop in the crimson and then sprinkled it upon the penitent, oh Lord, apply the blood of Christ to my soul! Purge with me hyssop"—

"And I shall be clean."

I shall not be clean any other way. This is the only cleansing and purification by the sacrificial Atonement. And You alone must do it. Lord, do it now!

8-9. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.* I do not want to hear it unless You make me to hear it. I would not be comforted unless You comfort me. Dread above everything, dear Friends, false comfort—false judgments of yourselves—high motions about your own attainments—grand ideas of your own standing in yourselves.

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* For there must not merely be a creation, but a daily renewal, or else what You have once created will soon be blotted and marred as Your first natural creation was. Go on from day to day to make and keep my heart pure within.

11. *Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.* Do not fling me away as a man pulls up a weed by the roots and throws it on a dunghill—

"Take not your Holy Spirit from me."

Oh, how often will the child of God have to pray this prayer? The Holy Spirit is in him and he knows it, but he grieves the Spirit—and when his heart is very tender this is his daily fear—lest the Spirit of God should depart from him. "Take not your Holy Spirit from me."

12. *Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free spirit.* I did know it once. What joy it is—the joy of Your salvation!

Give it back to me, O Lord. I cannot live on the old mercy! The recollection does not satisfy. It only makes me hunger. "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation."

13. *Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.* Nobody ever teaches the mercy of God so well as he that tastes it. Sinner, do you know what a good God my Lord Jesus is? He has forgiven my innumerable sins and, therefore, I love to speak of Him, and to speak of Him to such as you are, such as I am. "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." Dear Friends, if you know the Savior, be sure you tell all you know! Or if you cannot tell it all, tell as much as you can, and as long as you have got breath! And it may not be long. You may not have many more opportunities, for sickness comes so suddenly and puts the strong man aside so soon. Do use for God what time you have and tell of His love while you are yet in the land where men can hear it, and where you can speak of it. Let this be your prayer—"Then will I teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted unto You."

14. *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* He said that he would be a preacher? No, he said that he would be a singer. God's people feel that they cannot do too much when they get a sense of pardoned sin. They will be both preacher and presenter! They will preach! They will sing! They will have all the irons in the fire. They will not be afraid of turning their faculties to too many accounts.

15-17. *O Lord open You my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.* What a sweet verse that is! Have you got a broken heart tonight, dear Friend, and do you feel almost ashamed to bring it, because it is in such a broken condition? It is in the best possible condition! I have read accounts of meetings of God's saints met by the ten days together and talking all about great things that have been done for them and from the first to the last no indication of a broken heart or of a contrite spirit! I confess I could not understand it and did not want to understand it. I would rather stand with the poor publican behind the door five minutes and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," than sit ten days with perfect brethren to magnify and glorify God about what I thought He had done for me, because I am persuaded that in the latter case I should be always in danger of magnifying *myself*, rather than God—whereas in the former case I should be near the truth, and near where I ought to be. Oh, keep to this—"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

18, 19. *Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* Notice this. David felt that he had done something to pull down the walls of Zion. His bad example would do mischief to the cause of God and his prayer to be forgiven is not a selfish one, which deals only with his own particular blessing, or his own desire for mercy.

He wants the Church to prosper! He wants God's work to go on and so he cannot close the prayer, even of a penitent and broken heart, without crying, "Build You the walls of Jerusalem." In proportion as we think less of ourselves we shall think more of the Church of God, and more of the work of God in the land. To despise yourself is the way to honor God and His people. But when you honor yourself, you will first despise others, and it will go on by degrees to a dishonoring of God, Himself, from which may the Lord save us!

ROMANS 7.

This is Paul's own account of his inward conflicts. He longed to conquer sin. He wanted to become a free man and live always a godly and holy life, but he found that there was a battle within his nature.

Verse 7. *What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? God forbid! No, I had not known sin, but by the Law: for I had not known lust, except the Law had said, You shall not covet.* There are some who hope to overcome their evil propensities by the Law of God. They think that if they can know and feel the authority of the Law of God, that will have an awe over their minds and they shall become holy. Now the Law is, in itself, supremely holy. It cannot be improved. We could not add to it, or take from it without injuring it. It is a perfect Law! But what is its effect upon the mind? When it comes into an unrenewed mind, instead of checking sin, it causes sin! The Apostle says that he had not known lust, except the Law had said, "You shall not covet." There is a something about us which rebels against law the moment we come to it. There are some things we should never think of doing if we were not prohibited from them—and then there becomes a tendency at once in this vile nature of ours to break the Law of God.

8. *But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, worked in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the Law sin was dead.* If there had never been any Law, there could not have been any sin, because sin is a breaking of Law! The Law is good. We are not speaking about that. The Law is necessary, but still, such is our nature that the very existence of Law argues and creates the existence of sin. And when the Law comes, then sin comes immediately. "Without the Law sin was dead."

9. *For I was alive without the Law once.* I thought that I was everything that was good. I imagined that I was doing everything that was right. I felt no rebellion in my heart. I was alive.

9. *But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* I kicked at that commandment. My holiness was soon gone. The excellence which I thought I had in my character soon vanished for I found myself breaking the Law of God.

10-13. *And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Therefore the Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid! But, sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good: that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.* There was sin in his nature, but he did not know it. But when the commandment came, then that evil nature said, "I won't keep that com-

mandment,” and it took occasion at once to show itself by breaking that commandment. It was something like a medicine which many a wise physician has given to his patient. There is a deadly disease in the internals of the man and he gives him a medicine that throws it out. You see it on the skin. You feel the pain of it. It would have been his death anyhow. It can only be his death now, but now it is a part of the process of the cure to bring the disease where it can be seen. And so the Law comes into a man's heart and because of the rebellion of his nature, he kicks against the Law and sins. It does not make him sinful. It only shows that he *was* sinful, for a perfect Law would not make a perfect man sin! It would lead and guide him in the way of holiness. But a perfect Law coming into contact with an imperfect nature soon creates rebellion and sin. It is an illustration that is not good throughout, but still it is of some use. You have seen quicklime—you throw water on it. The water is of a cooling nature. There is nothing in the water but that which would quench fire, and yet when it is thrown upon the lime the consequence is a burning heat! So is it with the Law cast upon man's nature. It seems to create sin. Not that the Law does it of itself, but, coming into contact with the vicious principles of our nature, sin becomes the product of it. It is the only product. You may preach up the Law of God till everybody becomes worse than he was before. You may read the Ten Commandments till men learn what to do in order to provoke God! The Law does not create holiness. It never can.

14. *For we know that the Law is spiritual: but I am carnal.* Fleshly.

14. *Sold under sin.* Even now that I have become a Christian and am renewed by Grace!

15. *For that which I do, I allow not.* I often do that which I do not justify, which I do not wish to do again, which I abhor myself for doing.

16. *For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that I do.* This is the Believer's riddle. To say that this is not a Believer's experience is to prove that the man who says it does not know much about how Believers feel. We hate sin and yet, alas, alas, we fall into it! We would live perfect lives if we could, we that are renewed. We make no justification for our sin—it is evil and abominable—yet do we find these two things warring and fighting within.

16. *If, then, I do that which I would not, I consent unto the Law that it is good.* My inmost heart says the Law of God is good, though I have not kept it as I wish I had—yet my very wish to keep it is the consent of my nature to the goodness of that Law—and proves that there is a vitality about me which will yet throw out the disease and make me right in the sight of God.

17. *Now then it is no more I that do it.* The real “I,” the true “I,” the new-born “ego.” Thank God for that—to have a will to do good, to have a strong, passionate desire to be holy! “To will is present with me.”

17. *But sin that dwells in me.* I would be earnest in prayer, and my thoughts are distracted. I would love God with all my heart, but something else comes in and steals away a part of it. I would be holy as God is holy, but I find myself falling short of my desires. So the Apostle means.

18-20, *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find*

not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it. The true and real "I."

20. *But sin that dwells in me.* Oh, this accursed indwelling sin! Would God it were driven out. We do not say this to excuse ourselves—God forbid—but to blame ourselves that we permit this sin to dwell within us! Yet must we rejoice in God that we are born-again, and that this new "I," the true "I," will not yield to sin, but fights against it!

21. *I find then a Law.* Or rule.

21-24. *That, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man. But I see another Law in my members, warring against the Law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Now, the more holy a man gets, the more he cries in this fashion. While he is low down in the scale, he puts up with sin and he is uneasy. But when he gets to see Christ and get somewhat like He, the more nearly he approximates to the image of his Master, the more the presence of the least sinful thought is horrifying to him! He would, if he could, never look on sin again—never have the slightest inclination to it, but he finds his heart getting abroad and wandering when he would tether it down, if he could, to the Cross and crucify it there. And so the more happy he is in Christ the more desperately does he cry against the wretchedness of being touched with sin, even in the least degree. "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

25. *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* It will be done! I shall be delivered. I shall be perfect—

***"Oh, blissful hour! Oh, sweet abode!
I shall be near and like my God."***

Oh, to be without fault before the Throne of God—without tendency to sin, without the possibility of it, immaculately clean, with a heart that sends forth pure waters like the River of Life that flows from beneath the Throne of God! This is our portion! We are looking for it, and we will never rest until we get it, blessed be His name. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

25. *So then with the mind I myself serve the Law of God.* With the new nature.

25. *But with the flesh, the law of sin.* With the flesh—this old rubbishy stuff that must die and be buried, and the sooner the better! With my old corrupt nature I serve the law of sin. But what a mercy it is that the next verse is that, notwithstanding that, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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STANDING AND SINGING

NO. 3375

A SERMON

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“My foot stands in an even place; in the congregations will I bless the Lord.”
Psalm 26:12.

YOU will remember our taking a pathetic verse for our meditation, some little while ago, which was the prayer of a saint in trouble, whose prayer was, “Look upon my affliction and my pain.” [See Sermon #741, Volume 13—A TROUBLED PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] We must now look upon the reverse of the picture and think upon a Christian in prosperity and joy, and perhaps, as there may have been some comfort to afflicted souls before, so there may be some instruction tonight to those who are prosperous.

It is worthy of remark, at the outset, that *the condition of a Christian cannot readily be judged by anyone but himself*. Certainly his outward condition is a very unfair test of his real state. When Paul and Silas had been scourged and laid with their feet fast in the stocks, they seemed to others to be very miserable. But when, in the dead of the night, they began to sing God’s praises and the prisoners heard them, they proved themselves to be among the happiest of men! So was it with David. When the Psalmist wrote this song, he was slandered and vilified—every evil thing was laid to his charge. This was the case externally, and yet within, his mind was at such perfect peace that he could say, “My foot stands in an even place.”

It seemed to the common onlooker as though his foot would slip, as though he were like one hurled from the Tarpeian rock to be certainly dashed to pieces—but his soul’s experience was the absolute reverse of this. He seems to say to them all, “Hoot at me if you will! Seek to trip me up as you please! God is high above you all, and in Him I shall still stand my ground, for, blessed be His name, notwithstanding every attempt of the enemy to throw me down, my foot stands in an even place and in the congregation will I bless the Lord.”

There are two things in the text to which I would call your attention. The first is *a believer in a happy position*. And the second is, *a believer engaged in a happy occupation*. His “foot standing in an even place,” a happy position; “Praising and blessing God,” a happy occupation. We have here, first, then—

I. A BELIEVER IN A VERY HAPPY POSITION.

Now, what does he mean by his “foot standing in an even place”? Well, is it not the very worst evil that a genuine Christian can suffer to fall into sin? To fall finally, would, of course, be our everlasting ruin. To fall at all, in any sense, is our greatest grief. Every true child of God would sooner sorrow a thousand times than sin once. His Father’s rod he has learned to love, but sin, even when it is the choicest pleasure, he has learned to hate. “Lord,” he says, “allow me to go anywhere except into sin. If the way is rough, so be it, if it is Your way, I will bless You for being in it. But if the road is ever so smooth, allow not my feet to tread it, if it is Bye-Path Meadow.” The worst evil that can befall a Christian, I say, is to fall into sin and continue to do so. On the contrary, one of the richest blessings that a Christian can enjoy is to be kept aright in his walk and conversation—year after year to wear a spotless character—year after year to be such a one as Daniel, that even the man’s enemies can find nothing against him except touching the law of his God. Oh, this is a great honor! This is a rare jewel! There are some of God’s servants who will get to heaven who never wore this jewel. They have been the Lord’s people, but yet their slips and falls have given them broken bones and troubled hearts—and they have been saved at the last “so as by fire.” But it is a choice mercy if the child of God is able not only safely to get into the harbor, but to get into the harbor without having touched a rock, without having sunk in a quicksand, without having suffered shipwreck—not only to come safely to heaven, but to have “an abundant entrance ministered to him” into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Now, dear friends, the standing which is spoken of in the text relates to *the secure standing of the child of God in respect to sin*—and it may be understood in two senses. Sometimes the Christian is in an even place with *regard to common, outward sin*. And secondly, he is at all times in an even place with *regard to the sin of other men*—there he stands in such an even place that sin touches him not.

First, I say there are some Christians who may take the language of the text *in regard to outward sin* and thank God that they are not just now exposed to vehement temptations. They are not journeying in slippery places, but their foot stands in an even place.

This may be occasioned by several causes. *Sometimes it is caused by providence*. My brothers, you have, perhaps, sometimes wished that you were rich. You have been in a little way of business and you have thought, “I wish I had a larger capital that I might launch out a little that I might speculate that I might get a larger income and accumulate at a faster rate.” Ah, you do not know. Those high places are slippery places, as some of late have proved to their own sorrow. You have need, instead of asking God to put you there, to thank Him that you are not so rich, that you are not therefore subject to the peculiar temptations incidental to great transactions of business, or great accumulations of gold.

Comparatively, you may sit down and thank God that you are not in this position, but that your “foot stands in an even place.”

You may be thankful, too, if you are not extremely poor, for extreme poverty, like extreme wealth, is a very dangerous position. When a person is extremely poor, he may be tempted to steal. If he should be able to overcome that, he will be tempted to envy and may be very jealous of those who are better off than himself. And I do not know a more miserable spirit than an envious one! Nothing can be more un-Christian than to be angry with my fellow man because he happens to have more of outward good, and of inward excellence, too, perhaps, than I may happen to have. Thank God that your lot is cast in the middle place! If Agur’s prayer is fulfilled in you—“Give me neither poverty nor riches”—if you have just enough to have food and raiment, be content therewith and say, “I thank God that providentially I am not exposed to the temptations of fashion and all its mazes, and I am not thrust into the temptations of penury with all its grief—in that respect my foot stands in an even place.”

How many a young man is dazzled with the idea of fame! “Ah” he thinks, “if I could but carve my name on that rock! If I could, I would mount higher than that last, and carve my name high up there!” Yes, but how many have rolled back, have tried to scale the battlements and have fallen to the bottom, mangled corpses?—

“The path of glory leads but to the grave!”

Be thankful, young man, if God should mark out for you a quiet path of usefulness in the Sunday school, or in some village station, or in some place where, in the midst of your little family, you may bring your children up as a godly parent should, and at last, before the clods of the valley shall close over you, you may have, before you go hence, to thank God that your foot stood in an even place, though it might have slipped if you had been called to a more dangerous point on the hill! It is best for us to be thankful for the position in which providence has placed us, for I suppose that most of us now present will see that we are not peculiarly exposed to either of the extremes, and therefore, in that sense our “foot stands in an even place.”

Sometimes this is the case not so much with regard to our own condition, as to the place of our abode and the surroundings of our family circle. How many of you young people ought to bless God that you are converted and live where you do! I know the temptation with some young persons is to wish to get away from the parental roof very early and to try to set up on their own account. Young woman, if you have a godly father and a godly mother, be in no great hurry to go away from the hearth where piety has been your joy! Young man, if you are apprenticed with godly people, do not be in such hot haste to be away from the place; this is a wicked city, and for every place where a young man’s foot may stand “in an even place” in it, there are 50 places where it will need all

the divine grace he has, and a great deal more that only God can supply to keep him from giving way to temptation!

I am afraid that now-a-days, such is the general business habit, as we say, and the fastness of our living, that many of our young people do not think enough of religious privileges. I have read of a Jew who would not trade in a certain town because there was no synagogue in it—he said he would rather be at another place because there was a synagogue there. And what the Jew felt in this respect, surely the Christian ought to feel far more! If you have to put up with far less money, yet if you have an opportunity of hearing the gospel, and mixing with God's people, be not in a haste to throw away your golden privileges for the sake of those poor brazen gains which are pitiful in comparison with spiritual wealth! It is a wonderful mercy—a mercy which some of my dear friends now present would prize very much if they could have it—it is a wonderful mercy, I say, to live in the midst of godly people! Contrast it to the living with the ungodly! There are those in this place now who, when they go home from this place of worship tonight, will hear oaths and blasphemy before they fall asleep. They will probably be startled in the morning by hearing the name of God profaned. Their religion provokes the animosity of their dearest friends! They cannot be at their work without hearing ribaldry and without being selected to be the butt of all the archers who shoot at them, sorely wound them and grieve them—for though there are no burnings at the stake now-a-days, yet there are “trials of cruel mocking,” and these “mockings” are sometimes very “cruel” indeed! There is all the difference between the plant in the sheltered corner of the garden and the other plant set out in the wild, bleak waste for every frost to nip! Be thankful, dear young friends, yes, and let us be thankful who are not so young, if we are placed in a position where we are not continually exposed to the vicious example, or to the frowns of gainsayers. Let us say thankfully with David, “My foot stands in an even place in that respect: and in the congregation will I bless the Lord for it.”

Besides this, *our foot may be kept by providence and grace combined.* Providence may have placed us where the ministry is instructive and established—and then our foot stands in an even place. I have known some shepherds of flocks, and in the short time in which it has been my privilege to preside here, I think I have seen them veer to all points of the compass. There are some I know now whose particular position in theology no one ever did know, and I suppose, will never be able to ascertain, for there seems to be no definite teaching, no declaration of doctrines, no laying down of established truths of God! And, mark you, it is a great mercy when the Lord teaches us something and makes us know what we do know, and when what we hear we understand and receive into our souls by the teaching of the Holy Spirit! It is a great mercy when we are not carried away by this fanaticism, nor the other enthusiasm, but when we are cast into connection with people who hold fast to the faith which is delivered to them and are not to be carried

about by every novelty, but are conservative of the grand old truths and hold fast to the doctrines of the cross of Christ! It may have been the lot of some of you, dear friends, to sometimes be members of one church and sometimes of another—sometimes of a church given to quarrel and to break up, or, on the other hand, members of churches that are taken up with every novelty. Oh, be thankful that you have, many of you young Christians, round about you, fathers in Christ and matrons in Israel who confirm you in the faith, under God, and through whom your foot has been made to stand in an even place. For this mark of grace, bless the Lord!

But to go still farther. Sometimes the Christian may thank God for his standing, not so much because of his position in life, nor because of the outward means of grace, but *because of the inward establishment and spiritual growth which God the Holy Spirit has given him*. Oh, what a mercy it is, Christian, if your experience has been your own and you are come at last to a settled state of rest of heart! The devil sometimes says to you, “You will never be able to attain to the glory and the kingdom—you will never overcome your foes.” But you can say, “Ah, in this respect my foot stands in an even place, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day.” Sometimes your outward troubles are very many and the fear is that they will be too much for you—but oh, what a mercy it is to be able to stand in an even place in that respect, and say, “Goodness and mercy followed me all the days of my life, and I am persuaded that they always will. Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for God will be with me to be my stay!” When experience and patience have produced in us unstaggering faith in God, what a blessed life we lead! But the unbelieving heir of heaven, the man of little faith and little confidence in God—he is blown about by every wind and every difficulty staggers him—he is ready to weep under every trial! But the true Christian knows that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work out for him a far more exceedingly and eternal weight of glory! He believes that Jesus walks the stormy waters. He can hear Him say, “It is I,” and he is not afraid. He feels that he cannot suffer shipwreck while Christ is in the vessel with him, and therefore, if not always rejoicing, yet he is calm and patient, waiting for the salvation of the Lord. I think I know some of you who have been for years in this condition. You are not now as you used to be—all in heaven one day and all in the depths the next. You are not as readily excited as you once were. An earnest prayer-meeting fills you with holy joy, but it does not transport you quite out of the body as it once did. On the other hand, if some sharp affliction should come upon you, it still distresses you, but it does not perplex you and cast you into despair as it would once have done! You are no longer an infant, but you have become a man or woman in Christ Jesus! You have grown strong. You are rooted,

grounded, and settled in the faith! Now, be very tranquil, dear friends, and thankful that you can say concerning these things, “I am not to be moved by them—temptations that were once formidable to me are so no longer, for I know the promise and the faithfulness of my God—and my foot stands in an even place.”

Once more. This may sometimes be peculiarly true of the Christian, *when he has been enjoying near, dear, and ripened fellowship with the Lord Jesus*. We sometimes stand on Tabor with our transfigured Lord! It is not always Gethsemane. It is sometimes the mount of the first glory and sometimes whatever occurs has no more effect upon us than tempests upon solid rocks! The joy of the Lord, the presence of our Savior, the light of His love, the feast at His banqueting table—these things become so all-absorbing to us that we can say with Dr. Watts—

***“Let earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled.
Still I can smile at Satan’s rage,
And face a frowning world.”***

Such a soul, all taken up with divine love, sitting at the feet of Christ with Mary, has neither room nor time for Martha’s cares and encumbrances, but can rejoice and say, “My heart is fixed, oh my God! My heart is fixed, I will “sing and give praise.” Such a one may be poor and yet cannot be poor! Such a one may be sick and yet must be well! Such a one may be alone and yet not alone, for his Lord is with him! I wish that you and I could more often say in this respect, “My foot stands in an even place, and in the congregation I will bless the Lord.”

Now you can see that all this view of the text is but occasional. But there is a view of the text that is permanent. As I have already said with regard to the great sin, the sin which is unto death, the sin which would destroy a Christian, every child of God may at every time say, “My foot stands in an even place.” The child of God may sin, but he cannot sin away his birthright. The heir of heaven may fall, and he may fall foully, too, but though he falls seven times, he shall be lifted up again—and the eternal hand of God shall keep him, even to the end! Beloved, it is our mercy to believe that—

***“Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever.”***

If you stand on the Rock of Ages, my dear brothers and sisters, you stand on a Rock which never can reel beneath you, and from which no power, either earthly or infernal, can ever tear you! If you are in the hands of Christ, you know what He says—“No one is able to pluck them out of My hands; My Father which gave them to Me is greater than I, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hands.” Oh, how safe they are, then, in the hands of Christ, first, and in the hands of God after—as if to give a double security, a two-handed guarantee—the power of Christ and the power of the eternal Father being both guaranteed to the safety of the believer!

But may the believer ever say within himself that he is safe? Beloved, he may never say that he is safe in himself! No, that were, indeed, but a lie! But he may always say that he is safe in Christ Jesus. He may never say, "My mountain stands firm; I shall never be moved." But he may say—

***"My life is hid with Christ in God,
Beyond the reach of harm,"***

And, "Because He lives, I shall live also." He may not say, "I know that I, by my own strength, shall persevere to the end." But he may say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day." The perseverance of the Christian is not ensured by the Christian's resolve to persevere unto the end, nor by the Christian's own power, nor by any plans which the Christian can adopt! That perseverance is secured by the promise of Christ, by the energy of the Spirit, by the watchfulness of God and by the faithfulness of God to His own covenant!

Oh, Christian, how happy are you to be loved with an everlasting love, to have your name written in an everlasting covenant, to know that if your house is not so with God, yet He has made with you an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure! Your foot stands at all times, in this respect, in an even place where justice and mercy are sweetly balanced, where justice and truth have taken away all irregularities, where the path is even and plain! Oh, let your tongue sing praises unto the Lord!

And now just a few words, and only a few words, though as earnest as possible, upon—

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S HAPPY OCCUPATION.

The Psalmist says, "In the congregation will I bless the Lord," and surely we ought to do the same. Oh, think, dear friends, in your own remembrance, how many professors have perished! I scarcely dare to look back upon them. They once floated as calmly upon the surface of the sea as you or I do. There they are. I see the broken hulks, the boards and broken pieces still tossing upon the surf! Can you see the corpses as they strew the ocean—corpses of warriors apparently as brave and as well armed as we are! There is Demas, he has made shipwreck. There is Judas, too, the first son of perdition. Now, brothers and sisters, if we have been kept, if our feet have been made to stand in an even place and we do not bless the Lord, the very stones will cry out against us! Why is it that we have not fallen into sin as many others have done? Why, indeed, but that the grace of God has prevented us? There was everything in us that would have led us into the same mischief—the same sin, the same unbelief, the same evil habit of departing from the living God—and if it had not been for preventing grace which has held us fast, we would have made shipwreck as well as others! Let us praise God if, after 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years, or perhaps more, we are still spared to

stand in the midst of the Christian church upholding our integrity! Surely we ought to say, "In the congregation will I bless the Lord."

And then, again, as the Christian ought to do it, so it is the *best thing that he can do, for nothing can be more useful to him*. I fancy if we praised God when we are in the enjoyment of mercies, we would keep mercies longer. If God had more gratitude from us when we are well, He would help us to continue in good health, but He knows that we need to be sick, sometimes, to make us know the value of health, and therefore, He sends us to the bed of sickness that we may learn a lesson of gratitude? And if we were more grateful, we might, perhaps, be spared some of our troubles. And so while we are kept standing, if we bless the Lord for it, it may be that He will continue thus to keep us, but if not, He may allow us to slip in order that we may learn where our great strength lies—and may thenceforth praise His name! Christian, to praise God will be of the utmost service to you. The fact is, you must praise somebody—and if you do not praise God, you will slip into praising yourself—and that will make you hateful in God's esteem, for the Lord hates a proud look. If you once begin to say, "It is my own goodness and the excellency of my natural temperament that have kept me," you will soon come down—and great will be the fall thereof. But if you praise God, it will keep you from, self-conceit.

To praise God is, also, one of the sweetest medicines for worldliness. Most medicines are very strange—sour or bitter. I sometimes think doctors make them thus, for many persons would not think them effectual if they were not nasty! Probably there might just as well be sweet medicines as bitter. I do not know why there should not be. Certainly praise, though it is sweet and pleasant, is profitable and curative, too!

It will cure you of worldliness quite as much as will sorrow. If you sit down to a loaded table and bless the Lord for it, the abundance will not give you "fullness of bread." If you go abroad in the world and God increases your wealth, and you are grateful for it, it will not eat as does a canker, nor injure you, but the gratitude you have will be a sweet corrective force to keep you from being a mere earth-grubbing mole—as you would have been if you had not been lifting your eyes to heaven and mounting up on the wings of praise, as the eagle does, with his face towards the sun! Praise God that you have been able to bear your prosperity and you will probably have a longer time of it, and you will get good out of it. Moreover, as you ought to praise God and it is useful to praise God, so let me say that it is *honorable to God that you should praise Him*. There ought to be somebody to speak well of Him, for this wicked world is constantly abusing Him. If a man's own children do not praise him, where can he expect to have a good name? Oh, you who are the children of God, I am afraid you sometimes give your God a bad character! Those long faces of yours; those dolorous tales about providential afflictions—when they hear and see these, the world says,

“Ah, we always said so—they are a miserable set and they serve a very hard Master!” But it is a gross lie! There never were servants that had such a good Master as we have! We love His house! We love His service! We love His wages! We love Him! We are the happiest people in all the world and though the worldling will have it that we must be wretched because we are religious, we reply, “Our religion is our joy and our comfort! It is our delight and our bliss! We wish we had more of it! We serve a blessed God and we will speak well of His name.”

To bless the Lord, while it is honorable to Him, *will often be useful to our fellow creatures*, and this should be the most practical point. David said, “In the congregation will I bless the Lord,” by which I understand he felt that his blessing God might be useful to others, else he might have shut himself up in his room and praised God there. David was not like some of whom we know. I hear of some about the country who say, “I shall not go to the place of worship in my village. I cannot get on with the minister. I buy Mr. so-and-so’s sermons and I find more truth in them, so I shall stay at home.” You remember the view the apostle took of this when he wrote, “Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is”—a very bad manner, let me say, by the way the apostle mentions it! If there are a few people of God anywhere, join with them, and if they are such a people as you cannot think of joining as people of God, open a place of your own! Make it a point of conscience that where you have a house, God shall have one, and that where there is a tent for you, there shall be an altar for Him! How much might the kingdom of God spread if Christian people everywhere took care of this! David could have praised God alone, it is true, but he was not satisfied with it. He loved that genial warmth, that glow of holy fire which always comes when hearts come together. And so he says, “In the congregation will I praise the Lord.”

There are several ways of doing this. You may praise the Lord, you know, by singing—and what a delightful employment that is! I sometimes wish we all knew how to sing. It is very well for us to sing our best, but that best might be a great deal better. Our Moravian friends can, nearly all of them, sing, and if you were to go to their settlement you would find all of them able to join in the sacred song. It is miserable work where there are two or three fellows in white surplices who get up to praise God, or where there is a big machine out of which the music is brought. I suppose the Lord does have mercy upon such folly, but how there can be anything like spiritual worship coming from a box of pipes I cannot understand! The hearts of God’s people praise Him out of living organs! We must bring something like spiritual worship and when we have learned to praise God with the understanding as well as with our hearts, surely it will be none the less acceptable to Him, but all the more! He ought to have the best of the best and when we bring Him our praise it should be the best praise that it is possible for even hearts to make!

But there are other ways of blessing Him. You who cannot sing, can perhaps *praise Him by your preaching*. Oh, how we can help the Lord when we speak well of His name from the pulpit! It enlarges the scope and sphere of our praise when we can call upon hundreds, or on these occasions here, in this house, upon thousands of others, and say, “Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together! Come, let us bow down and worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker—let us come into His presence with thanksgiving and unto His courts with joy.” It is sweet work to preach when our preaching is blessing God!

Some of you cannot preach and you cannot sing. Well, you can *bless God by your conversation*. May the Lord give us many of His servants to bless Him in the farmyard, in the counting-house, behind the counter and in the factory! To bless Him when they are driving their carts, whose hearts are so full of praise that they naturally speak well of God as they speak well of some good friend who has helped and prospered them! Let me enlist you to bless God this very night before you go to bed—bless Him, I mean, in talking to someone else to whom your testimony for God may be blessed. Now, I charge you—you who love the Lord Jesus Christ and are His followers—if He has treated you badly, tell of it, speak honestly!

If you have found Him to be a hard Master, tell it to warn others against Him! But I know you cannot! You dare not say a word against Him, though you can say ten thousand words for Him—and would do so if it were not for your bashfulness. You can all say—

**“Lord, unloose my stammering tongue.
Who should louder sing than I?”**

Tell others that you have tasted and handled the good word of life, that you have found it a delightful thing to weep the tears of penitence, to turn with faith to the Savior and trust in Him. Do you say, “To whom shall I tell it?” Go, husband, tell it to your wife! My good sister, tell it to your husband! Tell it to your child! Tell it to your brother! “Andrew first finds his own brother, Simon Peter.” You go and do the same! Tell others and so help them to praise Him, too!

And there is another way of blessing God, even without much time. A Christian can *bless God by his life*. I heard somebody say of a Christian brother at Manchester that “he preached with his feet.” Ah, that is a noble way of preaching! May we have many such preachers! That is to say, by practical living, by walk and conversation. May you praise God by your consistent cheerfulness! There are brothers and sisters in this place to look at whose face is always enough to make one feel happy! They are not better nor richer than many I know of, but they seem always happy. They seem to live with Jesus—and when they speak, they speak well of Him. I am sure they are the most likely people to bring in converts. Ask the Lord to make your face to shine. Pray that you may look at Him until you are changed from glory unto glory! You know what that means—that the glory there is in Christ may come upon you—from glory to glory—that

your face may shine like that of Moses, the light of God's countenance being upon you through your praising and blessing Him!

I am afraid my sermon has no relation to some here present, but I ask them whether God has not been good to them in many respects. They have been kept alive—let them be grateful for the mercies they have and let their gratitude lead them to penitence, to think that they have sinned against so good a God! Ah, my hearers, if you will but repent and come to Him, He will be found of you. Knock and His door will be opened. Speak to Him and He will hear and listen to you! Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and He will wash you in His blood and bring you to His Father's right hand in the kingdom! The Lord bless these words, spoken in much conscious weakness, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 37:17-40.**

17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous.* They must stand, therefore, for how shall he fall whom God upholds?

18-19. *The LORD knows the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.* These are bad times now. Everyone complains, and indeed, there seems to be abundant cause, for distress is universal. But let us fall back on the promise. "In the days of famine they shall be satisfied."

20-23. *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall be consumed; into smoke shall they vanish away. The wicked borrow and pay not again: but the righteous show mercy and give. For such as are blessed of Him shall inherit the earth: and they that are cursed of Him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and He delights in his way.* There is a mutual delight, you see. If we delight in God, God delights in us. He delights in the conduct of His people. When they walk with Him, He takes pleasure in every step that they take. What do you say, brothers and sisters? Have you tried to live today so that God may take pleasure in you? He cannot do it if we have lived carelessly, or fruitlessly, or selfishly, but when we live to Him, then the Lord delights in our way.

24. *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholds him with His hand.* Just going to fall, but in came the interposing hand. Grace catches us up when sin would throw us down.

25. *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* It was so unusual a thing that David had never seen it. I have several times seen the seed of the righteous begging bread, but in every case it has been because of their drunkenness or their laziness, or because of their own vice which they

brought upon themselves. But, as a rule, God takes care of the children of His children. He does not allow them to want. They may be brought into great straits, but He will not permit them to come to beggary.

26-29. *He is always merciful, and lends; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore. For the LORD loves justice, and forsakes not His saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever. There is a grand time coming (oh, that God would hasten it!) when truth and righteousness shall rule the earth, and then shall the godly have their portion! At the present time—*

***“Every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile.”***

But the day shall come when the vile person shall cease from off the earth and the saints shall have the kingdom.

30. *The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of justice. You may often judge a man by his mouth. The physician looks at the tongue to see how the man is—and so is a righteous man known by his mouth and his tongue, for he talks of justice.*

31-40. *The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut of, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man and behold the upright. For the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.*

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GOD'S ANSWER TO PERSISTENT PRAYER

NO. 3376

A SERMON
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“There is a sound of abundance of rain.”
1 Kings 18:41.

FROM the narrative we may learn that *things can never be so bad but what God can bring deliverance in His own time.* The country had been parched in Palestine for three years. Travelers in the East will tell you how brown and burned that country looks at all times, but how it must have appeared when the clouds cleaved together and all the pastures were turned to dust, I can scarcely conceive. It must have been a terrible and piteous sight when the cattle had perished and the people were ready to die through famine and hunger. Yet, bad as it was, when the clouds had long ago vanished, when the children of three years old did not know what a drop of rain meant, when the skies seemed to be as brass above the heads of poor tortured mortals, then it was that the word came to Elijah, saying, “There shall yet be rain.” Courage, then! If the times should be full of danger, if there should be forebodings in the hearts of the bravest, if infidelity should threaten to put out the light of the gospel, or if Romanism should seem to blot out the name of Christ from under heaven, yet God can still appear! And if any one church is left and the Lord commands the clouds that they rain no rain upon her, her hedges be broken down, the wild boars out of the woods waste her and she seems to be utterly left, yet at the last hour of the day, when her hope all but expires, Jehovah, her friend, may come to help her! And so with us personally—if we are brought to the last handful of meal in the barrel and the last drop of oil in the cruse—if we are brought so low that now it seems relief would come too late, or could not possibly come at all, the Lord, who has His way in the whirlwind and who makes the clouds the dust of His feet, can now come from above! On cherubim and seraphim, right royally can He descend in speedy flight and bring help to His needy servants! Let us, therefore, drive despair away! There is no room for that in Jehovah’s world! As long as He still reigns, let the earth rejoice and let His people wait upon Him in hope.

Further, we learn another lesson, namely, that *when prayer has been exercised concerning anything, it is our duty and our privilege to expect the answer!*

We sometimes pray and receive nothing—but it is in most cases because we have asked amiss. Or if we are quite sure that our request was a right one, yet we have forgotten the canon or the law which says,

“Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavers is as the waves of the sea driven by the wind and tossed: let not that man expect to receive anything of the Lord.” Now, if we ask believingly, we are quite sure to ask expectantly! We shall go up to the top of Carmel to look for the cloud if we have believingly sought for the rain. We shall send Gehazi yet seven times if he perceives no sign of mercy at the first—and we shall continue in importunate prayer—still believing that Jehovah cannot lie and will, as surely as He lives, be as good as His word and fulfill His promise to those who trust Him.

How bold it was of Elijah to go to Ahab, even before that cloud had been seen, before he had sent his servant to look for it, and to say to him, “There is a sound of abundance of rain!” What was that sound? I know not. I do not suppose that Ahab heard it, or that anyone else, except Elijah, recognized it. The ears of true faith are very quick and keen. She hears the coming of the blessing, the footsteps of the angels as they draw near, by way of Jacob’s ladder. God has heard her, and she hears her God! God is quick to hear her whispers and her thoughts—and she knows “the secret of the Lord,” for it “is with them that fear Him.” And long before the eyes have seen, or the ears have heard, or it has entered into the heart of man to imagine it, she perceives that the blessing is coming! There are certain sacred instincts which belong to the faith of God’s elect, which faith always comes from God. We must remember its divine origin and that it keeps up its acquaintanceship with the eternal Father by whom it was begotten. Like the shell picked up from the deep sea which always continues to whisper hoarsely of the sea from which it came, so faith continues to hear the sound of Jehovah’s goings. If none else hears them, she perceives them!

I thought of using this fact tonight as an illustration of the truth of God that there are *certain* signs which faith can see of a coming revival in a church. We will take that first. Then, *there are certain tokens which faith can perceive of coming joy and peace in an individual heart*—of that secondly. In the first place—

I. THERE ARE CERTAIN SIGNS AND TOKENS FOR GOOD WHICH PRAYERFUL FAITH CLEARLY PERCEIVES WHEN AN AWAKENING—A GENUINE REVIVAL—IS ABOUT TO COME.

What are these signs? I do not know that they are perceptible at this time throughout the churches of London. I do not know that they are perceptible *anywhere*, but I do know that wherever they are, they are the shadows which coming events cast before them! And one of the first of them is this—*a growing dissatisfaction with the present state of things and an increasing anxiety among the members of the church for the salvation of souls*. To have no conversions is a very dreadful thing, but to be at ease without seeing conversions is at all times more dreadful! I could bear a suspension in the increase of the church, I think, with some degree of peace of mind if I found all the members distressed and disturbed about it!

But if we should ever come to this pass—God grant we never may!—that we shall see no conversions and yet shall all of us say, “Still, still our place is well attended. There are such-and-such persons who come—we ourselves are fed with spiritual food and, therefore, all is well.” I say, if it ever comes to that, it will be a thing to mourn over, both by day and night, for it will be a token that the Spirit of God has for a while forsaken us! Oh, that the churches in London where the congregations are but small, and where the conversions are but few, would be clothed in sackcloth and cast ashes upon their heads! Oh, that they would proclaim a day of fasting and humble themselves before the Lord in the bitterness of their souls, for when it came to this, Jehovah’s hand would turn towards them in bounty and they would soon become the joyful mothers of children! As long as a church is satisfied to be barren, she shall be barren! But when she cries out in the anguish of her spirit, then shall Jehovah remember her. He hears the cries of His people, but when she will not cry and is at ease in desolate circumstances, then the desolation shall continue and the sorrows be multiplied!

Dear friends, it should be a matter of personal heart-searching for you how far any of you are at ease in Zion, how far you are satisfied without doing good yourselves, for in proportion as you are such, you are tainting the church with evil. But, on the other hand, let me inquire whether you have learned to sigh and cry for all the sin of this huge city, for all the abominations of this, our country? Let me ask whether you ever laid to heart the teeming millions of the heathen populations who are dying without a Savior? If you do this—and if all of us do it—it cannot be long before God shall look upon the earth and send a shower of divine grace, for that *anxiety in Christian hearts* is the sound of the coming of abundance of rain!

Another indication of a large blessing near at hand is when *this anxiety leads believers to be exceedingly earnest and importunate in prayer*. When, one by one, in their own chambers they become the King’s remembrancers and plead with Him day and night. When by twos and threes in the family, the prayer becomes fervent and grows into a passionate cry, “Oh, God, remember the land and send a blessing!” When in the churches, the spirit of prayer needs not to be excited by appeals from the pulpit, but is general and spontaneous! When the members make it a matter of regular conscience and joyous privilege to attend the prayer-meetings and when there they do not preach sermons, nor deliver themselves of doctrinal disquisitions to their fellow men, but are like Elijah when he knelt at Carmel with his head between his knees, or else like Jacob, at Jabbok, when he said, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” Then be sure of the blessing coming, for this sign never yet failed! Whenever and wherever there is this abounding prayer, there must be abounding blessing before long! Baal’s worshipers may pray to him and he may not answer them. They may cut themselves with stones and cover his altar with their blood, but Jehovah always looks to the

earnestness of His people and will surely avenge His own elect, though He bears long with them. He will give them the desires of their hearts! May we see—as we have seen it in this church—may we see it renewed among us—may we see it in every part of Christendom, in every church in London, in every church throughout the whole British Empire, in America and wherever there are believers—a deep and awful anxiety for souls that will not let believers be quiet, but will give them to exercise an incessant pleading with God which will stir up His strength and cause Him to make bare His arm!

A third sign, and a far more approximate one because it is the result of the other two, is *when ministers begin to take counsel, one with another*, and to say, “What must we do?” The church is earnest. We, too, share the fervor. What must we do that we may be more useful, that we may win more for Christ?” It becomes the sign of a great blessing when men in the ministry will preach the gospel more fully, more simply, more affectionately, more in dependence upon the Holy Spirit than they have ever done before. In proportion as elocution shall be less regarded, rhetoric be less honored, long words less admired—but simplicity, plainness of speech, boldness and earnestness shall be sought after—in that proportion, depend upon it, the blessing will come! In vain the prayers of God's people and all their tears in that place where the ministry gives forth an uncertain sound!

How shall God bless His vineyard by a cloud in which there is no rain? How shall He water the plants of His own right hand planting from a cistern that holds no water? Ah, brothers, if any of you have been guilty of expounding philosophical themes when he ought to have been preaching the simple gospel—if we have been guilty of trying to get poetic sentences and flowery periods when our sentences ought to have been short and sharp like daggers in the consciences of men! If we have lifted up a mere dogma instead of exalting Christ, and have preached the letter and forgotten the spirit, may God forgive us this great offense and help us, from this time forward, to begin to learn how to preach, to begin to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn from Him how to touch the springs of the human heart and, by His Spirit's power, lead men to cry, “What must we do to be saved?”

Brothers in Christ who preach the gospel, it is in no spirit of mere criticism of the general ministry that I have offered these sentences! It is rather in criticism of us all and loving counsel to us all. If we are to obtain a blessing, depend upon it, we must come nearer to the cross! We must get to value human knowledge less and to value Christ infinitely more! And then, having these, we must cry aloud and spare not—and our message must always be concerning salvation. We must leave for a time the more difficult and deep things of God and we must keep hammering away at this one thing with all our might—that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life! Where this shall become commonly the case, there shall be the sound of an abundance of rain!

God send us more Haliburtons, more McCheynes, more Harrington Evans, more men of the stamp of John Newton, Mr. Whitfield and the Wesleys—and when we have these, we may take it as an indication that God is blessing us and that it is a sound of abundance of rain!

I have not quite concluded the list of these favorable tokens. There will be a certainty that the rain is falling. The first few drops will be wetting the sensitive pavement of the Christian church *when we shall see the doctrine of individual responsibility fully felt and carried out into individual action*. I believe—I do not know whether there are any of you among them—that there are a great multitude of Christian people who think that religion is a thing for ministers and that ministers ought to do all they can for the spread of the knowledge of the true religion. Of course, they include City Missionaries, Bible women and good people who can give all their time to such work! But the notion that every saved man is to be a minister in some sense, that every converted woman has also her share of ministry to perform for Christ, that it is not one member of the body that is to be active, while all the others are to be torpid and idle—of this they do not dream! When it shall be believed that there is as much work for the foot as there is for the head and as much for the uncomely parts as for those that have abundant comeliness—when the poor shall feel that the church cannot do without them and the rich shall perceive that they have their work to do in the circles in which they move—when the illiterate shall talk of Christ as well as the educated. When the nurse-girl, the servant in the kitchen, the workman at the loom and plow shall all be moved by one common impulse—when the divine enthusiasm shall blaze in the learned and in the ignorant, when it shall flash up in the heart of the members of Parliament, when it shall be found in the highest and lowest places of the land—when every Christian shall feel that he is not his own, but bought with a price—when he shall see the blood-mark stamped upon him and say with the apostle, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus,” when the consecrated life shall be lived, not in cloisters and nunneries, but in cottages, mansions, palaces—in the abodes of wealth and fashion as in the dwelling places of poverty. When God's men go out into the world as *God's men*, feeling that they are to live for Him fully, as Paul lived for Him fully, feeling that for them to live is indeed Christ—then, brothers and sisters, there will be a sound of an abundance of rain!

Verily, verily, I say unto you, you need not think of the conversion of Japan, India and China, nor of Ethiopia's turning unto God—we, ourselves, need to be converted to God first! The church of God is not fit to have a great blessing yet. If she is not first of all baptized in the Holy Spirit and in fire, she will not be qualified to do the great deeds that God intends her to do before long. The world shall be saved, but the church must first be quickened. The nations shall be converted, but the church of God must, first of all, be awakened! The fire shall go forth from Zion, but it must first burn furiously upon Zion's own hearth! Out of nothing

comes nothing—and if the church degenerates into nothing, she will do nothing. It is only when she possesses the divine life in the fullest vigor, that she shall be capable of doing work for God which shall glorify the name of the Lord Jesus! The church has now got all the conversions that she is qualified to get. God always gives every church as big a blessing as it is fit to have—and if it qualifies itself for more—it shall have more! God treats His churches as parents treat their sons. They give them but little money when they are children—a penny will do—but when they get to be young men, they shall have yet more. We have but little because we are fit to possess and use but little. We are not faithful in what is given to us—and if the one talent often lies wrapped in a napkin, how can we expect to have five or 10 entrusted to us?

God stir up the church, then, in the manner which I have tried to depict, and there will be “a sound of abundance of rain.” And now to change the line of thought, I want to—

II. HAVE A FEW MINUTES' QUIET TALK WITH PERSONS WHO ARE DISPIRITED.

Some of you have got into Giant Despair's castle. You have had a taste of his cruel crab tree cudgel lately. You have been taken to see the dead men's bones outside the castle and you have been told that there is nothing for you but destruction. Now, there is, I believe, to such as you are, with all your sad distress of mind, an indication that the famine and drought of your soul shall soon end. Such a condition as yours cannot always be. There are always signs of abundance of rain. Perhaps there are some such signs now in you!

This is one—*God always means to bless us when He empties us completely*—when we get to know that we are nothing and have nothing unless He fills us with His hidden treasure! If you were self-confident and felt that you could rally yourself—that you had still some stores to fall back upon—it is very likely that your present state would continue. But if you are brought to the ground, you cannot go any lower and you shall soon be lifted up! If it has come to be the darkest hour in the night, the day will soon dawn, the first beams will soon streak and redden the horizon! When you become so poor and needy that you dare not trust yourself in anything—when you feel as if you scarcely could open your mouth, but cry, “Open You my lips”—when you feel as if your wisdom were all turned to folly and your wit all gone, like a man at sea, staggering to and fro, reeling like a drunken man. When you feel that you cannot help yourself, then remember the old proverb that “man's extremity is God's opportunity.” You must empty the pitcher before you can fill it! You must get the purse emptied of all the bad money before you can put in the genuine coin. You must throw the chaff out of the bushel before you can put in the wheat. And God is emptying you of your self-sufficiency and carnal trust in order that now there may be a full Christ for empty sinners, a rich Christ for poverty-stricken sinners! If you have got a moldy crust of your own, you shall not have the bread of

heaven. If you have one brass farthing left of your own merit, you shall not have Christ—

***“Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large—
While we can call one mite our own,
We get no full discharge!
But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small,
As soon as we have nothing to pay,
Our God forgives us all!”***

Now, your being nothing and having nothing—your being helplessly bankrupt in spiritual affairs—is a token for good and I thank the Master for it!

There is sure to be a sign of abundance of rain, too, *when your soul begins to be unutterably miserable apart from Jesus Christ*. If you could find comfort in the joys of this world, I would fear it would be a long while before you would find peace. But if pleasures which were once so sweet have now become insipid or distasteful. If social joys are now shunned because you have an aching void within your heart which these cannot fill. If you get alone and sigh and cry because you need—you need, you scarcely know what—but still you feel you cannot rest until you find your God! That unrest, that dissatisfaction, disturbance, longing, sighing and pining all are good signs! “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” I think I can hear in that longing of yours a sound of abundance of rain! But there are better signs than any you can see in yourselves, for the most comfortable evidences we can ever bring from self are generally but miserable comforters, like those of poor Job. They begin by comforting and end by making us more wretched than before.

But here are some things that are signs of abundance of rain. The first is, *God has given His Son to die for sinners*. You are a sinner. You know it and you feel it. Now, a sinner is a sacred thing. The Holy Spirit has made him so by declaring that Christ came to seek and to save just such! If God has given His dear Son to bleed upon the cross as a substitute for guilt, surely He will deny nothing! “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?” Stand at the foot of the cross and as you hear the blood of Jesus falling, drop by drop, surely in the ears of faith there is a sound of abundance of rain!

But He lives. He is gone from the cross to heaven where He lives and intercedes before His Father's face. “Therefore also,” it is written, “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever lives to make intercession for them.” If you hear the voice of Jesus pleading with authority before the Father's throne, you feel certain that God will not refuse His Son's request, but will do to Him according to His petition. So that here is another sound of abundance of rain! “He made intercession for the transgressors”—that is you again. He makes

intercession for such as you are! Give Him, then, your cause to plead, nor doubt the Father's grace.

Another blessed sign of an abundance of mercy for poor burdened souls is *the gift of the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit has been given to us. It is a thing that we are to pray for, that the Holy Spirit may be poured out, but the Holy Spirit *is* poured out, *was* given to the whole church on the day of Pentecost in order that He might abide with us forever! The Holy Spirit, then, is here—the head of the present dispensation, ruling and reigning in the hearts of His people. But why does He come? To convince of sin; to give us repentance; to show us Christ; to lead us to Christ, to work faith in us, and to breed all the spiritual graces within our souls.

Oh, friends, however barren and dead we may be, the Holy Spirit can quicken us! And in the fact that He is given to His people there is another sign of abundance of rain.

But I think there is another we must not forget—and that is *that there is a mercy-seat*. I like, when I feel my own sinfulness and corruption, to think that there is still a mercy-seat. There it stands. I may not have gone to it as I ought. I may feel as if I never could go to it as I ought. My heart may be as heavy as a stone, but there is the mercy-seat and God does not mean not to bless me, or He would have taken that mercy-seat away! He would have said, “No, I forbid you to pray. I will never hear you again.” But as long as there stands that blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, why, who is it meant for? It is surely meant for the needy! It is meant for those who need to pray—and the blood upon it is an evidence that it is meant for the guilty who need pardon—

***“The mercy seat is open still,
Here let my soul retreat.”***

The very fact that I may pray is another sign of an abundance of rain!

And once more—is it not a sign of an abundance of mercy to a poor devil-dragged sinner who has been dragged, as it were, through a whole forest of temptations, through the brambles and briars of his sins, who is all wounded, torn, ragged and bleeding—is it not a sign of mercy to him that *there is the invitation always ringing from the gospel*, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest”? Always does that invitation stand! Never does it cease to call! This silver trumpet always sounds! The bell is always ringing—

“Come and welcome, sinner, come!”

“Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money, let him come: yes, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price.” Why that invitation? Is it mockery? Is it scorn or sarcasm? Does God invite intending to repulse? Does He set open the door of mercy meaning to shut it in the sinner's face? Impossible! God is willing to receive and bless, for God invites most freely. And, mark you, He does more than invite—He commands—and with the command there is a threat! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; He that believes not shall be condemned.” He makes it a sin not to believe—a sin not to have mercy upon yourselves—a sin not to take the mercy which

He freely gives! Yes, He makes this the greatest of all sins. This is *the* sin which causes men to perish, that they believe not in Christ. "He that believes not is condemned already, because He has not believed on the Son of God." Now, see how hearty God is in this matter. He first invites—will He reject you? Next, He commands you to come—can He cast you away when you do as He bids you do? Then He threatens you, if you do not come. How His heart of generosity is displayed here! He cannot refuse to save you if you trust Him. You, blackest, worst and vilest, if you trust Him, He cannot refuse you! He has threatened to destroy you if you do not trust—can He destroy you if you do? What a God were that! No! Cast yourselves upon Him! Fall flat upon the promise which He gives you in His dear Son and surely, so doing, you shall feel that great rain for which your thirsty soul is longing, for the very invitation is a sound of abundance of rain!

Christian brothers and sisters, I dare say some of you sometimes get very dry and feel as if you need an abundance of rain. Well, *that very sense of need, that inward craving*, will be a sign of its coming! Continue much in prayer, even when you do not get a blessing in it. An esteemed clergyman gives this advice to his friends—if they have not liberty in prayer, to be sure and use a form! I think that is about as bad advice as he could possibly have given! When you feel you have not liberty in prayer, pray in order to get liberty! Do not leave the mercy-seat till you do, but put up with no makeshifts. Do not resort to any of those legs of wood, iron and stone. Get to have real and living fellowship with Christ and dread above all things, the possibility of sham religion being put in the place of the real, living thing! Never be satisfied, dearly beloved, until you live every day in communion with Christ! Do not be content without the abiding presence of that gracious Sun of your soul, your blessed Savior! Without Him, this life is a very death—and the thought of the world to come a torment to the spirit! And when you feel you cannot do without Him, without the reality of His assured presence. When services will not do and the Bible, itself, will not do. Without getting Him, without getting heart-work and spirit-work, without getting the soul and sustenance of it—then it is that before long an abundant blessing will drop upon your soul!

The Lord make us uneasy and wretched out of Him—make us hungry and thirsty apart from Him! The Lord make us covetous beyond all covetousness after Him, dissatisfied beyond all peace of mind apart from Him! And when we get to that, He will feed us with bread to the fullest and give us the wines on the lees well-refined, that we may drink and rejoice! May God give a blessing to these words for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 7.**

While we are reading, let us also be adoring at the same time, for the words of Christ have a gracious divinity about them. They are infinite. They are omnipotent. There is a kind of life in them—a life which communicates itself to those who hear them. Our Savior did not preach sermons—He preached texts. All His sermons are full of golden sentences, not hammered gold leaf, like those of men, but ingots of solid gold and the gold of that land is good, the most fine gold. There is none like it. Thus He preaches in the seventh chapter of Matthew.

Verse 1. *Judge not that you be not judged.* Set not up for critics, especially in the act of worship. Probably there is no greater destroyer of profit in the hearing of the word than is the spirit of carping criticism.

1, 2. *Judge not that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.* When the Lord comes in judgment, He might almost decline to mount the throne, for He might say, “These men have already tried and condemned each other—let their sentences abide.” If He were to judge us as we have judged others, who among us would stand? But we may rest assured that our fellow men will usually exercise towards us much the same judgment that we exercise towards them.

3. *And why do you behold the speck that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye?* It is a beam. You do not see it because it is in your own eye. How is it that you can be so severe towards that which is in another, and so lenient towards yourself?

4, 5. *Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull the speck out of your eye and, behold, a beam is in your own eye? You hypocrite! First cast out the beam out of your own eye; and then shall you see clearly to cast out the speck out of your brother's eye.* There may be, dear friends, a great deal of hypocrisy about us, of which we are not aware, for when a man sees a fault in another and tells him of it, he says, “You know I am a very plain-spoken person. There is no hypocrisy about me.” Well, but there is, and, according to the Savior's description, this may be sheer hypocrisy because meanwhile in your own eye there is something worse than you see in your fellow, and this you pass over! And this is simply untruthful dealing and it amounts to hypocrisy. If you were really so zealous to make people see, you would begin by being zealous to see, yourself! And if you were so concerned to have all eyes cleansed from impurity, you would begin by cleansing your own, or seeking to have them cleansed.

6. *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again, and tear you to pieces.* It is a pity to talk about some of the secrets of our holy faith in any and every company. It would be almost profane to speak of them in the company of profane men. We know that they would not understand us—they would find occasion for jest and ridicule and, therefore, our own reverence for holy things must cause us to lay a finger on our lips when we are in the presence of profane persons. Do not let us, however, carry out one precept to the exclusion of others! There are dogs that eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table. Drop them a

crumb. And there are even swine that may yet be transformed—to whom the sight of a pearl might give some inkling of a better condition of heart. Cast not the pearls before them, but you may show them to them sometimes when they are in as good a state of mind as they are likely to be in. It is ours to preach the gospel to every creature—that is a precept of Christ, and yet all creatures are not always in the condition to hear the gospel. We must choose our time. Yet even this I would not push too far. We are to preach the gospel in season and out of season. Oh, that we may be able to follow precepts as far as they are meant to go, and no further.

7. *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* This is the simplest form of prayer. Follow up your prayer by the effort. “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Add force to your petitions and to your prayers. If the door blocks the way, knock until it is opened.

8. *For everyone that asks, receives, and he that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks, it shall be opened.* One way or another you will get the blessing if you are but persevering! And blessed is the man who is a master of the art of asking, but does not forget the labor of seeking an entrance through the importunity of knocking!

9, 10. *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?* Our Lord will give us the real thing. Sometimes we would be quite satisfied with an imitation of it. And sometimes we have to wait and be prepared for the reception of the real thing—it is infinitely better for us to wait for months than immediately to get a stone—better to wait for a fish than the next moment to have a scorpion! There were some in the wilderness who asked to be satisfied, and they were so, with the flesh of quails. They got their stones, they got their scorpions. But the Lord's people may sometimes find that they have to wait a while. God will not give to them that which is other than good for them.

11, 12. *If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him? Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.* Wonderful condensation of the two tables of the law! God help us to remember it. This is a golden rule and he that follows that shall lead a golden life.

13, 14. *Enter you in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in that way. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.* Do not be ashamed of being called narrow! Do not be ashamed of being supposed to lead a life of great precision and exactness. There is nothing very grand about breadth, after all. And I have noticed one thing—the broadest men I have ever met with in the best sense, have always kept to the narrow way, and the narrowest

people I know are those who are so fond of the broad way! I could indicate some literature which professes to be exceedingly liberal—it is liberal, indeed, in finding fault with everybody who holds the gospel, but its tone is bitterness, itself, towards all the orthodox! Wormwood and gall are honey compared with what the liberal people generally pour out upon those who keep close to the truth of God! I prefer to cultivate a broad spirit to a narrow heart—and then to talk about the breadth of the way.

15. *Beware of false prophets.* But as long as he is a prophet, people will respect him. Do not find fault with him, he is a clever man.

15-25. *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven. 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 say unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you that work iniquity. Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. For the best man will be tried, and perhaps all the more because he is such!*

26-29. *And everyone that hears these sayings of Mine and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine. For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

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*“And I was left.”
Ezekiel 9:8.*

SALVATION never shines so brightly to any man’s eyes as when it comes to himself. Then is divine grace illustrious, indeed, when we can see it working with divine power upon ourselves. To our apprehension, our own case is always the most desperate, and therefore, mercy shown to us is the most extraordinary! We see others perish and wonder that the same doom has not befallen ourselves. The horror of the ruin which we dreaded and our intense delight at the certainty of safety in Christ unite with our personal sense of unworthiness to make us cry in amazement, “And I was left.”

Ezekiel, in vision, saw the slaughter men smiting right and left at the bidding of divine justice. And as he stood unharmed among the heaps of the slain, he exclaimed with surprise, “I was left.” It may be the day will come when we, too, shall cry with solemn joy, “And I, too, by sovereign grace, am spared while others perish.” Special grace will cause us to marvel. Emphatically will it be so at the last dread day.

Read the story of the gross idolatry of the people of Jerusalem as recorded in the 8th chapter of Ezekiel’s prophecy, and you will not wonder at the judgment with which the Lord at length overthrew the city. Let us set our hearts to consider how the Lord dealt with the guilty people. “Six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lies toward the north, and every man with a slaughter weapon in his hand.” The destruction worked by these executioners was swift and terrible—and it was typical of other solemn visitations. All through history the observing eye notices lines of justice, red marks upon the page where the judge of all the earth has at last seen it necessary to decree a terrible visitation upon a guilty people. All these past displays of divine vengeance point at the coming judgment even more complete and overwhelming. The past is prophetic of the future! A day is surely coming when the Lord Jesus, who came once to save, will descend a second time to judge! Despised mercy has always been succeeded by deserved wrath—and so must it be in the end of all things. “But who may abide the day of His coming? Or who shall stand when He appears?” When sinners are smitten, who will be left? He shall lift the balances of justice and make bare the sword of execution. When His avenging angels shall gather the vintage of the earth, who among us shall exclaim in wondering gratitude, “And I was left.”? Such an one will be a wonder of grace, indeed, worthy to take rank with those marvels of grace of whom we have spoken in many former discourses in

this place! To each one of you, I put this inquiry—Will you be an instance of sparing grace, and cry, “And I was left”?

We will use the wonderfully descriptive vision of this chapter that we may, with holy fear, behold *the character of the doom* from which grace delivers us. And then we will dwell upon the exclamation of our text, “I was left,” considering it as the joyful utterance of *the persons who are privileged to escape the destruction*. And lastly, *the emotions which the escaped feel*.

By the help of the Holy Spirit, let us solemnly consider—

I. THE TERRIBLE DOOM from which the prophet in vision saw himself preserved, regarding it as a figure of the judgment which is yet to come upon all the world.

Observe, first, that it was a *just* punishment inflicted upon those who had been often warned—a punishment which they willfully brought upon themselves. God had said that if they set up idols, He would destroy them, for He would not endure such an insult to His Godhead. He had often pleaded with them, not with words only, but with severe providences, for their land had been laid desolate, their city had been besieged and their kings had been carried away captive! But they were bent on backsliding to the worship of their idol gods. Therefore, when the sword of the Lord was drawn from its scabbard, it was no novel punishment, no freak of vengeance, no unexpected execution. So, in the close of life, and at the end of the world, when judgment comes on men, it will be just and according to the solemn warnings of the Word of God. When I read the terrible things which are written in God’s book in reference to future punishment, especially the awful things which Jesus spoke concerning the place where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched, I am greatly pressed in spirit. Some there are who sit in judgment upon the great judge and condemn the punishment which He inflicts as too severe! As for myself, I cannot measure the power of God’s anger—but let it burn as it may—I am sure that it will be just. No needless pang will be inflicted upon a single one of God’s creatures! Even those who are doomed forever will endure no more than divine justice absolutely requires, no more than they, themselves, would admit to be the due reward of their sins if their consciences would judge aright. Mark you, this is the very hell of hell that men will know that they are justly suffering. To endure a tyrant’s wrath would be a small thing compared with suffering what one has brought upon himself by willful wanton choices of wrong. Sin and suffering are indissolubly bound together in the constitution of nature—it cannot be otherwise, nor ought it to be. It is right that evil should be punished. Those who were punished in Jerusalem could not turn upon the executioners and say, “We do not deserve this doom”—every cruel wound of the Chaldean sword and every fierce crash of the Babylonian battle-axe fell on men who in their consciences knew that they were only reaping what they themselves had sown! Brothers and sisters, what wonders of grace shall we be if, from a judgment which we have so richly deserved, we shall be rescued at the last!

Let us notice very carefully that this slaughter was *preceded by separation* which removed from among the people those who were distinct in character. Before the slaughter men proceeded to their stern task, a man appeared among them clothed in linen with a writer's inkhorn by his side, who marked all those who in their hearts were grieved at the evil done in the city. Until these were marked, the destroyers did not commence their work. Whenever the Lord lays bare His arm for war, He first gathers His saints into a place of safety! He did not destroy the world by the flood till Noah and his family were safe in the ark. He would not suffer a single fire drop to fall on Sodom till Lot had escaped to Zoar. He carefully preserves His own—flood, nor flame, nor pestilence, nor famine shall do them harm! We read in the Revelation that the angel said, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." Vengeance must sheath her sword till divine love has housed its darlings. When Christ comes to destroy the earth, He will first take away His people. Before the elements shall melt with fervent heat and the pillars of the universe shall rock and reel beneath the weight of wrathful deity, He will have caught up His elect into the air, so that they shall be forever with Him! When He comes He shall divide the nations as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats—no sheep of His shall be destroyed! He shall without fail take the tares from among the wheat, but not one single ear of wheat shall be in danger. O that we may be among the selected ones and prove His power to keep us in the day of wrath! May each one of us say, amid the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds, "And I was left." Dear friend, do you think you are marked on the forehead? If at this moment my voice were drowned by the trumpet of resurrection, would you be among those who would awake to safety and glory? Would you be able to say, "The multitude perished around me, but I was left"? It will be so if you hate the sins by which you are surrounded and if you have received the mark of the blood of Jesus upon your soul! If not, you will not escape, for there is no other door of salvation but His saving name! God grant us grace to belong to that chosen number who wear the covenant seal, the mark of Him who counts the people!

Next, this judgment was placed *in the Mediator's hands*. I want you to notice this. Observe that according to the chapter, there was no slaughter done except where the man with the writer's inkhorn led the way. So, again, we read in the 10th chapter that, "One cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims into the fire that was between the cherubims and took, thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen; who took it and went out," and cast it over the city. See this! God's glory of old shone forth between the cherubim! That is to say, over the place of propitiation and atonement, and as long as that glow of light remained, no judgment fell on Jerusalem, for God in Christ condemns not! But by and by "the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house," and then judgment was near to come! When God

no longer deals with men in Christ, His wrath burns like fire and He commissions the ambassador of mercy to be the messenger of wrath! The very man who marked with his pen the saved ones, threw burning coals upon the city and led the way for the destruction of the sinful. What does this teach but this—"The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son"? I know of no truth of God more dreadful to meditate upon! Think of it, you careless ones—the very Christ who died on Calvary is He by whom you will be sentenced! God will judge the world by this man, Christ Jesus! He it is who will come in the clouds of heaven and before Him shall be gathered all nations! And when those who have despised Him shall look upon His face, they will be terrified beyond conception! Not the lightning, not the thunder, not the dreadful sound of the last tremendous trumpet shall so alarm them as that face of injured love! Then will they cry to the mountains and hills to hide them from the face of Him that sits upon the throne! Why, it is the face of Him that wept for sinners, the face which scoffers stained with bloody drops extracted by the thorny crown, the face of the incarnate God who, in infinite mercy, came to save mankind! But because they have despised Him. Because they would not be saved. Because they preferred their own lusts to infinite love and persisted in rejecting God's best proof of kindness, therefore will they say, "Hide us from the face," for the sight of that face shall be to them more accusing and more condemning than all else besides! How dreadful is this truth of God! The more you consider it, the more will it fill your soul with terror! Would to God it might drive you to fly to Jesus, for then you will behold Him with joy in that day!

This destruction, we are told, *began at the sanctuary*. Suppose the Lord were to visit London in His anger—where would He begin to smite? "Oh," somebody says, "of course, the destroying angel would go down to the low music halls and dancing rooms! Or He would sweep out the back slums and the drink palaces, the jails and places where women of ill-repute congregate!" Turn to the Scripture which surrounds our text. The Lord says, "Begin at My sanctuary." Begin at the churches! Begin at the chapels! Begin with the church members! Begin with the ministers, the bishops! Begin with those who are teachers of the gospel! Begin with the chief and front of the religious world—begin with the high professors who are looked up to as examples! What does Peter say? "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?"

The first thing the slaughter men did was to slaughter the ancient men which were before the temple, even the 70 elders of the people, for they were secret idolaters! You may be sure that the sword which did not spare the chief men and fathers made but short work with the baser sort! Elders of our churches, ministers of Christ—judgment will begin with us! We must not expect to find more lenient treatment than others at the last great assize! No, rather, if there shall be a specially careful testing of sincerity, it will be for us who have taken upon ourselves to lead others

to the Savior! For this cause let us see well to it that we are not deceived or deceivers, for we shall surely be detected in that day! To play the hypocrite is to play the fool! Will a man deceive his Maker, or delude the Most High? It cannot be! You church members, all of you, should look well to it, for judgment will begin with you! God's fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem! In the olden times, the people fled to churches and holy places for sanctuary—but how vain will this be when the Lord's avengers shall come forth, since there the havoc will begin! How fiercely shall the sword sweep through the hosts of carnal professors—the men who called themselves servants of God while they were slaves of the devil—who drank of the cup of the Lord, but were drunk with the wine of their own lusts—who could lie, cheat, commit fornication and yet dared to approach the sacred table of the Lord? What cutting and hewing will there be among the base-born professors of our churches! It were better for such men that they had never been born, or being born, that their lot had fallen amid heathen ignorance, so that they might have been unable to add sin to sin by lying unto the living God! “Begin at My sanctuary.” The word is terrible to all those who have a name to live and are dead! God grant that in such testing times, when many fail, we may survive every ordeal, and through grace, exclaim in the end, “And I was left.”

After the executioners had begun at the sanctuary, it is to be observed that they *did not spare any except those upon whom was the mark*. Old and young, men and women, priests and people, all were slain who had not the sacred sign! And so in the last tremendous day all sinners who have not fled to Christ will perish! Our dear babies that died in infancy, we believe to be all washed in the blood of Jesus, and all saved—but for the rest of mankind who have lived to years of responsibility, there will be only one of two things—they must either be saved because they had faith in Christ, or else the full weight of divine wrath must fall upon them. Either the mark of Christ's pen, or of Christ's sword, must be upon everyone! There will be no sparing of one man because he was rich, nor of another because he was learned, nor of a third because he was eloquent, nor of a fourth because he was held in high esteem. Those who are marked with the blood of Christ are safe! Without that mark all are lost! This is the one separating sign—do you wear it? Or will you die in your sins? Bow down at once before the feet of Jesus and beseech Him to mark you as His own so that you may be one of those who will joyfully cry, “And I was left.” Now, secondly, I have to call your very particular attention to—

II. THE PERSONS WHO ESCAPED, who could each say, “And I was left.” We are told that those were marked for mercy who did “sigh and cry for the abominations that were done in the midst thereof.” Now, we must be very particular about this. It is no word of mine, remember—it is God's word, and therefore, I beg you to hear and weigh it for yourselves. We do not read that the devouring sword passed by those quiet people who never did anybody any harm—no mention is made of such an exemption! Neither does the record say that the Lord saved those

professors who were judicious and maintained a fair name and reputation until death. No, the only people who were saved were those who were exercised in heart—and that heart-work was of a painful kind—they sighed and cried because of abounding sin. They saw it, protested against it, avoided it, and last of all, wept over it continually. Where testimony failed, it remained for them to mourn. Retiring from public labors, they sat down and sighed their hearts away because of the evils which they could not cure. And when they felt that sighing alone would do no good, they took to crying in prayer to God that He would come and put an end to the dreadful ills which brooded over the land! I would not say a hard thing, but I wonder, if I were able to read the secret lives of professors of religion, whether I should find that they all sigh and cry over the sins of others? Are the tenth of them thus engaged? I am afraid that it does not cause some people much anxiety when they see sin rampant around them. They say that they are sorry, but it never frets them much, or causes them as much trouble as would come of a lost sixpence or a cut finger! Did you ever feel as if your heart would break over an ungodly son? I do not believe that you are a Christian if you have such a son and have not felt an agony on his behalf. Did you ever feel as if you could lay down your life to save that daughter of yours? I cannot believe that you are a Christian if you have not sometimes come to that! When you have gone through the street and heard an oath, has not your blood chilled in you? Has not horror taken hold upon you because of the wicked? There cannot be much grace in you if that has not been the case. If you can go up and down in the world fully at ease because you are prospering in business and things go smoothly with you, if you forget the woe of this city's sin and poverty and the yet greater woe which comes upon it, how dwells the love of God in you? The saving mark is only set on those who sigh and cry—if you are heartless and indifferent, there is no such mark on you!

“Are we to be always miserable?” asks one. Far from it! There are many other things to make us rejoice, but if the sad state of our fellow men does not cause us to sigh and cry, then we have not the grace of God in us! “Well,” says one, “but every man must look to himself.” That is the language of Cain—“Am I my brother's keeper?” That kind of talk is in keeping with the spirit of the wicked one and his seed—the heir of heaven abhors such language! The genuine Christian loves his race, and therefore, he longs to see it made holy and happy. He cannot bear to see men sinning and so dishonoring God and ruining themselves. If we really love the Lord, we shall sometimes lie awake at night sighing to think how His name is blasphemed and how little progress His gospel makes! We shall groan to think that men should despise the glorious God who made them and who daily loads them with benefits! It sometimes lies upon my heart like a huge mountain which rushes my spirit, to think that Jesus should be rejected and that in this land of Bibles, where Latimer lit a candle which shall never be put out, the old madness is returning and many are again bowing before the images of jealousy which the priests have set up! Yes, we have priests among us again! You can see them in

their long and ugly garments in every street! And women have begun to confess to them! Shame! Shame! I marvel that the crimson blush does not mantle the cheek of everyone who dares to ask or answer the questions appointed for the confessional! And yet the questions are asked, modesty is outraged and the multitudes tamely look on!

My countrymen are going back to Rome! Their fathers' noble blood was shed for God and none was left for the veins of their sons. In vain the conflicts of the years gone by! In vain a Cromwell's mighty arm and the purging of the land! In vain the Puritans driven from their pulpits and witnessing in poverty and persecution! Must England go back, again, to wear the fetters forged by papal Rome? My God, prevent it! Prevent it if it costs the lives of thousands of us, for we would be glad to die to save our country from so dire a curse! If you never sigh and cry because of the spread of Ritualism, I do not understand you! What stuff are you made of? "Oh, but my business goes on exceedingly well." Yes, and so does mine when souls are saved, but when they are led away into error, my business cannot prosper and I have loss upon loss! I am happy enough when I think Christ's kingdom comes, but nothing beneath the sky can give me solid satisfaction if my Lord's work is at a standstill! I would to God we were all so taken up with the glory of God that the wickedness of mankind would grieve us to the heart!

But it was not their mourning which saved those who escaped—it was the mark which they all received which preserved them from destruction! We must all bear the mark of Jesus Christ. What is that? It is the mark of faith in the atoning blood. That sets apart the chosen of the Lord and that alone! If you have that mark—and you have it not unless you sigh and cry over the sins of others—then in the last day no sword of justice can come near you! Did you read that word, "But come not near any man upon whom is the mark." Come not even *near* the marked ones lest they be afraid. The grace-marked man is safe even from the near approach of harm! Christ bled for him, and therefore, he cannot, must not die! Leave him alone, you bearers of the destroying weapons! Just as the angel of death, when he flew through the land of Egypt, was forbidden to touch a house where the blood of the lamb was on the lintel and the two side posts, so is it sure that avenging justice cannot touch the man who is in Christ Jesus. Who is he that condemns since Christ has died? Have you, then, the blood mark? Yes, or no? Do not refuse to question yourself upon this point. Do not take it for granted, lest you are deceived. Believe me, your all hangs upon it. If you are not registered by the man clothed in linen, you will not be able to say, "And I was left."

This brings me to this last point of which I desire to speak. What were—

III. THE PROPHET'S EMOTIONS WHEN HE SAID, "AND I WAS LEFT"?

He saw men falling right and left and he, himself, stood like a lone rock amidst a sea of blood! And he cried in wonder, "And I was left."

"Let us hear what he further says—"I fell on my face." He lay *prostrate with humility*. Have you a hope that you are saved? Fall on your face,

then! See the hell from which you are delivered and bow before the Lord! Why are you to be saved more than anyone else? Certainly not because of any merit in you. It is due to the sovereign grace of God alone! Fall on your face and acknowledge your indebtedness—

***“Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there’s room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”***

“And I was left.”

If a man has been a drunkard and has at length been led to flee to Christ, when he says, “And I was left,” he will feel the hot tears rising in his eyes, for many other drinkers have died in delirium. One who has been a public sinner, when she is saved, will not be able to think of it without astonishment. Indeed, each saved man is a marvel to himself. Nobody here wonders more at divine grace in his salvation than I do! Why was I chosen, and called, and saved? I cannot make it out, and I never shall—but I will always praise, and bless, and magnify my Lord for casting an eye of love upon me! Will you not do the same, Beloved, if you feel that you, by grace, are left? Will you not fall on your face and bless the mercy which makes you to differ?

What did the prophet do next? Finding that he was left, he *began to pray for others*. “Ah, Lord,” he said, “will You destroy all the residue of Israel?” Intercession is an instinct of the renewed heart. When the believer finds that he is safe, he must pray for his fellow men. Though the prophet’s prayer was too late, yet, blessed be God, ours will not be! We shall be heard. Pray, then, for perishing men! Ask God, who has spared you, to spare those who are like you. Somebody has said there will be three great wonders in heaven—first, to see so many there whom we never expected to meet in glory. Secondly, to miss so many of whom we felt sure that they must be safe. And thirdly, the greatest wonder of all will be to find ourselves there! I am sure that everyone who has a hope of being in glory feels it to be a marvel and he or she resolves, “If I am saved, I will sing the loudest of them all, for I shall owe most to the abounding mercy of God!”

Let me ask a few questions and I have done. The first—and let each man ask it of himself—shall I be left when the ungodly are slain? Answer it now to yourselves. Men, women, children—will you be spared in that last great day? Are you in Christ? Have you a good hope in Him? Do not lie to yourselves. You will be weighed in the balances—will you be found wanting or not? “Shall I be left?” Let that question burn into your souls.

Next, will my relatives be saved? My wife, my husband, my children, my brother, my sister, my father, my mother—will these all be saved? Happy are we who can say, “Yes, we believe they will,” as some of us can joyfully hope. But if you have to say, “No, I fear that my boy is unconverted, or that my father is unsaved,” then do not rest till you have wrestled with God for their salvation. Good woman, if you are obliged to say, “I fear my husband is unconverted,” join me in prayer. Bow your heads at once and cry unto your God, “Lord, save our children! Lord, save our parents! Lord, save our husbands and wives, our brothers and

sisters and let the whole of our families meet in Heaven, unbroken circles, for Your name's sake!"

May God hear that prayer if it has come from the lips of sincerity! I could not endure the thought of missing one of my boys in heaven—I hope I shall see them both there, and therefore, I am in deep sympathy with any of you who have not seen your households brought to Christ. O for grace to pray earnestly and labor zealously for the salvation of your whole households!

The next earnest inquiry is, if you and your relatives are saved, how about your neighbors, your fellow workmen, your companions in business? "Oh," you say, "many of them are scoffers! A good many of them are still in the gall of bitterness." A sorrowful fact, but have you spoken to them? It is amazing what a kind word will do. Have you tried it? Did you ever try to speak to that person who meets you every morning as you go to work? Suppose he should be lost? Oh, it will be a bitter feeling for you to think that he went down to the pit without your making an effort to bring him to God! Do not let it be so. "But we must not be too pushy," says one. I do not know about that. If you saw poor people in a burning house, nobody would blame you for being too forward if you helped to save them. When a man is sinking in the river, if you jump in and pull him out, nobody will say, "You were rude and intrusive, for you were never introduced to him!" This world has been lost and it must be saved—and we must not mind our manners in saving it. We must get a grip of sinking sinners somehow, even if it is by the hair of their heads, before they sink, for if they sink, they are lost forever! They will forgive us very soon for any roughness that we use, but we shall not forgive ourselves if, for lack of a little energy, we permit them to die without a knowledge of the truth of God!

Oh, beloved friends, if you are left while others perish, I beseech you, by the mercies of God, by the heart of compassion which is in Christ Jesus, by the bleeding wounds of the dying Son of God—love your fellow men and sigh and cry about them if you cannot bring them to Christ! If you cannot save them, you can weep over them. If you cannot give them a drop of cold water in hell, you can give them your heart's tears while they are yet in this body!

But are you in very deed reconciled to God yourselves? Reader, are you cured of the awful disease of sin? Are you marked with the blood-red sign of trust in the atoning blood? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, the Lord have mercy upon you! May you have sense enough to have mercy upon yourself! May the Spirit of God instruct you to that end. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8:14-30.**

Verse 14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* Not those who say they are "the sons of God," but those who

undoubtedly prove that they are by being led, influenced, gently guided by the Spirit of God!

15. *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear: but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* We did receive the spirit of bondage once. We felt that we were under the law and that the law cursed us. We felt its rigorous taxation and that we could not meet it. Now that spirit has gone and we have the spirit of freedom, the spirit of children, the Spirit of adoption. I suppose that the apostle, when he thus spoke and said, “you,” felt so much of the Spirit of adoption in his own bosom that he could not talk of it as belonging to others alone. He was obliged to include it thus, and so he puts it, “You have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” He wanted to intimate that he, himself, was also a partaker of this blessed Spirit. And woe to the preacher who can preach an adoption which he never enjoyed! Woe to any of us if we can teach others concerning the spirit of sonship, but never feel it crying in our own souls, “Abba, Father.”

16. *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* It corroborates the testimony of conscience. We feel that we are the children of God and the Spirit of God comes forward as a second, but still greater and higher witness, to confirm the testimony that we are the children of God!

17. *And if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.* It is to be all with Him! With Him in the suffering. With Him in the glory. With Him in the reproach of men. With Him in the honor at the right hand of the Father. But if we shun the path of humiliation with Him, we may expect that He will deny us in the day of His glory.

18. *For I reckon.* Judge, count it up, and calculate.

18. *That the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* These sufferings, however, sharp, are short compared with eternal glory—infinitesimal, not worthy to be taken account of—like one drop falling into a river and lost in it.

19-21. *For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* There is a future even for materialism. That poor, dusky clod in which we dwell is yet to be illuminated with the light of God—and these poor bodies which are akin to the dust of the earth, and still remain as if they were not delivered, being subjected to pain, and weakness, and death—even they are yet to be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God!

22-23. *For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves, also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* The soul has obtained

its redemption. Therefore, our heart is glad and our glory rejoicing. But our body has not yet obtained its redemption. That is to come at the resurrection. Then will be the adoption. "Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Oh, blessed fact! Though now, in common with the whole creation, the body is subjected to bondages, yet it shall be delivered and we—the whole man, body as well as soul and spirit—shall be brought into the liberty of the children of God!

24-25. *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for it? But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.* Ah, brothers and sisters, if we could be all we should like to be, there would then be no room for the exercise of hope! If we had all that we are to have, then hope, which is one of the sweetest of the divine graces, would have no room in which to exercise herself. It is a blessed thing to have hope. Though I have heard that faith and hope are not to be found in heaven, I very much question it. I do not think they will ever die. "Now abide these three—faith, hope, and love"—for in heaven there will be room, surely, for trust in the ever blessed God that He will never cast us out from our blessedness—room for the expectation of the second advent—room for the expectation of the conquest of the world—room for the fulfilled promise of bringing all the elect to glory! Still something to be hoped for! Still something to be believed! Yet here is the main sphere of hope, and therefore, let us give it full scope. And when other graces seem to be at a non-plus, let us still hope. I believe the New Zealand word for hope is "swimming thought," because that will swim when everything else is drowned. Oh, happy is that man who has a hope that swims on the crest of the stormiest billow!

26. *Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities.* And especially our infirmities in prayer, for there is where infirmities are mostly seen.

26. *For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered.* I should have thought that it would have read, "But the Spirit Himself teaches us what we should pray for." But it does more than that. He goes beyond teaching us what we should pray for—He "makes intercession for us, with groans which cannot be uttered." Do you know what those groans are? I am afraid that those who never had groans which cannot be uttered will never know anything of that glory which cannot be expressed, for that is the way to it. The groans that cannot be uttered lead on to unutterable joy!

27. *And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* That is the philosophy of prayer. Whatever God's will is, the Spirit of God writes it on the hearts of praying saints, and they pray for the very thing which God intends to give. As the barometer often foretells the weather that is coming, so the spirit of prayer in the Christian is the barometer which indicates when showers of blessing are coming. It is well with us when we can pray. If we cannot do anything else, if we feel that we can pray, times are not so bad with us as we might think.

28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. We know it! We are assured of it!*

29-30. *For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. No breaking of these links! Where God gives one of these blessings, He gives the rest. There is no intimation of a failure somewhere in between. The predestinated are called, and the called are justified and the justified are glorified!*

31-33. *What shall we say, then, to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who shall? Who may? Who dares?*

33-35. *It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? All these have done their worst.*

36. *As it is written, For Your sake we are killed all the daylong; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But have they divided the saints from the love of Christ? Have they made the saints leave off excellence Christ, or Christ cease from excellence His people?*

37-39. *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. For which blessed be the name of the adorable Trinity, world without end!*

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Keep yourselves in the love of God.”
Jude: 21st verse.

THIS exhortation is not addressed to all who are here present. It is only addressed to those who “are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” It is, in fact, addressed only to the true Christian who has passed from death unto life—who is a new creature in Christ Jesus—and in whom dwells the Holy Spirit. To such persons the Apostle Jude says in the text, “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” To other persons we have this to say—You cannot keep yourselves in the love of God, for you never knew what it was to be in it. You have lived—with shame and sorrow be it spoken—you have lived all this while in a world that is full of God and yet you have never perceived Him! You have been a pensioner upon His bounty, clothed by His charity, protected by His providence and yet you have been altogether forgetful of the God whom you ought to have loved with all your heart, soul and strength! Ah, little do you know what you have lost by living without the love of God! The love of God is that which fills our mortal existence with the brightness of heaven and makes us feast on immortal joys, even in this vale of tears! If some men were born and bred in mines, where they saw not the light of day, I can suppose that they would think themselves possibly better off than those who had lived above and who had walked abroad in the light. I can suppose them to be even conceited because they found themselves better able to find their way about in the gloomy caverns below than those would be whose eyes had been used to the light—more at home there in the gloomy bowels of the earth than the sons of light who had lived above. I can imagine their getting much conceit to themselves because of their enjoying the darkness which is beneath. But still, what a miserable life would it always be to live in that gloom—and what a change to be taken suddenly and for the first time from the dark pit out into the light—to look upon the green fields, the god of day, the flashing waves of the sea and the glories of the starry night! So I can conceive many of my hearers having lived so long in the dark world where there is no light, that they have acquired the art of living in this gloom until they are “wiser in their generation than the children of light.” They can do a thousand things better than God’s people can do and they, therefore, perhaps despise the Christian. But oh, my friends, if you could but be brought out into the world of love, the

world of light, where God, the blessed Sun of Love who floods the earth with peace and blessedness could shine upon those darkened eyeballs of yours—if you could but “know the love of Christ which passes knowledge”—you would think that you had never lived before and would pity yourselves to think you could have spent so many years without knowing what true life means! May that come to pass with some tonight! Pray, Christian, pray for those who know not God that He may be found of them. Ask for them that mighty grace may come and meet with them and that they may also begin to understand what “the love of God” means!

But the text is spoken to Christians and we must keep it to them and come at once to apply it to the believer.

The word, “keep,” which is used here, has in it, in the Greek, the idea of keeping under a guard, or of keeping a prisoner in custody. There is the thought of watchfully regarding one who is likely to escape—and so we are told to keep ourselves in the love of God as the warden keeps his prisoner in his cell. I do not like to use such a metaphor in connection with so sweet a text, and yet I must, and so we will have three thoughts. First, *we will speak a little about this prison*—oh, that we may be always shut up in it!—“the love of God”; secondly, about *the earnest warden who is told to keep the prisoner*; and then, thirdly, about the free prisoners, “*keep yourselves in the love of God.*” Keep yourselves in heavenly custody, being never so free and never so happy, as when shut up in this divine enclosure!

I really do not like to use the text with such a meaning, but I cannot very well bring out the meaning of it in any better way. Let us speak, then, first of—

I. THE HEAVENLY PRISON OF “THE LOVE OF GOD.”

There is no restraint about this prison. He who gets into it finds, for the first time, true liberty! Then his mind is free from all its bondage. Then his faculties find themselves in a sea where they may swim. Then are his purest longings gratified. Then are his passions allowed to take wing and mount as they will. Then the soul has space to float onwards and when it comes fully to the love of God, the new-born soul is in its element!

But what is the meaning of this “love of God,” in which we are to keep ourselves? It means, first, believer, that you are to *keep your mind in the remembrance of the love of God to you*. We, alas, forget too often what a friend we have above. Keep up, Christian, the recollection of what the Father did for you when He chose you before all worlds! Be continually mindful of what the Son did for you when He poured out His precious blood upon the cross and gave His life a ransom for many. Never be unmindful of what the Holy Spirit did for you when He called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. About the neck of memory let the glittering pearls of God's mercy always hang! Take care, whatever else you may forget, that you forget not the love of God to you! As the Krishna said—

***“Let every idol be forgotten,
But oh, my soul, forget Him not.”***

Let your ear be bored to this doorpost of God's love to you! Set this as a seal upon your arm and as a ring upon your finger. Brand it into your inmost heart and let your soul's core always wear in it the thought of God's love to you. Queen Mary said that when she died they would find the word, “*Calais*,” written upon her heart, for the loss of that town had grieved her so. But while the Christian lives—for he shall not die—there shall always be engraved upon his heart the name of Christ, for the love of Christ shall abide there! Yes, we will remember You—“we will remember Your love, for Your love is better than wine!”

The apostle means, too—Keep yourselves *in the assurance of the divine love*. Brothers and sisters, you have known that Christ loves you. You have had it proven to you as clearly as a mathematical demonstration, that God loves you. You have even been able to speak in the singular, and say, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” There have been blessed moments when no ripple of doubt disturbed the glossy surface of your calm and peaceful soul. Oh, keep that assurance! Pray that no evil doubt may come in to make you think that God does not love you. Ask that you may be always able to say, “This is my Beloved: my Beloved is mine, and I am His.” Do not sometimes climb the mountain and then slip down into the treacherous mists of the valley, but ask that you may always bathe your forehead in the sunlight of the divine assurance of the love of God to you! And so keep yourselves in the love of God.

It means next, keep yourselves *in the enjoyment of the love of God*. No one knows what the enjoyment of the divine love is but the man who has experienced it. Oh, the calm which a sense of that divine love will bring to the heart! Our Lord said to the noisy billows of the lake, “Be still,” and they quickly hushed their raging and there was a great calm! But the love of Christ is more than peaceful—it is joyful, it is inspiring! The man who has it has a cup filled to the brim and running over! And he who drinks of that holy chalice can say, “There is none like it.” Like the water of the well of Bethlehem by the gate, if any of God's people should not be able to get at it, they will sigh for it and say, “Oh, that one would give me a drink of that water again!” Some of us know what mirth means—we are of a genial nature and can enter into the common joys of men. We can sit around the social hearth and feel the joys of childhood's prattle and the glee of the little ones. We thank God we are not stoics—we can share the joys that are common to mankind, but oh, we do proclaim and bear our witness that all the joys of earth heaped together are as nothing compared with the bliss of having the love of God shed abroad in the heart! The others are but common joys, but the love of God is heaven's own joy! They are but husks, which are well enough in their way, but the kernel of joy lies in a full understanding of the love of God in the soul. Oh, that we could always live upon it! That this manna dropped from heaven every morning, that we gathered our omer of it as soon as the

sun dawned and fed on it till the sun went down! Happy Christians, seek to keep yourselves thus in the love of God!

But, brothers and sisters, this is not all. The apostle also means, "Keep yourselves in the *power of the love of God.*" Oh, the power of the love of God has in governing and influencing a man! Nothing can master a strong temper, a forceful will, an obstinate disposition, or a wayward heart like the love of God! Even God's law is but a frail reed compared with God's love, which is the rod of omnipotence. If the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, the idols will soon depart and the love of sin will take its flight—and the wickedness which you and I could not conquer without it will be driven out with this two-edged sword of the power of the love of God manifested in the soul! I love to feel myself bowed down under this power until I would sacrifice my own interest, relinquish all self-seeking, abandon all care of being obedient to my own will and be passive in the hand of the omnipotent ruler to mold me, rule me and govern me just as He wills! We are not like the horse and the mule that have a bit in their mouths and that require the rod, but when love impels us, our willing feet in swift obedience move and we feel it to be a blessed thing to obey His commandments, or even His gentle leadings by His gracious Spirit!

Brothers and sisters, I pray you take this exhortation in its practical, as well as its experimental form. Keep yourselves in the love of God, *in the manifestation of it.* Love the souls of your fellow men! Pity the poor and needy. Have compassion upon the ignorant and the wicked; let no strangeness nor excess of sin prevent your loving the sinner, and let no extravagance or unkindness prevent your forgiving one another even unto 70 times seven! Keep yourselves in the love of Christ under provocations as multiplied as those which fell upon your Master's shoulders and so prove that your charity suffers long and is kind, hopes all things, endures all things because it is not mere human charity, beautiful as that is, but is the love of God reigning and commanding your heart! "Keep yourselves in the love of God" in your relations one to another. May no root of bitterness spring up in this church, nor in any other. Love one another as one happy family. Love one another, for you will have to dwell together forever in heaven! Bear with each other, as you hope to be borne with by your loving Savior. Be knit together in brotherly love! Be as one man—be forceful like a phalanx of soldiers marching on to victory. Let the love of God reign in your hearts! Let it gleam from your eyes! Let it flash radiantly from your countenance! Let it bedew your lips and let its savor sweeten your words! Let it give a holy blessedness to your deeds and your thoughts!

Keep yourselves, in all these senses, in the love of God. It is a wondrous prison for a man to be in a blessed paradise for him to walk in. Paradise had a gate and once Adam never wanted to get out of it—just in that sense keep yourselves in this blessed paradise of the love of God and wander not from it. And now, secondly and briefly, let us say two or three words about—

II. THE EARNEST WARDEN WHO IS TO KEEP HIMSELF IN THE LOVE OF GOD.

This warden is not the minister. The minister has to preach and assist me, but the minister is not to take care of my soul as though I had nothing to do with it. I do not believe in any such nonsense as that you can be responsible for other people's souls, so that others may assist you with their vigilance. Never, I beseech you, Englishmen and Englishwomen, never be such fools as to put yourselves at the feet of a priest! Believe that you have as much prevalence with God as these pretenders have and that if you go to God, and take your burden of sin, you will get it taken off—but if you go roundabout to seek relief and pardon through them—you will never get it, for you insult God in the way by which you go to work! Oh, may God grant that we may never live to see our countrymen so befooled as to put their necks under the Romish yoke once again! May England never be beneath a Pope's feet, but may we always have too much manliness ever to fall to the snare of this cunning fowler! May we always be kept from it and so may always keep ourselves in the love of God.

And now, Mr. Warden, we are to say a word or two to you. See, then, your prisoner. He is one, alas, who is very apt at escaping from the gracious prison. So infatuated does he become with worldly joys that he will oftentimes let his God, his Savior, go. And besides this, there are many who are prison breakers and who will break his prison bars for him. Shall I tell you their names? There is one fellow called *sin*. Sin will soon prevent your enjoying the love of God. Let the Christian hesitate to walk disorderly and he will soon begin to talk lightly of his wickedness, and this, again, will soon stop his communion with God. Though the Christian shall not perish, yet many of his joys shall—though God will keep him so that he shall not be utterly destroyed—yet the gladsome sense of the love of God will soon depart when sin comes in to lead astray!

And so it shall be when another breaks the prison, namely, those under the command of *idolatry*. Let your hearts begin to idolize an earth-born creature and very soon you will not be able to keep yourselves in the love of God. Father, that dear child of yours may become as much an idol to you as even the golden calf was to the Israelites! Husband, wife, friends, acquaintances, brothers, sisters, our goods, our persons, our fame, our reputation—any one of these may become our idol—and when this is the case, there is no keeping the heart in the love of God, for the prison doors are opened and the prisoner, unhappily, comes out.

Warden, if you would keep your prisoner, remember he cannot well come out except through the doors, and, therefore, watch well the door by which he has *communications with the outward world*. If you would keep yourself in the love of God, Christian, watch yourself well when you are in business! Watch yourself when you are in the family. Watch the door in private. Watch the communications which you have with the

ungodly—and as it is here that you would be apt to fritter away your joys and lose the richness of your communion—be the more watchful here. And, warden, watch in the night, when it is dark in your soul, for many a prisoner has made his escape at nightfall. Watch well when trouble comes, lest doubts and fears should come in. And if you would lock your prisoner securely in and keep him from escaping from the all-surrounding love of God, watch yourself carefully at all times, lest by any means you slip from this good way!

And, warden, I would recommend you to take care that every bolt in the prison door is securely fastened. God has given you certain gospel ordinances and if you would keep yourself in the love of God, read His word, for it will stir you up to bind yourself to Him! Be much in private prayer, for this has a force like a bolt to keep out the world and keep you in.

Come to the communion table, for at the time when Christ is known in the breaking of bread, another bolt is put between you and the world! In other words, whatever He says unto you, do it, for in keeping of His commandments there is great reward.

And, warden, since you have a prisoner to keep who needs much watching, *load him well with chains*. Do you think this is a hard suggestion? The chains are such that the more of them the prisoner wears, the freer, light, and happy he will be! Shall I tell you how to forge them? Forge them on the anvil of meditation! Think of what God did before the earth was. Think of eternal love before the day star had begun to shine. Think of what Jesus did for you in the covenant and in the suretyship engagements of eternity! Bind about your soul the chain of the Savior's pangs and griefs. If you would keep your heart a blessed prisoner in the love of God, nail it with nails which pierced the hands of Christ and bind it to the pillar where the Lord was scourged! Make every drop of blood which Jesus sweat in the garden and shed upon the cross, to be a course of mighty network bound about your heart to hold it a fast prisoner forever!

Oh brothers and sisters, we have indeed enough to bind us to Christ if we were not the most willfully forgetful men and women in the world! Oh, what has Jesus done for me? Rather, what has He *not* done for me? He is all in all and being to me more than all, let me bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar! Let the hands of a man and the cords of love be cast about this prisoner so that he may never get out of the divine enclosure of the love of God!

I cannot set before you as I would, nor with all the earnestness I want to command, the necessity of thus binding your heart to the love of Christ, but I will add this. Warden, *take care to call in help* and remember there is one who can help you very efficiently. It is the Holy Spirit. You keep yourself in the love of God? Indeed, you *cannot* do it unless you call in divine power. If ever you get the love of God in your heart, go down on your knees and ask the Holy Spirit to always keep it there! You shall never catch this bird and shall never be able to keep it unless the Holy

Spirit helps you. Oh, to be crucified with Christ! We may well desire it—to be fastened to His cross so that we shall never again desire to wander, but feel ourselves the happy bond-slaves, the free servants of our Lord Jesus Christ! And now, time flies and we have, thirdly, to say a word or two about—

III. THE FREE, THE HAPPY AND THE BLESSED PRISONER who is thus exhorted to keep himself in the love of God.

My dear brothers and sisters, if by the help of God we shall be able to do this, *how happy we shall be*. I would make no stipulation of any kind if God would grant me one request, namely, that He would keep me in His love. If I might but have this request granted, I am sure it would be equal to me whether He may have appointed me life or death, or whether He may have appointed me weal or woe! It would make no difference where one lived, if one lived in the love of God!

It would make no difference, either, whether one were in wealth or poverty, if the love of Christ had consumed all care about self. When once the love of God, like a devouring flame, has consumed and destroyed all care about self, then we are perfectly happy. It is impossible to then be miserable—all that the heart wants is to be kept in the love of God—for then it would always be in a state of true blessedness! Dear brothers and sisters, how important it is that we should be happy! Moses, without the brightness of his face, would be little more than other men. And a Christian without holy joy—what is he? I am certain that nothing has done more mischief to Christianity than the loss of joy of some professors. Why, there are some of you that only dishonor your religion by your constant moans and groans! If we are not happy, who ought to be? Children of God, heirs of heaven, accepted in the Beloved, all our sins forgiven and we ourselves on the way to heaven—if we do not sing, who can sing? If there is no holy mirth in our hearts, no joyous songs set to glorious tunes in our souls as we go along our pilgrimage to heaven, then it must be a miserable world indeed! But a happy Christian entices others to Christ. His very face and bearing are a gospel ministry of invitation to others. And those others say, “We will go with you, for we perceive that the Lord is with you.”

And there is another thing. If you are kept in the love of God, besides being happy, you *will be so useful*. If we do not enjoy the love of God, ourselves, we cannot do much good to others. You will be blessed to your families. You will be blessed to the ungodly and you will be blessed wherever you are *if you are kept in the love of God*. I can conceive that a man with the love of God in his heart, if he saw a stranger here, would be pretty sure to have a word with him and, perhaps, the stranger would be very glad. I am sure there are here every Sunday a great many people who would be quite willing to have a little talk about divine things and to whom a little private conversation might be far more useful than any sermon that I could deliver. You who have the love of God in you will look after such—you cannot help it. You love, and God loves. God is blessing

you and you want to bless men—and you will pine and pant to bring others to the Savior! I need you, the members of this church, particularly to have the love of God in your hearts just now, so that these daily prayer meetings of ours may be seasons of great and miraculous power! When a cold heart comes into the prayer meeting, if it does not hinder, at any rate it brings no help—but every warm and loving heart that comes increases the general fire. You each bring your bundle of wood, as it were, and put it on the hearth, and so it makes one great blaze! Oh, when a thousand hearts full of love come together, then prayer is sure to speed!

If your heart is full of the love of God, it will keep on going up to heaven in prayer, even when you are at your business or your work, as well as when you are in the house of God. Brothers and sisters, we shall yet have great times! God is going to bless us and we shall see greater things than the world has ever beheld since the day of Pentecost! I trust we are seeking for it and expecting it—and if so, we shall get it! Let us seek to have the blessing in ourselves and ask to be kept in the love of God!

It would not do for the farmer to have his men ill in harvest time—they must be strong and hearty and robust when they have to reap. Oh, that you and I may be made strong to reap here! At such times they bring out the big bottle and though some of us do not think that that is the best thing that could be done for the workman, yet I would like, tonight, to bring out among you the big bottles of the promises of God of which you may drink without any fear of getting intoxicated! Oh, that you could drink of such a promise as this, “I will be with you,” and then, full of strength, go out into the fields and work for Christ without weariness! When heaven begins to open its golden gates and throw open its windows, and cast out its blessings, then, at all events, let us open the doors of our hearts, throw them wide open in expectancy and open the doors of our mouths wide that God may fill them! Let us come up to this house and go to our own houses, too, with the love of God plenteously shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and let this be always our prayer—

***“Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers.
Come, shed abroad a Savior’s love,
And that shall kindle ours.”***

Now, to many here I am afraid I have been saying some things which are no more understood by them than Latin or Greek would be! You could not understand it, but there is one thing I want you to understand before you go tonight, and that is 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,” and whoever here believes in Him—that is, trusts Christ to save him—shall not perish, but have everlasting life! Whatever his past life may have been, however black his character may be, if he will but come to the heavenly Father, through Christ, trusting in

Christ who bore the punishment for sin, such a man or woman or child shall be forgiven! They shall be saved, shall be made a new creature, and shall go on their way rejoicing! And they will be filled with the love of God and, with all the blood-washed, shall pass through the pearly gates—and in heaven shall join with them in singing of the love of God, world without end! May you and I have a portion there, for Christ's sake.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 14.**

Verse 1. *Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.* You will be troubled—that cannot be helped. But let not your heart be troubled. You are like a ship and all the water in the sea cannot hurt a ship if it is kept outside of her. Let not your heart be troubled. How are you to prevent it? Faith is the remedy. You already believe—believe more. “You believe in God, believe also in Me.” “You have a trust in the infinite power of God—believe in Me as the incarnation of His infinite love.”

2. *In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* There is no room for you on earth—there will be in heaven. If troubles should so multiply that it seems impossible to live in them, you shall be carried away where you shall live above them. “In My Father's house are many mansions.” You may depend upon the love of Christ, beloved, for if there were anything dark, mysterious, or distressing which would lead you to despair, He would not have kept it back. He treats you frankly. “If it were not so, I would have told you. I go and you are sorry that I go. It is one source of your sorrow. But I go to prepare place for you.”

3. *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.* Oh, this is ground for sweet comfort, and it ought to yield it to us tonight! He has gone, but He will come again. He has not left us forever. Space divides us for a while, but, skipping over the mountains like a roe and a young hart, He will come again, even to this poor world and to us, His waiting church, He will come again. Therefore, have patience. Let not your heart be troubled. Jesus Christ will come very soon.

4. *And where I go, you know, and the way you know.* You know where Christ is gone. You know how to get at Him. The throne on which He sits is the throne of grace. He is gone to the Father, and your prayers will find the Father. You know the way. Then frequent it and though as yet in your bodies you cannot reach Him, yet in spirit you can. “Where I go you know, and the way you know.”

5. *Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not where You go; and how can we know the way?* Which was a contradiction of His Master which Thomas ought not to have uttered! He should have put it much rather in the form of a question for explanation, than of such a flat denial. His Master said, “Where I go you know.” Thomas said, “We know not where

You go.” We must take care that we do not contradict Christ! Our unbelief would be shamed out of us if we were to look at it and examine it. I am persuaded that your faith will be justified the more you examine it, till you will discover that faith in God is nothing, after all, but sanctified commonsense! So unbelief will appear to be more shameful the more you examine it, till you discover at length that it is nothing but garish folly. An outrage upon the first principles of wisdom is distrust of God!

6, 7. *Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also: and from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.* This, then, is the main point of knowledge with us—to know Christ. All the studies in the world are vain compared with the study of Christ crucified! This is the most excellent of all the sciences. He that knows Christ, knows the way, the truth, the life, yes, and God Himself!

8, 9. *Philip said to Him, Lord show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us. Jesus said to him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father; and why do you say, then, Show us the Father?* The best view of God we can ever have is Christ! In the person of His Son there is more seen of God than in all nature—yes and in all history added to nature! God has given us a full-length portrait of Himself in Jesus, while in all His works, we have no more than a mere miniature of Him. Oh, that we knew Christ more! Then should we know the Father.

10-12. *Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go to My Father.* Oh, what strength there is in faith! These are the same people who are not to be troubled. They are to rise so much above trouble of heart that they are to become performers of works like Christ's! Yes, and since Christ has gone and He has endowed us with the Holy Spirit, we are to do yet greater works than He did! Oh, to know the possibilities of our nature—to know what God can do by us! What appears to us as we are, as unable to be done, we may be enabled to do through the spirit of God which is in Christ Jesus.

13, 14. *And whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.* It does not mean that every prayer will be answered. The power to ask a thing in Christ's name is not given to everybody. It is not merely to say at the end of your prayer, “for Christ's sake.” It is another thing—it is to be able to feel that as Christ stood in your place, so you dare stand in Christ's place—and what you have asked, you have asked in His name, feeling that what you have asked is such that Christ would have asked it. Now, when you can feel that, and can feel that Christ puts His

seal on what you have asked, then you ask in His name! A person cannot always speak in the name of another—cannot do it at all unless he has received an authorization to do so. Then he stands as that person's deputy—stands in his place—speaks in his name. I am sure that nine out of ten of the prayers of Christians are not offered in the name of Christ and could not be! It would be a sin against Christ for such prayers to be supposed to be the prayers of Christ! But when we talk of the Spirit of God, and we dare ask in the name and use the seal of Christ—to set His signature at the bottom of our petition, then, brothers and sisters depend upon it—Christ will do it!

15. *If you love Me, keep My commandments.* Oh, some of us would have liked Him to have said, "If you love Me, give all your money! Go into a convent! If you love Me, perform some wonderful action. Go into the streets and preach where you will be hooted. Go to some foreign country and get yourself made a martyr." No, no! "If you love Me, keep My commandments. Stay at home near your father and mother. If you love Me, love My disciples. Let love rule you. And in that place in life in which I have set you, try to honor My name by exhibiting My character. If you love Me, keep My commandments."

16-19. *And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever. Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him: for He dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me: because I live, you shall live also. "Yet a little while and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me." Now, when the world does not see Him, we still see Him. He is present to our faith, though passing from our sight. "Because I live, you shall live also." Is He a dead Christ? Then He has a dead people for His church. He is a living Savior! He has a living people and they shall no more die than He shall die, "for He, being raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him." "Because I live, you shall live also."*

20. *At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in You.* What a wonderful union this is—Christ in the Father, the saints in Christ and Christ in the saints! These are riddles which are not meant for the children of this world—but they who are the children of God shall understand them, shall live upon them!

21. *He that has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me.* Not He that preaches about them, talks much about them, boasts about a higher life and all sorts of things, but, "He that has My commandments and keeps them, He it is that loves Me: and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him."

21, 22. *And He that loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not*

unto the world? If you do manifest Yourself to us, who are only a few poor fishermen, You do not extend Your Kingdom much. But if You would manifest Yourself to the world in all Your glory, surely they would be surprised and overwhelmed, and Your kingdom would thus come.” But that is not Christ’s way. His manifestations are for His own: not for glitter, but for edification. He comes to bless them—not that He may be ostentatious among men.

23. *Jesus answered and said to him, If a man loves Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him. Oh, what an honored man that—for the Father and the Son to be his guests—to make an abode in his heart!*

24-28. *He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s which sent Me. These things have I spoken unto you being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I. Christ had stooped to take a lower place for our sakes.*

29-31. *And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it is come to pass, you might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go from here.*

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ROUGH, BUT FRIENDLY

NO. 3379

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1913,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man’s money into his sack, and to give them provisions for the way: and thus did he unto them.”
Genesis 42:25.***

AN immense number of persons came down into Egypt from all parts of the world to buy corn. Many of these Joseph never saw. Many others came into his presence. I do not find that of all who came, he treated any of them roughly, except his own brothers. “Strange!” you will say, and if you did not know the sequel of the story, it would not only seem strange, but cruel. You would not know how to account for such a thing.

Very like this is the manner of God’s providence. There are thousands of people living in this world, with all of whom God deals according to wisdom. We all bear trouble in a measure, for, “man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards.” Some have more troubles than others and these often happen to be those who are dearest to the Lord. If any man escapes the rod, the true-born children of the royal family of heaven never can! Some may sin and prosper, but the righteous, if they sin, suffer. The ungodly are permitted to fatten like sheep for the slaughter, to have no bands even in their death. Their strength is firm, they are not in trouble, as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. But as for God’s people, the waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. Through much tribulation they inherit the kingdom. To them is a special promise which is sure to be fulfilled—“In the world you shall have tribulation.” Now, if we did not know the end of the Lord and His great design in thus dealing with His people, it would seem to be a strange, inexplicable mystery that the best beloved should be the most afflicted and that the brothers and sisters of the reigning Savior should be those whom He treats most roughly. Others take their sacks of corn and go—these, ‘tis true, shall have their sacks filled and more—but they shall not go until first there have been some rough passages of arms between them and the brother, who, though he loves them so well, speaks so shortly to them!

Laying it down, then, as a rule, that God’s servants will be dealt roughly with by their Master, that the brothers and sisters of Christ must accept it, I shall now proceed to offer a few thoughts, which, perhaps, may be comfortable to those of God’s people who are in trouble. From the text and its surroundings, I gather this truth of God—

I. WHEN THE LORD IS ABOUT TO GIVE GREAT FAVORS, HE OFTEN DEALS ROUGHLY WITH THOSE WHO ARE TO RECEIVE THEM.

Joseph intends to bless his brothers. He has the most liberal of the royal designs towards them, but he first deals roughly with them. Before the Lord Jesus Christ shall come to give His church her last and most transcendent blessing in His millennial reign of splendor, there are vials that are to be poured out. There will be wars and rumors of wars. There will be the shaking of heaven and earth—great distress, famine, pestilences and earthquakes. The greater the blessing, the greater the trial that shall precede it! So, too, with our own souls. When the Lord Jesus Christ intended to save us and to give us a sense of pardon of our sins, He began by convincing us of our iniquity. He dealt heavy blows at our self-righteousness. He laid us in the dust and seemed to roll us in the mire. It seemed as though He delighted to tread upon us and to crush our every hope and destroy every fond expectation! It was all to wean us from self-righteousness, to pull us up by the roots, to prevent our growing and taking fast hold on the earth, to compel us to rest in His blood and righteousness and to seek our soul's life entirely from Him! That great blessing of salvation was, with the most of us, at any rate, preceded by thick clouds and tempests! We were convinced of sin, of self-righteousness, of judgment to come, and our heart trembled! And afterwards, when He had dealt roughly with us, He said, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you: go in peace." It seems, then, our experience is general and common, that the love letters of our Lord Christ have come to us in black envelopes and there has generally been a thunderstorm preceding a shower of special mercy! The clear shinings have been after the rain. The flood tide has come in most gloriously, but there has first been an ebb. It has always been so with us till now. I think experienced Christians begin to dread their joy and to expect blessings from their sorrows. When things apparently go bad, they know they really go well, and when things apparently go well, we are very apt to fear and tremble for all the good which God makes to pass before us and fear, lest in the dead calm, there may lurk some mischief to our souls.

Why does the Lord deal roughly with His servants when He means to bless them? Is it not to *keep them sober*? High spiritual joys have about them an intoxicating element to our poor nature. "Lest I should be exalted above measure," said the apostle, "there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me." Sometimes the trial comes before the mercy, sometimes with the mercy, sometimes after the mercy—but a trial and a high degree of spiritual joy are usually wedded together so that when you get the one—you may look out of the window for the other. 'Tis to keep us sober. Here is a brisk gale of spiritual influence upon our fluttering sail. What then? And why? Our poor boat would soon be upset, but God ballasts us with a weight of affliction, so that the vessel may keep steady amidst the waves. Master Brookes gives us a simile in which he shows us the danger there is even in the best and most spiritual enjoyments—he says, "Suppose a man loved his wife so very dearly and gave her so many rings, jewels and earrings, that she prized these and wore them till she began, by-and-by,

to dote upon her ornaments and to forget her husband? You could not blame him if he took these away because he wants her love for himself, not for his gifts." Now, instead of taking away these things, which it would be necessary for Him to do in order to keep us from spiritual ruin, the Lord is pleased to checker our lives. There are the bright stripes, or evidences of grace, and then there are the black squares of our troubles and afflictions. In that way an equilibrium is kept up—we are balanced—we do not grow top-heavy. And we are enabled to walk safely in the ways of the Lord. That is one reason He speaks roughly and deals graciously, to keep us sober.

Is it not likewise, *to keep us humble?* When a child of God gets one inch above the ground in his own esteem, he gets an inch too high! Whenever the man of God says, "I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing," he is very close to spiritual bankruptcy! None are so rich in grace as those who pine for more. None are so near to fullness as those who mourn their emptiness—the men who find their fullness not in themselves, but in Christ Jesus the Lord! Brothers and sisters, those 10 sons of Jacob must have felt their importance evaporate when Joseph put them in prison. Here they were "true men," as they said, "the sons of one man," but no respect is paid to the patriarch or to their patriarchal descent. They are put in prison as if they were common spies whose fate is generally the most ignoble. Now they begin to think of themselves in a very different light from that in which they did when they set out with their money in their hands to pay for their corn and have their money's worth. They were gentlemen, merchant traders when they entered Egypt, but after a while they seemed like beggars in their own esteem and better still, they begin to remember their faults! They call to remembrance that they were verily guilty concerning their brother. And the Lord never intends us to ride the high horse in thinking large things of ourselves. One thing I have always noticed as an observer, that whenever any man of God begins to get great, God always makes him smart. I think I have never seen a brother prospering in the ministry, or anywhere else, who began to be too large for association with his brethren, too good and too holy, perhaps, even to meet with common Christians—such a man has never kept up long—that balloon has come down—that bubble has, before long, gone to pieces. The profession of very extreme holiness has generally ended in the most dolorous iniquity and the professed exaltation of the heart on account of talent and success has generally led to degradation and shame! Hence the Lord, who would not have us exalted above measure, speaks roughly to us to keep us humble, as well as to keep us sober.

Why does He deal roughly with us? Is it not *to give us another reason for coming to Him?* Jacob's sons might not have come down to Egypt again. They might have said, "We would rather starve than go to be bull-baited by the lord of the land." But when Simeon is in prison they must go down. They have a reason for going and a reason which overcomes them, let them strive against it as they may! And, child of God, when the Lord favors you with His smile and with the light of His countenance, He

takes care at the same time to give you a trouble that shall compel you to come to the mercy seat. Oh, but I think it is a blessed thing to go to the throne of grace on an errand! Many pray out of custom, perhaps that is well, but I believe there is no praying like the praying of a man who has got an errand—he who goes to God because he *needs*, must go because he has something to ask for—and these rough dealings of God keep us well stocked with motives for being much on our knees, for much pleading with the Father of mercies that He would deliver us out of affliction and out of temptation—and is not this kindness on our Father's part thus to deal roughly with us that He may compel us to the sweet duty of prayer?

Moreover, brothers and sisters, does it not strike you that the Lord's rough dealings with His children, when He intends to bless them, *have the effect of making them see how utterly dependent they are for that blessing from Him?* Why, Jacob's sons could now see that Joseph could lock them up for life, or take away their lives, or could send them back, if he pleased, with empty sacks to starve! They were entirely in his hands. They had no more power to escape than the dove has from the talons of the hawk. So God would have us know that we are entirely and absolutely in His hands, as the clay in the hand of the potter. If He pleases to withhold His hand, all the world and all heaven cannot help us! If the Lord did not help you, how shall I help you out of the barn floor, or out of the winepress? That well stopped, all the world is walled up—there are no other bottles that can water you. Child of God, you are as dependent today upon the bounty of heaven as at your conversion! A babe in grace is not more dependent upon God than the mature and venerable Christian! Our life is in the hands of Christ. Our breath is in His nostrils. Let the foundations of our lives, either natural or spiritual, be taken away by a cessation of divine power and we crumble into spiritual and into physical death! We shall hold on our way, glory be to God, but not from any power that is in us, nor through our own innate strength! These shall melt away and droop and die under the exigencies of our spiritual pilgrimage. It is from the overflowing fountains of inexhaustible strength we must derive our supplies and so hold on to the end. Thus, treating us roughly makes us like bottles in the smoke—we become dry, shriveled up and empty—but still, it leads us to see how much the Lord can do for us. Being brought into need, it shows that all that is done, is done of His mercy and His sovereignty—not of our merit, nor through any concurrent help from us—but altogether, utterly and alone of Him!

Now, child of God, let me put this point to you very plainly. Without saying anything further, are you in very deep trouble tonight? Do all God's waves and billows go over you? Does deep call unto deep at the noise of His waterspouts? Then expect that now some great blessing will come of it! That stone on the lapidary's wheel has been cut, and cut, and cut again. That other stone in the corner of the shop is but a common pebble and he never vexes it upon the wheel, for it is worthless. But the more precious the stone is in His esteem, the more diligently does He cut

its facets. You are dear to God. Therefore is it that He tries you again and again, but good shall come of it and you shall blaze and sparkle, and glitter with divine grace which would have been otherwise unknown to you! Your tribulation shall work patience in you, and patience shall work experience, and experience hope, and hope shall make you not to be ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in you. You are trading in a profitable market! There is no usury so heavy as the interest of affliction. The black ships of trouble come home laden with pearls of grace. Therefore, be of good cheer. Take the rough usage from your brother Joseph—you must and will prevail! But I must change the tune. Our next observation upon the text is that while the Lord deals roughly with His servants—

II. HE USUALLY GIVES THEM AT THE SAME TIME PROVISION BY THE WAY so that they may be enabled to bear His roughness and to endure all the difficulties through which they are called to pass.

You observe Joseph had put Simeon in prison and had treated his other brothers very roughly, yet he gave them their sacks full of corn and put money into the mouths of their sacks. And then, as a third blessing, he gave them provisions for the way. Never does a child of God pass through trial without some special provision being made for him during his time of need.

But what provision is this? Why, dear brothers and sisters, there are different provisions according to different needs! Sometimes the child of God under trial has a *wonderful sense of divine love*. “Oh, how He loves me,” he says. There comes stroke after stroke—husband dies, child is buried, the property is wasted—yet the dear child says, “I cannot weep or repine, for I feel God loves me. I know not how it is, but I feel it so fresh and strong upon my soul and I have such a wonderful impression of that dear love of His, that it quite overcomes my sorrows and takes the edge off my grief.” And, let me say, there is nothing that under trial can support a soul so well as the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us! To know that my Father sees it all and orders all in love—in special love to me—oh, this makes the back strong enough to bear a very world of trouble and yet not to be wearied!

At other times God’s servants have been fed on a *joyous view of the covenant of grace*. I have known some who in their trouble have come to understand the deep doctrines of the Word of God as they never understood them before and could then say with David, “Although my house is not so with God, yet has He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” And as they look to the provisions of that covenant, to the sureness of the covenant, to the blessings of the covenant, to the everlasting nature of the covenant, their souls have been so ravished and transported with joy that they could beat poverty, or pain, or whatever form of roughness their heavenly Joseph might choose to put upon them!

Others of the Lord’s people have been sustained in their trouble by a *delightful outlook to the end of their sorrows and the better land on the other side of Jordan*. Oh, there have been saints upon sick beds who have

scarcely felt the torture of their pain or their disease, through the excess of bliss they have enjoyed in foretastes of the better land! Martyrs have been heard to call the fiery branches a bed of roses! And sometimes it has been almost questionable whether they suffered or not! The bodily pain must have been there, but the wonderful excitement of sacred joy in the thought that they were so soon to be with Christ and that their burning pile was but a chariot of fire to bear them to their Beloved has lifted them up above the tormenting sensation! They have been treated roughly, but they have had such provision by the way that they forgot the roughness as they rejoiced with unspeakable joy and full of glory! Well may the traveler trip over a rough road when his home is so near before him—the glittering spires of the new Jerusalem, the everlasting rest, the sweet fields arrayed in living green, the rivers of delight—

***“Oh, could we stand where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o’er—
Not Jordan’s stream nor death’s cold flood
Should fright us from the shore.”***

Roughly treat us as You will, good Lord, if we have this money in our sack’s mouth and this provision by the way, we will be well content!

The Lord sometimes sustains His people under His own roughness by the *recollection of their past experiences*. “My God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember You from Hermon and from the hill Mizar.” The faithfulness of God in the past has been so vividly remembered that the child of God could not dare to doubt! The evidence of God’s love was so strong, vehement and fresh in his soul that he cried, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him; let Him do what He will to me, yet do I know that in very faithfulness He has afflicted me.” He could hear these silver bells, thousands of them, all around, above, below, beneath—ringing out this tune—

***“For His mercy shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.”***

Oh, let the hell drum be beaten as loudly as the devil can beat it and let affliction come from heaven, earth and hell all at once—as long as we know that God’s mercy endures forever, our mouth shall be filled with laughter and we shall boast in the name of the Lord!

The saints of God have also had this provision by the way. In their sufferings *they have enjoyed a sight of the greater sufferings of Christ—*

***“Why should I complain of want or distress,
Temptation or pain? He told me no less.
The heirs of salvation, I know from His word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord.
How bitter that cup, no heart can conceive,
Which He drank quite up that sinners might live!
His way was much rougher and darker than mine—
Did Christ my Lord suffer, and shall I repine?”***

A sight of the steps of the Crucified One has often checked the tears which have been flowing, while the enraptured child of God would stand and sing in holy wonder—

***“Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than He went through before—
He that into this kingdom comes***

Must enter by this door.

Thus I might continue to show what kind of provision it is that the Lord gives by the way, but the time fails me. Indeed, for me to tell you of it has nothing to do with receiving it. Oh, child of God, let me rather put it close to you and may the Holy Spirit comfort you with it! You shall never be sent on a journey without provisions and you shall never have to go to battle at your own charges. If the Lord tries you, it shall never be above what you are able to bear, for He will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. He may treat you roughly, but He will fill your sack. He may speak sharp words, but He will put your money into your sack's mouth. He may take your Simeon and bind him before your eyes, but He will give you provision by the way till you get to the goodly land where you shall need no more provision and the Lamb shall be forever with you—and you with Him! The third lesson which we draw from this is that though sometimes the Lord treats His people roughly, more roughly than He does any other people, yet—

III. HE GIVES THEM THE BEST OF THE BARGAIN IN THE LONG RUN.

These, his brothers, were the only ones Joseph spoke roughly to, but they were the only ones upon whose necks he afterwards fell and wept. They were the only ones that made the tears come into his eyes. They were the only ones of whom he said, "I will preserve you alive." They were the only ones for whom he sent the wagons to bring them down, saying, "Regard not your stuff, for the whole land of Egypt is yours." They were the only ones whom he brought in before Pharaoh and said, "Behold my father and my brothers." They were highly favored and they dwelt in the land of Goshen and they had rest. Child of God, you will have the best of it soon! Even now you are the only ones that Christ deigns to call His brothers and sisters. You are the only people of whom it is written that you are a people dear to Him. You are the only people for whom Christ prayed, for He said, "I pray not for the world, but for those whom You have given Me out of the world, that they may be one." You are the people for whom all things work together for good. As many of you as have believed in the Lord Jesus and are resting upon Him for salvation, though your path may be rough and thorny, you are the only people who have God, Himself, to be your captain, who have His fiery cloudy pillar to be your direction and who shall have the everlasting rest, the eternal portion! Be of good courage. Your riches in reversion are such that you can smile at poverty. Your rest which is yet to come is such that you may well despise the labor which makes you eat your bread in the sweat of your face. Your glory which is to come so excels that you may forget your poverty and your reproach. Your being with Christ will be so superlatively, divinely blessed, that you may well, for a while, bear to have a rough word or two from Him—

"Forever with the Lord!

Amen, so let it be!"

When it shall be so, when you are forever with the Lord, if you could be ashamed, you would be ashamed and confounded to think that you ever

murmured, or ever entertained a thought of complaint against the kind and gracious God who ordered all things for the best for you to promote your profit and His glory! May that thought cheer you, you who are depressed and cast down—and may you go on your way rejoicing!

As for such as have never trusted Christ, it often makes my heart bleed when I talk of these things, to think that I cannot speak to them, that I cannot tell them that these comfortable things are theirs. Oh, unbeliever, you are an alien and a stranger to the privileges of heavenly citizenship! For you there is no blessedness, either now or hereafter! Why will you remain an unbeliever? Why will you continue to be careless and godless, Christless? I trust the Lord has designs of love to you. Leave your sins, for you must either leave them or be lost! Trust the Savior. Rely wholly upon His blood and righteousness, for there is no other righteousness that can ever help you. But if you cast your soul upon Him, it shall be well with you forever! God grant that we may all be found in the day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, as brothers and sisters who are in allegiance to Him. So may it be with you all. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATHEW 7:13-29; 15:1-12.**

Verse 13. *Enter you in at the strait gate.* It is very unpopular. The great ones will recommend to you great liberality and breadth. But enter yet in at the strait gate.

13. *For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in there.* That is a rule that is very unfashionable in these times, but depend upon it, the Lord who gave it to us, meant it for all times. That which seems narrow, which costs you self-denial—that which is contrary to the will of the flesh—that which does not seem to charm the eye and fascinate the senses—go after that! “Enter you in at the strait gate.” You will not be likely to err much, or too much on that side. Let this be a gauge to you. That kind of preaching which allows you to indulge in sin—that sort of teaching which lowers the standard of God’s word for you and makes you think more of your own judgment than of the teachings of Christ—away with it! Let others have it if they like. “Enter you in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in there.”

14. *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.* It is still so. Indeed, none find it unless grace finds them! He who made that gate must go after the wandering sheep and bring them through that gate. They will never choose it of themselves.

15. *Beware of false prophets.* Some honor and esteem all prophets. “Is not it a very high office? Is not a prophet a man sent from God?” Yes, and no! For the very reason there are counterfeits whom God has never sent. Beware of false prophets.

15. *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.* They look just like sheep. They look just like shepherds, but it is only their clothing. The mere hypocrite is the goat in sheep's clothing. But a false prophet is a wolf in sheep's clothing because he can do so much more harm—and will do so much more damage to the church of God!

16. *You shall know them by their fruits.* They are sure to come out in their actions. If you have not got the knowledge of theology and the like, to be able to judge their teaching, yet the simplest persons can judge their *actions!* “You shall know them by their fruits,” which are sure to come out sooner or later.

16. *Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?* Did you ever find a cluster of grapes growing upon a thorn bush? Grapes and figs are pleasant fruit, and holy living, true devotion, communion with God—these are the things that are sweet to God and to good men. But they come not of false doctrine. They are not seen in false prophets. Such prophets despise such things as these. They are for worldly ways and places of worldly gaiety they can frequent. Not so the servants of God!

17-19. *Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.* That is what comes of it in the end. It may spread itself abroad and may gather much admiration to itself for its verdure, but there is an axe being sharpened and a fire being kindled!

20. *Therefore by their fruits you shall know them.* You cannot judge them by their bark or by the spread of their branches, or by the verdure of their leaves, or even by the beauty of their blossoms in springtime. “By their fruits you shall know them.” The Savior here gives us a very earnest and very necessary warning, lest we should be deceived, for there are such who are not only deceived by their own sins, but deceived by false prophets who are among Satan's best agents!

21. *Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* They were very sound in doctrine. They called Jesus, “Lord.” They believed in His deity. Apparently they were very devout. They said, “Lord.” They worshiped Him. They were very importunate and earnest. They said, “Lord, Lord,” crying to Him again and again. But “not everyone that says unto Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” External utterances, however orthodox—professions, however sound, are not enough!

21. *But he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven.* Oh, dear friends, there must be holiness in us, for without holiness no man can see the Lord! It is not knowing the will of the heavenly Father, but *doing* it which is the mark of divine election. If God's grace has really entered into us, we, like the prophets, shall be known by our fruits! But if we are not doing the will of our Father who is in heaven, we shall not come to the heaven where He is!

22. *Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name?* Yes, so did Balaam. Was not King Saul also among the prophets, and yet neither Balaam nor Saul was accepted of God, but they were castaways! “Have we not prophesied in Your name?” A man may be a preacher and an eloquent preacher, and he may even have some blessing upon his preaching—and yet be cast away forever!

22. *And in Your name have cast out devils?* Yes, and there was one that cast out devils and he was a devil, himself, namely, Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. He went out and worked miracles in the name of Christ—and then sold Christ for 30 pieces of silver!

22. *And in Your name done many wonderful works?* Yes, and we may do many wonderful works and yet be wonderfully deceived! It is not wonderful works—it is *holy* works! Not works that amaze men, but works that please God, which are the proof of grace in the soul. Well, there will be some who will be able to say that they prophesied—that they cast out devils—that they did wonders.

23. *And then, will I say unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity.* “I was never acquainted with you. I never had anything to do with you. I was never on speaking terms with you. You never had any fellowship with Me. I never had any fellowship with you. Your motives and designs were very different from Mine. I never knew you.” If Christ once knows a man, He will never forget him. But He says, “I never knew you. Depart from Me, you that work iniquity. Get you gone—you are none of Mine.” Oh, that we might never hear that dreadful sentence pronounced upon us in the day when Christ shall come! And yet we may be preachers! We may be wonderworkers! We may be famous in the visible church of Christ and yet, He may say, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you that work iniquity.” These are solemn thoughts. Let them sink into your hearts.

24. *Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock.* It was the *doing* of those sayings that was the building on the rock. You may hear and only increase your condemnation—but to *do* what you hear is to have a good foundation! This man built his house upon a rock. He was not, therefore, free from troubles. Oh, no!

25. *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house.* Wherever you build, troubles will reach you—and if you are a child of God you are sure to have troubles! “A Christian is seldom long at ease.” The road to heaven is usually a rough one and there are thieves, lions, giants, and all sorts of enemies on that road. It was a house built on a rock. But the rain descended, the floods came and the wind blew and beat upon that house.

25. *And it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.* Is not that glorious? “And it fell not.” Then the more rain, the more flood and the more wind, the more was the house praised for its good foundation and for its stability. “It fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.” Oh, if God has made us holy in life so that we are doing what Christ preaches, especially this Sermon on the Mount, of which this is the close, then we need not

fear all the troubles of life or death, for it shall be said, "It falls not, for it was founded upon a rock!"

26-27. *And everyone that hears these sayings of Mine and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew.* For fools get into trouble, too! However big a fool you may be, you will have big troubles all the same for that. "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked." Houses built on sand must still be tried. "And the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew."

27. *And beat upon that house and it fell: and great was the fall of it.* For it could never be set up again! It was down once and for all. A man may fail in life and yet commence again and succeed. But once a bankrupt with your soul and you are broken forever! "It fell and great was the fall of it." Do not believe those who tell you that to lose your soul is a small affair which will be made right, by-and-by, by either annihilation or restoration. It is all a ruinous lie! This is the truth of God concerning it—"It fell, and great was the fall of it."

28, 29. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine. For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.* He did not quote this learned Rabbi and that—or propose this theory to their thoughtful consideration—He spoke the truth of God and left the truth to work its way upon the minds of men, knowing that many would reject it, for it would be a savor of death unto death to them—but knowing, also, that some would receive it, whom He had ordained unto eternal life, to whom it would be a savor of life unto life. Let us copy our divine Master's example and speak boldly as we ought to speak.

MATTHEW 15:1-12.

Verses 1, 2. *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.* A very amazing omission, certainly! But it seems to have struck them as a very great crime. "They wash not their hands when they eat bread"—as if the commands of God were not enough—men must overload us with their own commands, and sometimes the very people who would see us break God's commands without being at all distressed are dreadfully shocked if we do not keep theirs, showing clearly that they have a higher estimate of themselves than they have of God!

3-6. *But He answered and said unto them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and mother and, He that curses father or mother, let him die the death. But you say, Whoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatever you might be profited by me, and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have you made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.* The hypocrite said, "I cannot give you any help. I have vowed to give it as a subscription to the synagogue, or to the temple, therefore I cannot give it to you," and if he

could plead that he had given it as a gift in the form of a religious offering, he was exempted from assisting his own parents. “Well,” said Christ, “you do by this make the commandment of God of no effect.” “You hypocrites”—our Savior is the most gentle of men, but how plainly does He talk—and how honestly does He denounce everything like hypocrisy!

7-9. *You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draws near unto Me with their mouth and honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Now, may God save us from these two faults! The first is that of being content with the outside worship of God. Unless our very hearts worship, there is nothing whatever in the outward performance of religious rites or religious worship! Indeed, it is hypocrisy to draw near to God with the lips and knees when the heart is not there. The next evil to be dreaded is teaching for doctrines the *commandments of men*. Whatever is not plainly taught in Scripture is of no binding force upon any conscience! And it is evil to invent rites and ceremonies which are not taught in Holy Scripture. We must mind what we are doing! If we have not the plain warrant of Christ’s command for our teachings and our doings, we shall rather vex the Spirit of God than honor Him. Whatever our intention may be, we have not any right to worship God otherwise than according to His own mind. If we do, it will not be worship and not acceptable with Him.

10, 11. *And He called the multitude and said unto them, Hear, and understand. Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.* “And He called the multitude and said unto them—“Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man”—not that which he eats and drinks, “but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.” That is—what he says—that is the point.

12. *Then came His disciples, and said unto Him, Know You that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?* Some very kind friends are very jealous of the preacher lest he should offend anybody—and they will come in all tenderness of spirit and say, “Know you that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?”

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OUR LORD'S VOLUNTARY POVERTY NO. 3380

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*“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor; that you, through His poverty, might be rich.”
2 Corinthians 8:9.*

THE apostle was anxious to stir up the Corinthian church to generosity. They were a church of very great talents. They were an unusually gifted church, so that they were able to maintain in their midst a form of worship which is not often maintained and could not conveniently become the general form in the Christian church, namely, that a large proportion of the members spoke to edification, whereas in most other churches there was no such abundance of spiritual gifts. They were in the midst of a city of polished inhabitants and it had pleased God to call in that city some of the ablest men. But they seem to have been far from taking the front rank in some respects. They needed to be exhorted to purge themselves from a sin which no church had ever tolerated that had a ministry, and which only that church would allow, because it was nobody's business to look after it—and so it was not looked after. This sin *was a great lack of generosity in giving*. Now, in order to excite the church at Corinth, the apostle uses as an argument, first of all, the great generosity of the far poorer church in Macedonia. He says that in the midst of their poverty, they gave, not only up to their power, but generously beyond it. It is right for us to stimulate the zeal of one Christian by the example of another Christian—and it is the bounden duty of all believers so to walk that they may be worthy to be examples to the rest of the flock.

But even this argument is a poor one compared with that which the apostle was more constantly using, namely, the example of Christ, the church's great head and exemplar. He deals, indeed, an efficient blow at all selfishness when, leaving the churches of Macedonia out of the question, he says, “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Oh, that blessed Master of ours! Surely He is useful to us in ten thousand ways! There is not a single part of Him—there is no position He takes, no action He performs, no word that drops from His lips, no thought of His

heart, no aspect of His matchless character that is not serviceable to us, His people! Even in His poverty He becomes our instructor, just as in His death He becomes our Savior. Without staying longer in the text, we shall, first of all, ask you to consider *the example presented to us*, contemplating it in its various phases. And then, secondly, let me, in few but earnest words, *urge you to follow His example* in acts of gratitude.

I. THE EXAMPLE PRESENTED TO US.

It is that of our Lord, of whom Paul said, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." It seems, then, that Christ's coming from heaven to earth to suffer for us is here called, "grace." It was an act of grace on His part—an act purely gratuitous! He was not bound to have done it. We did not deserve it at His hands. It was no foreseen merit of ours, or of any other kind which could have been potent to attract Him from the skies and drag Him to the manger and the tomb! But He came as an act of free mercy to undeserving sinners. It was grace which was the source and fountain of His coming. That eternal love of God, by which we were first chosen, was the same love which sent the Savior to redeem the chosen. It was that grace from which all covenant mercies spring—the ancient wellhead of distinguishing grace—which brought the Savior here! It was because He, being God, was love. Because He, being God, was full of grace and truth, that He, therefore, left the realms above that He might lift us up to them by His coming down from them into the depths of our misery! "You know *the grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ." We ought to perpetually gaze upon the cross, I think, in the light of its being altogether an act of grace on Christ's part—and the result of grace towards us on the part of the divine Father. Oh, you see nothing there, sinners, towards you but grace—

***"Tis mercy fills the throne.
While wrath stands silent by."***

The wrath falls upon the Savior, but all that you have to see in Christ, today, is grace, pure grace—grace to take away the sin which made Him bleed—grace to accept the sinner who was guilty of His death. The cross reveals to us grace on the throne of God, grace at its culminating point, grace triumphant and resplendent in the uttermost degree! Who would see grace, let him behold a bleeding Savior bearing the griefs of men upon Himself and suffering in their place. "You know the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ," the kindness, the bounty, the benevolence, the generosity, the compassion, the condescension, the tenderness, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And when Paul had thus named the deed which the Savior did and labeled it with the title of, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," he follows it up by mentioning the heights from which the Savior descended—"*who though He was rich.*" It has been well observed that this little sentence is a clear proof that our Savior had an existence *before* He was born into

this world—that, in fact, He was divine—for it is said that, “He was rich, and that He became poor.” Now, He never was rich *in this life*—never!

If it should be said that He was rich at one time with the Holy Spirit, as Unitarians have said in order to get rid of the force of this verse, then He never did become poor in that sense. There was no period of the Savior's life on earth in which it could be said that He was rich, but He became poor. It must, therefore, have been in a previous state of being that our Lord was rich—and I shall now ask your thoughts to go back to the time when Jesus Christ *was* rich. Poor are our words! They are but an accommodation of mortal speech to an immortal theme! “*He was rich.*” When we read the word, “rich,” it seems, somehow or other, to pall the description of what Jesus Christ was, for He was so infinitely more rich than anything the world knows by that description! His riches were vastly more wealthy than any of the gaudy wealth which the world can bring—which is but transient and corruptible wealth! He was rich. Yes, but He was something more than that. However, we will make such use of the term as we can.

Jesus was rich *in possession*. As God over all, having made all things, all things were His. He could have said, “The cattle on a thousand hills are Mine; mine, the mines of gold, and the secret treasuries of silver; mine, the places where the diamonds sparkle and where the pearl emits its gentle ray. All things are Mine! A thousand stars glisten as My lamps and all the width of space, so full of the wonders of creation—all this is Mine!” He was rich *in service*. A thousand angels waited at His gates. He had but to will it and the strong-winged messengers flew upon His errands! They adored Him ceaselessly. Day without night they circled His throne, rejoicing. Even when on earth, He said He could pray to His Father and He would send Him twelve legions of angels. How much more was this the case when He sat in the state of heaven—and all these were the courtiers that waited before His throne? He was rich *in honor*. No pompous courts of Solomon could ever compare with the courts of the Son of God! All glory centered in Him; He was “God over all, blessed forever,” co-equal and co-eternal with the Father; to Him the perpetual song; to Him the never ceasing incense. To Him the golden harps, to Him the swell of heaven's highest symphonies, for He was adored of all and exalted high above principalities and powers, and every name that is named! And He was rich *in love*, which is the best of all wealth! His Father loved Him. “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Eternally was that a truth of God and, besides that, there were pure spirits of His own creating who loved Him with all the force of their being. He needed not our love to make Him rich! There was love enough in God for Him and if He had willed it, He could have made a thousand races of

nobler creatures than ourselves, all of whom would have loved Him with the deepest love!

He was rich, too, *in happiness*. We cannot conceive of the Savior knowing any sorrow, or grief, or need in heaven. He had all that even He could wish for, if such language can be used towards the infinite God. He was essentially and ineffably happiness, itself! Just as we believe, concerning the Most High God, that He is unruffled by a care and His soul undisturbed by a pang, so was it with the glorious one who afterwards condescended to be crowned with thorns—and to be pierced with the spear for our sakes. “He was rich!” Oh, the word, as I have said before, is a poor miserable word! It is the best that Paul could find, but there is such a grandeur about Christ that if we say He was rich in all respects, rich in all conception and rich beyond imagination's utmost stretch, rich beyond everything you and I will ever be able to conceive of—even when we got into the celestial state—so rich, so infinite, so glorious, so divine—this is what He was! “He was rich.”

And yet He considered us! And yet He stooped to us! Oh, my brothers and sisters, what an example for us to get the same grace and generosity, so that if in any respect we, too, are made rich here, we, too, may be as willing to stoop as He was. But, alas, while our stoop is all so little, His stoop is all so great!

Then the apostle goes on to say, “Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.” Not that He was *made poor*. It was not an act of providence that made Him so. He did not become bankrupt. He was not a king expelled from His dominions. He was not a fallen sovereign to whom we give shelter and pity, but He “became poor.” That is, it was His own voluntary act! It was His own cheerful will to become poor! And now I cannot help saying that that word, “*poor*,” does not seem to me to be strong enough. It is the best, I suppose, our language can afford, but still, there never was poverty like His poverty! It is a word which does but skim the surface of the Savior's condescension. He was poor. Well, He was poor *in the ordinary sense*. He was born of humble parents; He was not the son of a prince or a mighty one. He was reputed to be the carpenter's son. When His mother swaddled Him, she laid Him in the manger. He was not like those who are born in marble halls and are wrapped in scarlet—He was a plebeian and He took a lowly place even in His birth. He is sent to Egypt—He becomes an early exile. Scarcely any poverty in the world is like the poverty of the poor emigrant who leaves his country either from lack of bread or from fear of life—and Jesus Christ and His mother going down to Egypt are the very picture of poverty! We are thankful if we have only a little cottage in our own land where we may dwell, but in Egypt the Son of God must tabernacle for a while. And when He came back, He sought not His acquaintance among

even the tradesmen or the middle classes, much less among the lofty and the proud in spirit—He put upon Himself the smock frock of the country—“a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout”—and His intimate acquaintances were the fishermen of Galilee!

Was it not said of Him by David, “He has exalted one chosen out of the people”? And Christ was emphatically chosen out of the people. He was with them in all their toils and all their woes—so with them that none of them were poorer than He. “Foxes have holes,” He said, “and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head.” He was so poor that I never read He left a will about His worldly goods and chattels. All that He had of personal estate was just the garments He wore and those the soldiers parted among them—and there He was, naked, dead and indebted to charity! For a tomb, He had not even a sepulcher of His own—not a sorry six feet of earth in which His sleeping body might have rested in its own freehold—it was a borrowed tomb that gave the Savior a refuge. He thus became poor outwardly, but what was His poverty inwardly? He was poor *as to His friends*. Judas betrayed Him. Peter denied Him. All the disciples forsook Him and fled! He was poor *in servants*, for although He washed His disciples' feet, yet they washed not His! And when He came to the hour when human sympathy might have somewhat comforted Him, He had to say with melancholy pathos, “What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?” Oh, so poor has He become that there is not an eye to watch with Him in His lonely grief! So poor was He that the comforts which are left to the most abject were taken away from Him! No promise beamed to shed its light upon His soul. At one time, at any rate, no presence of God made Him glad. He was forsaken of His Father and His God! “Eloi, Eloi lama sabachthani,” indicated a poverty of soul quite as deep as that naked and mangled body indicated outward poverty.

He had lost all, or rather had given up all, laid aside everything—His crown of glory exchanged for the thorns of shame. The imperial mantle of dominion cast aside that He might wear His own blood! No more adored, but spit upon! No longer revered, but despised and made the offscouring of men! No throne, but a cross! No golden cup, but a draught of wormwood and of gall! No light and brightness of excessive glory, but the blackness of mid-day—midnight! No life and immortality, but, “It is finished,” and the giving up of the ghost! “Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.”

I wish it were in my power to go farther into this depth tonight, but neither my ability nor my time will serve me just now. Let your own meditations assist you to peer into the poverty of the Savior—such poverty, indeed, as you and I can never know, but, prompted by His example, let us not be ashamed to be poor! No, let us not, at the thought

of being poor, feel any kind of fear about it! Let us rather rejoice that in this we shall have fellowship with our Lord and if we serve Him we must be poor. If we are obedient to His will, we must make a sacrifice of worldly goods and prosperity. Let us take joyfully the spoiling of our goods. Let us, like the Master, count it all joy when we are thus stripped, for so shall we have fellowship with Him “who, though He was rich, yet for your sakes became poor.”

The apostle next calls our attention to the *objectives* of this wonderful condescending stoop of our Lord, namely, *ourselves*. “*For your sakes* He became poor.” For the sake of the Corinthians; for the sake of us.

And oh, where could there be found more unworthy beneficiaries of this amazing love than we have been? In contemplating the love which I personally received from my Savior, although I wonder at it in itself, I have often thought that I could far better understand it if it had been given to someone else than when it is shed abroad in my own soul. I do not know how it is, but somehow the salvation of the vilest sinner that lives does not one half as much surprise me as my own—and I find it far more easy to believe in the genuine salvation of any man than at times to believe in my own. Why should He love us? Oh, there is an amount of unworthiness about each one of us which we cannot see in our fellows that makes it amazing that we should have been chosen! Well, said the apostle, “His great love wherewith He loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins!” It is by His great love He loves us now we are alive, but it is still more wondrous love that He should spend His life-blood to buy our humanity when it was in its former state! None shall praise God more for His grace than I will if I get the privilege to see Him face to face, for none will be more indebted to His distinguishing mercy! I suppose you will feel the same and will, each one, resolve in the contest of humility that none of you will yield to his fellow, but will each one lie the lowest and sing the loudest to the praise of the matchless lover, this heavenly bridegroom of our souls! “*For your sakes* became poor.” Not a thorn in that crown for Himself, but for your sakes! No spit on those cheeks, no hair plucked from them, for Himself—but all for you! For you, the cruel lash, as it pitilessly furrowed those holy shoulders! For you, those drops of crimson sweat as they stained the cold earth! For you, each of those cruel nails! For you, for you, the spear that pierced His side! Oh, let each Christian here really seek to lay a claim to have a personal interest in the griefs and groans of Jesus! Sweet possessions! Oh, to treasure them! Richer than all jewels! Those drops of blood—far more priceless than rubies! Those falling tears more sparkling than diamonds! Treasure up the love of Jesus! Put it into your souls. Make a heart in your heart in which to treasure it! Count it to be the richest and most precious thing you can have, or can desire to have—the love of

Jesus with all its sweetness and everlasting delight! "For your sakes He became poor."

Well, now, if He did all this for the sake of us who are so unworthy, what ought you and I to do for His sake, who is so worthy? And if He emptied His great self for us, who are as nothing, shall not we be ready to empty our little selves for Him, who is so great?

If He gave all to us, what less than all can we give to Him? And even when we have given all, we shall think it all too little for such a Lord and such a friend! Does Jesus give Jesus, and shall not we give all of ourselves?

The apostle tells us, however—to conclude the exposition of the verse and our contemplation of this great example—that *Christ had an objective in doing this*, and the objective was this—"That you, through His poverty, might be made rich." I like the very phraseology, here, and think we should read it again..."That you, through His poverty, might be made rich." A person joined this church not long ago who had been a member of quite another denomination, in which the doctrine of the second advent, which we also hold, takes an infinitely more prominent place than we are ever likely to give to it, for it is the gospel of their salvation. This woman, however, professed herself to have been converted to God, here, and she said, "I was always taught to trust in Christ glorified, but now I come to see that my confidence must be in Christ crucified." This was what Paul preached and it is what we preach! I believe it is an error which is growing, that we are to be made rich through Christ glorified. I grant you that we shall be, for we are made rich by Christ in *any* capacity, but the text says it is through His *poverty* that we shall be made rich. The brightest treasure that can come to the Christian comes to Him through Christ crucified—we must take care in all our ideas of the second advent that we do not imagine the coming of a *temporal* kingdom and a *temporal* glory and go back to the beggarly elements of the old covenant—for if we do so we shall miss the true jewel, the *spiritual* treasure—the love of which is half dying out in the Christian church! Christ in His poverty should be most commonly the object of our contemplation, for it is through that poverty that we shall be made rich.

Now, I want to ask you whether you are rich tonight? If Jesus Christ died for you, I am sure He has not missed His intention in so dying and, therefore, you are rich! But you say you are poor and you were grumbling only an hour ago to think that you were so poor. Come, now! Come now! Jesus Christ, though He was rich, became poor—shall He miss the design of that great renunciation? Shall His plan fail? It is not for a moment to be supposed! Well, then, He has made you rich. You cannot count your treasures, Christian! A catalog of them would be too long for you ever to get through it! You have no estate. You have no barn

in which to store away your harvest. Perhaps there may be some of you with little more belonging to you than the garments in which you have come into this sanctuary. But yet—you are rich! Think about this—

***“All things are yours, the gift of God,
The purchase of a Savior's blood!
This world is yours, and worlds to come!
Earth is your lodge and heaven your home!”***

You have angels to be your protectors. You have Christ to be your intercessor and your friend! You have the Holy Spirit, Himself, to be your comforter! The everlasting arms are underneath you. The divine wings are above you. The divine glory is within you! Oh, what more could you desire? You shall have all the provisions that you need, for you shall dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed. Yes, Christ has made us rich in the highest possible sense of richness. He does not please to make many of His people rich in the common sense. As Luther says, He gives the husks to the hogs—the proper place for them—they can relish them and can make the best use of them. I doubt not that he was also right in what he said of the whole Turkish Empire, which God had given to the grand Turk who was the leading monarch of his day. He said, “It is only a bone for a dog.” So it is. All the kingdoms of this world are but so many bones which the householder throws out to the dogs and lets them devour them as they may. Perhaps all the time the child is kept waiting—and he may be kept waiting a little while for his food because the hour is not yet come—the dog can eat when it wills, but the child must eat at the set time which the Father has appointed. Let us be thankful if God does not give us our portion *here*. It is one of the things to be dreaded—the having your portion in this life! It is said of some that they have their portion in this life—and our Lord said of the Pharisees—“Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.” Oh, let us pray God not to give us our reward here! If we have helped the poor and have only received ingratitude, let us be very thankful that it proves that our reward is not here! If we labor for Christ and are misrepresented, let us be thankful, for again it proves that our reward is not of men and in time, but is of God and for all eternity! To have our reward, here, and our portion from men is a thing to be deprecated with tears, cries and groans! God grant us to know our riches to be of a better sort than that which the worldling covets!

Well, if it is so, that Christ has made us rich, I hope it is not fiction or fancy to any of you. You are rich in your soul—you know you are! You are wealthy and the argument from this is that you should be devoted to your Master. If He has made you rich, serve Him! If He has enabled you to be contented, at ease and happy—if you have blessed enjoyment in your soul, if you are at peace with God through Jesus Christ—who should serve God as *you* should? Highly favored as you are, the very

stones would cry out against you if you were not generous in your Master's service and praise!

And this brings me to the last matter, which is, in a few words—

II. TO EXHORT YOU TO PRACTICALLY CARRY OUT THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

There have been some advanced Christians—I say not this of all—but there have been some advanced Christians who literally have been made able to carry out the example of the Savior. How should we honor the memory of such men as John Wesley, for instance? He might have been a fellow—as he was, indeed, of the University—and have had excellent compensation. “The church,” so called, was open to him and, no doubt, a bishopric would soon have rewarded his exertions and his eloquence. But he lived through life purely to serve his Master according to his knowledge and conviction. And when an inventory was to be made of his plate, he had but two spoons, one at Bristol and one in London. And when he died, what had he to leave? His treasure had all gone before him into heaven and he died in poverty, having served his God with all he had, and making that the aim of his life—to live with all he had wholly to his Master's service! And such have been the lives of some of our missionaries. They have cut themselves away from all the claims of kindred and have given themselves, like the old Roman heroes in battle, who stood upon the sword and consecrated themselves to God. They have given themselves up to live and to die with never a thought of gain in this world, no, never dreaming of possessing anything as long as they lived! Such was apostolic life and such, I believe, would be more common in the Christian church if a high degree of divine grace were granted. I do not think it is the duty of most of you, nor that it will ever fall to the lot of 99 out of a hundred of you, but there are some of you—and there ought to be more—who, being called of God to some special work, should feel that if you are rich, if you possess rank, if you possess standing in society, you will give up the most brilliant, earthly prospect for that yet more brilliant prospect of bearing the cross and inheriting the crown!

I look forward, if God should ever send a revival of religion in England, not only to the time when the poor and the middle-classes shall find in their midst consecrated ministers, but when, from the very highest spheres of society, there will come to us men who might have worn the coronet, but who would rather proclaim the gospel! Men who might have piled up their wealth until it became like Babel's tower, but who would rather become poor, that in their poverty they may make many rich! It is not given unto all thus to do, but this is the dictate of Christianity—and where it can be done absolutely and be carried out to the fullest extent, it brings much glory to God!

Well, but the principle seems to me to be binding upon us all. I will venture to say—and I should not wonder that some of you will not like it to be said, that *I believe it is anti-Christian and unholy for any Christian to live with the objective of accumulating wealth.* You will say, “Are we not to strive all we can and to get all the money we can?” You may do so. You should do so. I cannot doubt but what, in so doing, you may do good service to the cause of God. But what I said was this, that to live *with the objective of accumulating wealth* is anti-Christian. There are thousands of men and women with whom that is the only thing they are living for—to save, save, save—and make a fortune! And when they die, what then? Well, then it will be in the newspapers that so-and-so died worth so much, and some will say, “Guess what worth he died with? It will be talked of all over the city, “Why, they paid probate duty on so much!” Yes! Well, now, if you had a steward—I will ask you a question—if you had a steward and that steward were to die—and you should hear that he died worth £100,000, what would you say? You would say, “Ah, I know whose money that was! He was only a steward and yet he died worth £100,000? I know where that money came from.” You would not want to ask the question, but you would say, “Ah, he was a thief, an old rogue!” I am not certain whether every man is not who does that; at least, unless he happens to occupy a very high and prominent position. A man says he is a steward. That is what he says, himself. We do not tell him so, but he says he is. He stands up and thanks God that he is a steward, but the old fellow has got some uncommonly heavy bags about him—more than a steward would have if he had handled his master's money properly!

To say that the most of you ought to spend all you earn would be simply ridiculous. To come into the pulpit and say to those of you who are in business and so on, that you ought to give all that you have to the cause of God every year would be, I think, most intolerable stupidity on my part! I do not say that at all! Let your children, by all manner of means, have that which they can lawfully claim of you. Make a fair provision if you are able to make it. Let your children be liberally educated. Let there be no stint in the house so that there should be complaints of need there. God has put you into a position and you may spend according to your station. What I mean to say is this—if you make it your objective in this world to live simply to get together a certain amount of money, and die and leave it—you are living with an anti-Christian objective and your spirit is apart from the spirit of your Lord Jesus Christ!

My Master did not make a fortune. There is none of you who will leave less than He left! We read some time ago of a bishop whose will was sworn to be under £150,000, and someone said, “He was a true

successor of the apostles, for he would be bound to say that if the Apostle Paul's will could have been sworn to, it, too, would have been under £150,000." And I think it is very likely that it would!

Ah, but such an occurrence as that always provokes a sneer in the world. They say, "Oh, yes, yes, yes—this is a picture of making the best of both worlds!" But it is not the picture of the Savior, living wholly for the cause of God and the cause of truth, but quite the reverse! I would like to see you, my dear friends who are poor, feeling that out of your poverty it is your privilege to give continually to Him who loved you and gave Himself for you, not casting the burden of God's work upon the few rich that may be among us, but every man honestly taking his share in the church's burden, which, indeed, is not her burden, but her privilege and her delight! I would like to see you bring in your gifts to God's treasury, not because you are asked to do so, or prompted, or driven to it, but because you love to do it out of love to Him. Well, then, those of you who are prospered in business—and may there be more of you!—will always find that it will sweeten what is left to yourselves if the full and fair proportion is given to your Master. I am afraid you will not be likely to imperil yourselves, or bring yourselves to poverty by what you do for the cause of Christ. Sorry would I be if, by any extravagance or imprudence of that kind, such a thing would occur—but on the whole it is not a very likely thing—so that I need not guard you particularly much against it. But if you give to God, you shall find that if you give by shovelfuls, God will give it back to you in cartloads! And if you give cartloads, His wagons shall be driven to your door and He will bless you in proportion as you give to Him!

I have thus applied the principle to wealth, but it should also be applied to everything the Christian has. I hope some of you have a good reputation. There was a time when I had one, but preaching the gospel very frequently brings upon you all sorts of misrepresentations. I remember pretty well the first stinging article I read in a newspaper concerning myself—as full of lies as an egg is full of meat—and I could not help wincing somewhat under it! But I soon learned the lesson that I could not afford to keep a reputation if I were a Christian minister—that I must be prepared to serve God with all my heart, soul and strength—and let man or devils say whatever they liked. I take no notice whatever of them, but go on serving God! And I count it a sweet thing to sing—

***"If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame
If You will remember me."***

Now, there is a young man over yonder who thinks he is a Christian, but he has been laughed at by the other young fellows in the shop and

he has half a mind to give up. What? What? When Jesus Christ, who was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, are you ashamed to be laughed at by a few simpletons? And there is a young woman here who was placed, just now, in a family where they are very godless. She hardly likes to show her colors for Christ. Oh, my sister, think of the Master and of the shame and the spitting that He endured for you—and let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. Stoop, stoop, my brother! Stoop, my sister! The way to heaven is downhill in a certain sense. The way to rise is to fall in your own esteem—and when you shall think yourself to be less than nothing, and your own reputation, and your own wealth, and everything you have to be all Christ's property—and you freely give it up to Him, then will you realize what it really is to be a Christian—but not till then!

Would to God some here were wholly devoted to the Master! I have been looking to see whether God would raise up among us some unusual spirits, some fiery souls, some consecrated men and women who have got the old heroic blood of ancient Christendom within their veins! May such yet arise and may each seek to follow where the Master leads the way to the praise and glory of His grace!

Now, there are some of you who have heard all this, but I have not addressed myself to you—and yet I meant you all the while—I mean even you who are unconverted. Think of the love of Jesus in coming in the flesh and may that sweet love be a sort of latchkey to your hearts with which Christ shall open them and let Himself in! If He has knocked and you have not opened, I trust He will open the door, Himself, by His own love—and may you be His tonight! If you so become His, be really His! You have served the devil—now serve Him! If you must serve Christ, do not serve Him with half your hearts—serve Him and no mistake. Give Him your whole soul. If He is worth having, He is worth having altogether and worth giving your whole soul. So may you do—and the Master shall have the praise evermore! Amen.

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THE BROKEN FENCE

NO. 3381

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1913.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered its surface, and the stone wall was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked on it and received instruction."
Proverbs 24:30-32.*

THIS lazy man did no hurt to his fellow men—he was not a thief, nor a ruffian, nor a meddler in anybody else's business. He did not trouble himself about other men's concerns, for he did not even attend to his own—it required too much exertion. He was not grossly vicious. He had not energy enough to care for that. He was one who liked to take things easily. He always let well enough alone and, for that matter, he let ill alone, too, as the nettles and the thistles in his garden plainly proved! What was the use of disturbing himself? It would be all the same a hundred years hence and so he took things just as they came. He was not a bad man, so some said of him, and yet, perhaps it will be found at last that there is no worse man in the world than the man who is not good, for in some respects he is not good enough to be bad! He has not enough force of character about him to serve either God or Baal. He simply serves himself, worshiping his own ease and adoring his own comfort. Yet he always meant to be right. Dear me, he was not going to sleep much longer, he would only have forty winks more and then he would be at his work—and show you what he could do! One of these days he meant to be thoroughly in earnest and make up for lost time. The time never actually came for him to begin, but it was always coming. He always meant to repent, but he went on in his sin. He meant to believe, but he died an unbeliever. He meant to be a Christian, but he lived without Christ. He halted between two opinions because he could not trouble himself to make up his mind! And so he perished of delay.

This picture of the slothful man and his garden and field overgrown with nettles and weeds represents many a man who has professed to be a Christian, but who has become slothful in the things of God. Spiritual life has withered in him. He has backslidden. He has come down from the condition of healthy spiritual energy into one of listlessness and indifference to the things of God. And while things have gone wrong within his heart and all sorts of mischiefs have come into him and grown up and seeded themselves in him, mischief is also taking place externally in his daily conduct. The stone wall which guarded his character is

broken down and he lies open to all evil. Upon this point we will now meditate. "The stone wall was broken down."

Come, then, let us take a walk with Solomon and stand with him and consider and learn instruction while we *look at this broken-down fence*. When we have examined it, let us *consider the consequences of broken-down walls*. And then, in the last place, let us try to *wake up this sluggard that his wall may yet be repaired*. If this slothful person should be one of ourselves, may God's infinite mercy awaken us before this ruined wall has let in a herd of prowling vices! First, let us take—

I. A LOOK AT THIS BROKEN FENCE.

You will see that in the beginning it was a very good fence, for it was a stone wall. Fields are often surrounded with wooden fences which soon decay, or with hedges which may very easily have gaps made in them. But this was a stone wall. Such walls are very usual in the East and are also common in some of our own counties where stone is plentiful. It was a substantial protection to begin with and well shut in the pretty little estate which had fallen into such bad hands. The man had a field for agricultural purposes and another strip of land for a vineyard or a garden. It was fertile soil, for it produced thorns and nettles in abundance—and where these flourish, better things can be produced—yet the idler took no care of his property, but allowed the wall to get into bad repair and in many places to be quite broken down.

Let me mention some of the stone walls that men permit to be broken down when they backslide.

In many cases *sound principles were instilled in youth*, but these are forgotten. What a blessing is Christian education! Our parents, both by persuasion and example, taught many of us the things that are pure and honest and of good repute. We saw in their lives how to live. They also opened the Word of God before us and they taught us the ways of right both toward God and toward men. They prayed for us and they prayed with us till the things of God were placed round about us, and shut us in as with a stone wall! We have never been able to get rid of our early impressions. Even in times of wandering, before we savingly knew the Lord, these things had a healthy power over us—we were checked when we would have done evil—we were assisted when we were struggling towards Christ. It is very sad when people permit these first principles to be shaken and to be removed like stones which fall from a boundary wall! Young persons begin at first to talk lightly of the old-fashioned ways of their parents. By-and-by it is not merely the old-fashionableness of the ways, but the ways, themselves, that they despise! They seek other company and from that other company they learn nothing but evil. They seek pleasure in places which it horrifies their parents to think of. This leads to worse—and if they do not bring their fathers' gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, it is no virtue of theirs. I have known young men who really were Christians, sadly backslide through being induced to modify, conceal, or alter those holy principles in which they were trained from their mother's knee. It is a great calamity when professedly

converted men become unfixed, unstable and carried about with every wind of doctrine. It shows great faultiness of mind and unsoundness of heart when we can trifle with those grave and solemn truths of God which have been sanctified by a mother's tears and by a father's earnest life! "I am Your servant," said David, "and the son of Your handmaid." He felt it to be a high honor and, at the same time, a sacred bond which bound him to God, that he was the son of one who could be called God's handmaid. Take care, you who have had Christian training that you do not trifle with it! "My son, keep your father's commandments and forsake not the law of your mother: bind them continually upon your heart and tie them about your neck."

Protection to character is also found in the fact that *solid doctrines have been learned*. This is a fine stone wall. Many among us have been taught the gospel of the grace of God and have learned it well, so that we are able to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Happy are they who have a religion that is grounded upon a clear knowledge of eternal truths of God! A religion which is all excitement and has little instruction in it, may serve for transient use, but for permanent life purposes there must be knowledge of those great doctrines which are fundamental to the gospel system. I tremble when I hear of a man's giving up, one by one, the vital principles of the gospel and boasting of his liberality! I hear him say, "These are my views, but others have a right to their views also." That is a very proper expression in reference to mere, "views," but we may not thus speak of truth, itself, as revealed by God that is one and unalterable, and all are bound to receive it! It is not your view of the truth, for that is a dim thing, but the very truth of God, itself, which will save you if your faith embraces it. I will readily yield my way of stating a doctrine, but not the doctrine, itself! One man may put it in this way, and another man, another way, but the truth, itself, must never be given up. The spirit of the broad school robs us of everything like certainty. I should like to ask some great men of that order whether they believe that *anything* is taught in the Scriptures which it would be worthwhile for a person to die for—and whether the martyrs were not great fools for laying down their lives for mere opinions which might be right or might be wrong? This broad Churchism is a breaking down of stone walls and it will let in the devil and all his crew and do infinite harm to the church of God if it is not stopped! A loose state of belief does great damage to any man's mind.

We are not bigots, but we should be none the worse if we so lived that men called us so. I met a man the other day who was accused of bigotry and I said, "Give me your hand, old fellow. I like to meet with bigots now and then, for the fine old creatures are getting scarce! And the stuff they are made of is so good that if there were more of it, we might see a few men among us again and fewer mollusks." Lately we have seen few men with backbones—the most have been of the jelly-fish order. I have lived in times in which I should have said, "Be liberal and shake off all

narrowness,” but now I am obliged to alter my tone and cry, “Be steadfast in the truth of God!” The faith once delivered to the saints is now all the more attractive to me because it is called narrow, for I am weary of that breadth which comes of broken hedges! There are fixed points of the truth of God, and definite certainties of creed—and woe to you if you allow these stone walls to crumble down! I fear that the slothful are a numerous band, and that ages to come may have to deplore the laxity which has been applauded by this negligent generation!

Another fence which is too often neglected is that of *godly habits* which had been formed. The sluggard allows this wall to be broken down. I will mention some valuable guards of life and character. One is the habit of *secret prayer*. Private prayer should be regularly offered, at least in the morning and in the evening. We cannot do without set seasons for drawing near to God. To look into the face of man without having first seen the face of God is very dangerous—to go out into the world without locking up the heart and giving God the key is to leave it open to all sorts of spiritual vagrants! At night, again, to go to your rest as the swine roll into their sty, without thanking God for the mercies of the day, is shameful! The evening sacrifice should be devoutly offered as surely as we have enjoyed the evening fireside. We should thus put ourselves under the wings of the preserver of men. It may be said, “We can pray at all times.” I know we can, but I fear that those who do not pray at stated hours seldom pray at all! Those who pray in season are the most likely persons to pray at all seasons. Spiritual life does not care for a cast-iron regulation, but since life casts itself into some mold or other, I would have you careful of its external habit, as well as its internal power. Never allow great gaps in the wall of your habitual private prayer!

I go a step farther. I believe that there is a great guardian power *about family prayer* and I feel greatly distressed because I know that very many Christian families neglect it. Romanism, at one time, could do nothing in England because it could offer nothing but the shadow of what Christians had already in substance. “Do you hear that bell tinkling in the morning? What is that for? To go to church to pray!” “Indeed,” said the Puritan, “I have no need to go there to pray. I have had my children together and we have read a passage of Scripture, prayed, sang the praises of God—we have a church in our house.” Ah, there goes that bell again in the evening. What is that for? Why, it is the vesper bell! The good man answered that he had no need to trudge a mile or two for that, for his holy vespers had been said and sung around his own table, of which the big Bible was the chief ornament! They told him that there could be no service without a priest, but he replied that every godly man should be a priest in his own house. Thus have the saints defied the overtures of priestcraft and kept the faith from generation to generation! Household devotion and the pulpit are, under God, the stone walls of Protestantism! And my prayer is that these may not be broken down!

Another fence to protect piety is found in *weeknight services*. I notice that when people forsake weeknight meetings the power of their religion evaporates. I do not speak of those lawfully detained to watch the sick and attend to farm-work and other business, or as domestic servants and the like—there are exceptions to all rules—but I mean those who could attend if they had a mind to do so. When people say, “It is quite enough for me to be wearied with the sermons of the Sunday. I do not want to go out to prayer meetings, lectures and so forth”—then it is clear that they have no appetite for the Word of God—and surely this is a bad sign. If you have a bit of wall built to protect the Sunday, and then six times the distance left without a fence, I believe that Satan’s cattle will get in and do no end of mischief!

Take care, also, of the stone wall of *Bible reading*, and of speaking often, one to another, concerning the things of God. Associate with the godly and commune with God and you will thus, by the blessing of God’s Spirit, keep up a good fence against temptations, which otherwise will get into the fields of your soul and devour all goodly fruits!

Many have found much protection for the field of daily life in the stone wall of *a public profession of faith*. I am speaking to you who are real believers and I know that you have often found it a great safeguard to be known and recognized as a follower of Jesus! I have never regretted—and I never shall regret—the day on which I walked to the little river Lark, in Cambridgeshire, and was there buried with Christ in baptism! In this I acted contrary to the opinions of all my friends whom I respected and esteemed—but as I had read the Greek Testament for myself, I felt bound to be immersed upon the profession of my faith, and so I was. By that act I said to the world, “I am dead to you, and buried to you in Christ, and I hope henceforth to live in newness of life.” That day, by God’s grace, I imitated the tactics of the general who meant to fight the enemy till he conquered and, therefore, he burned his boats that there might be no way of retreat! I believe that a solemn confession of Christ before men is as a thorn hedge to keep one within bounds and to keep off those who hope to draw you aside. Of course, it is nothing but a hedge—and it is of no use to fence in a field of weeds—but when wheat is growing, a hedge is of great consequence. You who imagine that you can be the Lord’s and yet lie open like a common, are under a great error! You ought to be distinguished from the world and obey the voice which says, “Come you out from among them, be you separate.” The promise of salvation is to the man who with his heart believes and with his mouth confesses. Say right boldly, “Let others do as they will! As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” By this act you come out into the king’s highway and put yourself under the protection of the Lord of pilgrims—and He will take care of you. Oftentimes, when otherwise you might have hesitated, you will say, “The vows of the Lord are upon me—how can I draw back?” I pray you, then, set up the stone wall and keep it up! And if it has at any corner been tumbled over, set it up again and let it be seen by your

conduct and conversation that you are a follower of Jesus Christ—and are not ashamed to have it known!

Keep to your religious principles like men and do not turn aside for the sake of gain or respectability! Do not let wealth break down your wall, for I have known some make a great gap to let their carriage go through and to let in wealthy worldlings for the sake of their society. Those who forsake their principles to please men will in the end be lightly esteemed, but he who is faithful shall have the honor which comes from God. Look well to this hedge of steadfast adherence to the faith and you shall find a great blessing in it.

There is yet another stone wall which I will mention, namely, *firmness of character*. Our holy faith teaches a man to be decided in the cause of Christ and to be resolute in getting rid of evil habits. “If your eye offends you”—wear a shade? No—“pluck it out.” “If your arm offends you”—hang it in a sling? No—cut it off and cast it from you.” True religion is very thorough in what it recommends. It says to us, “touch not the unclean thing.” But many persons are so idle in the ways of God that they have no mind of their own—evil companions tempt them, and they cannot say, “No.” They need a stone wall made up of noes! Here are the stones, “no, no, No.” Dare to be different! Resolve to keep close to Christ! Make a stern determination to permit nothing in your life, however gainful or pleasurable, if it would dishonor the name of Jesus! Be dogmatically true, obstinately holy, immovably honest, desperately kind, fixedly upright! If God’s grace sets up this hedge around you, even Satan will feel that he cannot get in and will complain to God, “have You not set a hedge about him?” I have kept you long enough looking over the wall! Let me invite you in and, for a few minutes, let us—

II. CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF A BROKEN-DOWN FENCE.

To make short work of it, first, *the boundary is gone*. Those lines of separation which were kept up by the good principles which were instilled in him by religious habits, by a bold profession and by a firm resolve, have vanished. And now the question is, “Is he a Christian, or is he not?” The fence is so far gone that he does not know which is his Lord’s property, and which remains an open common. In fact, he does not know whether he is still included in the Royal domain, or left to be mere waste of the world’s manor! This is for lack of keeping up the fences. If that man had lived near to God, if he had walked in his integrity, if the Spirit of God had richly rested on him in all holy living and waiting upon God, he would have known where the boundary was and he would have seen whether his land lay in the parish of All-Saints, or in the region called no-man’s-land, or in the district where Satan is the lord of the manor! I heard of a dear old saint the other day who, when she was near to death, was attacked by Satan and, waving her finger at the enemy in her gentle way, she routed him by saying, “Chosen! Chosen! Chosen!” She knew that she was chosen and she remembered the text, “The Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you.” When the wall stands in its integrity all around the field, we can resist

the devil by bidding him leave the Lord's property alone! "Begone! Look somewhere else. I belong to Christ, not to you." To do this you must mend the hedges well, so that there shall be a clear boundary line—and then you can say, "Trespassers, beware!" Do not yield an inch to the enemy, but make the wall all the higher, the more he seeks to enter. O that this adversary may never find a gap to enter by!

Next, when the wall has fallen, *the protection is gone*. When a man's heart has its wall broken, all his thoughts will go astray and wander upon the mountains of vanity. Like sheep, thoughts need careful folding, or they will be off in no time. "I hate vain thoughts," said David, but slothful men are sure to have plenty of them, for there is no keeping your thoughts out of vanity unless you stop every gap and shut every gate. Holy thoughts, comfortable meditations, devout longings and gracious communing will be off and gone if we sluggishly allow the stone wall to get out of repair.

Nor is this all, for as good things go out, so bad things come in. When the wall is gone, every passer-by sees, as it were, an invitation to enter! You have set before him an open door and in he comes. Are there fruits? He plucks them, of course. He walks about as if it were a public place and he pries everywhere. Is there any secret corner of your heart which you would keep for Jesus? Satan or the world will walk in—and do you wonder? Every passing goat, or roaming ox, or stray ass visits the growing crops and spoils more than he eats! And who can blame the creature when the gaps are so wide? All manner of evil lusts, desires, and imaginations prey upon an unfenced soul. It is of no use for you to say, "Lead us not into temptation." God will hear your prayer and He will not lead you there, but you are leading yourself into it, you are tempting the devil to tempt you! If you leave yourself open to evil influences, the Spirit of God will be grieved and He may leave you to reap the result of your folly. What do you think, friend? Had you not better attend to your fences at once?

And then there is another evil, for *the land itself will go away*. "No," you say, "how can that be?" If a stone wall is broken down around a farm in England, a man does not thereby lose his land, but in many parts of Palestine the land is all ups and downs on the sides of the hills—and every bit of ground is terraced and kept up by walls. When the walls fall, the soil slips over, terrace upon terrace, and the vines and trees go down with it! Then the rain comes and washes the soil away and nothing is left but barren crags which would starve a lark! In the same manner, a man may so neglect himself, so neglect the things of God and become so careless and indifferent about doctrine, and about holy living, that his power to do good ceases and his mind, his heart, and his energy seem to be gone. The prophet said, "Ephraim is a silly dove, without heart." There are flocks of such silly doves. The man who trifles with religion, sports with his own soul and will soon degenerate into so much of a trifler that he will be averse to solemn thought and incapable of real usefulness! I

charge you, dear friends, to be sternly true to yourselves and to your God! Stand to your principles in this evil and wicked day! Now, when everything seems to be turned into marsh, mire and mud—and religious thought appears to be silently sliding and slipping along, descending like a stream of slime into the Dead Sea of unbelief—get solid walls built around your life, around your faith and around your character! Stand fast and having done all, still stand! May God the Holy Spirit cause you to be rooted and grounded, built up and established, fixed and confirmed, never “casting away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward.” Lastly, I want, if I can, to—

III. WAKE UP THE SLUGGARD.

I would like to throw a handful of gravel up to his window. It is time to get up, for the sun has drunk up all the dew. He craves “a little more sleep.” My dear fellow, if you take a little more sleep, you will never wake at all till you lift up your eyes in another world! Wake at once! Leap from your bed before you are smothered in it. Wake up! Do you not see where you are? You have let things alone till your heart is covered with sins like weeds. You have neglected God and Christ till you have grown worldly, sinful, careless, indifferent, ungodly! I mean some of you who were once named with the sacred name! You have become like worldlings and are almost as far from being what you ought to be, as others who make no profession at all! Look at yourselves and see what has come of your neglected walls. Then look at some of your fellow Christians and mark how diligent they are. Look at many among them who are poor and illiterate—and yet they are doing far more than you for the Lord Jesus! In spite of your talents and opportunities, you are an unprofitable servant, letting all things run to waste! Is it not time that you bestirred yourself? Look again at others who, like yourself, went to sleep, meaning to wake in a little while. What has become of them? Alas, for there are those who have fallen into gross sin, dishonored their character and who have been put away from the church of God—yet they only went a little further than you have done! Your state of heart is much the same as theirs and if you should be tempted, as they have been, you will probably make shipwreck as they have done! Oh, see to it, you that slumber, for an idle professor is ready for anything. A slothful professor’s heart is tinder for the devil’s tinderbox! Does your heart thus invite the sparks of temptation?

Remember, lastly, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Shall He come and find you sleeping? Remember the judgment. What will you say to excuse yourself for opportunities lost, time wasted and talents wrapped up in a napkin when the Lord shall come?

As for you, my unconverted friend, if you go dreaming through this world without any sort of trouble, and never look to the state of your heart at all, you will be a lost man beyond all question! The slothful can have no hope, for “if the righteous scarcely are saved,” who strive to serve their Lord—where will those appear who sleep on in defiance of the calls of God? Salvation is wholly and alone of Grace, as you well know—but Grace never works in men’s minds towards slumbering and

indifference—it tends towards energy, activity, fervor, importunity, self-sacrifice! God grant us the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, that all things may be set in order, sins cut up by the roots within the heart and the whole man protected by sanctifying Grace from the wasters which lurk around, hoping to enter where the wall is low. O Lord, remember us in mercy, fence us about by Your power, and keep us from the sloth which would expose us to evil, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:1-20.**

It is not easy to see the special subjects that are spoken of by David in each of the short portions of eight verses, yet I do not doubt that if each portion were carefully examined, we would see that there is some thread running through. We have not here simply a number of pious sentences about the excellence of God's word, but we have choice gems, each of them set in a golden ring of spiritual intent and purpose. I think the first eight verses, all of which begin with that letter Aleph, or A, set forth the excellence of abiding in holiness and walking continually in the way of the Lord. Not so much the restoring and comforting power of the word, as the blessedness of that word in leading us to conduct ourselves in consistency of character at all times.

Verse 1. *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.* There is another blessing which comes before this. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered." And we can never know the blessing of this 119th Psalm unless we have felt in our own souls that first blessing—the blessedness of forgiven sin! But when, through the forgiveness of sin, we are put upon gospel ground and are saved—then, not according to the law, but according to the gospel—does this blessing come upon us. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way." The men who have kept their garments unspotted from the world—who from the time of their conversion even until now have been under the influence of the divine Spirit, and so have been enabled to walk in holiness without once defiling their garments with any great and public sin—who walk in the law of the Lord, not occasionally, but always—whose daily walk is in conformity with the divine mind—these are truly blessed!

2. *Blessed are they that keep His testimonies and that seek Him with the whole heart.* For he that has most of God, yet needs to seek more. We keep the testimonies—those we know, for we are taught of the Lord according to the promise, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." Yet we still seek more. With our whole heart we are pressing on still to something higher and better! Even the undefiled in the way are so, comparatively—they are not absolutely undefiled, so as to be absolutely perfect in the sight of God—hence they feel their imperfection and they press after something better. They seek Him with the whole heart.

3, 4. *They also do no iniquity, they walk in His ways. You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently.* So that if we do, we are unprofitable servants; we have done no more than was our duty to do! When His divine grace has renewed us and has enabled us to walk in all sobriety, truthfulness and holiness, even then we have nothing to boast of! “You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently.”

5. *O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!* “Oh, that I may never defile my garments!” And he who has not defiled his garments still prays the same prayer that he may be kept still and directed still. “Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!”

6. *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.* It gives a man boldness. Integrity of heart before God breeds sacred courage. He has nothing to be ashamed of and he is not ashamed when he has respect unto all God’s commandments.

7. *I will praise You with uprightness of heart when I shall have learned Your righteous judgments.* Not, “I will praise myself.” Not, “I will take credit, myself, for my clean walking,” but, “When You have taught me and I learn Your ways, then all the praise shall be rendered unto You.” This is the fruit of evangelical obedience! Legal obedience, even could it be rendered, would be sure to claim the servant’s wage and take to itself the praise—but the obedience of a child of God leads to the laying of honor at Jehovah’s feet.

8. *I will keep Your statutes: O forsake me not utterly!* Strong resolution, but a deep consciousness of weakness and unworthiness—

***“I will, but oh’...how can I do it?
Oh, for this, no strength have I—
My strength is at Your feet to lie.
Oh, forsake me not utterly.”***

Now, in the next eight verses it seems to me that the subject is somewhat different. We have seen the excellence of an undefiled way. Now we have before us one who wants to prove the power of the word to keep him in that undefiled way, and so he begins with this question.

9. *How shall a young man cleanse his way?* His passions are strong, his experience little. His tempers are many—his friends cannot always be at his side. “How shall he cleanse his way?” It is very apt to become miry. The answer is—

9. *By taking heed thereto according to Your word.* The Word of God will keep him in the clean path—will warn him of all the mire into which he would have fallen—and if he takes heed to his steps, he shall not trip.

10. *With my whole heart have I sought You: O let me not wander from Your commandments.* There is the young man’s fear and it may be the old man’s fear, too. “I have sought You sincerely and earnestly, but do not permit my weaker passions to get the mastery over me—do not suffer me in some unguarded hour to be carried captive by my lusts. Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments. It were better to die than to wander from Your way.” The true convert dreads sin! He loathes the very thought

of the most pleasurable folly. “Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments.”

11. *Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.* There is the dread, you see—the dread of sinning—the dread of defiling his way. So he says that he has adopted this divine remedy. A good division of this text, if anyone would preach from it, is the best thing, “Your word,” in the best place—“have I hid in my heart,” for the best of purposes—“that I might not sin against You.”

12. *Blessed are You, O LORD: teach me Your statutes.* As if he said, “Teach me your statutes that I may be blessed, too. You are a happy God. Teach me Your way that I may be happy, too. Blessed are the undefiled. Teach me to be so, that as You are blessed, so I may be.”

13, 14. *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.* A man’s walking will be right when his delight is of this kind, for where the heart goes, the life will go. To some people religion is a task. It will never have much power over them. But when it becomes a delight, then will their walk be affected by it. A well-known and renowned infidel of the last generation, traveling in Wales, said to a little girl whom he saw reading her Bible, “Well, my dear,” he said, “I see you are getting through your task.” “Task, sir?” she said, “What do you mean? I am reading the Bible.” He said, “I thought your mother had set you a chapter to read.” “Oh no, sir. If my mother wanted to punish me, she would not make me read the Bible. It is the most delightful book in the entire world and it is a great joy to me when I can get a little time alone to read my Bible.” It touched his heart. As he confessed afterwards, he was delighted to find something like genuine religion. And where you find delight in religion, there it is genuine! True, genuine religion is like some of the German waters. They come up all fresh and sparkling. I like to see the sparkling in it—a little sparking religion—a little flash of joy and of delight. But very much that we get now-a-days is flat, stale, dull, unprofitable. They keep it corked, but badly corked, usually, and when we see it, there is nothing in it that we should desire it! It is a poor article. God give us delight in Himself, for that is true religion!—

***“I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies
As much as in all riches.”***

15. *I will meditate in Your precepts, and have respect unto Your ways.* An excellent way of keeping the life clean is to keep the thoughts clean. Our boys are brought to prison by reading the abominable trash that is poured forth for juveniles—and many and many a crime has been the result of the fiction of the present day! It is often not only light reading, but filthy reading, too. If we would read God’s word more, and meditate in it better, our hearts would be kept sweet and so would our lives!

16. *I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your word.* God grant that we never may.

17. *Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live, and keep Your word.* Does it need much grace, then, to keep a child of God alive—even

to keep him alive? Yes, it does! Little grace will be of no use to us. We must have great grace, for our needs are great. Sometimes our troubles are great. At other times our temptations are great. We are always in great necessity and You, Lord, must have a large bank, and you must give it liberally to us, or else we, poor, penniless beggars, must utterly die of need. Merely to live, then, needs the bounty of God. “Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word”—for there is no living in truth, except as we keep the Word of God. Those who live in the neglect of God’s word are not living at all, but they are dead while they live! God deliver us from such life.

18. *Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law.* They are there, but I cannot see them unless You open my eyes. It is not that Your word is dark, but that my eyes are dim. Yes, by nature they are blinded altogether. Oh, You who are the great Physician of the blind, open my eyes!

19. *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Your commandments from me.* Do you see the drift of that? He says, “I am a stranger here. Then, Lord, if You do not become and continue to be my Acquaintance, I am altogether alone.” It is true of the Christian that he cannot find anything here that can satisfy his soul. He must, therefore, have the Lord, or else he is in a very sorry case. Oh, beloved, the more you find yourselves strangers in this world, the more are you becoming like your God! The Psalmist says elsewhere, “For I am a stranger *with You.*” Not, “to You,” but, “*with You, like You,*” for God is a stranger in this world. Men do not recognize Him or delight themselves in Him. “So, since, Lord, I have no other friend, and can find no other satisfying portion, hide not Your commandments from me. On the contrary, let me see more of You, because I have nothing else.”

20. *My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto Your judgments at all times.* We cannot always say that, for we sometimes wish that our hearts would break. Sometimes we sing—

***“My heart rejoice or ache—
Resolve this doubt for me;
And if it is not broken, break
And heal it if it be.”***

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OUR LORD'S TRANSCENDENT GREATNESS NO. 3382

A SERMON

**PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1913,
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ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 2, 1866.**

***"Now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth."
Micah 5:4.***

THERE can be no doubt but what the prophet here spoke of the Messiah—of our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall not need to enter into any discussion of that subject here, but shall take it at once for granted that the passage means, "Now shall the Lord Jesus be great unto the ends of the earth." This does not mean that Jesus Christ will be any greater than He always is essentially and naturally. As the Son of God, He is infinite in glory and can be no greater. As King of kings and Lord of lords, His glory fills immensity. Before Him all intelligent spirits that are obedient to God pay their constant homage. He is so great that as we look up to Him, we can both rejoice in Him as our brother and be humbled in His presence when we reflect that He is our God. Jesus Christ is not to be greater, then, essentially than He now is. He is "God over all, blessed forever." The greatness here spoken of is not one of essence, but of manifestation. Christ is to be made great in the judgment, hearts and understandings of men, as He is at all times really great in Himself. When we read in the text, "Now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth," we may remember that *He is already great in heaven*. Albeit that man rejects Him—painful as the thought is that multitudes in this world have not even heard His name and that multitudes more only know it to revile it—yet there is a place where His name is great.

In every golden street that name is celebrated. The strings of every holy harp in heaven are set to the melodies of His praise. All of "the melodious sonnets sung by angel hosts above" are to extol and magnify Him. They delight to do Him service. We may comfort ourselves with this thought when blasphemy abounds and the love of many grows cold. There is at least one shrine where He is always adored—one happier and better land where the sound of blasphemy never profanes Him—where He is loved, adored and revered by every creature!

And it is also sweet to remember that although Jesus Christ is not as yet great unto the ends of the earth, yet He is exceedingly *great in the hearts of the multitudes of His people*. When we meet here tonight, a comparatively little band, we are not the only worshipers of the crucified one. At this moment the sacred song is going up from tens of thousands of sincere hearts in this island. Across the continent there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal, but who delight to join with angels and archangels in singing the praises of Jesus. And far, far across the sea,

men of our own kith and kin love Him as we do. No, no, where is there a place where the name of Jesus is not now known? As the wide sea is everywhere whitened with the sails of our commerce, so do these swift ships bear in them the servants of God!

The desert has been heard to ring with the songs of His praises! Adventurous missionaries have forced their way to what seemed to be impenetrable swamps and deserts that never could be trodden by the foot of man—and Jesus Christ's name has been made known—at least as a witness *against* the people, even where it has not been received by the people. Little is the light of God, but we thank God we have some light! Few there are that find the narrow road, but still, there is a goodly company who, as they march along, sing of Jesus—the way, the truth and the life! “The whole world lies in the wicked one,” but, like an oasis in the midst of the desert, we can see the Christian church! Like a handful of salt scattered over a mass of putridity, like here and there a lamp hung up in the thick darkness, God has a chosen people and in their hearts Jesus Christ is great—and shall be great in time and in eternity!

But the text does mean this, that throughout the whole world—north, south, east, and west—Jesus Christ shall yet be made great! We will speak of this tonight, first, *by showing that He deserves to be great*. Then by reminding you that *God has decreed that He shall be great*. Thirdly, by asking you, my brothers and sisters, *whether you do not also agree with that decree* and now, in His strength, *that you will make Him great*. And then I shall close by asking *whether there are not some here whose hearts, as yet unbowed to His dominion, shall tonight come and acknowledge His sway, that they also may feel and proclaim His greatness unto the ends of the earth*. In the first place, what a task I have undertaken in endeavoring to show that—

I. JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE MADE GREAT!

Oh, my brothers and sisters, it needs an angel to set forth the person of the Lord Jesus, and yet an angel might fail, for an angel was never washed in the Savior's blood and never redeemed from wrath by Jesus the substitute! What are my lips but poor, cold clay, and what are my words but air, and how shall I, then, set forth the Son of God, the eternal one, “who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich”?

Does the world ring with the name of the *conqueror*? It was but a few years ago that everywhere the name of Napoleon was dreaded and men trembled at the very thought of that mighty destroyer of the human race. Ah, well, if a conqueror's name always seems to have a spell about it which fascinates men with its glitter and its glare, I will say that Jesus is a greater conqueror than all the Napoleons, or Alexanders, or Caesars who ever devastated the world, for He has overcome that which overcame them!

Kings as they were, they were often the victims of great sin. Alexander drowned himself in the bowl long before he died, for he was the slave of drunkenness. But Christ has fought with sin and overcome it, leading it

captive at His chariot wheels. Behold the conqueror, smitten in the breast by the skeleton hand, lies as motionless as the slave he slew! Death is the conqueror of conquerors, and casts noble dust upon the same grave as the poorest and most ignoble! But my Lord and Master has conquered death—

***“He, hell in hell laid low,
Made sin, He sin overthrew,
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death, by dying, slew.”***

My Master met Satan face to face and put His foot upon his neck. He met sin and trod it as men tread grapes in the winepress! He met death, itself, the master of all, and rent the grave, rolled away the stone and proclaimed a resurrection to the buried sons of men! This conqueror is, and well does He deserve to be made great!

Some men who will not applaud a conqueror will sometimes speak well of a deliverer. I saw on the triumphal arch at Milan, at the far end of the Corso, a well-deserved eulogy on the man who, whether with or without his own will, helped at first to snap the chains of Italy. There was a grateful recognition on the part of Italy of the deeds of Victor Emmanuel and of Louis Napoleon—and the horses of triumph on the top of the Arch of Victory seemed well placed as a tribute to one who had helped to set a nation free, which long had felt the tyrant's chain. It is said that when Macedonia was first set free, the Greeks were assembled at their games and they gave to him who freed Greece the name of “Sotea” or “Savior,” and the shouting was such that they said the birds fell dead, astonished! 'Twas an exaggeration, but I can understand the joy of a nation when a savior comes to deliver them from bondage! But what shouts shall be equal to the praises of the Son of God! The fetters He has broken are the fetters of your souls! The dungeons from which He delivers are the dungeons of eternal fire! The rescue that He brings you is not for this life, only, but for the life to come! As everlasting as the age of God is the deliverance which Jesus brings! Sound, sound His name abroad! Daughters of music, give Him your sweetest notes. Look, the triumphant hero comes! Now let every heart give forth its glad peal of holy joy for all that He has done! He deserves to be great, both as conqueror and as deliverer!

In these more peaceful times, too, men are inclined to make those great who are *full of learning*. When a man has penetrated through the shell of ignorance and has gotten to the central core of knowledge, men say that he is great. We speak of a great geologist, a great mathematician, or a great astronomer. Men are proud of their fellow man when he has threaded the stars, walked with his staff above and become familiar with planet and with comet, as though they were his next of kin! But what shall I say of my Lord, for in Him dwells all “the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”? To know Him is life and by His knowledge shall His righteous one justify many. If you get Christ, you get wisdom! His name is “wisdom.” Solomon, the wise one, called Him so. He is wisdom without faintest folly, knowledge without mistake. Oh, let Him, then, be made great!

Great *discoverers, too*, are highly honored and valued. It was right of Her Majesty the Queen to confer knighthood upon those who had bound two lands together, moored two distant nations side by side, so that they could speak to each other in friendly terms. 'Twas well done, good sirs, to make the depths of the sea a highway for human thought! But what has Jesus done? He has not merely linked England and America together, but heaven and earth! He has thrown a connecting cable between the sinner, far off from God, and the eternal one who, hating sin, was far off from man. Now, through Him we can speak with God and, through Him, God returns an answer to the message of our misery and the sigh of our grief! Oh, brothers and sisters, Christ has established a communication which is swifter than the telegraph! "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." He has bridged a gulf such as no human mind ever imagined could be bridged! As far as hell is from heaven was man from God—but Christ has bridged the chasm! The mountains of our sins are greater than a thousand Alps heaped on each other—and they stood between us and God—but the cross has tunneled the mountains and there is now a highway for souls to come to God! Now shall He be great, indeed, if He gets His just deserts!

Men also, now-a-days, are wise enough to think those great *who show great generosity*. She is great who goes into the hospital, devoting the prime of her days to the relieving of human misery. He is truly great who, having acquired wealth, gives it with more than a princely hand to build habitations for the poor. He is great who, having won a nation, gives it up as freely as he won it and who lives unrestrained by the smiles or frowns of kings and is the true, though uncrowned, king, the world's hero, whom we all delight to honor! But oh, my Master, my Lord Jesus as much excels all these as the sun excels the stars! He gave not corruptible things, as silver and gold, but He gave Himself, His heart, His soul, His deity! He gave such a jewel for us that if heaven and earth were sold, they could not buy another like it! He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from iniquity! Speak of entering into hospitals? He came unto this great hospital—this huge leper house, the world—and He Himself took our infirmities, bore our sicknesses and by His stripes we are healed! Speak of the disinterestedness that has made men heroes from the mere love of their fellow men? What had Christ to gain? Oh, you lamps of heaven, what had He to gain? Your splendor was enough for Him! What could He win but shame, disgrace, abuse, the spit on His face and the scourging on His shoulders?

It was for the love of His enemies, the love of those who hated and despised Him and nailed Him to the cross—it was for this transcendent, unparalleled love that Christ came to earth! He deserves to be great and I am sure that if you do not think that Jesus Christ is great, it is because you do not know Him—

***"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him too."***

There is no biography that has ever been written that is like that given us by the four evangelists. There is no story of human sacrifice that can

rival it, or that can be mentioned in the same breath! Oh, men, it was for you He lived! Oh, men, it was for you He died!

The angels love Him, though for them He laid not down His life—and shall men, alone, be dumb, or earth, alone, fast close her mouth and refuse to praise Him? The very stones, surely, would speak, if we did not say, “Now, shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.”

Thus much upon a theme that defies our power to set forth fully. And now, in the second place, the text may be viewed as—

II. A SOLEMN PURPOSE AND DECREE ON THE PART OF GOD.

Christ shall be made great to the ends of the earth. There are idol-gods that are worshiped by the largest proportion of our race, but the idols He shall utterly abolish! The false prophets have more followers on earth than Christ has. There are more Muslims than Christians of all kinds. But the crescent of Mohamed must wane. The papacy has still a firm hold upon the minds of millions, but, like a millstone which is hurled into the flood to rise no more, so must the anti-Christ of Rome be utterly cast away! Everything that stands in the place of Christ must be broken into a thousand shivers, for He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet! Brothers and sisters, the very signs of the times, as well as the Word of God, lead us to the comfortable belief that there should be a wider enlightenment of the human mind. It may be, certainly it may be, that the Lord will speedily come, but it does not seem to me at all likely that He will. We are to live anticipating His coming, as servants who know they will have to give an account when He does come. That is the practical bearing of the doctrine upon our life, but there are many prophecies yet to be fulfilled which seem to show that He is not coming just now. I believe that there will be a gradual enlightenment of the human race. I see but little of it at present, but, still, He *must* be great unto the ends of the earth! Hard hearts will melt before the preaching of His gospel. Perhaps they will melt suddenly. Perhaps a nation shall be born in a day. That preaching which now wins tens might, if God willed it, win hundreds, no, it might win thousands and hundreds of thousands! I have never seen any reason why, if God blesses half a dozen in the Tabernacle under a sermon, He should not bless the whole congregation! I do not see any reason why, if He blesses the preaching of the word here, He should not bless it everywhere! No, I see a great many reasons why He should and I hope that He will—and that Pentecost will be outdone until we shall talk of that blessed day as being but a trifling beginning of a much greater result! Pentecost was only the feast of the first-fruits. It was not the harvest. The first-fruits were just one sheaf and, surely the harvest is to be much more than that! Let us, then, expect far greater things than even Pentecost knew!

We would not be surprised if news should come, long before these heads of ours sleep among the sweet clods of the valley, that there has been an awakening through Germany and France—that the gospel has spread all down the Apennines—that the truth of God, as it is in Jesus, has shaken Italy from end to end! That Turkey has submitted to the cross! That the Euphrates has dried up its rebellion, that the multitudes

of India have cast away Vishnu and Siva and bowed before Christ! That Confucius is no longer the great philosopher of China, but that the man of Nazareth is the teacher of millions in that strange people—that from Eastern Coast to Western—the people have set their faces towards Christ and desire to learn concerning Him! We may be living upon the threshold of mighty times. “There were giants upon the earth” in days gone by. There may be giants yet again and the gospel which has crept along at a steady pace may yet take to itself its great power and, swift as the chariot of the sun, the light of truth shall fly the whole world over! This, then, is God's purpose and decree, “Now, shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.”

I want, now, in the third place, to ask Christians here—

III. WHETHER, AS THIS IS GOD'S DECREE, IT HAS NOT OFTEN ALSO BEEN THE EXPRESSION OF OUR HEARTS?

When you and I were first converted, did we not say that we would make Him great? And we did try to do it. We began to talk to our friends. We got a handful of tracts and gave them away. We tried to get into a little cottage to speak about Christ and our resolve then was that, as far as ever our power would go, we would make Christ great to the ends of the earth! Ah, we have fallen very sadly short of those first days. I am afraid we have not kept up our first love, but I wish that every Christian here would go back to that first moment when he received his pardon and say, “Yes, I have been loved much and, having had much forgiven, in God's name, I will love Him much in return. And as far as I can, I will make His name great.”

Since that period we have had some very happy seasons. I know that in this very house of prayer we have sometimes felt that we could stay here forever. It has been like heaven below to us, and then we have said, “Oh, what will I not give Him? I will consecrate my substance. I will use my tongue, my mind, my hands—I will do anything for Him—He has loved me so much that I cannot help talking about it! I will make my children and all my family know what a precious Savior He is.” Oh, I wish that we had come to this and that we not only said it, now and then, but that it was our prayer night and day and the one comfort of our hearts! Beloved, there are some of us who can say before God, the heart-searching one, that the one thing we care about is to make Jesus Christ great. I have sometimes prayed from this platform a prayer which has made some of you wonder when I have asked that, if the crushing of me might lift Christ one inch higher, it might be done at once. Well, it is my daily feeling. I thank God that if it would more honor Him to cast me where He wills, if I might but be permitted to love Him and He will but love me, the thing may be done and He shall have all the praise! While Mr. Tennant was being greatly helped of God in preaching, it came to pass on a certain Sunday that a sermon which he had very carefully prepared suddenly went from his mind and, instead of preaching, he was compelled to be silent. It was a painfully humbling thing for him, but it was the means of the conversion of one of his hearers, who said, “Then I am to understand that as Mr. Tennant preaches so mightily sometimes

to the people, but could not preach on this occasion, he must have been helped of God before—and so it has been God that has spoken to me.” This thought pricked the man to the heart. Oh, it were a good thing to be made a shame, a blessed thing to be a butt, a jest, a jeer, a byword—if Christ were but lifted up thereby!

When Sir Walter Raleigh laid down his cloak and covered the mire for Queen Elizabeth's sake, it was, I fear, but a courtier's trick. But for Christians to be willing to lose their reputations and even their very lives to make Christ glorious—this is the only truly Christian way of living! God forbid that we should ever think about sparing or pampering self. I saw a good Christian brother last Friday, whom God has greatly blessed. But, when working in a very bad part of London, he used to be constantly teased by abominable stories which were made up against him. I said to Him, “I see you have got something that no evangelist can afford to have.” “What is that?” he said. “Why,” was the reply, “you have got a good reputation and you must get rid of it for Christ's sake. That is to say, live a holy life and then let men call you ‘devil’ if they like. Let them lay every sin to your charge, but never heed them, never speak nor fight for yourself, but speak and fight for your Master! Contend for Him and think it to be your honor and your glory to become a butt, an outcast and as the offscouring of all things if Jehovah-Jesus may but wear the crown—and you can win but one single soul to Jesus Christ forever.”

I think, then, that we are all agreed upon this point. We mean, God helping us, to hold fast to this and to do what we can that Jesus Christ may be great unto the ends of the earth!

And now we can spend only two or three minutes in asking the question—

IV. ARE THERE NOT SOME HERE TONIGHT IN WHOM JESUS CHRIST MAY BE MADE GREAT?

Now, you good people who have never done anything wrong and who have got a very good righteousness of your own—I do not ask you to glorify Christ—because you cannot! If I wanted to praise up some doctor and said, “Now, here he is—he can cure all diseases! Will you come and help him to get a name?” I would know that you who were not sick could not help him, but the man who was most sick would be the very one that would get the doctor the best name if he could cure him! So when Christ's name is to be lifted up and we want to preach Him so that He may be extolled, you who feel your guilt are the very men who can help us! Supposing now, Jesus Christ should take the drunk and wash out his mouth and make a sober man of him—and a Christian—would not that make Christ to be exalted? And ah, if there should be, even here, a woman of an evil and vicious life, and Christ should change her so as to make her chaste and honorable—oh, how great it would make Him to become! And if some black villain has crept in here and one who has said of himself that there is no hope of his being converted and no mercy possible for him—supposing he should find pardon and peace by believing in Jesus? And then suppose he become a preacher of His

gospel—would that not make Christ's name to be made great? John Newton was once the vilest of the vile and oh, it made London wonder when the African blasphemer stood up in the pulpit of the church of St. Mary, Woolnooth, to preach the Christ and the cross which he had so blasphemed! And oh, may God make London wonder yet again by taking some of the worst of the worst, and saving them, and making them proclaimers of the gospel of His grace! Why should He not do it? He has often done it. Are you willing and anxious that He should do it again? Then cry to Him and He will do it!

Perhaps there is one here who has been a backslider. Ah, backslider, you can make Christ's name great if you come back to Him! Mr. Whitefield's brother had once been a very sad backslider. He had gone far, far from the way of Christ. At last his conscience was pricked and he fell into despair. Sitting at tea one day with the Countess of Huntingdon, he said to the Countess, "I know what you have said is very proper, and I believe in the infinite mercy and goodness of God, but I do not believe in its application to me, for I am a lost man." The Countess put down the tea and said, "I am glad to hear it, Mr. Whitefield! I am glad to hear it!" "Madam," he said, "I did not think you would rejoice and glory in a thing as terrible as that!" "I am glad to hear you say you are lost, Mr. Whitefield," she said, "for it is written that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost." His eyes sparkled and he said, "I thank God for that text, and for the extraordinary power with which it has now come into my heart." He died that night and God had just sent him the word of peace in time to gather him into the fold. Why should not many of you who are lost glorify the name of Christ by trusting Him, for He came to seek and to save the lost?

Andrew Fuller was once preaching in Scotland and there was a wicked, abandoned woman, whose life had been given up to all sorts of filthiness. She noticed that the church was very full and that many people were standing outside. So she asked what was doing. They told her that an Englishman was preaching. She desired to hear him—she pressed into the crowd, as some of you may have done tonight—and Mr. Fuller just then used this blessed expression, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." "Oh," said the woman, "is there an invitation to the ends of the earth? Surely I am one of the ends of the earth!" She looked, according to the gracious command, and Christ got a good name in that Scottish parish through her being so wondrously saved! Oh, I wish He could be great to some of you who are in the ends of the earth! I feel as if I could give my eyes, both of them, if Christ could but be great with some of you!

The devil has been great with you. He has had his bit in your mouth. He has ridden you, and will yet ride you down to hell! Will you never kick against him? Oh, that Christ might come and lay hold upon your bridle and say, "You shall go no further," so turning you into a new course and making you willing in the day of His power!

Last of all, there may be one here who has been an infidel. If there is, I only hope that he will yet come to make Christ's name great. I remember

hearing that Mr. John Cooke, of Maidenhead, was once blessed to the conversion of a man when he was preaching upon the unpardonable sin. In the town where he preached there was a young man who was a member of a club which was very common some 50 years ago, but now happily, I hope, extinct, called, "The Hell-Fire Club."

The object of the club was to meet once or twice a week and each member of the club was to invent some new oath or be fined. The young man went to hear Mr. Cooke only with the design of picking up some new religious phrase that he might turn into a fresh blasphemy and so delight the unhappy men with whom he was accustomed to meet at the public-house.

The subject was, as I have said, the unpardonable sin. And Mr. Cooke showed what that sin was *not*, and who had *not* committed it—and the man found, as he listened, that he was one of those who had not committed it. He went home and fell, bathed in tears, before God, to think that he had gone so far, but had not been permitted to go quite as far as the unpardonable sin! That man became a Christian and a useful servant of the Lord Jesus. I will be bound to say that "The Hell-Fire Club" began to feel that Jesus Christ's name was great! I wish that some of you who are practically Hell-Fire men and women might become heaven's men and women and become so tonight! Oh, it would be a fine thing if you went home and your wife should find you saying—instead of cursing and swearing—"I think we must pray." How struck she would be! There is a good woman here now with her husband—I think they are both to be received into fellowship tonight—and what a happy time it was for her—though even she then knew little or nothing about Christ—when one night, as they were going to bed, her husband knelt down and prayed! She had never heard such a thing before, but after a little while she thought she had better pray, too. You cannot do better, good woman, when the Lord blesses your husband, than to try to get a blessing, too. They could not long pray in quiet—and soon she asked how it had all come about—and so she learned that it came to pass that God had met with the husband. Oh, I wish He would meet with some of you! He has, in His love, turned many a lion into a lamb, and many a raven into a dove.

Let us all pray this short prayer—

*"Oh, sovereign grace, my heart subdued,
I would be led in triumph, too!
A willing captive to my Lord,
To sing the triumph of His word."*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: REVELATION 12.

Verse 1. *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. This is that woman of whom the promise runs, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." John saw this in a vision in the heavenly places. He saw the church of God, enthroned, made glorious, clothed with the sun, having the brightness of divine light*

about her, with all that is variable, changeable as the moon under her feet, and upon her head the crown “that her Lord had given her”—twelve patriarchs, twelve prophets, twelve apostles, a complete number of glorious lights kindled from heaven!

2. *And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.* That child that is born of her, that seed of the woman that shall bruise the serpent's head is first, Christ, and then all the first-born, of whom He is the great representative.

3, 4. *And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.* The spirit of evil in the heavenlies fighting with the power of light and goodness and grace, a mysterious being with great power, high intelligence, seven heads, ten horns, and having mighty influence over multitudes of men, so that there were seven crowns upon his seven heads. “And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.” The crocodile, which, I suppose, was the earthly figure from which John's dream sprang, has great force in its tail and Satan, doubtless of old, drew from heaven a number of its stars—other angels fell with him. And there are times in the heavens of the church when the ministers fall—they seem to go in companies. Those who should be lights for God are into darkness and become teachers of heresy. “He did cast them down to the earth.” They lost their brightness, they betrayed their earthly origin. “And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.” Remember how he sought to slay Jesus and the like is the case of all the man-children born unto God, who will be of service in the kingdom of God. The main attack of the dragon was against the child—the main attack of the power of evil is against Christ and everything Christly. If he could destroy the gospel, he would not care about the church one whit—the woman might go if the man-child could be destroyed.

5. *And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne.* That is the brief history of the birth of Christ and of His going from us. He “was caught up unto God, and to His throne.” God will take care of the great principle of truth. If it cannot have a refuge on earth, He will find it a refuge in heaven.

6. *And the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared of God that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.* The church of God was long in obscurity. You can hardly find it among the Albigenses and Waldenses. It was hidden away among the mountains. The Wycliffites, the Lollards and others held fast the truth of God, but history scarcely records their names. The woman was in the wilderness, hidden away for many a day. “And there was war in heaven.” You are not to think of “heaven” as a place, but among the

heavenlies. John, in a vision, saw the great contending powers of evil. He was like the prophet when he saw a mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire.

7, 8. *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. And prevailed not: neither was their place found any more in heaven.* You remember how our Lord, who is the true Michael, the only great archangel, said at the beginning of the preaching of the gospel, "I beheld Satan as lightning falling from heaven." His power among the heavenlies is gone! He was cast out of the place called heaven. So is he now, by the preaching of the gospel, and by the death of Christ, cast down from among the heavenly influences.

9. *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.* This was done in the olden time as a matter of fact. It is done continually, spiritually, as Christ is lifted up and His gospel gets the victory.

10. *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.* Always at it; this prince of evil pretending to goodness, and daring to bring accusations against the Holy One of God. But he is not permitted, now, to stand in the court—he is hurled from his high place. He used his place with a desperate pertinacity of malice, accusing the brethren day and night.

11, 12. *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time.* "Therefore rejoice you heavens, and you that dwell in them." Let great joy be in the hearts of all spiritual beings, whether angels or men, for Satan is cast down from among them! But the battle is not over—the scene of it is only transferred from the heavenlies to the earthly. "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you having great wrath because he knows that he has but a short time." We may expect him to rage more and more as the time of his destruction comes nearer and nearer. He is like a bad tenant—he will damage the house out of which he is to be ejected. But he is to be ejected! And let God be glorified for it!

13. *And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child.* He had changed his place, but he did not change his nature—and so he still perseveres in his attack upon God.

14, 15. *And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman that he*

might cause her to be carried away by the flood. Read history and see what fierce and brutal persecutions were used like floods against the gospel of Christ!

16. *And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.* It is poor help that the earth can give, and yet God has overruled to make it useful. The kings and the powers of this world have for their own reasons sometimes protected the church. It was so in Luther's day; the jealousy that was felt of the influence of the court of Rome politically tended to the preservation of Luther and those around about him, so that the gospel was not destroyed. "The earth helped the woman," and we may expect that even those political disasters, which we often dread, will all tend that way. How often has priestly arrogance been put to the blush even for political reasons! We have nothing to do with that, but still we can see how God can overrule. It is always amiss when a woman begins to help the earth—she has nothing to do with that—let the church leave the state alone. But sometimes it happens that in the political providence of God the earth helps the woman.

17. *And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have testimony of Jesus Christ.* "And the dragon was angry with the woman." If ever you meet with a church of God which the devil likes, it is good for nothing! But if it is a true church of God—if it holds the truths of God and if it walks in holiness, it will always be true! "And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed." He had destroyed many already with that flood of persecution and he kept on a battle with the remnant of her seed, "which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Into the deep mysteries of this passage I have not attempted to go, but have simply skimmed the surface. God bless the reading to us.

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THE PLOWMAN

NO. 3383

A SERMON
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*“Does the plowman plow all day to sow?”
Isaiah 28:24.*

UNLESS they are cultivated, fields yield us nothing but briars and thistles. In this we may see ourselves. Unless the great husbandman shall till us by His grace, we shall produce nothing that is good, but everything that is evil. If one of these days I shall hear that a country has been discovered where wheat grows without the work of the farmer, I may then, perhaps, hope to find one of our race who will bring forth holiness without the grace of God. Up to this day, all land on which the foot of man has trodden has needed labor and care. And even so among men, the need of gracious tillage is universal! Jesus says to all of us, “You must be born-again.” Unless God the Holy Spirit breaks up the heart with the plow of the law and sows it with the seed of the gospel, not a single ear of holiness will any of us produce, even though we may be children of godly parents and may be regarded as excellent moral people by those with whom we live!

Yes, and the plow is needed not only to produce that which is good, but to destroy that which is evil! There are diseases which, in the course of ages, wear themselves out and do not appear again among men. And there may be forms of vice which, under changed circumstances, do not so much abound as they used to do—but human nature will always remain the same and, therefore, there will always be plentiful crops of the weeds of sin in man’s fields—and nothing can keep these under but spiritual husbandry carried on by the Spirit of God. You cannot destroy weeds by exhortations, nor can you tear out the roots of sin from the soul by moral persuasion. Something sharper and more effectual must be brought to bear upon them. God must put His own right hand to the plow, or the hemlock of sin will never give place to the corn of holiness! Good is never spontaneous in unrenewed humanity! And evil is never cut up till the plow of almighty grace is driven through it.

The text leads our thoughts in this direction and gives us practical guidance through asking the simple question, “Does the plowman plow all day to sow?” *This question may be answered in the affirmative, “Yes, in the proper season he does plow all day to sow.”* And, secondly, *this text may more properly be answered in the negative, “No, the plowman does not plow every day to sow—he has other work to do according to the season.”* Our text may be—

I. ANSWERED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE—“Yes, the plowman does plow all day to sow.” When it is plowing time, he keeps at it till his work is done. If it requires one day, or two days, or 20 days to finish his fields, he continues at his task while the weather permits. The perseverance of the plowman is instructive and it teaches us a double lesson. When the Lord comes to plow the heart of man, He plows all day—herein is His patience. And, secondly, so ought the Lord’s servants to labor all day with men’s hearts—herein is our perseverance.

“Does the plowman plow all day?” *So does God plow the heart of man, and herein is His patience.* The team was in the field, in the case of some of us, very early in the morning, for our first recollections have to do with conscience and the furrows of pain which it made in our youthful mind. When we were little children, we woke in the night under a sense of sin. Our father’s teaching and our mother’s prayers made deep and painful impressions upon us—and though we did not then yield our hearts to God, we were greatly stirred and all indifference to religion was made impossible. When we were boys at school, the reading of a chapter in the Word of God, or the death of a playmate, or an address at a Bible class, or a solemn sermon so affected us that we were uneasy for weeks! The strivings of the Spirit of God within urged us to think of higher and better things. Though we quenched the Spirit. Though we stifled conviction, yet we bore the marks of the plowshare—furrows were made in the soul and certain foul weeds of evil were cut up by the roots, although no seed of grace was as yet sown in our hearts. Some have continued in this state for many years—plowed, but not sown. But, blessed be God, it was not so with others of us, for we had not left boyhood before the good seed of the gospel fell upon our heart! Alas, there are many who do not thus yield to grace, and with them the plowman plows all day to sow. I have seen the young man coming to London in his youth, yielding to its temptations, drinking in its poisoned sweets, violating his conscience and yet continuing unhappy in it all—fearful, unrestful, stirred about even as the soil is agitated by the plow! In how many cases has this kind of work gone on for years and all to no avail? Ah, and I have known the man come to middle life and still he has not received the good seed, neither has the ground of his hard heart been thoroughly broken up! He has gone on in business without God—day after day he has risen and gone to bed again with no more religion than his horses—and yet all this while there have been ringing in his ears warnings of judgment to come and chidings of conscience so that he has not been at peace. After a powerful sermon he has not enjoyed his meals, or been able to sleep, for he has asked himself, “What shall I do in the end thereof?” The plowman has plowed all day, till the evening shadows have lengthened and the day has faded to a close. What a mercy it is when the furrows are at last made ready and the good seed is cast in—to be received, nurtured and multiplied a hundredfold!

It is mournful to remember that we have seen this plowing continue till the sun has touched the horizon and the night dews have begun to fall. Even then the long-suffering God has followed up His work—plowing, plowing, plowing, plowing till darkness ended all! Do I address any aged ones whose lease must soon run out? I would affectionately beseech them to consider their position. What? Three score years old and yet unsaved? Forty years did God allow the manners of Israel in the wilderness, but He has borne with you for 60 years! Seventy years old and yet unregenerated? Ah, my friend, you will have but little time in which to serve your Savior before you go to heaven. But will you go there at all? Is it not growing dreadfully likely that you will die in your sins and perish forever? How happy are those who are brought to Christ in early life! But still remember—

***“While the lamp continues to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.”***

It is late, it is very late, but it is not too late. The plowman plows all day and the Lord waits that He may be gracious to you. I have seen many aged persons converted and, therefore, I would encourage other old folks to believe in Jesus. I once read a sermon in which a minister asserted that he had seldom known any converted who were over 40 years of age if they had been hearers of the gospel all their lives. There is certainly much need to caution those who are guilty of delay, but there must be no manufacturing of facts! Whatever that minister might think, or even observe, my own observation leads me to believe that about as many people are converted to God at one age as at another, taking into consideration the fact that the young are much more numerous than the old. It is a dreadful thing to have remained an unbeliever all these years, but yet the grace of God does not stop short at a certain age—those who enter the vineyard at the 11th hour shall have their penny and grace shall be glorified in the old as well as in the young! Come along, old friend, Jesus Christ invites you to come to Him even now, though you have stayed away so long! You have been a sadly tough piece of ground—and the plowman has plowed all day—but if at last the sods are turned and the heart is lying in ridges, there is hope for you yet!

“Does the plowman plow all day?” I answer—Yes, however long the day may be, God, in mercy still plows! He is long-suffering, full of tenderness, mercy and grace. Do not spurn such patience, but yield to the Lord who has acted towards you with so much gentle love!

The text, however, not only sets forth patience on God’s part, but it teaches *perseverance on our part*. “Does the plowman plow all day?” Yes, He does. Then if I am seeking Christ, ought I to be discouraged because I do not immediately find Him? The promise is, “He that asks, receives, and he that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks, it shall be opened.” There may be reasons why the door is not opened at our first knock. What then? “Does the plowman plow all day?” Then I will knock all day! It may be at the first seeking I may not find—what then? “Does the

plowman plow all day?” Then I will seek all day. It may happen that at my first asking I shall not receive—what then? “Does the plowman plow all day?” Then will I ask all day. Friends, if you have begun to seek the Lord, the short way is, “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Do that at once! In the name of God, do it at once and you are saved at once! May the Spirit of God bring you to faith in Jesus—and you are at once in the kingdom of Christ! But if, perhaps, in seeking the Lord, you are ignorant of this, or do not see your way, never give up seeking! Get to the foot of the cross, lay hold of it and cry, “If I perish, I will perish here! Lord, I come to You in Jesus Christ for mercy, but if You are not pleased to look at me immediately and forgive my sins, I will cry to You till You do.” When God’s Holy Spirit brings a man to downright earnest prayer, which will not take a denial, he is not far from peace! Careless indifference and shilly-shallying with God hold men in bondage. They find peace when their hearts are awakened to strong resolve to seek until they find! I like to see men search the Scriptures till they learn the way of salvation and hear the gospel till their souls live by it! If they are resolved to drive the plow through doubts, fears and difficulties, till they come to salvation, they shall soon come to it by the grace of God!

The same is true in seeking the salvation of others. “Does the plowman plow all day?” Yes, when it is plowing time. Then, so will I work on, and on, and on. I will pray and preach, or pray and teach, however long the day may be that God shall appoint me, for—

**“Tis all my business here below
The precious gospel seed to sow.”**

Brother worker, are you getting a little weary? Never mind, wake yourself and plow on for the love of Jesus and dying men! Our day of work has in it only the appointed hours—and while they last, let us fulfill our task. Plowing is hard work, but as there will be no harvest without it, let us put forth all our strength and never flag till we have performed our Lord’s will and His Holy Spirit has worked conviction in men’s souls! Some soils are very stiff and cling together and the labor is heartbreaking. Others are like the unclaimed waste, full of roots and tangled bramble—they need a steam plow and we must pray the Lord to make us such, for we cannot leave them untilled and, therefore, we must put forth more strength than the labor may be done.

I heard some time ago of a minister who called to see a poor man who was dying, but he was not able to gain admittance. He called the next morning and some idle excuse was made so that he could not see him. He called again the next morning, but he was still refused. He went on till he called 20 times in vain, but on the 21st occasion he was permitted to see the sufferer and, by God’s grace, he saved a soul from death! “Why do you tell your child a thing 20 times?” asked someone of a mother. “Because,” she said, “I find 19 times is not enough.” Now, when a soul is to be plowed, it may so happen that hundreds of furrows will not do it. What then? Why, plow all day till the work is done! Whether you are

ministers, missionaries, teachers, or private soul-winners, never grow weary, for your work is noble and the reward of it is infinite! The grace of God is seen in our being permitted to engage in such holy service—it is greatly magnified in sustaining us in it and it will be pre-eminently conspicuous in enabling us to hold out till we can say, “I have finished the work which You gave me to do.”

We prize that which costs us labor and service—and we shall set all the higher value upon the saved ones when the Lord grants them to our efforts! It is good for us to learn the value of our sheaves by going forth weeping to the sowing. When you think of the plowman’s plowing all day, be moved to plod on in earnest efforts to win souls. Seek—

***“With cries, entreaties, tears to save
And snatch them from the fiery wave.”***

Does the plowman plow all day for a little bit of oats or barley, and will not you plow all day for souls that shall live forever, if saved, to adore the grace of God, or shall live forever, if unsaved, in outer darkness and woe? Oh, by the terrors of the wrath to come and the glory that is to be revealed, gird up your loins and plow all day!

I would beg all the members of our churches to keep their hands on the gospel plow and their eyes straight before them. “Does the plowman plow all day?” Let Christians do the same! Start close to the hedge and go right down to the bottom of the field. Plow as close to the ditch as you can and leave small headlands. What though there are fallen women, thieves and drunks in the slums around you, do not neglect any of them! For if you leave a stretch of land to the weeds, they will soon spread among the wheat. When you have gone right to the end of the field once, what shall you do next? Why, just turn around and make for the place you started from! And when you have thus been up and down, what next? Why, up and down again! And what next? Why, up and down again! You have visited that district with tracts—do it again—fifty-two times in the year multiply your furrows! We must learn how to continue in well-doing. Your eternal destiny is to go on doing good forever and ever—and it is well to go through a rehearsal here. So just plow on, plow on and look for results as the reward of continued perseverance! Plowing is not done with a skip and a jump—the plowman plows all day. Dash and flash are all very fine in some things, but not in plowing! There the work must be steady, persistent, regular. Certain persons soon give it up—it wears out their gloves, blisters their soft hands, tires their bones and makes them eat their bread rather more in the sweat of their face than they care for! Those whom the Lord fills with His grace will keep to their plowing year after year, and verily I say unto you, they shall have their reward. “Does the plowman plow all day?” Then let us do the same, being assured that one day every hill and valley shall be tilled and sown—and every desert and wilderness shall yield a harvest for our Lord—and the angel reapers shall descend and the shouts of the harvest home shall fill both earth and Heaven! But, now, somewhat briefly—

II. THE TEXT MAY BE ANSWERED IN THE NEGATIVE. “Does the plowman plow all day to sow?” No, he does not always plow. After he has plowed, he breaks the clods, sows, reaps and threshes. In the chapter before us you will see that other works of husbandry are mentioned. The plowman has many other things to do beside plowing. There is an advance in what he does—this teaches us that there is the same on God’s part and should be the same on ours.

First, *on God’s part there is an advance in what He does.* “Does the plowman plow all day?” No, he goes forward to other matters. It may be that in the case of some of you, the Lord has been using certain painful agencies to plow you. You are feeling the terrors of the law, the bitterness of sin, the holiness of God, the weakness of the flesh and the shadow of the wrath to come. Is this going to last forever? Will it continue till the spirit fails and the soul expires? Listen—“Does the plowman plow all day?” No, he is preparing for something else—he plows to sow. Thus does the Lord deal with you! Therefore be of good courage, there is an end to the wounding and slaying—and better things are in store for you. You are poor and needy and you seek water, but there is none and your tongue fails for thirst. But the Lord will hear you and deliver you! He will not contend forever, neither will He always be angry. He will turn again and He will have compassion upon us. He will not always make furrows by His chiding. He will come and cast in the precious corn of consolation and water it with the dews of heaven and smile upon it with the sunlight of His grace—and there shall soon be in you, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear—and in due season you shall joy as with the joy of harvest! O you who are sorely wounded in the place of dragons, I hear you cry! Does God always send terror and conviction of sin? Listen to this—“If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.” And what is the call of God to the willing and obedient but this, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”? You shall be saved now, find peace now if you will have done with yourself and all looking to your own good works to save you—and will turn to Him who paid the ransom for you upon the cross! The Lord is gentle and tender, and full of compassion. He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever.

Many of your doubts and fears come from unbelief, or of Satan, or of the flesh—and are not of God at all! Blame Him not for what He does not send and does not wish you to suffer! His mind is for your peace, not for your distress, for thus He speaks, “comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.” “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.” He has smitten, but He will smile! He has wounded, but He will heal! He has slain, but He will make alive! Therefore turn unto Him at once and receive comfort at His hands. The plowman does not plow forever, else would he reap no

harvest. And God is not always breaking hearts— He also draws near on heart-healing errands!

You see, then, that the great husbandman advances from painful agencies, and I want you to mark that He goes on to *productive work* in the hearts of His people. He will take away the furrows, you shall not see them, for the corn will cover them with beauty. As she that was in travail remembers no more her sorrow for joy that a man is born into the world, so shall you, who are under the legal rod, remember no more the misery of conviction, for God will sow you with grace, and make your soul, even your poor, barren soul, to bring forth fruit unto His praise and glory! “Oh,” says one, “I wish that would come true to me.” It will. “Does the plowman plow all day to sow?” You expect, by-and-by, to see plowed fields clothed with springing corn—and you may look to see repentant hearts gladdened with forgiveness! Therefore, be of good courage.

You shall advance, also, to a *joyful experience*. See that plowman? He whistles as he plows. He does not own much of this world’s goods, but yet he is merry! He looks forward to the day when he will be on the top of the big wagon, joining in the shout of the harvest home—and so he plows in hope, expecting a crop. And, dear soul, God will yet joy and rejoice over you when you believe in Jesus Christ and you, too, shall be full of joy! Be of good cheer, the better portion is yet to come! Press forward to it. gospel sorrowing leads on to gospel hoping, believing, rejoicing—and the rejoicing knows no end! God will not chasten all day, but He will lead you on from strength to strength, from glory unto glory, till you shall be like He! This, then, is the advance that there is in God’s work among men, from painful agencies to productive work and joyful experience!

But what if the plowing should never lead to sowing? What if you should be disturbed in conscience and should go on to resist it all? Then God will make another advance, but it will be to put up the plow and to command the clouds that they rain no rain upon the land—and then its end is to be burned. Oh, man, there is nothing more awful than for your soul to be left to go out of cultivation—God Himself giving you up! Surely that is hell. He that is unholy will be unholy still. The law of fixed character will operate eternally and no hand of the merciful one shall come near to till the soul again! What worse than this can happen?

We conclude by saying that *this advance is a lesson to us*, for we, too, are to go forward. “Does the plowman plow all day?” No, he plows to sow, and in due time he sows. Some churches seem to think that all they have to do is to plow—at least all they attempt is a kind of scratching of the soil and talking of what they are going to do. It is fine talk, certainly, but does the plowman plow all day? You may draw up a large program and promise great things, but pray do not stop there! Don’t be making furrows all day—get to your sowing! I fancy that those who promise most, perform the least. Men who do much in the world have no program at first—their course works itself out by its own inner force by the grace of God—they do not propose, but perform! They do not plow all day to sow,

but they are like our Lord's servant in the parable, of whom He says, "The sower went forth to sow."

Let the ministers of Christ also follow the rule of advance. *Let us go from preaching the law to preaching the gospel.* "Does the plowman plow all day?" He does plow—he would not sow in hope if he had not first prepared the ground. Robbie Flockart, who preached for years in the Edinboro streets, says, "It is in vain to sew with the silk thread of the gospel unless you use the sharp needle of the law." Some of my brothers do not care to preach eternal wrath and its terrors. This is a cruel mercy, for they ruin souls by hiding from them their ruin! If they need try to sew without a needle, I cannot help it, but I do not mean to be so foolish myself! My needle may be old-fashioned, but it is sharp and when it carries with it the silken thread of the gospel, I am sure good work is done by it! You cannot get a harvest if you are afraid of disturbing the soil, nor can you save souls if you never warn them of hell fire. We must tell the sinner what God has revealed about sin, righteousness and judgment to come. Still, brothers, we must not plow all day. No, no! The preaching of the law is only preparatory to the preaching of the gospel! The stress of our business lies in proclaiming glad tidings. We are not followers of John the Baptist, but of Jesus Christ! We are not rugged prophets of woe, but joyful heralds of grace. Be not satisfied with revival services and stirring appeals, but preach the doctrines of grace so as to bring out the full compass of covenant truth. Plowing has had its turn, now for planting and watering! Reproof may now give place to consolation. We are first to make disciples of men and then to teach them to observe all things whatever Jesus has commanded us. We must pass on from the rudiments to the higher truths of God, from laying foundations to further building!

And now, another lesson to those of you who are as yet hearers and nothing more. I want you to go from plowing to something better, namely, *from hearing and fearing to believing.* How many years some of you have been hearing the gospel! Do you mean to continue in that state forever? Will you never believe in Him of whom you hear so much? You have been stirred up a good deal—the other night you went home almost brokenhearted! I should think you are plowed enough by this time, and yet you have not received the seed of eternal life, for you have not believed in the Lord Jesus! It is dreadful to be always on the brink of everlasting life and yet never to be alive. It will be an awful thing to be almost in heaven and yet forever shut out! It is a wretched thing to rush into a railway station just in time to see the train steaming out—I had much rather be half an hour behind time! To lose a train by half a second is most annoying. Alas, if you go on as you have done for years, you will have your hand on the latch of heaven and yet be shut out! You will be within a hair's breadth of glory and yet be covered with eternal shame! Oh, beware of being so near to the kingdom of God and yet lost—almost, but not altogether saved! God grant that you may not be among

those who are plowed and plowed, and plowed, and yet never sown! It will be of no avail at the last to cry, "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in Your presence and You have taught in our streets. We had a seat at the chapel. We attended the services on weeknights as well as on Sundays! We went to prayer meetings, we joined a Bible class, we distributed tracts, we subscribed our guinea to the funds! We gave up every open sin, we used a form of prayer and read a chapter of the Bible every day." All these things may be done and yet there may be no saving faith in the Lord Jesus! Take heed lest your Lord should answer, "With all this, your heart never came to Me. Therefore, depart from Me! I never knew you." If Jesus once knows a man, He always knows him. He can never say to me, "I never knew you," for He has known me as His poor dependent, a beggar for years at His door! Some of you have been all that is good, except that you never came into contact with Christ, never trusted Him, never knew Him. Ah, me, how sad your state! Will it always be so?

Lastly, I would say to you who are being plowed and are agitated about your souls, go at once to the next stage of believing. Oh, if people did but know how simple a thing believing is, surely they would believe! Alas, they do not know it, and it becomes all the more difficult to them because in itself it is so easy! The difficulty of believing lies in there being no difficulty in it! "If the prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it?" Oh, yes, you would have done it and you would have thought it easy, too! But when he simply says, "Wash, and be clean," there is a difficulty with pride and self. If you can truly say that you are willing to abase your pride and do anything which the Lord bids you, then I pray you understand that there is no further preparation required—believe in Jesus at once! May the Holy Spirit make you sick of self and ready to accept the gospel! The word is near you, let it be believed! It is in your mouth, let it be swallowed! It is in your heart, let it be trusted! With your heart believe in Jesus and with your mouth make confession of Him and you shall be saved! A main part of faith lies in the giving up of all other confidences. Oh, give up at once every false hope! I tried once to show what faith was by quoting Dr. Watts' lines—

***"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall.
Be You my strength, and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."***

I tried to represent faith as falling into Christ's arms and I thought I made it so plain that the wayfaring man could not err therein. When I had finished preaching, a young man came to me and said, "But, sir, I cannot fall upon Christ's arms." I replied at once, "Tumble into them anyway you can! Faint away into Christ's arms, or die in Christ's arms, so long as you get there." Many talk of what they can do and what they cannot do, and I fear they miss the vital point. Faith is leaving off "can-ing" and "cannot-ing," and leaving it all to Christ, for He can do all things, though you can do nothing! "Does the plowman plow all day to

sow?” No, he makes progress and goes from plowing to sowing. Go, and do you likewise—sow unto the Spirit the precious seed of faith in Christ—and the Lord will give you a joyous harvest!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 10:16-33.**

Verses 16-25. *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speaks, but the Spirit of Your Father which speaks in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And you shall be hated of all men for My name's sake; but he that endures to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another: for verily I say unto you, you shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man is come. The disciple is not above his master, nor his servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he is as his master, and the servant as his lord. It is more than enough, for the disciple might expect to fare worse than his master, and the servant to have less comfort than the lord. So it is in worldly things—that our Lord and Master has such fellowship with His people that He does not put it so, but He says, “It is enough for the disciple that he is as his master, and the servant as his Lord.”*

25. *If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?* But they cannot call them anymore or any worse. They have given our Master the blackest of all the epithet and any hard and opprobrious titles that can ever be applied to us must fall short of these which were applied to Him. Surely we ought not to wince—not for a single moment!

26. *Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.* They may cover your name and character with temporary dishonor, but the covering will soon break off. Like fire hidden under autumn leaves, it will burn up, by-and-by, and there will be a resurrection of reputations, as well as of persons! And what a wondrous resurrection that will be for those who are cast out as the offscouring of all things, when they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father!

27. *What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.* There is a secret learning, but there must be a public teaching. Christ takes us aside to reveal Himself, that afterwards we may boldly go forth to others and tell them what we have learned in private. Oh, child of God, if you have a

sweet morsel in the chamber by yourself, do not be so selfish as to keep it to yourself! Go and tell your brothers and sisters, and your house, and of the same place, the things which you have learned. If any of you have had a very choice experience, and a more than usual manifestation of divine love, be sure to let others be enriched with your riches. Have you found honey? Eat it not all yourself, but, like Samson, when he found it in the carcass of the lion, go to father and mother, and friends with your hands full of the secret, and let them eat it also.

28. *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.* Oh, fearful destruction! This is what we may well fear—both body and soul to undergo everlasting ruin, broken in pieces and destroyed as to all excellency, happiness and peace. This we may fear.

29. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.* He rules over all things, the least as well as the greatest! We see His hand in the tempest and we look at the black wing of the storm and see that God rides it. But the wing of the tiny sparrows, so insignificant in value, is equally directed by His power and wisdom!

30. *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* Minute is the providence of God, taking care of you, even as to that part of your person which is not vital and without which you could still live on. “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” The tiniest and most insignificant benefits are all ordered by His eternal purpose.

31-33. *Fear you not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. Whoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men—*And you see from the connection, that here the denying means not confessing. “Whoever shall deny Me before men.”

33. *Him will I also deny before My Father who is in heaven.* The attempt, therefore, to avoid all publicity in religion—to endeavor to slink into Heaven by the back gate—to somehow or other find an underground road to salvation, is a futile attempt! Christ requires that we should acknowledge Him, seeing that He so graciously acknowledges us. He puts it as a solemn command—and I would press it upon the conscience of any Believer here who has never confessed his faith. You miss, at any rate, the promise here—but you miss some others besides. You are walking in the path of disobedience. You are, to some extent, guilty of putting Christ to shame, for if others see that you are ashamed of Him, they conclude that there is something to be ashamed of in Him. Your practice dishonors Him. Why should you hold back? Are you not going to take your place among His people? You tell me that they have many faults. Have they more than you? If you never join a church till you find a perfect one, you will never join one this side of Heaven! And if the church were perfect when you joined it, it would certainly cease to be so then—for you would bring your shortcomings and imperfections into it! I have

lived among the people of God now these many years and I, as pastor of this church, have had to mourn over many and many for its faults, but still, there is no people like God's people, and of His house I will say—

***“Here my best friends—my kindred—dwell.
Here God my Savior reigns!”***

Some of the best and noblest spirits that ever lived have not been ashamed to associate with their fellow Christians, though they perceived their errors. They have rather cast in their lot with them, poor and despised as they were, and have accounted it even their honor if they might but be numbered with the redeemed among men.

34. *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.* The ultimate result of Christ's mission will be peace. Swords shall be broken into plowshares, and the spears into pruning hooks, but on the way to peace there will be war. On the way to universal peace there will be a general confusion. When true religion comes into a man's heart, it at once makes him a warrior. He begins to contend against evil—to contend against contention. He fights for peace, though it may seem strange that it should be so.

35, 36. *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.* They will drive us back when they perceive that our face is set towards heaven. When you see a fish swimming with the stream, it is almost always a dead one. The living fish goes *against* the stream—and the true child of God has to go against the current of mankind, and oftentimes the hardest push in life is to go against father, mother, brother, sister, for Christ's sake and the gospel.

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GROWTH IN FAITH

NO. 3384

A SERMON

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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*“The apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.”
Luke 17:5.*

THE *apostles* said this. I have sometimes thought that Paul’s speech at Lystra, when he forbade the multitude to worship him and told the people that he was a man of like passions with themselves, has need to be repeated in the ears of many modern Christians, for there is a tendency in the Christian church to set up the apostles and other eminent saints upon a platform high above the level of ordinary humanity! I do not say to worship them, but rather to hold them in extraordinary esteem than to regard them as models for imitation. Brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ would have us to know that we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. He would have us be certain that He, Himself, was tempted in all points like as we are. With equal certainty would He have us to know that the chosen twelve, the leaders of His host, who went forth from Him, were men of like passions with ourselves. We are not to look upon them as though they were unapproachable heroes, a sort of divine character, or as though they were free from our infirmities and our troubles. They were as we are—and if they excelled us it was by divine strength, alone, by strength which we also may receive—by grace which is as free to us as it was to them. If they were here, they would still have to struggle with unbelief and, conscious of their unbelief, would say again, “Lord, increase our faith.”

The apostles said it and the apostles *said it to Jesus*. They went to the Strong for strength! It is idle to go elsewhere. In vain would they have said it to one another; in vain would they have searched the whole world to find some eminent saint to whom to address the petition! They would have been like those foolish virgins who said to the wise, “Give us of your oil,” and they would have had the same answer, “Not so, lest there be not enough for you and for us.” The virgins went to those that sold and bought for themselves. The apostles went to Christ, the lawgiver, the author and finisher of their faith and, lifting up their hearts to Him in the prayer, “Lord, increase our faith,” they, before long, gained a comfortable answer and became strong in faith, giving glory to God!

Now, I shall need your attention at this time to five or six observations about *faith as a growing thing*. The first observation is this—

I. THE TEXT THROWS A LITTLE LIGHT UPON WHAT FAITH IS.

This is not altogether a dark subject, but still it is one upon which there has been a great deal of controversy. You are aware, perhaps, that in the first flush of the Reformation it was asserted by most divines that saving faith was full assurance, or, at the least, that full assurance of salvation and of a personal interest in Christ entered into the essence of saving faith—and this has been maintained by a very large number of divines and is *still maintained* by many Christians that to *personally* believe that Christ died for *me* is saving faith.

Now, we believe this to be an error. We prize full assurance beyond all price. We count it to be a gem beyond all earthly values, but we think it is a distressing doctrine to some of the weak ones of the flock to say that full assurance is necessary to salvation! We believe it to be necessary to deep joy, necessary to edification, necessary to usefulness—but necessary to salvation we do not believe it to be! We believe there are thousands on the Rock of Ages who sometimes fear they are not there—and tens of thousands who will enter heaven whose faith never reached beyond the *simple reliance upon Christ*—which we hold to be the essence of saving faith.

The persuasion that Christ died for *me* comes after the exercise of faith and is an outgrowth of that faith. It is faith in full bloom, but it is not necessarily the essence of faith in Christ. Some of those who teach that to believe that Christ died for me is faith, also teach at the same time that Christ died for everyone! Now, it will strike your mind at once that this kind of faith which they teach is nothing but the belief of a very simple truism, for if He died for everyone, then He must have died for me—and my believing that he died for me may, as far as I can see, be a simple intellectual operation—having nothing to do with the heart—and certainly not requiring the assistance of the Holy Spirit, for anyone can believe that since as long as Christ died for everyone, he died for me! Faith of that sort is a very simple thing and although every Christian is also to perceive that Christ died for him, finally, yet if you *begin* with that, you begin at the wrong end and you may be guilty of presumption instead of exercising the faith of God's elect!

What, then, is the essence of saving faith? It is *this—trust in Christ*—dependence, reliance upon Him. It is a belief that Jesus Christ is the appointed Savior of the world. That He is also the Atonement for sin. But it is more than that—it is a trusting in the work of Christ to save you. As to whether Christ has died for you in particular or not, that you shall find out, by-and-by, but faith is coming empty-handed and accepting Christ's fullness; to come naked and take His righteousness to be your glorious dress. To go, vile, to the fountain which He has filled with blood, to be

washed therein—in fact, to have done with all self-confidence and to put your whole reliance in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever has this is saved—whatever else he has not, he is saved! And neither death nor Hell shall ever destroy a man who in simple, honest confidence depends on what Christ has done for the salvation of sinners. If you lay hold upon Christ to be all in all to you and if you say, “Nothing but Jesus do I know—what He has done is all my rest and all my rejoicing,” then you have God’s promise for it, “He that believes on Him has everlasting life.” And you have it and you, therefore, shall never perish!

This, then, is saving faith, and this is the very soul, and essence, and substance of it! It is not, in itself, full assurance, but full assurance grows out of it. In the Helvetic Confession, faith is said to be “a most firm confidence in Christ”—another little mistake! A most firm confidence in Christ is faith, and is strong faith—but there may be faith where there is no “most firm confidence,” though this may be a very valuable evidence. Faith, however, may sometimes be mixed with unbelief. But where any amount of reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ exists, there is the evidence of *true faith*, although that reliance may not amount to a happy, comfortable, delightful persuasion of one’s own personal salvation. Yet it is faith, saving faith, and will save the soul of him who has it! Let that stand as the first observation.

II. Secondly, FAITH, WHEREVER IT IS, IS CAPABLE OF GROWTH.

The apostles said, “Lord, increase our faith.” Faith is the gift of God and it is given us by degrees. Faith is not always the same in degree, even at the time of the new birth. All children are not alike strong when they are born into the world. All faith is not alike strong at first. Sometimes those who are first at the beginning get last afterwards—and sometimes those who are last at the beginning outstrip the others! God does not give us all the same endowment of faith when we commence. Some of us are very tender, much troubled and find it very difficult to lay hold even upon the least of God’s promises. But the faith is all of the same nature—though it is not all of the same quantity and degree—it is all the same quality. A diamond is a diamond, though it is no bigger than a pea or the point of a pin—it is precisely of the same character as the Koh-I-Noor, though it is not so large. Also with faith. Faith as little as a grain of mustard seed is just as much the faith of God’s elect as if it were as large as a mountain! It is still living faith. It is the same, though smaller in amount. It is not always the same in quantity when we receive it, but after we have received it, it grows.

This is proved *by the later lives of the apostles themselves*. Take Simon Peter as an instance. At one time poor Simon, indeed—how he was to be pitied! He sat down to warm his hands at a fire in the High Priest’s palace and, as he was sitting there, a pert servant girl said to him, “You, al-

so, were with Him.” And so weak was Peter’s faith that he actually denied his Master! But not many weeks after that, the Holy Spirit descended on Simon Peter and now the same man who blushed with fear before the flippant maid is standing up before thousands in the streets of Jerusalem and delivering himself with the greatest bravery on behalf of the gospel of the crucified Christ! There is now no fear, or trembling, or unbelief in Simon Peter, for Pentecost has come and he is made strong and bold by the Holy Spirit! How wonderfully has he changed! You might almost have thought that there were two Simon Peters, rather than one, so marvelously has he grown in faith and courage!

Further, that faith grows is very clear from the fact that there have been and are *thousands of other persons* who have evidently had more faith than you or I ever had, and yet *who have found that their faith was not always strong*. Look at the martyrs—how they went to their deaths singing hymns on the road. How many of them triumphed in the amphitheater when wild beasts tore them to pieces! How they were thrown into damp, reeking dungeons, where they laid until the mildew grew upon them and there they were left to starve—and yet how there they died with joy in their hearts and songs on their lips! Those were men and women of faith whose shoelaces you and I are not worthy to unloose—they were far, far greater than we! And yet if you had spoken to any of them, they would have said that they were no better than we are when they began, but that God had, by His grace, nurtured and tended their faith until it had become what it was. Do you know what this growth in faith is? We never become nursing fathers and mothers to any of our brothers and sisters or our hearers until we have this growth in faith. I bless God that I have seen many of you grow in faith—and my earnest prayer is that every one of you may grow to the full assurance of hope unto the end, so that I may have to say of you all, “Your faith grows exceedingly, and your love unto all the saints.” Yes, brothers and sisters, we do see faith grow in others quite as plainly as we have ever seen the shrubs and the plants growing in the field!

Moreover, *I think you and I are conscious that our own faith has grown*. I know mine has. I know it is weaker, sometimes, for we may grow backwards. Yet I am conscious, taking the run of the years, that my faith is stronger than it was.

I will tell you how faith grows. Sometimes it grows *in intensity*. You believe the same things, but you believe them more firmly. A child has a pearl in its hand. Yes, but now the child has grown up into a man and he has the same pearl, but how differently he holds it! When, as a little child, he held the pearl, then you might, perhaps, have taken it away from him. But now that he is a man, see how he doubles his fists and grasps the treasure! So it is with the man who grows in faith. He gets such a grip upon eternal truths of God that you cannot take them from

him! He has learned to stand firmly. He is not carried about by every wind of doctrine. He keeps the helm of his soul fixed right to the port where he is bound—let the wind blow and the storm howl and moan as it may!

Faith also grows not only in intensity but *in extent*, so that you believe more than you once did. At first we believe a few great truths and then knowledge comes to our assistance and instead of only three or four great majestic truths of God, we learn ten—and as we advance further we learn a hundred! Sometimes, however, we grieve to confess that as our faith grows in extent, it diminishes in intensity, which is a very poor gain. But if we believe more and believe all with the same intensity as we did at first, then is our faith growing, indeed, and we are advancing after a most healthy and happy fashion!

Faith *does* grow—we know it does—in these two respects, for we have, some of us, been conscious of the growth in ourselves. Beloved, *it would be a very strange thing if faith did not grow*. It was a great miracle when Joshua made the sun stand still because that day the sun was the only thing in the entire world that did stand still! Everything else was moving. It is part of God's law that every star shall revolve—that there shall be nothing inert. Even the great sun, itself, rolls round and is constantly going on its mighty way. The sun was the only thing that day that stood still and, therefore, it was, indeed, a miracle! Now, if faith did not grow, it would be the only thing in the Christian that stood still and did not grow—for everything else in the whole man certainly grows.

Does not Christ teach us this, again, by His talking of, first, the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear? At another time we are told that we are children and that we think as children, and speak as children—but that when we shall become men, we shall put away childish things. In other places something is said about little children, then about children, and then about young men and then about the fathers. I will not quote all the instances—they are too numerous—in which both by metaphor and by plain speech, we are taught in God's word that the whole Christian grows and, therefore his faith, which is as his right arm, must surely grow, too!

Faith, then, is a matter of growth. And now thirdly—

III. GROWTH OF FAITH IS VERY DESIRABLE. I said at the first that the very least faith is saving, but then it is not desirable that we should only have the very least faith. It is exceedingly desirable that we should get the greatest possible faith!

Growth in faith is desirable and it is so, first of all, *because unbelief is a very great sin* and where there is little faith there is evidently lurking unbelief and, consequently, sin—and no true Christian would like to be easy while he is daily committing sin. It is not possible for us to be weak

in faith without transgressing. Weak faith may bring us a blessing, but weakness in faith is an evil—and to indulge weakness in faith and not to struggle out of it would only be a willful increase of guilt!

Brothers and sisters, I do not think that we ever estimate aright what a bitter and an evil thing our unbelief is. It is a question, really, whether there is any other sin which makes so direct a stab at the truth of God as this does! It is a question whether there is any sin more defiling to us, or more dishonoring to God. Brothers and sisters, we ought to daily aspire to the highest faith in order that we may expel unbelief—and so be delivered from constant sin!

Growth in faith also *is necessary for our sanctification*. It is by faith that sin is kept down and that all our divine graces grow. Unless faith is vigorous, we cannot expect to be making progress towards perfection. Sanctification is a daily and unceasing thing. It is carried on in our thoughts and hearts by the Holy Spirit, but faith in the precious blood is the great means He uses for that sanctifying.

We overcome sin through the blood of the Lamb applied to us day by day by the hyssop of faith. Brothers and sisters, if you neglect your faith, you will soon find that, struggle as you will, to advance in other graces, your struggles will be all in vain. Faith, faith, faith—this is the reservoir and if this is not well filled, the pipes will soon run dry!

Again, growth in faith *is necessary to our comfort*. Little-Faith goes to heaven, but his feet are sore on the road. He gets into the kingdom, but it is like a leaky vessel that has cast its precious cargo overboard and only just manages to get into port—it almost founders at the harbor's mouth. Little-Faith stumbles at a straw, but *Great-Faith* is very full of comfort. His mind is stored with grateful recollections of past mercies and his eyes beam with the fond anticipations of mercies yet to come—and so Great-Faith makes a heaven for itself here below—and goes towards the songs of glory rehearsing some of them on the road! Give me strong faith in God and I need ask for nothing else, for strong faith will turn poverty into wealth, weakness into strength, deep sorrows into lasting joys and monster difficulties into marvelous triumphs! More faith and you shall have plenteous comfort. It is always feast days and feast nights—it is a merry Christmas all the year round to a soul that has an unstaggering faith in the promises of the blessed God!

Strong faith is also *very necessary to our usefulness*. If we go to our work timidly, scarcely knowing our own interest in Christ, we may have a blessing, but it is not likely to be a great one. But when we know whom we have believed and have tasted and handled that the good Word of God is assuredly ours, then what we speak will come with grace and power—and under the varying unction of the Holy Spirit there are more probabilities of our success when we work with faith than when we work with doubting! Indeed, it is to faith that the blessing comes! I question wheth-

er our preaching in unbelief is of much service, but if we preach believing that souls will be saved, they *will be* saved! If we preach relying on God's promise that His word shall not return unto Him void, it *will not* return void, but there shall be fruit for the sower according to the assurance of our faithful God!

Brothers and sisters, I cannot now speak to you at length upon a topic so important, but I leave it with you, being assured that you cannot think too much of it. To have your faith growing exceedingly is desirable above all things. Seek for it, I pray you, and may the Lord grant it to you according to His fullness of mercy. But now let us ponder the joyous truth, that—

IV. GROWTH IN FAITH IS OBTAINABLE.

The apostles would not have asked for it, would not have been allowed to ask for it, if it had not been possible to receive it! They did ask for it, they did receive it and, therefore, you and I may ask for it and receive it. They exhort us to obtain it—at least they practically do so by their example—therefore we may obtain it. It is always a sad thing and greatly depressing to Christian growth when you picture in your mind's eye great and eminent saints as being far above anything that you can ever be. Brothers and sisters, let me beseech you, when you read the life of such a man as Dr. Payson, do not say, "He is such a spiritually-minded man! I shall never be like he!" You *shall* be like he by God's grace! When you turn to the life of Whitefield, young man who is about to enter the Christian ministry, let not the Evil Spirit say, "You cannot be so devoted and so seraphic in earnestness as he was." Why not? Where Whitefield fell short of being perfect, you fall short with him and you will be short, indeed—but why not be as he? The same Master who made him has also put you upon the wheel. The same Spirit who kept him fervent and faithful has promised to dwell in you! Why should not the same results be produced? I know that you sometimes look up to those who are more advanced in the divine Life than you are. You who have lately been united to the Christian church envy them—you do not think that you can ever reach their standard. Ah, beloved, be it your prayer to reach the best in the church, that if it is the Lord's will, you may feel yourselves to be less than they are and yet to be in reality far fuller of God's grace and love, and every good thing than any of them! Aspire, my brothers and sisters—do not despair, but *aspire* for God's glory, to prove to this wicked world that Christianity has not lost its vigor—that it is still possible for us to be as simple-minded and as heroic as the apostles were. Aspire to what they obtained! Ask for an increase of faith, as they asked for it—and when you have it, be not content even with that, nor think that you cannot by any possibility be as full of faith as they were!

I know that the enemy will tell you that you are placed in a position where you cannot possibly be so full of divine grace. Tell the enemy that he is a liar from the beginning! You may be in a position where you cannot be extensively useful. You may be where you are neither called upon nor expected to do many of the works which others perform. But circles are admired and praised not because of their largeness, but their roundness! So you will have honor from God, not according to the size of your sphere, but according to the completeness with which you fill it, doing as unto the Lord who requires of you according to His will and through His grace. A nursery maid having the care of two or three children, teaching them the sweet story of the love of Christ and seeking to bring their hearts to Jesus may be more faithful than I am with a large congregation continually listening to me. She may do all her work—it will be hard for me to do all mine. You with a little shop and much labor to make both ends meet—and with a large family to bring up in the fear of God—may have more honor from the Master, at last, than many a man whose name is blazoned before the world!

It is not where you are, but *what* you are. And it is not how you are seen, but how you live in the sight of God. That is the thing that matters! Ah, dear friends, it is possible that in the sphere where you are, to excel as much in faith as Paul did when preaching at Athens! Or Peter, standing in the midst of Jerusalem before the Parthians, Medes and Elamites! Let nothing deter you. Believe that you would not be taught to pray, “Lord, increase our faith,” if God would not answer the prayer—and that He will answer it and give you the highest faith that ever man had—even you, so that on the sickbed, or in the midst of poverty you may be as illustrious an example of faith as the best known believer who has ever adorned the annals of the church. But to proceed—as this growth in faith is obtainable, so, in the next place—

V. THERE IS A PROPER MEANS FOR OBTAINING IT.

If I might advise you, the first means I would lay down for making faith grow would be that which the apostles adopted, namely, *prayer*. They said, “Lord, increase our faith.” Pray much that your faith may grow. Oh, I am afraid in this naughty age in which we are so busy with a thousand cares that we are only too deficient at the mercy seat and this accounts for the fact that there is so much superficial religion among us. If you would learn to believe God’s promises, go with the promises to God and see them in the light of His countenance! Plead them with solemn earnestness, not wavering before the mercy seat till you have a comfortable assurance that God will be to you what He has said. Let us have more prayer and there will be more faith!

Next to that, *search the Word of God more*. The more we are familiar with God’s inspired book, the more likely shall we be to believe it. If I want to believe a story which is current, I shall best strengthen my cre-

dence of its truthfulness by hearing it constantly repeated. When I begin to examine a doctrine and I see that the doctrine is clear, then I cannot help believing it. Now come to the Word of God, pure and unadulterated, and, as you read it, it will be its own witness. The glory which “gilds each sacred page, majestic like the sun,” will flash before your eyes and you will then marvel that you ever could have doubted it. And let me tell you—many a promise which you have passed over before, or thought it to be scarcely worth attention, will shine out in splendor and delight your eyes and enrapture your spirit! Oh, how dead is the Word of God at one time, to what it is at another! You shall read it in the dark without the help of the Holy Spirit and it shall be to you like Christ in the eyes of the unregenerate world—“without form and comeliness.” But at another time, when God shines upon it, you shall find it to be marrow and fatness to your soul and you will wonder that you have ever risen from perusing it, so delightful shall it be to your soul!

Search the word much! Seek to inquire into the facts and doctrines of the gospel. There are very few theological treatises issued now-a-days. You do not read theology. You do not care about it! I know what you read—three-volume novels and especially religious tales in magazines! I wish that we were rid of these religious tales. I like irreligious tales much better, for when they are downright irreligious, people will not read the trash—but when these tales are flavored with a little of the spice of godliness, they go down with them and their heads get stuffed up with the silly nonsense they read! And instead of being the better by what they read, they are rather the worse. I wish you would sit down and study some of the good old stuff which your grandmothers used to read. Some of those old men and women used to sit down and when they had put on their spectacles, would read through some treatise on the doctrines of the gospel. Those were the grand old women who, when the minister was unsound, soon let him know that they would hear no such old wives’ fables, but would only have good gospel truth! And their husbands were of the same sort—they read and searched for themselves. Now-a-days I believe that if a man has only a glib tongue, he may preach very much what he likes. There are hundreds of our hearers who today would go after a Calvinist or even a hyper-Calvinist and tomorrow would go and hear an Arminian—and it would all be good because of the garnishing and because of the little sprigs and flowers all over the dish! God deliver us from such religion as this and give us to know the truth of God by searching it out! Do, dear friends, search out the truth in God’s word. Seek to get a firm grip and deep knowledge of it. It would be well for half the Christians in England if they would learn the Assembly’s Catechism. They would get a world of knowledge even by that compendium, but getting the truth by the word is an even more profitable means of increasing our faith!

Let me say again that faith is very frequently helped to grow *by communion with the saints*. Those of you who are younger will often be helped by talking with the more mature and advanced in the Christian life. Yes, the sickbeds of those who are tried and afflicted are often a school in which young disciples may learn lessons in faith! Here you may be enriched with pearls and gems which can be bought in no other market. And suffering saints—men and women who have been in the furnace and have the smell of the fire upon them, who have become like silver purified seven times, who can bear their witness to help given in days of poverty and of deep sustaining grace in seasons of sore bodily and mental anguish—these can greatly enrich and, through what they shall give, your faith shall grow!

And your faith will also grow, no doubt, *when God treats you as He has treated them*, for, after all, other people's experience is not of half the value to us as is our own. It is when we feel ourselves in the pinch, when we begin to pass through the fire that we fly to the Eternal God and rejoice that "underneath are the everlasting arms." Ask for the sanctified use of affliction! Pray for the sanctified use of prosperity, too, and so by all providential means your faith will grow.

Remember, however, that the only real mode of growth in faith *is by the power of the Holy Spirit*. As I said at the commencement of this discourse, Peter's growth in faith came upon him at Pentecost. And it was the same with the others of the twelve—they became new men because the Spirit's power rested upon them. Beloved, if we have more of the power of the Spirit of God, more exercise of His power within us, our faith will increase!

Faith, then, is a growing thing. We ought to desire to have it grow. It can grow and I have told you some of the means by which it may grow. And now two or three minutes upon—

VI. THE WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN HINDER ITS GROWTH.

I say only two or three minutes, though it is a very large subject. You can very easily hinder your growth in faith. You can do it by neglecting faith, by letting your Bible grow dusty, by leaving a ministry which is edifying, by despising the Holy Spirit. You can do it by not exercising what you already have. You cannot lose your faith if it is true faith, but you can lose much of its comparative power by worldly-mindedness, by giving yourselves up to covetousness, by forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as is the manner of some—by falling into sin, by tampering with the flesh, by indulging in vanity—by anything which will grieve the Holy Spirit! You may also weaken your faith by dwelling far from the sun. Dwellers in lands of snow and ice soon grow cold, and so may it be with us by living far from God and the Sun of Righteousness. As by refraining from meat a man may soon grow weak, so by abstaining from spiritual food and soul nourishing, our faith will soon decay. As a long drought

quickly makes the flowers of the garden to droop their heads, so if there is a drought of divine influence upon you, very soon your faith will begin to wither. By living, however, close to God and simply looking up to Him for everything, your faith may continue to grow until it gets to be the full assurance of faith and, like Abraham, you are “strong in faith, giving glory to God.” And here I shall close by saying, let it be one of the resolute pursuits of our life, that being saved we may—

VII. SEEK AFTER THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF GRACE THAT IS OBTAINABLE.

I have heard of a good woman—a widow—who was once in great trouble when visited by her pastor, but on a second visit she was found to be very happy. “What has happened?” inquired her pastor. “What has made you so cheerful?” She said, “I have been reading that precious word, ‘Your Maker is your husband.’” “How has that comforted you?” he said. “Why,” she answered, “when my husband was alive, I always lived up to his income. But now that my Maker is my husband, I will try to live up to His income and oh, what a task I have got before me if I am to live up to the income of God that has no bounds and no limits, and knows of no such thing as exhaustion! If I may draw upon Him to the utmost extent of His income, how richly I may live!”

Well, now, let us adopt the good woman’s policy and try to live according to the income of our blessed husband, the Lord Jesus Christ! Then shall our faith grow exceedingly, and our love, and all our divine graces!

Now I am afraid there are some here who have no faith, who have never trusted Christ. Then, dear friends, it is our solemn duty to remind you, before we sit down, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*. You have come here, tonight, and I am glad you have—and some of you come often—and I am rejoiced. You are honest, sober, moral, amiable. This is all well, but you would like to please God, would you not? Well, but without faith it is impossible for you to please Him! You may do what you may, but without faith it is impossible to please God! God will never accept anything from any of us unless He sees the blood of His Son with it. If you do not go to Christ, it is no use going to the Father, for “no man comes to the Father,” says Christ, “but by Me.”

What? You have forgotten to trust in Jesus? You have thought that something else would do? You have been trying your fancied good works, prayers, and your feelings? Now, dear friends, remember what the apostle Paul did. He went round about for many years to establish his own righteousness, but as soon as he trusted in Christ, he said, “Those things which were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ: yes, doubtless, and I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.” Now, I will tell you. You may, perhaps, be a Churchman and you feel very pleased to think that you have been so regular in your

life. Or you may be a Dissenter and feel proud to think you are such a consistent Nonconformist. Now, if ever you are converted, these things which are gain to you *now*, you will count to be less than nothing! You, too, will count them to be loss as compared with Christ. Yes, and your prayers, your repentance, what you have given to charity and what you have done—this, and that, and the other—you will look upon them all as being less than nothing and take Christ to be everything to you! “What are you doing, now?” said a good old divine to a brother who was dying. He said, “I am doing, now, what I have done many times before in health—I am taking all my good works and all my bad works—indeed, they are so much alike that I can scarcely tell which is which—and I am tying them all in one bundle and throwing them overboard as fast as I can! And I am just clinging to Christ with all my heart and all my soul.” This is the only way of safety. None but Jesus! Nothing of yours—not one brass farthing—but Christ, Christ, Christ—Christ at the top and the bottom, at the beginning and the end, first, last and throughout! You must have nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ! And if you do this night depend upon Him, why, my dear friend, your sins are all forgiven! Just what Christ said to the poor grateful leper, I say to you in Christ’s name—if you really do depend upon Him—“Your faith has saved you. Go in peace!” Though your past life may have been ever so vile and you have come in here without God and without hope, yet if you now believe in Jesus Christ and rely alone upon Him, none of your sins shall be mentioned against you any more forever. “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud and, like a thick cloud, your transgressions.”

May you have faith given you tonight and then another day, after you have faith, may you pray, “Lord, increase my faith.” That is not your prayer tonight—be thankful if you have any faith at all! But you who have faith tonight, pray tonight, and pray always, “Lord increase our faith.”

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THE SAVIOR'S THIRST

NO. 3385

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1913.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst.”
John 19:28.*

THE early Christians were known to think and talk far more of our Savior than we do. Some of them were, perhaps, not quite so clear upon justification by faith as they ought to have been, but they were very clear about the merits of the precious blood. And if they did not always speak very clearly about the doctrines of grace, they spoke with wonderful power and savor about the “five” wounds—about the nail marks and the spear wound. I could wish that our religion would go back somewhat more to that personal apprehension of Christ than it does. By all means let us have dogmatic teaching, setting forth those most precious truths of God that are our consolation, but better than all is the person of Christ Himself—the way, the truth, and the life. We should do well if we more often stood in meditation at the foot of the cross and viewed His wounds, counted the precious drops as they fall and sought fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Some of those early saints wrote long treatises on the solitary wounds of Jesus—many of them passed whole days in contemplation of some minute part of His passion. We cannot imitate them in this respect—we have not the leisure. I am afraid we have not the mental application they possessed. Nevertheless, let us explore the sacred mystery as best we can. At this time would we get away to Calvary and there stand and hear our Redeemer crying, “I thirst,” as He bears for us the guilt of sin.

Very briefly we shall regard the text, first, as *our Savior’s cry, and as only such*. Secondly, we shall consider *its relationship to ourselves*. And thirdly, and sorrowfully, *its relation to ungodly man*. First, then, we will—

I. CONSIDER THIS CRY OF OUR SAVIOR—“I thirst.”

Is it not clear proof that He was certainly a man? Certain heretics sprang up in the early church who asserted that the body of our Lord was only a phantom—that as God, He was here, but as man He only exhibited Himself to the outward sense and did not actually exist in flesh and blood. But He thirsted. Now, a spirit has not thirst! A spirit neither eats nor drinks—it is immaterial and knows not the needs that belong to this poor flesh and blood! We may, therefore, rest quite sure that, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.”

No better proof could we have of the substantiality of His manhood than the cry, "I thirst." Herein, at all events, we can sympathize with Him. From the moment when He rose from the communion supper, saying, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom"—from that moment He had had no further refreshment, either of meat or of drink. Yet well He needed drink, for all through that long night in Gethsemane He sweated—we know what kind of sweat—as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground! Such toil as His might well have needed refreshment. Then He was hurried away to Caiaphas and afterwards to Pilate. He had to encounter the accusations of His enemies and a strong bridle He had to put upon Himself, that, like a sheep before her shearers, He might be dumb. There was a strain upon His system such as none of us ever have had to endure, or ever shall have—a strain such as we can never imagine—and yet not one morsel of bread, nor one drop of water crossed those blessed and parched lips! Well might He cry, "I thirst," when, after so many hours of wrestling with the powers of darkness, He was now about to die!

You remember, also, the peculiar way in which our Lord was put to death. The piercing of the hands and the feet was sure to bring on fever. Those members, though far remote from the vital parts, are yet full of the most delicate and tender nerves—and pain soon travels along them till the whole frame becomes hot with burning fever! Our Lord's own words in the 22nd Psalm will occur to you—"My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue cleaves to My jaws; and You have brought Me into the dust of death." Those of you who have been afflicted with fever far less serious than this, will recollect how it parched you like a potsherd and dried up all the juices of your system and all the moisture of your body like the parched fields of summer! You had, then, a thirst, indeed! But your Savior had a double cause for thirst—long fasting without food or drink and then the bitter pangs of death! Sympathize with Him then, beloved, and remember that all this was for you—and for you as His enemies—for you as if there were no others in the world! Though He suffered for all His elect, yet especially for each one of His people were the nails driven, for each one did He thirst and for each one did He take a draught of the vinegar and the gall. Come, then, and kiss those blessed lips and bow before your Savior in reverent praise!

Further, my brothers and sisters, we are quite certain that our Lord, in saying, "I thirst," must *have felt the extreme bitterness of thirst*. He was no complainer. You never heard a word come from His lips when it might have been withheld. He must have been driven to dire extremity, indeed, when He thus proclaimed to friends and foes that He was thirsting for a drop of water. Some have said that this cry, "I thirst," coming, as it does, after the far more bitter and awful cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" was an evidence of a turn in the Savior's conflict—that during all the first part of our Savior's suffering He was taken up with such anxious thought and with such internal anguish that He could not

think of the thirst, which, grievous as it was, was but a minor pain in comparison with what He felt when His Father in justice turned away His face from Him—and that now He begins to collect His thoughts for a while and is able to fight with His own personal bodily pains. It may be so. Possibly that cry was an indication that the battle had turned and that victory was coming to the suffering hero. But, ah, brothers and sisters, however there may have come a gleam of sunshine in this cry compared to the blacker darkness, you can never dream what a thirst that was that parched the Savior's mouth and lips! You will never feel such a thirst as He felt to its direst extent. Cold, hunger, nakedness and thirst may fall to your lot, but there was more of grief in His thirst than you can ever know! There was a bitterness here which my language cannot possibly bring out!

Another thought rises up to my mind—I will not mislead you here. I feel thankful to our Lord for saying, "I thirst!" Ah, brothers and sisters, sometimes when we are sorely afflicted, or have some little infirmity, perhaps not anything vital or mortal, though it pains us much, we complain, or at least we say, "I thirst." Now, are we wrong in so doing? Ought we to play the stoic? Ought we to be like the Indian at the stake who sings while he is roasting? Ought we to be like St. Lawrence on the gridiron? Is stoicism a part of Christianity? Oh, no! Jesus said, "I thirst," and herein He gave permission to all of you who are bowed down with your griefs and your sorrows to whisper them into the ears of those who watch by the bed, and to say, "I thirst." I daresay you have often felt ashamed of yourselves for this. You have said, "Now, if I had some huge trouble, or if the pangs I suffered were absolutely mortal, I could lean upon the Beloved's arm. But as for this ache, or this pain, it darts through my body and causes me much anguish, though it does not kill me." Well, but just as Jesus wept that He might let you weep on account of your sorrows and your griefs, so He says, "I thirst," that you might have permission patiently, as He did, to express your little complaints—that you might not think He sneers at you, or looks down upon you as though you were an alien—that you might know He sympathizes with you in it all!

He does not use language like that of Cassius when he laughed at Caesar because he was sick and said—

***"And when the fit was on him I did mark
How he did shake—'tis true this god did shake—
His coward lips did from their color fly!
And that same eye whose head does awe the world
Did lose its luster—I did hear him groan!
Yes, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
Mark him, and write his speeches in their books,
Alas, it cried, 'Give me some drink, Titinius,
As a sick girl.'"***

And why should it not? He was but a man. He was but "as a sick girl," and what is there in a sick girl to despise, after all? Jesus Christ said, "I thirst," and in this He says to every sick girl, and every sick child, and

every sick one throughout the world, "The Master, who is now in heaven, but who once suffered on earth, despises not the tears of the sufferers, but has pity on them on their beds of sickness."

Jesus said, "I thirst." As our Lord used these words, may I ask you for a minute to *contemplate it with wonder?* Who was this that said, "I thirst"? Know you not that it was He who balanced the clouds and who filled the channels of the mighty deep? He said, "I thirst," and yet in Him was a well of water springing up unto everlasting life! Yes, He who guided every river in its course and watered all the fields with grateful showers—He it was, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, before whom hell trembles and the earth is filled with dismay! He whom heaven adores and all eternity worships—He it was who said, "I thirst!" Matchless condescension—from the infinity of God to the weakness of a thirsting, dying man! And this, again I must remind you, was for you. He that suffered for you was no common mortal, no ordinary man, such as you are, but the perfect and ever blessed God, high above all principalities and powers and every name that is named! He it was who, with this condescending lowness of estate, stooped and cried, as you have done, "I thirst!"

Once more, in this cry of our Lord, "I thirst," *I think I see a trace of the atonement which He was then offering.* The pangs of Christ upon the cross are to be regarded as a substitution for the sins and sorrows of ungodly men—

***"He bore that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire."***

Now, brothers and sisters, a part of the punishment of the wicked in hell is the deprivation of every form of comfort. Man refused to obey His creator—the time will come when the creator will refuse to succor man! Man refused to minister to God—the time will come when God's creatures will not minister to man! Remember those solemn words of the Master when He said that the rich man was without a drop of water to cool his tongue and was tormented in the flame? And yet the water was withheld from coming near the sinner who had died in willful rebellion against God! Oh, my dear friends, if we had our due, we should have none of the comforts of life! The very air would refuse to yield us breath and bread, the staff of life, to yield us nourishment! Yes, we would find the whole creation in arms against us because we are up in arms against God! The time shall come when those who stand up against the Most High shall find no comfort left them—and no hope of comfort—everything that can make existence tolerable shall be withdrawn and everything that can make it intolerable shall be poured upon them! For upon the wicked, God shall rain fire and brimstone, and a horrid tempest—this shall be the portion of their cup!

Behold, then, when Emmanuel stood for us and suffered in our place, He, too, must thirst! He must be deprived of every comfort, stripped naked to the last rag and hung up on the cross as though earth rejected Him and heaven would not receive Him! Midway between the two worlds

He dies in the most abject poverty! And because of our sin, He cries, "I thirst!" Beloved, never seek for companionship with any who would ignore the miseries of the Lord, for, depend upon it, in that proportion they lessen the glory of the atonement. If it is but a light thing for the sinner to rebel against God, it was not a light thing for Christ to redeem him! It covered Christ with the greatest luster, for, after all, it stands out as one of His most resplendent works that He has redeemed us from going down into the pit, having found a ransom for us! By so much the greater the love, by so much the greater is the salvation. Think not lightly of sin and its punishment, lest you come to think lightly of Christ and what He suffered to redeem you from your guilt! The cry, "I thirst," is part of the substitutionary work which Christ performed when He thirsted, because, otherwise, sinners would have thirsted forever and have been denied all the pleasure, joy and peace of heaven.

The meditation upon this cry as proceeding from our Lord invites one more remark. Will it be straining the text too far if we say that underlying those words, "I thirst," *there is something more than a mere thirst for drink?* Once, when He sat upon the well of Samaria, He said to the poor harlot who met Him there, "Give Me a drink," and He got a drink from her—a drink that the world knew nothing about when she gave her heart to Him, obedient to His gospel. Christ is always thirsting after the salvation of precious souls and that cry on the cross that thrilled all who listened to it was the outburst of the great heart of Jesus Christ as He saw the multitude, and He cried unto His God, "I thirst." He thirsted to redeem mankind! He thirsted to accomplish the work of our salvation! This very day He still thirsts in that respect, as He is still willing to receive those who come to Him, still resolved that such as come shall never be cast out and still desirous that they may come! Oh, poor souls, you do not thirst for Christ, but you little know how He thirsts for you! There is love in His heart towards those who have no love to Him! Christ would not have you die. Christ would not have you cast into hell! Give yourselves up, then, to the gentle sway of Him who for your souls' good, said, "I thirst." Oh, I wish that all we who love Christ knew more of this hungering and thirsting after the redemption of our fellow men. May the Lord teach us to sympathize with them! If He wept for sinners, may our cheeks never be dry! He was in anguish for their souls, and we will not restrain our anguish because they will not be saved, but ignorantly, carelessly, or resolutely despise the gospel of Christ!

Thus much upon this point, so far as it concerns our Lord, Himself. Turn not away your eyes, but look and listen as He cries, "I thirst." Very briefly, now let us notice—

II. OUR RELATIONSHIP AND OUR BEARING TOWARDS THIS CRY.

I shall address myself on this head to the people of God. And the first remark is this—brothers and sisters, because Jesus Christ said, "I thirst," *you and I are delivered from that terrible thirst which once devoured us.* We were awakened by the Holy Spirit, some of us, years

ago, to perceive our danger. We had not known before what sin was—what a destroying fever it was. We had cherished it in our bosom, but when we began to discover our desperate position, we were compelled to thirst and cry for mercy. With some of us, our thirst was very great—we could scarcely sleep—and as for our meals, we left them untouched often in the agony of our despair. I do remember how my soul chose strangling rather than life! It seemed so hard to live under the frown of God, awakened to a sense of sin, but unable to get rid of the sin! Now at this moment that thirst has gone, for we have received the adoption, the salvation, the forgiveness! You came to Jesus as you were with all your thirst and you stooped down and drank of the crystal stream. And now you rejoice with unspeakable joy because your thirst is gone! Oh, clap your hands for very joy at the remembrance of it! Be humble that you should need His thirst to save you from thirst, but oh, be glad to think that the work is done and that you shall never thirst again as you did then, for, “he that drinks,” says Christ, “of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, for it shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” Your insatiable desires are stayed! The horseleech within you that cried, “Give, give,” at last is satisfied! The cravings of conscience that had been awakened by the love of God are satisfied! Now, oh, joy, your sorrow is over! Your peace, like a river has come, and your righteousness is like the waves of the sea! Live happily, live joyously! Tell others what Christ has done for you. Eat not your morsel alone, but publish to the world that through the thirst of a dying Savior you have ceased to thirst!

And as you have done with that first thirst of bitter agony, now seek to be filled with another thirst—a *thirst after more of Christ!* Oh, that sweet wine of His love is very thirst-creating—those who have once tasted it need more of it! Thirst after a closer walk with Him! Thirst to know more of Him! Thirst to be more like He! Thirst to understand more the mystery of His sufferings and to be more full of anticipation of His blessed advent—

“Nearer, my God, to Thee; nearer to Thee.”

Be this your cry. Open your mouth wide, for He will fill it. Enlarge your desires, for He will satisfy them all. Be eager after more of Christ! Hunger and thirst after more of righteousness. All your desires shall be supplied you. Do not, therefore, stint yourself by narrowing them. Oh, that you could ask more at His hands, for—

***“All your capacious powers can ask,
In Christ do richly meet.”***

Were your imagination to stretch her wings and soar ever so far beyond the narrow bounds of space, she would weary long before she reached the fullness of God which dwells bodily in our Lord Jesus Christ!

Let me also invite you to cultivate another thirst—a thirst like that which we read our Lord thirsted with—*for the conversion of our souls.* Give us but a score of men that hunger and thirst for the conversion of others and we shall see good work done! But oh, we are so cold, callous

and sleeping, though men are perishing every day! Behold the mass of people gathered in this Tabernacle! We can never all meet again. Some of us will probably be in eternity before another Sabbath shall have dawned—and of those who shall have departed this life, some will, perhaps, have gone down to the pit. And yet we have no tears for them! Oh, God, strike our hearts with a rod more powerful than that of Moses and fill our eyes with sympathetic tears! Think what it is that your own child could be lost, that your own relative could perish! Oh, wake yourselves up to passionate prayer, to longing desire and to constant effort—and never, from this moment on, cease to thirst with a passionate desire, which, like that of your Lord, shall fill you and compel you practically to say, in the industrious application of a spiritual life, “I thirst!”

My last point is a very heavy one. I could wish it has not to be delivered. It is addressed—

III. TO UNGODLY MEN AND WOMEN.

If the Lord Jesus Christ thirsted when He only carried the sins of others, what thirst will be upon you when God shall punish you for your own sins? Either ‘Christ must thirst for you, or you must thirst forever, and ever, and ever! There is but one alternative—justice must be vindicated through a substitute, or it must be glorified in your everlasting destruction! Think what it will be to have your sweet cup and your flowing bowl all put away from you, and not a drop of water to cool your tongue—to have your dainty meat and your gay festivals forever abolished—no light for your eyes, no joy for any one of the senses of your body and your souls made to suffer unutterable woe!

I shall not stay to picture, even in Christ’s own words, the agony of lost spirits. But I bid you keep this on your minds. If Christ, who was God’s Son, suffered so bitterly for sins that were not His own, how bitterly must you, who are not God’s sons, but God’s enemies, suffer for sins that *are* your own? And you must so suffer unless Christ, the substitute, stands for you! He was no substitute for all, but only for His own people. You say to me, “Did He stand for me?” I can tell you if you can answer this question, “Do you trust Jesus Christ? Will you now trust Him?” If so, a simple child-like faith in Jesus will bring you salvation! Now, remember, if you believe, all your sins are laid upon Christ and, therefore, they can never be laid upon you! If you believe, Christ was punished in your place and you can never be punished, because he was punished for you! Substitution—this is the groundwork of our confidence! Because He was accursed, we cannot be accursed, for, if we believe in Him, all that He suffered was for us—and we stand absolved before the judgment seat of Christ. The Lord give you this simple faith in the Redeemer this very night! And then He will see in you of the travail of His soul and the thirst of His great heart will be satisfied! The Lord bless you. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 51; 32; MATTHEW 26:59-68; LUKE 23.**

Let us read two Psalms of penitence. Repentance and faith go hand in hand all the way to heaven. Repenting and believing make up a large measure of the Christian life. First, let us read the 51st Psalm, penned by David after his great sin with Bathsheba, when, by the instrumentality of Nathan, he had been led to repentance. What if we have not fallen into any gross open sin? Yet, perhaps if we could see our hearts as God sees them, we should be as much ashamed as the Psalmist was when to the music of his sighs and groans, he poured out this Psalm.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness. According unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* What delicious words those are! “Your loving-kindness.” I have sometimes felt glad to be a Saxon, that I should speak a language that had such delightful words in it. “Loving-kindness”; “tender mercy.” Now, the eye that is quickest to see the tenderness of God is the eye of repentance, for the sinner who feels condemnation in his own heart looks so keenly after everything that may make for his comfort, and his eyes light on the tender mercies and loving-kindness of God. The prayer is for pardon—no, it is for purification, as well as pardon!

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* Take out this plague spot. I cannot bear it any longer. Oh, cleanse me from every trace of it, my God, I beseech You!

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me.* I tell it to You because it haunts me. It is always present to my mind. It seems painted on my eyeballs. I cannot but see it, turn whichever way I may.

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* He had sinned against his people, setting them an evil example—sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah—but he sees the whole evil concentrating itself, as it were, upon his God. He felt that the virus of the whole thing was that he had done dishonor to the name of the Most High, whose servant he was.

5-7. *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* “Behold,” he says, as if to go to the bottom of it, and to show that sin was not an accident with him, but that he, himself, was sinful. It was a grand faith—it was an Abrahamic faith—that when a man had such a sense of sin as David had, he at the same time could believe in the cleansing power of the blood! For you who do not know what sin is, and who have never groaned beneath the burden, to talk about the pardoning blood—oh, it is easy enough and there is nothing in it! But for a soul that knows the guilt and feels it and is burdened by it, still to believe in the power of the

atonement sacrifice—this is faith indeed! David had seen the priest take the bunch of hyssop and dip it in the warm blood of the goat or the bullock, and then sprinkle it—and he says, “Lord, do the same with me—with that richer blood of divine atonement!” That blood which, in David’s day, was yet to be shed! “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

8-10. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* Lord, the mischief lies deep! Strike at the root of it; I would not have You to wash out only a spot, but go to my heart and renew that, that I may sin no more.

11-14. *Cast me not away from Your presence and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways: and sinners shall be converted unto You. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* In that verse there is one of the surest marks of David’s sincere repentance, namely, that he calls his sin by its right name—“blood-guiltiness.” I have no doubt that he had said to himself that Uriah died by accident, and pleaded very much to excuse and extenuate his guilt. But now he outs with it. That is the word—“blood-guiltiness.” It is no use trying to apologize and excuse yourselves before God. As long as that is done, no pardon will ever be applied to the conscience. But when the sin is seen in its true colors, then shall those colors be washed away and we shall be whiter than snow. “Then will I teach transgressors Your ways.” He felt that if God would pardon him, he would be the man to tell of God’s way of mercy to others. And I trust, dear friends, if we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, our witness will never be silent about the goodness and the mercy of the Lord. If you have never spoken to others, begin tonight! Teach others the ways of God to you!

15-19. *O Lord open You my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice, otherwise would I give it. You delight not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* Sure to be good times when men are under a sense of pardoned sin. None serve Him so well as those whose sins are washed away—who feel the same within.

Now, we will read the **32nd Psalm.**

Verses 1-5. *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. When I kept silent, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I*

acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. Soon over. Once poured into Jehovah's ear out of a contrite heart, and the transgression was gone forever! May it be so with you, dear hearer. If Your sin has never been forgiven you till tonight, may you this night obtain pardon through confession of sin.

6, 7. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near him. You are my hiding place. You shall preserve me from trouble. You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.*

MATTHEW 26:59-68; LUKE 23.

Verses 59-60. *Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death; but found none. Neither for love nor money.*

60. *Yes, though many false witnesses came, yet they found none. That is, none that agreed—the lie that one man spoke was refuted by the next!*

61. *At last came two false witnesses, and said this—They did not say any other word, as if they did not know any word in any language vile enough for Him. “This”—our translators have very properly put in the word fellow.*

61. *Fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. He never said anything of the kind! It was a most wicked misrepresentation of what He had said. If men wish to find an accusation against us, they can do it without any materials.*

62-64. *And the high priest arose and said unto Him, Do You not answer? What is it which these witness against You? But Jesus held His peace. And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I command You by the living God, that You tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said unto him, You have said it: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. He binds them over to make their appearance before Him when He becomes the judge and they shall take the place of the criminal!*

65, 66. *Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy! What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard His blasphemy, What do you think? He looks round upon the seventy elders of the people who were sitting there in the great council and “They answered and said, He is guilty of death.” Probably Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were not there—they were the only two friends the Lord had in the Sanhedrin.*

66, 67, 68. *They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, Saying, prophesy unto us, You Christ, Who is he that smote You? This ended the regular ecclesiastical trial of Christ. A little time was spent before Pilate, the judicial ruler, was ready to see Christ,*

but as soon as the dawn was come, they dragged Him before another tribunal. We shall now turn to **Luke 23**.

Verse 1, 2, *And the whole multitude of them arose and led Him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, We found this—Put in what word you like—villain—scoundrel—our translators could not find a better word than that inexpressive-expressive word, “fellow.” “We found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He, Himself is Christ, a King.” They shift the charge, you see, now! Before, it was blasphemy, now it is sedition.*

2, 3. *Fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar saying that He, Himself, is Christ a King. And Pilate asked Him, saying, Are You the King of the Jews? And He answered him and said, You said it.* Another of the evangelists tells us that He first asked Pilate what he meant by the question, explaining that He only claimed the kingdom in a spiritual sense.

4, 5. *Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the fiercer, saying, He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.* When Pilate heard them say Galilee, he caught at that—he did not wish to displease the multitude.

6, 7. *When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.* So away the Master goes—He must be dragged through the streets again to a third tribunal! Oh, You blessed Lamb of God! Never were sheep driven to the shambles as You were driven to death!

8. *And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad, for he was desirous to see Him for a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him.* But the Lord never worked miracles to gratify idle curiosity! He who would have worked a miracle to heal the poorest beggar in the street would not work a wonder to please the king in whose power He was!

9. *Then he questioned Him in many words: but He answered him nothing.* “No,” says good Christopher Ness—“John Baptist was Christ's voice and Herod had killed him—there Christ would not speak—as if He would say, ‘No, no,’ you did cut off John Baptist's head, who was My messenger, and since you have ill-treated My ambassador, I, the King of kings, will have nothing to say to you.”

10. *And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.* The original word is “made nothing of Him”—made Him as nothing.

11, 12. *And Herod with his men of war set Him at nothing, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves.* Two dogs could well agree to hunt the same prey! And sinners who quarrel on other things will often be quite agreed to persecute the gospel.

13-16. *And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, You have brought this man unto me, as one that perverts the people, and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof you accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him. Ah, that word, "chastise," slips so glibly over the tongue! But you know what it meant, when the Roman Lictors laid bare the back and used the terrific scourge! "I will scourge Him," said Pilate. Perhaps he thought that if he scourged Him, His suffering would induce the Jews to spare His life.*

17-20. *(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast). And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us, Barabbas! (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison). Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spoke again to them. He seems to have gone backward and forward many times, desiring to save the life of Christ, but not having the moral courage to do it.*

21-26. *But they cried, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him! And he said unto them the third time, Why? What evil has He done? I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired. But he delivered Jesus to their will. And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus*

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CHRIST OUR PEACE

NO. 3386

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*“He is our peace.”
Ephesians 2:14.*

THE true minister of Christ is not satisfied to be long away from his main theme. There are many things which it is very proper for him to speak upon in your hearing. We dare not forget the doctrines of the Word of God, or the precepts, or the experiences of God's people. But recognizing the claims of all these, God forbid that we should glorify save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is the preaching of Christ which is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Therefore, wherever we may wander around the circumference, we always feel a drawing in of our soul toward the center, which is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

And if the preacher feels that he cannot go on long in the pulpit without preaching up his Lord and Master, I am quite sure that all the saints of God feel that they cannot be long content without this theme. They must constantly have Christ. As often as the table is spread in our homes, we need bread. We do not care to have the same meats and drinks in the morning, at mid-day and at the evening meal. We like to have a frequent change of food, but we always want the bread—and the table is badly furnished, let it have what it may upon it, if there is not there the bread which is the staff of life! So the believer delights in the variety of God's word and there is no truth which is not precious to him. He counts the very shavings of truth to be like the dust of diamonds. Let every particle of it be gathered up and treasured, yes, so treasured that men may be ready to die for the slightest fragment of a truth of God! But still, the purest diamond, the Koh-i-noor of the whole, is the doctrine of the Savior suffering for our sins—and if we do not hear much concerning the Lamb of God, if this is not the big bell that is rung most often, we feel that none of the others can make up for the lack! If this silver trumpet of jubilee is not blown, the year is dull and dreary, and the service of God's sanctuary becomes an empty thing. Christ, Christ, Christ! Oh, that we may always make Him the sum and substance of our ministry and that you may always desire Christ as the water of life to your souls—your all-in-all, without whom you cannot be at rest! We come then, at this time, to our dear theme, praying God the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them to us. It is His office—may He tenderly consider us and fulfill that office in our souls—here and now!

There are only four words in the text and, therefore, four things may suffice us for tonight. The first great word, or, at any rate, the second greatest, is the word, "peace," and we shall think for a little while upon that, considering—

I. IN WHAT SENSE WE ARE TO REGARD THE EXPRESSION, "HE IS OUR PEACE."

The text compels us to begin with the thought, *the Lord Jesus Christ is peace between the Jew and the Gentile*. There was an old enmity between these two, an enmity on both sides. The Jew looked down upon the Gentile. He said, "I am of the seed of Abraham, the friend of God—ours are the oracles, ours the true God and the covenant—as for you Gentiles, you are an idolatrous seed whom God has left, as He did your father, to carry out the devices of your own hearts and to perish in your uncircumcision." The Jew called the Gentile a dog, thought him unclean, would have no friendly dealings with him, considered that uncircumcised men were little better than beasts and scarcely to be written down in the same list as the seed of Israel. And the Gentiles, with equal earnestness and intensity, returned the enmity, for if the Jew taunted the Gentile with uncircumcision, much more did the Gentile ridicule the Jew because of his circumcision! The most severe edicts, especially under the Roman Empire, were passed against the Jews. Some of the Emperors expressed themselves as believing them to be the most detestable of all races! One of them said that he had seen the heathens of Sarmatia and had beheld the barbarous tribes of the North, but he had seen all vices and all wickedness outdone among the Jews! It was not true—it was a gross lie—but it shows what was the enmity of the Gentile mind generally against the Jew, for the fact was that in those days the Jew was looked upon as unsocial. He never mingled with other nations. He could by no possibility be absorbed into other tribes, but held firmly to his nationality and would not be reckoned among the people. Hence there was a perpetual conflict. But my brothers and sisters, no sooner did the Lord Jesus Christ display the fullness of the gospel in the Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Spirit resting upon the Jew, than the Jew began to preach to the Gentile! There was a little tug in Peter's heart at first. He hardly liked it, but still, God gave him a vision and immediately he went to preach the gospel among those whom he had counted to be common and unclean! As for Paul, though a Pharisee of the Pharisees, though one of the strictest of Jews, yet he seems to have taken naturally to preaching among the Gentiles as soon as he was converted. He immediately went to these despised people and began to declare unto them the unsearchable riches of Christ! Now, in Christ Jesus, what fraternity there is, my brothers and sisters, between the seed of Israel and the Gentile stock! How we all feel that we are one! How many of the Jewish people has the Lord called! I hear it sometimes said that He called a larger proportion of the Jews than He has of the Gentiles, for, remember, the seed of Israel is but small, while the Gentiles at the present time number, I suppose, a

thousand millions at least, so that a small number of Christian Jews make a large proportion to the bulk! But wherever you meet with a converted Jew, a true believer, there is no more hearty lover of the Gentiles, no one more desirous to see the Gentiles saved!

And when you meet with a genuine, converted, instructed Gentile, how his heart goes out toward the seed of Israel and how rejoiced he is when he hears that some of the Lord's brothers and sisters, according to the flesh, are converted to the faith in the crucified Jesus! Yes, there is now no longer enmity. It is all over. Nothing can be more un-Christian than for a Christian to despise a Jew! Nothing is more unlike the spirit of our Master than when you laugh at the Jew and speak of him with contempt. Remember that the King of kings was a Jew! The Lord Jesus Christ, Himself—whom we adore as true Deity—came in our humanity as of the stock of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, an Hebrew of the Hebrews. Let there always be love and concord between us—and when the Lord shall be pleased to take the veil from Israel's eyes—then shall be our happy time as well as theirs. The Lord send it soon that He may be glorified. Enough, however, upon that.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our peace in a second sense, namely, *in making peace between nations*. That there are wars in the world at the present time is not the consequence of anything that Christ has said, but of the lusts of our flesh. As I understand the Word of God, I always rejoice to find a soldier a Christian, but I always mourn to find a Christian a soldier, for it seems to me that when I take up Christ Jesus, I hear one of His laws, "I say unto you, resist not evil. Put up your sword into its sheath; he that takes the sword shall perish by the sword." The followers of Christ in these days seem to me to have forgotten a great part of Christianity. How many of you would go tomorrow into a court of law and, if you were called upon to do it, would take an oath, whereas if there is anything taught in Scripture, it is expressly taught that you are not to swear at all, neither by heaven, nor by earth, nor by any other oath! If Christ ever delivered a plain precept, it is this—and yet all denominations of Christians seem to have cast it to the winds, with the exception of the Society of Friends. And so with regard to this matter of war, our apostle does not mince matters when he says, "Whence come wars? Whence come fights? Come they not from your own lusts?" That is the top and bottom of it, but, wherever true Christianity prevails, war becomes less frequent. It is owing to Christianity that war is far less common—though still too frequent—than it used to be. The length of human life has been much increased by the prevalence of peace—and wars, devastating wars, though, alas, they still break out—are not so constant as once they were and we are confidently looking forward to the time when the Messiah shall wield His blessed scepter and wars shall cease to the ends of the earth! Then shall men—

***"Hang the useless helmet high,
And study war no more."***

Then shall the shrill clarion of the battlefield yield to the pipe of shepherd's plaintive melody; then shall the weaned child play upon the hole of the asp, and the lion shall eat straw like an ox. Oh, that the Prince of Peace would come and establish His empire upon a firm foundation! Then could we, indeed say, "He is our peace!"

But, brothers and sisters, there is another meaning in the text. *The Lord Jesus is the great cause of peace between man and man.* As soon as you become a Christian, you cannot hate anybody. To be angry without a cause is a sin to you as soon as you are a believer in Christ! Unless you are a fearful hypocrite, you then forgive every man his offenses and you continue to forgive your brethren even unto 70 times seven, once you become the sincere disciple of Jesus. It is utterly inconsistent with grace in the heart to harbor malice against your fellow man. Through our infirmity we may be, and sometimes are, quick of temper and sharp—and this we ought to regret and mourn over—but to carry in our soul any enmity against any man is contrary to the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ! Give me your hand, my brother, my sister, for the sake of Him who died for us! We cannot quarrel at the foot of the cross! We cannot look up and see the streaming wounds and then break the King's peace! I mean the peace that the bleeding, thorn-crowned King has made! Especially among Christians, there must not be anything like a shadow of division or discord. And I do pray you, as I have often done, if you would be followers of Christ, be you as little children and lay aside everything like enmity, hatred, variance, strife and jealousies! You will have to live in heaven together, I hope. Oh, live like heavenly ones together here! You profess to have one Lord, one faith, one baptism. You say that you are filled with the Holy Spirit—then let no root of bitterness springing up trouble you, lest thereby many are defiled! May that sweet and holy dove, the Spirit of Christ, rest upon all mankind, so that each man may see in his fellow man a brother or a sister. May divisions between sects and parties—and especially between nations and men of different colors—be laid aside and may we all rejoice in one universal confraternity. May the day soon break when there shall be true liberty the world over and fraternity established everywhere after Christ's own model!

Still, brothers and sisters, these are only secondary applications of the text. *The great peace which Christ has made is between God and man.* There was war between man and his God. Man offended and loved to offend. God would have him return and be obedient, but man would not, for his heart was set on mischief. Man had so offended the divine law that punishment was inevitable! Jesus Christ came in and bore "the chastisement of our peace," suffering an equivalent for what His redeemed would have suffered!

Now, God can with strictest justice pardon human transgressions. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other at the cross of Christ. God was merciful and yet was just in our forgiveness—and now, between Him and those who are in Christ Jesus—there is no difference, no

division, no strife, no war! Therefore, being reconciled by His blood, “we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” We are brought near by the blood of the atonement. The chasm is bridged, the mountain is removed! Do you enjoy this peace, my dear hearer? Can you look up to God, the great God, and feel that there is no alienation between you—that what He loves, you love? That the object of His heart is the supreme object of yours? That if there has been any idol set up, contrary to Him, in your heart, you desire to have it thrown out? Oh, if it is so, then bless God that He has given you Christ to be your peace!

And then, brothers and sisters, there follows from this peace between man and God *peace between man and himself*, for man is as much at war with himself as he is with God, and until Christ comes in, he enjoys no rest. “There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.” Some of you know experimentally what it is to have a strife and a warfare going on within—and you will never get a deep and settled calm until Christ comes into the vessel of your soul and says to the winds of your fear, and to the waves of your sins, “Peace, be still.”

He that has Christ has a peace that passes all understanding! He that has Christ has great peace and nothing shall offend him. But he that has no Christ has no solid peace. He may say, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace, and daub his wall with untempered mortar, but the hail shall sweep away all his refuges of lies! And after his false peace there shall come a terrible alarm. Oh, my hearer, have you had peace made between God and you by the precious blood? If so, then you are now at rest! But if you are tossed to and fro between one thought and another, you have nothing to rest upon! I pray you listen carefully to what I have to say concerning the Lord Jesus, and may the Holy Spirit bless it to you! Thus much upon that priceless gem, that blessed word, “peace.”

The next great word in the text worthy of our adoring thought is that little one of two letters only, the pronoun “*He*.” “He is our peace.”

II. WHO IS SAID TO BE “OUR PEACE”?

What are we to understand by the Lord Jesus Christ being our peace? I want you carefully to notice that it does not say that His work on our behalf is the *source* of our peace. That, of course, is true, but here it says, “He is our peace.” He, personally—HE—Christ Himself, is the peace of His people! It does not say that He *makes* our peace, or that He *brings* us peace. That is very true, most true, but it is a greater truth that He, Himself, is our peace!

Now, I beseech you, believer, to look at this truth of God very carefully, and you, unbeliever, too! The unbeliever thinks that in order to get peace, he must perform good works. But see, man, your good works are not your peace! If they had been, God would have said so plainly, “Your good works shall be your peace.” But not so, “He is our peace.” It is not that you are to be a peace unto yourself, nor does it say that your repentance, or tears, or prayers can give you peace. These are good and

they are to be used, but the ground of your peace must never be, “I have prayed. I have repented”—but He—He is our peace! There are many things that you may do and that you *shall* do by the power of the Holy Spirit, but I tell you that none of these things are to be the basis of your comfort! Your soul’s fountain of crystal comfort is to be Christ and Christ alone! He, He, He—HE is our peace! Nothing in you, nothing you can do, nothing you can feel, but Christ, to whom you must look or perish. He must be your peace!

Now, believer, look this in the face. Christ is to be your peace—not your communion with God, nor your high and holy experiences. All these are very precious and I wish we could always be on Tabor’s brow. It were well for us if, like, Enoch, we always walked with God, but still, our communion must never be looked upon as the ground of our peace with God. It is Christ and Christ, alone, that is our peace! Though you could mount as high as Gabriel and soar aloft through heaven, as on a wing of fire—like the swift archangel, your rapid flight must not be your comfort, nor all the glorious service which you could render to your God, but Christ, Christ, Christ and Christ, alone, must be your peace. Beloved, it is all in vain for any of us to look back and try to find peace in what we have done!

It is a very great comfort to us, in some respects, to have been called by grace in early youth—to have been enabled to preach the gospel year after year with success—and I know what it is to think of all the souls who have been converted under my ministry. I know what it is to remember how many times I have addressed immense crowds of people. But I also know what it is to think, “Well, I may do all this and only be more condemned for it! I may do all this and yet be found out to be a miserable hypocrite, after all.” Therefore, there is no abiding comfort to be found in this. It is not our *doing* for Christ, but Christ, Himself, that is our peace! Now, some of you have been in the Sunday school, today, and you do not feel that you have got on well with the children. Well, I am glad if you have a passionate yearning for the salvation of the children’s souls, but do not begin to lose your hope and confidence in Christ because you do not succeed! If you had succeeded, you would have been very mistaken had you taken it as an evidence of your redemption! And if you fear you have not succeeded, have spoken in vain and spent your strength for nothing, do not be greatly cast down by it, for your peace does not lie either in your service, or in your success—it lies entirely in Christ!

I like the remark that was once made by a poor bricklayer who tumbled from the top of a house. A clergyman went to see him and, as he thought the man was dying, he said to him, “My dear fellow, you must try to make your peace with God.” “Ah, sir,” said the man, “you do not understand it, I can see. Make my peace with God? Why that was made for me in the eternal covenant before the world began! That was made for

me on Calvary's tree of shame, when Christ laid down His life. If Christ had not made my peace with God, I know I could not make it!"

So put all the things you have done and can do, into the scale, believer, and when they are all there—kick them all out again—for they are not worth a single ounce of weight in your soul's salvation! Christ must be there! And Christ alone!

One of the occupations of the dying saint must be the tying up of his bad works and of his good works in one bundle—for they are wonderfully much alike—and throwing them all overboard, every one of them, and floating to glory on the plank of free grace in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is our peace! HE is our peace! If believers would always remember this, they would not be so often depressed and distressed. Ah, I have often heard this cry, as I told you this morning, "I do not grow in grace as I could wish. I do not serve my Lord as I should. I live at a great distance from Him. I am afraid I dishonor His holy name." I like to hear that! That is all good, *very good*, but then they go on with this—"I am afraid that I shall perish, after all"—and that is all wrong, very wrong, for if the question is put, "Do you trust in Christ?" and if the answer is that you do, well then, if God is true, you *cannot* perish! If all your help comes from Him who made heaven and earth, and who died upon the bloody tree for your sins, then heaven and earth may pass away and shall, but His promise cannot! He has given you two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, that you may have strong consolation if you have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus! Do you believe in Jesus? Do you hang upon Christ wholly and entirely? Then are you saved and God's word is pledged to bring you safely home at the last! Sanctification must never be put in the place of justification—when we do so, we shall miss sanctification, as well as justification. When believers say, "I cannot grow in grace as I would, and therefore I doubt," do you see what they do? It is as though they said, "Here is a plant that will not grow and therefore it shall not have any water." It is impossible for any one of us—for you—to get sanctification through doubts! Your doubting takes away the water which alone can nourish the roots of your sanctity. If, in the teeth of all your sins, you still believe in Christ—believe over the head of all your shortcomings and your negligence—then your belief will breed love and admiration! And then your love of Christ and your admiration of Him will breed imitation—and so there will come holy living to the glory of God! Love is the forceful mainspring of a gracious life, but doubt makes it grow limp and feeble. Doubt snaps the string of your bow, takes off the edge of your sword, makes you languid and powerless and causes all your divine graces to flag. Therefore, keep to it, Christian, keep to it and let not the devil, himself, drag you from it! "He is our peace"—my peace—not myself, nor anything that is in me, but Christ Jesus alone!

I have thus put the negative of it, but now let us take the positive. "He is our peace." By this is meant, first, that *the person of Christ* is our

peace. He is God. I rest on Him. I *have perfect peace*, then, for He is almighty, He cannot fail me. He is inimitable—He will not leave me. He is truth itself—He will not belie His word.

Jesus Christ is also man, and if man, then He sympathizes with me, being touched with a fellow feeling for me in my infirmities. Then with such a heart of tenderness, He will not throw up the work of grace, but He will bear with my ill manners and be my “brother born for adversity,” even to the end. So, then, the complex person of Christ, as God, as well as man, is the peace of the believer when he trusts Him.

In the next place, *the perfect righteousness of Christ* is another part of our peace. In a delightful little book upon the person of Christ by good Mr. Bonar, he speaks about our sins as though they were so many mud creeks—our sins of unbelief, neglect, lack of love and so on. Well, but wherein we have failed, Christ has not failed—every duty in which we have come short, He has fulfilled! For every sin that we commit, you will always find an opposite virtue in Christ. Well says Mr. Bonar, “Then Christ is the flood tide which comes up and fills all these creeks and covers all the mire—and there is not a little creek nor a great bay but what this tide of Christ’s glorious merits fills all!” Perhaps this thought may give you the meaning of the text, “Your peace shall be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea”—the many waves which come up and cover all the sands and the mire of our iniquities till God sees no sin in us, because He sees the righteousness of Christ standing for us—and looks upon us, not as we are separately, but as we stand in Him—and so He makes us to be “accepted in the Beloved.” Oh, believer, if you can wrap the righteousness of Christ around you, you can feel, then, the sweetness of the truth of our text, “He is our peace.”

Yet once more. After His person and His righteousness, there *comes His precious blood*. Oh, beloved, there is no balm for the soul like the cross! Sometimes I like to sing to myself, when I get a little fluttered in my soul, that precious hymn—

**“Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend!
Life and health, and peace possessing,
From the sinner’s dying friend!
Here it is I find my heaven,
While upon the cross I gaze.
Love I much? I’m more forgiven—
I’m a miracle of grace.”**

I have sometimes used this simile and will use it again. If you ride through London, mile after mile, mile after mile, and see the great swarms of people, you say to yourself, “I cannot make out how all these people are fed. I cannot see how there is always a meal for these four millions and more.” But go off tomorrow morning and make a round of the great markets—the cattle market, the meat markets, the fruit markets and I know not what besides—and now you say, “I cannot make

out where the people can be found to eat all this! How does such a tremendous mass of provisions of all kinds ever get consumed?"

You change your note directly. When you only looked at the people's needs, you thought, "How can they all be supplied?" but when you look at the supply, you say, "How can there be needs great enough for all this?" So you look at your sins and you say, "How can there be merit enough to put all these sins away?" But if you will but look at the Son of God dying on the cross for sinners, you will change your note and you will say, "Where could there be sinners great enough to demand such an immense sacrifice as the giving up of the life of the Son of God to redeem men from their iniquities?" You must go to the cross if you want to have peace concerning your sins, for "He is our peace."

Further, beloved, *the ever-living Christ is always our peace*. The thought that there beats a heart in heaven that is always loving us; that there moves a tongue in heaven that always pleads for us; that there is an arm in heaven that always fights for us; and that there is a foot in heaven that will be swift to run for our defense—oh, this is a precious consolation! If faith can but perceive that Jesus Christ is within the veil at the Father's throne, with His heart full of love towards those who trust in Him, then will He be to us our peace!

I shall not, however, enlarge farther upon that point, though it is a very fruitful subject. But I must say that the *more you know of Christ's character and work, the deeper will be your peace*. Ignorant professors who do not know that Jesus Christ "is the same yesterday, today, and forever," are sometimes afraid that the promises will not be fulfilled. But they must be fulfilled, for He is not only full of grace, but of truth! Know Christ and trust Him—and you need not be afraid. Poverty shall not make you poor, sickness shall not make you diseased, and death shall not make you die! You shall triumph over all these in your inmost soul and come off more than conqueror through Him who has loved you and is your peace!

We have only as yet handled two words, but they are two big, colossal words. "*He is our peace.*"

But we must now speak briefly upon those two diamond rivets which fasten Christ and peace together. So we look now at—

III. WHOSE PEACE IS HE?

Notice that word, "our." "He is *our* peace." To whom, then, is this splendid peace given? Every man that has Christ as his Savior! I have half a mind to ask those who have trusted Christ to be their peace, to say aloud, here and now, "He is our peace." There is a gray-headed man here, and if he were to rise and lean on his staff, he could say, "Yes, blessed be God, without doubt I can say that He is my peace." There is a valiant soldier of Christ yonder, and he would declare boldly, "He is my peace." But I daresay there is some timid Hannah here who would wipe the tears from her face and quietly say, "Yes, He is my peace." And there

are some youngsters here, whom the Lord has but lately brought in, and they can say, tremblingly, but yet meaning it from their inmost souls, "He is my peace." It is all the same, whether we are old or young, whether we are advanced in the divine life, or are only just in the beginning of it—we have no other peace except the Lord Jesus Christ!

But who are these people who have Christ to be their peace? Well, they are *those who could not get peace anywhere else*, for we never come to Christ until we are driven to Him by stormy weather. He is such a blessed port that we might all wish to cast anchor in Him, but yet we are such fools that we keep out at sea as long as we can—and only when we feel our sins to be like hurricanes howling in our ears, do we fly to Christ! Well, if you have nowhere else to go and you come to Him with all your hunger and nakedness—and trust in Him—whether you sink or swim, then shall He be your peace!

I cannot delay upon that, however, for our time is gone and, therefore, I must take that other word—"is."

IV. WHEN IS HE OUR PEACE?

I know the world says, "I hope He will be my peace." Dear hearer, do not be satisfied with that! Never be content with "may be," but seek after a present salvation! I was soundly enough asleep the other morning when, about half-past three my bell rang very sharply, and then rang again. And when I put my head out of the window to see who was there, I heard someone say, "Oh, if you please, sir, there is a poor man dying, and he wants to see you badly! Do come." "Oh, yes, where does he live? I will be there as quickly as I can." And away I went.

The dying man said to me, "I beg your pardon, sir, for sending for you at this time of night, but it is very hard for a man to go out of this world and not know where he is going. Do tell me the way I may be saved." I was glad enough to tell him about Him who is our peace, but how I wished and wished again that he had not needed to be told about it then! As I said to those who were round about him, "Now see, he has enough to think of with his dying pains, without having to think of finding a Savior now! Oh, the rest of you seek Him while you have health and strength!" And I now say that to you! You will find other work when you come to die without having to search for a Savior! Besides that, what a joy it is to get Christ now—to say, "He is my peace." Why, there are some of us who are as happy now in Christ as we could well wish to be! We find that our religion is no misery to us. It is not a chain, but like the wings of a bird and it helps us to mount! We feel at perfect peace with God right now, and if death were to come tonight, or tomorrow, or while we are sitting here, I trust we should not think of him as an adversary, but our Father's servant, sent to take us into our Father's presence! Oh, my dear hearers, some of you, when you come to dying, will, perhaps, have to think, "I used to attend a Sunday school. I used to go to a place of worship, but I gave it all up when I came to London. When I got into business and had a family, I thought I needed Sunday for recreation, and

so I neglected my soul, and now where am I? Far off from God!" Oh, I hope I shall not have to come and tell you in your extremity about a Savior, but may you now receive Him! All that He asks of you is to trust Him—and that He gives you! My poor friend said the other night, "I cannot think, sir. I cannot settle my thoughts." Yes, but you can think now and, therefore, now, before the evil days come and the dark night draws on, turn, turn! May God turn you! May effectual grace lead you to see my bleeding Master with His five streaming wounds, with the crown of thorns about His brow, mocked and despised, and spit upon for us, that we might escape the thorn and not have to be wounded with the arrows of death, but might live through Him! May the Lord Jesus Christ be to every one of you your peace tonight, that you may take the text and say, "He is now, even tonight, our peace."

God grant it for His name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 11:27-46.**

Our Lord's greatest miracles were always the reward of faith.

Verse 27. *She said unto Him, Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come unto the world.* By which she as good as said, "I believe that and I believe everything else. I have an implicit faith in You. Whatever You say, whatever You have said or shall say, I am prepared to believe it all, for I believe in You. I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

28. *And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary, her sister, secretly.* Because she knew that the Jews hated the Savior. She could not tell what would come of it if they knew of His coming, so she whispers to her—

28-30. *Saying, The Master is come, and calls for you. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was at that place where Martha met Him.* Their cemeteries were outside the town and probably the Savior was near the very grave where Lazarus slept.

31-32. *The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goes unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died.* Her thought was the same as the thought of Martha, but she did not say as much as Martha. She never did. Martha had a dialogue with the Savior, but Mary bowed at His feet.

33-37. *When Jesus, therefore, saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have you laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and*

see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him! And some of them said, Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus, therefore, again groaning in Himself, came to the grave. Many have asked why Christ groaned. Why, brothers and sisters, it is the way in which He gives life—by His own death! We sometimes say of one who does a great action, “It took so much out of him.” So it did out of the Savior. He must groan that Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus may rejoice. It is not without the stirring of His very life that He gives life to the dead!

38-39. *It was a cave and the stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take you away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, said unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinks: for he has been dead four days. “It were a pity to roll away the stone.”*

40-41. *Jesus said unto her, Said I not unto you, that if you would believe, you should see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. That is grand praying, is it not? Sometimes we ought to say, “Just so.” “Father, I thank You that You have heard me.”*

42-44. *And I knew that You hear Me always, but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me. And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth! And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. He probably slipped himself off from the ledge in the tomb upon which he been laid and there he appeared before them bound so that he could not move farther.*

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END OF VOLUME 59

PLEADING WITH THE INDIFFERENT

NO. 3360

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger.”
Lamentations 1:12.

THIS was the lamentation of Jeremiah. As he saw the desolation of the beloved city, as he marked the cruelties inflicted by the invaders upon the Jewish youth, children and maidens, and as he foresaw the long years of bitterness reserved for the captives in Babylon, he felt as if he were a peer in the realm of misery—indeed peerless. He stands foremost, a very emperor of grief, a king of sighs and tears. “Behold, and see,” he said, “if there was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me.”

But may there not have been griefs as great as those of Jeremiah? Is the language that flows from his lips strictly accurate? Like most of the periods which flow from abundant grief, is there not some exaggeration here? If we take the words out of the mouth of Jeremiah and put them into the mouth of Jesus—if we suppose them to be spoken by Him, as, hanging on the cross He did bear the wrath of God for us, then there is no hyperbole, no exaggeration! The words may be read as they stand—and stand as we read them—and their fullest weight shall not outweigh the truth!

This evening two things challenge our attention—an earnest *expostulation*—“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?” And a solemn *question*—“Behold, and see, was there ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me?” First—

I. AN EARNEST EXPOSTULATION.

The Son of God has become incarnate. He became man out of love to men. But men loved Him not, and though in Him was every perfection, they hunted and hounded Him to death! The story is told four times over by inspired authority in this book, but the mass of mankind feel no concern in it. I come here tonight and I say to many of you—does not the story of Jesus at all interest you? You heard it read just now, did it fall flat and stale upon your ears? Did you say to yourselves, “It is dry work to listen to that; there is nothing there to strike the attention; if I had

taken up a newspaper and had read of some murder, my wits would have been all awakened, but in the hearing of this death of Christ, I feel not at all stirred.” Well, then, I ask you—why is this? Why is it so? If there is anything in the entire world that ought to interest a man, it is the death of Christ! Yet I find men, learned men, spending year after year in sorting out butterflies, beetles and gnats, or in making out the various orders of shells, or in digging into the earth and seeking to discover what strange creatures once floundered through the boundless mire, or swam in the vast seas! I find men occupied with things of no sort of practical moment and which, to me, do not seem so wonderfully enchanting. Yet the story of God, Himself, who deigned to become a man and as a man suffered, and bled, and died, is thought to be too small a trifle for minds to dwell upon it. O reason! Where have you gone? O judgment! Where have you fled? Men spend their strength on trifles, but on God incarnate they turn their backs!

It is strange that even the *sufferings of Christ* do not attract the attention of men, for generally if we hear any sad story of the misfortunes of our fellow creatures, we are interested. The newspaper is accounted more than usually interesting which contains full particulars of shipwrecks, the blowing down of houses, murders, shootings, killings and I do not know what! Everybody has felt he could read such a paper as that because it concerned his fellow men—what they had lost and what they had suffered. Everyone stops to hear the tale of the ancient mariner! Even the wedding guest is held while he, with the earnest eyes, tells how he suffered on the wide, deep, stagnant sea. And yet this story of a man who came to our earth with no motive but love, and lived here to do nothing but good, and yet was so despised and rejected as to be nailed to a cross, and there made to die in the midst of jeers, sneers, pains and unknown agonies—this does not interest men! I marvel, and yet I marvel not at the strange indifference of this age to the wonders of Calvary! How is it earth does not stretch out her hands and say, “Come and tell us of the God that loved us and came down to our low estate—and suffered for us men and for our salvation”? How is it that the crowds of this great city do not come and besiege our houses and say, “Tell us yet again this strange, mysterious story of the sufferings of the perfect Son of God”? It ought to interest us, if nothing more! Is it nothing to you, however? Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?

It ought to be more than interesting—it ought *to excite our admiration*. You cannot read of a man sacrificing himself for the good of his fellow creatures without feeling at once that you wish you had known that fine fellow! And you feel instinctively that you would do anything in the world to serve him if he still lives, or to help relatives left behind if he has died in a brave attempt. Who does not esteem, though you never knew him,

the good man at Bethnal Green who perished but lately in the explosion at the firework factory? He rushes in to seek to rescue others and is found, at last, a handful of ashes bewailed by a weeping wife! One felt at once, "There was a man who had a soul beating beneath his ribs." But is no admiration to be given to the Son of God who left a throne of glory without bound and came here below to poverty, to shame, to a life of contempt and toil—and then voluntarily gave Himself up to a death which never could have been inflicted upon Him if He had not given Himself up to die? Jesus Christ had no motive in suffering but the good of men! Nothing selfish ever crossed His soul. Oh, brothers and sisters, it was pity that ruled His heart—pity, and only pity—and while we set up our statues in reverence of men who have loved their fellow men and speak of such-and-such a man as "a great philanthropist," is it nothing to you that Jesus should die for men and shall this greatest of all philanthropists, this first and chief of lovers of the race of men, be altogether forgotten? I would admire Him even if He had not saved me! If I had no share in His blood, I think I would love Him. The life of Christ enchants me! The death of Christ binds me to His cross! Even if I were never washed in His blood and were even cast away into hell, if that were possible, I still feel I must admire Him for His love to others! Yes, and I must adore Him, too, for His godlike character and His godlike sufferings for the sons of men! But why, why is it that such a Christ, so lovely and so admirable, is forgotten by the most of mankind and is nothing to them?

Now, my dear hearers, there are some of you to whom I might put this question very closely. You have heard about Jesus very often. This pulpit is always ringing with His name. And you have admired what Jesus did. I know you have and if any spoke ill of Him, you would be very grieved—and you would be among the first to defend His name! And yet—and yet—is that all? Are you always going to be interested and to admire, but are you never going further? Is it, after all, to come to this, that it is nothing to you that Jesus should die? You have no interest in that death, no part, no lot in the salvation which that death brings to the sons of men! I am afraid that with some of you it will be so all your days. Fifteen years have I preached to some of you—15 years! And if those 15 years have not brought you to Christ, is there any reason to believe that 15 more years will do it? No, I fear that with some of you the harvest is past and the summer is ended—and you are not saved. There was a time when this voice did seem to cut into your soul and the truths of God that were uttered awakened your conscience! But it is all nothing to you now. You could go to sleep under the sound of it and your soul does sleep under the sense of it! What? Will you be lost? Have you resolved to be lost with a Savior lifted up before you? Have you determined that you will

never look to Him who is lifted up to save you from the serpent's bite? Shall Christ, the water of life, never be tasted by your lips? Do you elect to perish of thirst? Shall this bread of life be never eaten? Do you choose rather to starve than to come to Him? No, you tell me you hope one of these days. Ah, but I have no hope of you for any day but today! And I wish you, too, knew that procrastination is of all things fatal. I would sooner that you resolved to be damned than that you only said, "Tomorrow, tomorrow." For if today you resolved upon your ruin, you might be startled at the resolution—and you might be led to see your folly and awakened to amend your steps! But if you always say, "Tomorrow, tomorrow," it will be the will-o'-the-wisp that will tempt you into the fatal troubling situation where souls have been lost by tens of thousands—as yours will be!

Oh, why should I have to be always coming down these steps and into this pulpit, to say over and over and over again to you that Jesus died—and that if you trust Him you shall live? Why should it need to be repeated over and over? Great God of patience, such a story as this ought to be accepted of the heart at once! If You bear with men who reject it, we may well bear with them, too, but, oh, we pray You let them not go too far with Your long-suffering, nor venture too much upon Your patience, lest You lift Your hand and swear in Your wrath that they shall not enter into Your rest because they had the gospel, but they counted not themselves to be worthy of it!

One thing I would say to you, to all of you to whom it seems as yet to be nothing that Jesus should die—that personally to me it *is* something that He should die. It is more than something—it is everything—and I will tell you why. It is much to me that Jesus died, for I know I slew Him. I sang those verses just now and I sang them with some bitterness of soul, I was forced to feel—

“Tis I have thus ungrateful been.”

If it were not that I had sinned, as one of the race, there had been no need for Christ to die. But as it was sin that pierced and nailed Him, I had a share in His death. But then I know another thing—that by that death I am delivered from the very guilt that put Him to death! I have looked to Him and I am forgiven. Fleming tells us in a book of his, that a great culprit had been condemned to be hanged at Ayr. He had been a very great offender, but while he lay in prison, God granted him repentance and he was heard to say continually as they took him to the scaffold, "Oh, but He's a great forgiver! Oh, but He's a great forgiver!" And I have often felt as if I could stand and cry, yes, even dance and say it, "Oh, but He's a great forgiver! Oh, but He's a great forgiver!" My innumerable sins confessed to Him were blotted out, each one, and peace and joy bestowed where all before was fear and trembling! Now,

there are hundreds in this house that could say the same. If I were to ask it, and this were the proper time, there are thousands within this dome who could rise and say, "I, too, can say that it is much to me that Jesus died, for though I slew Him, yet by His death I live, and by the blood which I drew from His veins I have been washed and made white." Now, if it is so much to us, we do sincerely wish, oh, unconverted ones, that Christ were as much to you, for we do think He ought to be! We desire that He should be! We pray that He may be and we tremble, even to horror, lest, after all, He should not be, for if Christ is nothing to you, it will be a hard dying for you, a hard dying—the bed shall be of iron and the pillow shall be cold as ice—and it will be hard passing into a disembodied state! It will be hard coming before God. It will be hard for when your body rises in the day of the resurrection, when the trumpet sounds, and the sepulchers are burst open, and your body, linked to your soul again, shall stand before the flaming throne of Christ! It will be hard for you—oh, so hard—throughout eternity! An eternity without Christ! An eternity without Christ! "Nothing to you, nothing to you," you say now, but how will it be when conscience shall remind you in eternity, "you heard of Christ, but you said He was nothing to you! You listened to earnest admonitions, but you said they were nothing to you." How will this stir the fire? How will this fan the flame? How will this prick your conscience and vex your spirit, that Jesus died, and inestimable mercies dropped from the cross—pardons sealed with blood were distributed freely upon Calvary and broken hearts were healed—and sins were forgiven and the dead were raised and the lost were saved? But it was all nothing to you, nothing to you! Oh, before death comes—and he is on his way to some here present—on his way to meet them soon! Before death comes on the pale horse with hell following at his heels, I beseech you, as you love your souls, look to the crucified and be not satisfied till you can say, "He is everything to me! I slew Him, but He saved me! I looked to Him and I live!"

May God bless this admonition and my heart shall be glad, indeed, if He will but do it. Oh, how little can I do for you, you unconverted ones, and how little can I do for you! When I sometimes get a handshake from some of you, and you say, "Well, I have been hearing you for years, sir, but I am not converted," I look hopefully upon you, but I cannot help, when I get away, reproaching myself in part and saying, "Have I preached to these people as I ought to?" You make me wake up at night to weep about you and to ask myself again and again, "What more can I say? How shall I put it? With what force and power can I deliver it, if perhaps I may reach their hearts?" Oh, I trust you may yet be brought—and God shall be praised and glorified world without end! Now, let us change to a second point—

II. A SOLEMN QUESTION.

The Lord Jesus Christ may be represented here as bidding men see if there is any sorrow like unto His sorrow which is done to Him. Now, observe, that it may be truthfully said that *the sufferings of Jesus were altogether unique and by themselves*. There were never any sufferings which could match His—and never was there such an illustrious sufferer put to such boundless shame. He was the eye of heaven, the very sun and star of the bright world! It was the seraph's bliss to do Him homage. King of kings and Lord of lords was He, and the government was upon His shoulders! And His name was called Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace! All the hallelujahs of eternity rolled up at His august feet! But He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief! And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not. They spat into His face. They plucked off His hair. They blindfolded Him. They struck Him with their fists. They scourged Him. The bloody scourges made the sacred drops roll. They gave Him a felon's death and then stood by and mocked His prayers and made jests about His groans and pangs! Never was one so high brought so low. "Behold and see if there were ever sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me." Never one so innocent, so falsely accused. He had done no evil. He was no rival of Caesar. He said His kingdom was not of this world. Instead of doing evil, He had done boundless good. His food and His drink were to do God's will. His delight was to help the poor, to feed the hungry, to heal the sick. He was all gentleness, all goodness. From both His hands He scattered His bounties lavishly among the graceless sons of men—and yet they said He was guilty of sedition and of blasphemy! He, seditious? He a blasphemer? Lying could go no farther! Bribed witnesses could not be made to agree! The lie was too massive even for those to compass who were willing to have compassed it! Oh, was ever grief like His—to be treated as a felon and put to death as though guilty—when all the while He did no sin, neither was deceit found on His lips!

Remember, beloved, that in our Savior's death there were aggravations of an extraordinary kind. Before He actually came to die, that dreadful night in Gethsemane had broken His already emaciated frame. There He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. In two or three cases, other persons have sweat drops of blood, but they have invariably died. Our Savior did this and yet lived. Oh, how was the bitterness of His soul expressed in that awful overflow which fell upon Gethsemane's soil! Then, remember, He was led, deserted by His friends, without any comfort from His God, to be tried by Herod, by Pilate, by Caiaphas—to be scourged, beaten, probably several times with rods and scourges. God forsook Him—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken

Me?” was the very depth of His agony and without one to pity, one to administer comfort, utterly forsaken, our Savior died with aggravations of agonies that were to be found in no other death!

Still, the singularity of His death lies in another respect. There was never sorrow like the sorrow which was done unto Christ, *because all His sorrow was born for others*. Whatever you and I may suffer, we deserve it and, directly or indirectly, we may trace it to the fact that we are sinners. But He was not a sinner. In Him was no sin and neither suffering nor death could lawfully have been laid upon Him had He not made Himself the substitute for His people. Behold, and see if there was ever sorrow like His sorrow! He bears the sin of many. He is numbered with the transgressors. He stands vicariously to endure what never could have been His if it had not been that He was a surety and stood in His people’s place.

Now, I want your thoughts just one minute. What was it that Christ, as substitute, had to endure? Answer—although it may not have been precisely what we ought to have endured, it must have been something equivalent thereto. Now, what ought one sinner to have suffered? Answer—Eternal misery in hell! What, then, what then must have been the pangs which in Christ’s case stood as the equivalent for the eternal agonies of *one sinner*? But Christ died not for one sinner, but for tens of thousands, for countless multitudes, whom no one can number! Think, then, my brothers and sisters, what must have been the crushing blows which Jehovah laid on Him when those blows were to be an equivalent for the hells of ten thousand times ten thousand of those for whom He suffered! Of course, it were not possible for Him to have endured, even for one, if He had not been God! His Godhead gave Him an infinite capacity for misery and infused a boundless degree of misery into all the pangs He bore. You have no more idea of what Christ suffered in His soul than you have when you take up in a shell, a drop of seawater! What Christ suffered is utterly inconceivable! We are not just to think of Him as dying as another dies. His was a vast soul, so great a soul that it seemed to have all souls within it—and it had the capacity for suffering what all souls might have borne—and the whole of that vast nature which God had given, that wondrous nature which He Himself also essentially possessed—was put forth to make an atonement for human sin. “Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me.”

“Oh, let us now, instead of talking any more, sit down by meditation at the foot of the cross and look up! ‘Tis the King! ‘Tis the King, but He is crowned with thorns! It is the prince of glory, but He is stripped naked to His shame! It is the Ancient of eternal days, but He bows His head to die! He is God, all-sufficient, yet He cries, “I thirst”! He is the angel’s darling,

but He is despised and rejected of men! Hark, He fills heaven with honor! His presence gilds heaven with light, yet there upon the cross He is covered with darkness! And the music about Him is that of His own sighs, and cries, and groans. Was ever grief like Yours? Needless question! Needless question! All but shameful question, for were all griefs that ever were condensed into one, they were no more worthy to be compared therewith than the glowworm's tiny lamp with the ever-blazing sun!

What then, beloved, what then? If Christ is thus alone in suffering, what then? Why, *let Him stand alone in our love*. High, high, high set up Christ in your heart! Now, brothers and sisters you have many objects of your affection, but oh, lift up my lord, your soul's bridegroom, your spirit's well-beloved! Come now, if you have thought well of Him, think better of Him! If you have loved Him, oh, love Him more! Now, ask to have your heart inflamed, as with coals of juniper, which have a vehement heat, and let that heart be all His own! Oh, let there be no such love as your love to Christ! Let it pass the love of women! Let it go beyond a mother's love, a brother's affection, a father's tenderness! Love Him—you cannot match His love to you, but at least seek to let your little stream run side by side with the mighty river!

If Christ is thus alone in suffering, brothers and sisters, let us seek to make Him, if we can, alone in our service. We do not do much for Christ, compared with what we should. Some have learned to give much, but yet what is our giving for such an one as He is? We only give what we can spare—how few of us ever pinch ourselves for Him? He smarted for us and gave up even His very garments for us, but we do not come to that. In the olden times they did—saints, martyrs and Christian missionaries made sacrifice of all and counted it no sacrifice out of love to Him. I wish we had more Marys who would break the alabaster box of precious ointment upon His dear head. Oh, for a little extravagance of love, a little fanaticism of affection for Him, for He deserves ten thousand times more than the most enthusiastic ever dream of rendering! If He is thus, brothers and sisters, so far beyond all others in His sorrow, let Him also be first and foremost tonight *in our praise*. If you have poetic minds, weave no garlands except for His dear brow! If you are men of eloquence, speak no glowing periods except to His honor! If you are men of wit and scholarship, oh, seek to lay your scholarship at the foot of His cross! Come here with all your talents and yield them to Him who bought them with His blood! Come, here, you with much and yet with little—come with hearts so warm whom He loved so well—

***“Here then your music bring,
Strike aloud each cheerful string!
Mortals join the hosts above,
Come and praise redeeming love.”***

The Lord give us such a frame of mind as that, tonight, when we come to the breaking of bread, and His be the glory. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 69:1-21; MARK 15:15-23; LUKE 23:26-33.**

We shall read together at this time a part of the 69th Psalm and afterwards two passages in the New Testament. Although there is no doubt that this Psalm is intended to describe a very large class of sufferers, we think it never had its full meaning perfectly carried out until our blessed Lord and Master suffered at the hands of men. We shall read the Psalm believing that it is full of Christ. It is absolutely certain that we have references here to His advent, His passion and His resurrection.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, a Psalm of David.

Verse 1. *Save me, O God, for the waters are come into my soul.* The waves have not only teased the bank, but they have dashed over the bulwarks and there is a flood within, as well as a flood without.

2. *I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me.* We had this text explained to us last Friday night when the traveler told us he saw a man sink in the mud, almost swallowed up by it, till by a very desperate grasp of the boat, he made his escape. Christ was, as it were, sucked in by the great deeps of His afflictions—as if He would quickly be swallowed up.

3. *I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried.* He had been so long in the garden in that awful agony, with strong crying and tears.

3, 4. *My eyes fail while I wait for my God. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head.* See Him now in the street being led away to Mount Calvary—a vast multitude has congregated there, all eager to see Him die!

4. *They that would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully, are mighty.* They have the Roman soldiers at their backs, while the mob applauds them.

4. *Then I restored that which I took not away.* Christ did not take away our innocence, nor our safety, nor our honor, but He restored them all to us! He has made us clean! He has made us accepted in the Beloved! He has put a crown of pure gold upon our heads and set our feet upon a rock.

5. *O God, You know my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from You.* These words are not applicable to our Lord, except so far as they may refer to *our* foolishness and to *our* sin, which we know were all laid on Him. But one commentator says that He is here speaking according to the manner of the people. They called Him foolish. They charged Him

with sin, but He appeals to heaven, “Lord, You know whether I have been foolish, whether I have any sins or not.” In that sense we might apply it literally to the Savior.

6. *Let not them that wait on You, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those who seek You be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.* “Let not the shame of My cross destroy their faith. Grant unto them such confidence in me that they may take up their cross daily and follow Me, that they may even learn to say with My apostle, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

7. *Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered My face.* It was for His Father’s sake that He might bring honor to Jehovah, that He thus suffered reproach. “Shame has covered My face”—that face which is brighter than the sun and which angels desire to gaze upon!

8. *I have become a stranger unto My brethren.* “Peter says he knows Me not. All of them have forsaken Me.”

8, 9. *And an alien unto My mother’s children. For the zeal of Your house has eaten Me up and the reproaches of them that reproached You are fallen upon Me.* Every hard word that was spoken of the Father fell upon the Son—the iniquities which were rebellions against Jehovah all fell upon the man of Nazareth!

10. *When I wept, and chastened My soul with fasting, that was to My reproach.* That was scandal unto them.

11. *I made sack cloth also My garment; and I became a proverb unto them.* Just as Michal said of David, “How glorious did the king of Israel become in the eyes of his handmaidens!” Out of mockery, so did they reproach Christ, “How glorious was the king of Israel, so daintily arrayed in a peasant’s robe, or stripped naked upon His cross.”

12. *They that sit in the gate speak against Me.* The judges who there dispensed justice. The merchants who there trade their wares. The idlers who were there to loiter, to hear the news—these all speak against Me.

12. *And I became the song of the drunkard.* They made ballads of Him. We may understand that to mean they issued lampoons—every now and then there came out a caricature.

13, 14. *But as for Me, My prayer is unto You, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of Your mercy hear Me, in the truth of Your salvation, deliver Me out of the mire, and let Me not sink: let Me be delivered from them that hate Me, and out of the deep waters.* Imagine you hear your Master as He silently prays this prayer in the streets of Jerusalem—the mobs are hooting, but He is praying—women are weeping, and He is weeping, too.

15-20. *Let not the flood overflow Me, neither let the deep swallow Me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon Me. Hear Me, O Lord, for Your loving kindness is good: turn unto Me according to the multitude of Your*

tender mercies. And hide not Your face from Your servant; for I am in trouble: hear Me speedily. Draw near unto My soul, and redeem it: deliver Me because of My enemies. You have known My reproach and My shame, and My dishonor: My adversaries are all before You. Reproach has broken My heart. This is one of the most extraordinary verses in Holy Writ!

20, 21. *And I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink.* Now, let us read the incidents in the history of Christ, of which this Psalm is a sort of prophecy and exposition.

MARK 15:15-23.

Verses 15-23. *And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led Him away into the hall which is called Praetorium; and they called together the whole band. And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head. And began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews. And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. And they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross. And they brought Him unto the place called Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, the place of a skull. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not.* I shall have to show you that this was given to Him in mercy. The Romans always gave, before crucifixion, a cup of drugged wine, in order to lessen the sensibilities of the victim. In this case there was not only myrrh in the cup, but gall. A second cup of gall Christ did drink, but this cup, being intoxicating, He would not receive—when He had tasted it, He would not drink. He needed the possession of all His faculties—and in their clearest state—in order to do combat with the dreadful powers of darkness.

LUKE 23:26-33.

Luke supplies some particulars which Mark has left out. Turn, therefore, to the 23rd chapter of Luke and the 26th verse. Luke, also, tells us of Simon.

Verse 26. *And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.* Now these are the things which Mark has not put in.

27, 29. *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 breasts which never gave suck. This was accounted a curse, but their curses would seem blessings to them when compared with the curse of the dreadful slaughter at Jerusalem!*

30, 31. *Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall upon us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree what shall be done in the dry? If they do these things while yet the Jewish state is standing, what will they do when that state is broken up? If they do these things to innocent persons—a green tree—what will they do to the unhallowed person, the ungodly and the rebellious who are like dry, rotten trees? How will the flame lay hold on those branches out of which the sap of virtue has long ago been dried?*

32. *And there were also two other, malefactors. It should be “others”—there should be an “s” there.*

32, 33. *Led with Him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Shall we refuse to take up our cross and follow the Lord Jesus Christ? I think not. If any ask us whether we will leave Him because of the fears which may be excited by the world’s frowns, this shall be our answer—let us sing it—with regard to the world and all its temptations—*

***“No, facing all its frowns or smiles,
Counting its gain but loss!
Outside the camp we take our place,
With Jesus bear the cross.”***

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GOD'S VALIANT RIGHT HAND

NO. 3361

A SERMON
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***“The right hand of the Lord is exalted:
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”***
Psalm 118:16.

THIS verse might full often have leapt from the lips of believers in the olden times. This verse might have constituted part of the song of Moses at the Red Sea, for how wondrously did God there overthrow the host of His enemies, when, after dividing the sea, Egypt was swallowed up in it, God, Himself causing the last foe of Israel to be swept away by the mighty waters! “Sing unto the Lord,” they said, “for He has triumphed gloriously,” and by the shores of the Red Sea they knew that “The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.” It was so in the wilderness when Joshua fought with Amalek and Moses held up his hands in prayer. It was so when they smote Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan. Are not these things written in the books of the wars of the Lord, and is it not said, “The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name”? It was conspicuously so in the driving out of the Canaanites. When the people of Israel, untrained for war, marched into the land, they found that their enemies had chariots of iron and they were entrenched in cities that were walled up even unto heaven—but yet all the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites could not stand against the twelve tribes of Israel! They fled before them like chaff before the wind! They were scattered like the clouds before the tempest! “Oh, praise you the Lord and magnify Him, for He cast out the heathen and He planted His people in their own land.” The right hand of the Lord was that day exalted, for His right hand does valiantly!

And was it not so throughout the period of the judges? Time would fail us to tell you of Samson, of Gideon, of Barak and all those mighty men who were as weapons in the hands of Jehovah—javelins cast forth by omnipotence! Truly in those days, also, the right hand of the Lord did valiantly! David, who penned this Psalm, knew this in his own experience, for he smote the Philistines hip and thigh with great slaughter. And long after David had slept with his fathers, others arose and God was with them—and the Lord did mighty deeds. Have you forgotten how the hosts of Sennacherib lay like the sere leaves of autumn when the breath of the archangel had blasted them? Right onward

throughout the whole history of Israel, the foes of God had made headway for a while, for He put His hand, even His right hand, into His bosom. But when the Lord has risen and His people have chanted the solemn Psalm, "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered," then they that hated Him have fled before Him! Into smoke have they been consumed like the fat of rams! Into smoke have they been consumed away! "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

But from those triumphs of physical might over warlike powers we turn our eyes to another field of battle—a spiritual one! And God who was mighty with weapons of war, we find mighty with the sword of the Spirit and with the weapons of the gospel! And we claim the verse which is now before us as a song of the New Testament as well as a chant of the Old! The right hand of the Lord is this day exalted and still it does valiantly!

We shall ask your attention not to a very lengthy sermon, but to these three points:—*The triumphs of the Lord Jesus; the triumphs of the gospel in the church; the triumphs of grace in individual hearts.* To all these and I know not to which one more than another, the text is most appropriate.

I. CONCERNING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE LORD JESUS IT MAY BE SAID, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." He did not come as a man of war, for He is the Prince of Peace. He came not here with sword, shield and buckler, but He came with a body fitted to suffer and with a heart that was made strong to endure. The Christ of God came in lowliness and in shame, to be despised and rejected of men, but for all that He fought great battles in the midst of His weakness and won for Himself wondrous spiritual victories. Observe, dear friends, with holy adoration, how our Lord Jesus Christ met Satan in conflict, not once or twice, but many times! In fact, throughout the Savior's life, the prince of the powers of the air assailed our Master. That was a glorious duel which was fought in the wilderness, and on the lofty mountain, from which those two contending spirits had a view of the whole world; and on the pinnacle of the temple, too. Sharp was the sword of Diabolus when he sought to smite the Savior under the fifth rib and make a full end of His innocence. But oh, how glorious the strokes of the Lord, Himself, with the sword of the Spirit, when He said, "It is written," and yet again, "It is written," and yet again, "It is written," and He chased the fiend away! And then triumphant angels came and ministered to the conqueror amidst the loneliness of the desert. Oh, you spirits, you might have sung that day, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." All through His life our Savior kept His vantage ground. The prince of this world assailed Him, but he made no dent upon His armor, much less wound upon His soul! He was tempted in all points—the darts flew so thick that they assailed Him from head to foot—but He was without a wound at the close

of the conflict! He was tempted, but yet without sin. And you know how it came to the last tug of all in the garden of Gethsemane. Oh, what a wrestling was that, when, as it were, the arch-fiend grappled close with Christ and gripped Him so that—

***“That desperate tug His soul might feel,
Through bars of brass and triple steel.”***

It brought the bloody sweat down the Master's face, but He did not relinquish His hold upon the foe and gave him such a fall that he never shall recover the defeat which he sustained amidst the olive trees of Gethsemane! And on the cross, too, when he rallied his forces for the last time and assailed the Spirit of our Lord with all the malice of his infernal nature, there the great Michael, the true archangel, set His foot upon the dragon's head—and though His heel was wounded—yet He broke that head! And the strength of the power of evil is gone forever! Its monarchy is finally destroyed. “The right hand of the Lord,” though it was a pierced hand, “the right hand of the Lord,” though it had grasped a scepter of reed, “does valiantly”! “The right hand of the Lord is exalted.”

The same might be said, but we should go over the same ground, again, if we spoke of *the conquests which our Lord achieved over sin* in every shape and form. It mattered not how it approached Him—He repelled it! He overthrew it as far as He was personally concerned. And when the sins of His people were laid upon Him, oh, brothers and sisters, how dreadful was that hour, but how ought we to look back upon it with devout thankfulness! When the sins of His people came like an avalanche to crush Him, how gloriously did He sustain the load! With what wondrous power of angels did He suffer the wrath of God which was due for the sins of His people—

***“Bore all incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare.”***

And when He had made atonement forever for all His people's sins and brought in everlasting righteousness for all His chosen, and could say, “It is finished”—when He gave up the ghost—then truly the right hand of the Lord was exalted and the right hand of the Lord had done valiantly! Brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus has this day conquered all our sins! There is not a transgression left to accuse His people! There is no record against them in God's book! He has perfected forever them that are set apart. The work is finished! Salvation is complete! The right hand of the Lord has done for us what we could not have done for ourselves! What the angels of heaven would not have been as foolish as to have attempted, the Lord Jesus Christ has most surely completed for all believers! Heaven rings this day with the joyful songs of His triumphant saints who tell how “the right hand of the Lord is exalted.”

Our precious Lord is to be praised in language like our text for having *vanquished death as well as sin*. Satan and sin He overthrew and virtually therein He conquered death. It did not seem as if He would

vanquish death, my brothers and sisters, when He lay in the grave. The image of death was set as with a seal upon His brow! The Lord of life and immortality seemed, and was as really dead as any of the sons of Adam! The three days passed—the appointed time in which He should be, like Jonah, in the bowels of the earth. But on the third day He could not be held by the bonds of death. I think I see Him, like another Samson who had been bound with cords, awakening from His slumber like a strong man refreshed, and He snaps the bonds of death, for it was not possible that He could be held by them! Then the stone was rolled away from the door of the sepulcher and out He came, resplendent in the glory of His resurrection body! From that moment death has been destroyed! Children of God shall pass through the grave, but they cannot be confined in it. “Oh, death, where is your sting? Oh, grave, where is your victory?” Christ has forever taken away the gates of the Gaza of the grave, carried them far away where Satan can never bring them back, and death cannot restore his stronghold. Glorify the ever-living Christ, for His right hand is exalted!

And the same was conspicuously true in the day *when our Lord left this world and rose to the Father*. Our imagination can hardly depict that scene, when they who received Him after the apostles had lost sight of Him, brought His chariot from on high to bear Him to His throne. Oh, what an ascent was that, when flashed the eternal coursers up the celestial hills. For He comes, mighty to save! He went forth to battle, but He comes back from conquest to wear His well-earned renown. Do you not see at His chariot wheels the bound monsters? They must be dragged to the very gates of heaven and then hurled down again! He has led captivity captive and received gifts for men. Oh, in that day of our Lord's ascending up on high, they who gazed upon the matchless spectacle of the returning King of kings must have said, if not in words, yet certainly in sense, “The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”

In those victories, beloved, you and I have a share. Satan was conquered for us! Sin was overcome for us! Death was bound for us—

***“Hell and our sins obstruct our course,
But hell and sin are vanquished foes!
Our Savior nailed them to His cross,
And sang the triumph when He rose.”***

Believe it and be glad of it! All your enemies are overcome! You still have to battle, but you fight with conquered foes. The dragon who is most dreadful to you carries a deadly wound about him. Your sins with which you have to contend from day to day are virtually slain. They have their death wound—they shall not be able to follow you into heaven. Oh, rejoice in your Lord, conquer in His conquests, be victorious in His victory, overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and give Him all the

glory of your triumph! Now, I pass on to note, in the second place, that our text is very applicable to—

II. THE PERPETUAL TRIUMPHS OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST.

The church began with feeble numbers, with small wealth. I might add, with comparatively little talent, but she was clothed with the Holy Spirit—she was, therefore, mighty! Let us just look at the history of the church a minute or two, that our souls may be comforted with the prospect of the like victories in days to come. When first the church was in the world like a new-born child, the dragon vomited forth torrents with the hope of drowning it. You know the rough weapons with which the world assailed the church at first. The sword was unsheathed, prisons were put into use, the rack, unutterable torments, shame, reproach, every infernal art of persecution was pressed into the diabolical service to put down, if possible, the cause and kingdom of Christ in the world. Now, only think for a minute what became of the continued attempts, *the cruel attempts of the world against the church*, for the result conspicuously shows how the right hand of the Lord was exalted! The more they persecuted Israel in Egypt, the more they multiplied—and it was the same with the church of God. They that were persecuted went everywhere preaching the Word. They might have tarried at home, perhaps, and been corn in the garner, but persecution broke down the door and they were thrown, like handfuls of wheat, broadcast over the nations—and everywhere the precious seed sprang up! It was of no use killing the Christians—it was like the killing of the hydra—the cutting off of one head made a hundred fresh ones spring up!

Young men went to see the martyrdom of saints and as they saw their holy patience, they came to be believers themselves, till dying Christians became the most powerful preachers of the gospel and even the saints that believed were comforted by the sight of the death of the martyrs—they went to see how to die, they went to learn the way to give themselves up for Christ! The anvil never smites the hammer in return, but it breaks many hammers. It wears out the hammer. Here is the patience of the saints. God being in His church, she has borne year after year, and God has forborne to avenge her, but she has triumphed! Her weak, feeble maidens and her illiterate men, her sons and her daughters who lifted not a hand in self-defense, have vanquished those that were armed to the teeth and had the power of imperial Rome and of all empires at their back! “The right hand of the Lord,” amidst the hosts of martyrs who wear the ruby crown in heaven today, “is exalted,” for “the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”

Then, at the same time, the church was sent into the world to *combat with the superstitions which existed* in that age and, brothers and sisters, the superstitions of ancient Rome were very attractive, very venerable.

They had existed through long ages. They were interwoven with the daily life of the people. Poetry, art, philosophy, all lent their power to maintain the old heathenism with which the Christian church came in contact. I have no doubt whatever that the *Pontifex Maximus* of the day, if he had been told that in Paul he saw a rival, teaching a religion which would break down all the old altars and the temples of Rome, would have ridiculed the statement. And yet it was so, for where are the gods of old Rome today? Who worships Jupiter today? Who bows before Saturn, father of the gods? Or who pays reverence to Venus or Diana? These have gone—and what has smitten them and broken them in pieces? The stone cut out of the mountain without hands has dashed them all in pieces and broken their power like potters' vessels! And none shall set up these false gods again. Nor was it so in Rome, alone. In all countries, the church of God has had a complete triumph. Weird superstitions woven with stories of magic which alarmed the multitudes have fled like the birds of night before the rising sun! No form of superstition which the enemy has been able to devise has had power to retain its hold where the gospel has been fully preached. The superstition might seem to stand like the eternal hills, but faith has said, "Who are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain," and the mountain of superstition has melted away! "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

But, my brothers and sisters, the church has been *assailed by heresies within herself* and if anything might have destroyed her, surely it would have been these! I will single out but one—the Arian heresy. You that are well read in church history will know how very potent at one time the Arian heresy was in the ancient church. The divinity of our Lord became almost universally denied! He was a great man, a good man, perhaps the best of men, but they said that He was nothing more. It was a grand day when Athanasius declared that Christ was "very God of very God," and, finding himself alone, yet said, "I, Athanasius, against the world." It did seem an unequal combat, for there were monarchs on the side of the Arians—bishops and the power of the then church, as well as the power of the world! But Arianism—where is it now? The pure faith of God has flung it off like drops of rain that are cast off from the housetops and remain not! There may be some sleeping in the dens and corners of the earth, to hide their ignoble heads, but the heresy is dead for any power that it has in the Christian church. And so shall every heresy die. As the eternal God lives, nothing is immortal but the truth of God—nothing is eternal but the gospel! The right hand of the Lord fights not for a lie, but it is lifted up and His arm is made bare for the truth of His Son Jesus Christ! And all along through the pages of church history this is true—that the right hand of the Lord is exalted, and does valiantly in overthrowing error!

But the church had to suffer from something which excelled heresy because it *was the aggregation of heresy, superstition and apostasy*. I mean the spread of Popery. In the Middle Ages the night was sevenfold. There was scarcely light enough for the anxious seeker to see his Lord! And men were crushed by the Inquisition, by the practice of priestly confession, by the domination of priests, bishops and popes. And if any man had then bewailed the absence of the light, as some few did, and an angel had said to him, "Courage, my son. The day shall come in which all this system shall lose its power and the old gospel shall come back"—I can imagine I hear the weeper say, "If the Lord should open windows in heaven, could such a thing be?" But such a thing was! God found the man and gave him a heart of iron and a brow of brass—and Martin Luther's voice was heard ringing across these waters, saying, "Therefore is a man justified by faith, and not by the works of the law." And other voices took up that strain till in regions where that truth of God was an utterly unknown thing, it became familiar to the peasant at the plow and humble men and women, hiding away from the powers that would have destroyed them, cheered one another with the gladness of that gospel sound! Oh, you know, beloved, how God smote the Church of Rome in those days gone by, and as you read the story of the Reformation, you can say, "The right hand of the Lord is exalted."

Now, I shall not detain you with history. I shall bring you to today, for the truth of the olden times is fulfilled in your ears again this day. *Wherever the gospel is preached, the right hand of the Lord is exalted!* We have seen it and, therefore, we speak what we know. If the gospel of Jesus Christ is faithfully preached, no matter by whom—if it is the whole gospel affectionately declared, prayed over, believingly delivered—it will always glorify God's name! I want you to notice in these days how the Lord's hand is exalted in some respects.

First, in this *respect—in awakening the attention of a negligent people* to the gospel. There is nothing in the world that makes so much stir as preaching Christ! You shall preach anything else you like and the people will sleep. But if you will preach Christ out and out simply, in plain Saxon, as Paul would have Him preached, not with wisdom of words, you shall find the people will come together! I know not why it is, but so it is that even those who dislike the gospel will come to hear it! And though sometimes they set their teeth together and curse the men that preach it, yet they come again—they cannot help it. A gospel preacher has charms coming from his lips that bind themselves around men's hearts. And he holds them captives, unwilling at first and afterwards joyful captives, to the power of the word He preaches! There should be little need of advertisements with a simple, plain, bold gospel preacher. You shall put him down a back street, you shall give him a passage down a court, you shall then do nothing more for him but let him speak to a handful of

people—and the first news you will hear of him is that he is eccentric, that he is extraordinary, that he is a fool, that he is a madman! This is always good news! There is a man of God somewhere about when we hear that noise! Straightway people want to hear this enthusiast, this Methodist, this Presbyterian—and they rush to listen—and then it is that there is power felt by the people! They do not know what it is, but there is a something in it which seems to grip their hearts and hold them! It is nothing other than this—that the Lord has said of Christ that if He is lifted up, He will draw all men to Him! And where Christ is lifted up, people will be drawn to hear. They must hear! We need not ask them to come—they must come!. Where His body is, there will the eagles be gathered together! Where the Savior Christ is proclaimed, there shall they come who need to feed upon a Savior! Does philosophy achieve such a triumph as this? You call it a poor triumph. So it may be in itself, but in its ulterior results it is a very great one. There are wise men on the earth that would give their eyes and ears if they could but get the people to listen to them—but where Christ is not preached, there are generally more spiders than there are human souls. Put Unitarianism in the pulpit and you shall soon find how the pews begin to multiply in emptiness! Little else comes of it. A gospel with no gospel has great power of dispersion, but it has little power of attraction—but the gospel of Jesus Christ soon draws a multitude together and, “the right hand of the Lord is exalted.”

But you will still say this is little, and I shall confess it is comparatively little, but mark you, if the gospel is preached, it does not end in coming and going to hear it, for soon that gospel comes like an eagle from afar and pounces down on men's hearts and makes them a prey to its power! They that came to scoff, remain to pray! They that looked in from curiosity, remain to receive the Savior into their hearts! And those who came from enmity become converted into friends! Oh, how the right hand of the Lord was exalted in the days of Whitfield and Wesley! The stories of these two eminent men have been written lately by many loving pens—and I must confess I am always to read the narratives, however they may be written. Though I have read them many times, I can always read them again. Oh, it was wonderful when the whole land was asleep! The Church of England was asleep in the dark and the Dissenters were asleep in the light—but there suddenly arose up a man who dared to stand upon his father's grave in the churchyard and to preach the gospel! And then there came another, a twin seraph, with equal wings, who went into fields and began to proclaim the strange doctrine of faith as a saving grace, the necessity of regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit! Oh, those were brave days—the days of the early Methodists—when the time of the singing of birds was come and the land was full of the power of the Holy Spirit! And it is just so now. Anywhere where the gospel is preached, and preached with the Holy Spirit sent

down from heaven, there are conversions, there are broken hearts, there are spirits held by Jesus' love, there are glad ones consecrating themselves to the Redeemer's service! "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

And we have seen the truth of this in some of the very darkest parts of London. What a wonderful instance of what God's grace can do can be seen by anyone who chooses to see it in such spots as Seven Dials, where God's love has blessed the earnest evangelist; or in Golden Lane, where a dear brother of our own, labors amidst the poverty and sin of the masses. Why, when I have gone there to see my brothers and sisters meet together, the poorest of the poor—fruit sellers, men that were drunks and blasphemers, women that were thieves and harlots—and have heard them sing the praises of Jesus and rejoice in His dear name, I have felt "the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." And so here and all around! I need not quote instances, for you know them better than I do, of how lions are turned into lambs and ravens into doves, and the most unlikely spots in East London—that were deserts, salt lands and not inhabited, that looked as if they were cursed of God—have been made to rejoice and blossom, as the rose, when the preacher of the Gospel has come into the place and His master with him! Oh, yes, "the right hand of the Lord is exalted." But they say the gospel has lost its power. I read the other day that some of us were the echoes of a dead Puritanism that we were not abreast of the age and were preaching a faith that was practically dead! Sirs, they lie in their throats that say so, and some of them know it, for the gospel is no more dead than they are, nor half as much! It lives and lives in all its energy! And they speak not the truth that dare to say it has lost its force. But it is unphilosophical! Hair-splitters do not care about it! Neological divines toss it out as a thing fit for old women! Glory be to God! If it suits old women, it will suit us and all kinds of people! But inasmuch as it is not philosophical according to their declaration, that word of God is fulfilled in our ears, "The foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Then they turn round and say, "But look at those who preach it—uneducated men—men that are not of the higher classes of society, unskilled in the refinements, not able to always give the original word of the Scripture upon which they preach." Yes, sir, and it would be a difficult task for any man to prove that the early triumphs of the gospel owed a solitary jot to education and learning! In looking at the inscriptions in the catacombs a few days ago, when in Rome, I could not help the observation continually coming to my lips that the early Christians must all, or almost all of them, have been so illiterate as scarcely to have been able to write their own names, for the most common words that are upon the slabs of stone that face the graves of

the early Christians are badly spelt—and there are Greek letters and Latin letters intermingled, showing that they hardly knew how to finish a word in one language, but must piece it out with another, not knowing completely either the one or the other! Yes, but it was because God had put His truth into the mouth of babes and sucklings, and established strength, that when the church had conquered by such humble instrumentalities, and the truths of God had been mighty when preached by such simple men, the right hand of the Lord was exalted, for the right hand of the Lord had done it—not the wisdom, nor the craft, nor the energy of man! God's arm was the more conspicuous because of the feebleness of the instrumentality! Much rather, then, will we glory in infirmities, because the power of God does rest upon us, for He it is that does valiantly! But now I must, in the third place, say a few words, and but a few, for time fails us, upon—

III. THE TRIUMPHS OF GRACE IN INDIVIDUALS.

Let us talk together. You remember, some of you who are this day converted, the time *when first the gospel had power over your soul*. I remember how I fought against it. A mother's tears would not move me, nor a father's earnest rebukes. I heard the gospel, sometimes, and I was a little affected by it, but I threw it off! But I shall never forget when it came with power to my soul. I had no shield that could keep off its darts—the arrows of God found a ready way into my conscience—and they seemed to drink my very blood! My wound rankled and was corrupt. My soul refused to be comforted. Then, as I used to go up to my little chamber and bow my knees in prayer and come down more wretched than when I entered it, when I would search the Word of God to find comfort, but could not find it—then it was that he who knew me might have said, “The right hand of the Lord is exalted in that young man, for he was proud and lofty, and self-righteous, but now he lies in the very dust, and wonders that God lets him live, and marvels that there should be a gospel for him, and can only half believe it true that such a wretch as he should ever be saved.” Oh, I wish the Lord would come with power to some self-righteous ones that are here this afternoon! You are as good as your neighbors? Ah, suppose you are condemned with your neighbors, will that help you? To be lost in company is small benefit. Oh, but you have never done anybody any harm? No, except your God—and you have robbed Him of all the praise that was due to Him! And you have lived in this world just as you might have lived if there had been no God! Oh, proud sinner, I cannot bring you down, but God can! Oh, for a blow from the mighty arm to level you and roll you, biting the dust in shame and self-abasement! Some of us know what that means. May you know it, too, and then you will say, though your heart is breaking as you say it, “The right hand of the Lord is exalted! He is good, but I am evil! He is great and I am nothing! He is infinitely holy, but I am shamefully impure!

God be merciful to me a sinner! God save me for His Name's sake." It is in such a thing as this that the right hand of the Lord is exalted.

But let me talk with you further, you that know the Lord. Beloved, do you remember when you sought to escape from the multitude of your sins? Do you recollect when they compassed you about like bees? You could not count your sins—you had forgotten them—they seemed dead and buried, but they all came to life, again, and they swarmed about you! They buzzed about you at your table. They stung you in your sleep, in your dreams. They stung you at your work. You had no peace because of your sins! And do you remember the place, the spot of ground, where you met with Jesus? Some of us recollect it to a yard. We looked to Him upon the cross and the battle was over at once! One look to Jesus, crucified, and the sins that compassed us about were destroyed in the name of the Lord—and the fires that threatened to devour us were quenched as a fire of thorns through the precious blood of Jesus! Do you remember it? Oh, let your soul go back to *your spiritual birthday*. Ring the bells of your heart, again, and hang out the streamers of your soul for that happy day when Jesus washed your sins away! Oh, beloved, that day beyond all others, the right hand of the Lord was exalted; the right hand of the Lord did valiantly for you! It is a grand picture. I should like to see some artist attempt to sketch it, but he certainly must fail. I would like to hear some poet sing it, but I think that he could hardly reach the dignity of the argument. When Miriam and the daughters of Israel took their timbrels and went forth with the song and the dance to sing because Egypt had been destroyed, and Israel was free, do you know the note in that song that pleases me best of all is this, when they said, "The depths have covered them; there is not one of them left." Why, they looked upon the Red Sea and could not see a trace of their foes! And I think I hear them singing it, "The depths have covered them; there is not one, not one," and they answered each other, "Not one, not one, not one of them left." And so when you and I looked to Christ and saw His atoning sacrifice like a mighty sea roll over all our sins—in that blessed day our spirits sang, "The depths have covered them; there is not one, not one, not one of them left." Every sin is gone, every transgression swallowed up in superabounding grace. "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly."

The same has been true, beloved friends, in the many cases in which you and I have had *to overcome our troubles*. What sore afflictions have we passed through! Some to whom I speak, it may be, have had mountains of tribulation. Yes, beloved, but when God has been with you, you have stepped from mountaintop to mountaintop without going down into the valley at all!

And, beloved friends, to close all, where there was much room for great enlargement, let me say, when you and I shall come to die—as soon, thank God, we shall, for it is a subject to be treated of with

thankfulness—we shall find *in our dying moments* that “the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.” I might almost say that I came here from the grave, for it is in truth but a day or so since I went to bury one of the holiest men I ever knew and, I may add, the happiest man I ever saw in all my life! He fell asleep at a good old age, but as I stood by his bedside often in his last illness, I envied him. Covered from head to foot, as he said, with the boils of Job and the sores of Lazarus in one—with all his bones aching as though they were out of joint, yet he said to me—“What a happy thing it is to be here.” And I said, “What a happy thing to be upon a dying bed?” “Yes,” he said, “for I am with God, and God is with me, and Christ is mine and I am His, and it is the happiest day I ever lived.” He had often said that in his lifetime, for I never knew him otherwise than rejoicing in his God. But I was glad to hear him, when his eyes were almost glazed with death, say, “It is the happiest day I ever lived.” And just before he died, instead of expressing any regrets at the pain he was feeling, or at his departure, he turned round and said to his dear ones around the bed, “You seem all changed to me from what you were. I love you, but I have reached a higher stage than things that are seen. I have seen the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off—and I have heard words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” And they said, “Can you not tell us something of what you have seen?” He said, “You must pardon me. I am forbidden to tell you. But henceforth, I have done with all things here below, and I am taken up with the joy and glory of my Lord.” “My bliss is so great,” he said, “it kills me! I cannot live much longer through the excess of joy I feel!” In a few short minutes he had closed his eyes and was with God.

The Negro said of his minister, “Sir, he is dying full of life!” So have I seen them die, full of life—the best of life! And I have then thought, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.” Fear not! The last conflict shall be the chief of your victories this side the river! The Lord bless you and make you a blessing. Amen.

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FEARING AND TRUSTING—TRUSTING AND NOT FEARING

NO. 3362

A SERMON

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ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 15, 1867.

***“Whenever I am afraid,
I will trust in You.”***
Psalm 56:3.

“I will trust, and not be afraid.”
Isaiah 12:2.

I INTEND this evening to have two texts, though I shall not therefore have two sermons and so keep you a double length of time! Our first text, which will suffice to begin with, is in the 56th Psalm, at the 3rd verse—*“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.”*

David was one of the boldest of men. From his youth up, he was noted for his courage. As a youth he went, in simple confidence in God, and attacked the giant Goliath. Throughout life there was no man who seemed to be more at home in wars and battles—and less likely to be afraid. But yet this hero, this courageous man says that he *was* sometimes afraid. And I suppose that there are none of us but must plead guilty to the impeachment that sometimes the brave spirit gives way and that we tremble and are afraid. It is a disease for which the cure is here mentioned, *“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.”* When my soul suffers from the palsy of fear, I will lay hold upon the strong one and get strength from Him—and so my fears shall all be cast out.”

To be afraid is, in some cases, *a very childish thing*. We sometimes expect to see our little children frightened and that they will not bear to be alone in the dark, but we are surely not afraid to be there! The more we are afraid, the more childish we become. Courage is manly, but to be afraid is to be like a child. It is not always so, however, for there are some great and sore dangers which may well make the very boldest man tremble.

To be afraid is always *a distressing thing*. The heart beats quickly and the whole system seems to be thrown out of order. There have been known cases of men who have had to endure severe terror for several hours—and their hair has all turned gray in a single night. No doubt, too, there have been diseases which have brought men to their graves

which have been caused by fright. Fear is always distressing and whether it is the fear of outward danger, or fear of inward sin, it is always a terrible thing to have to go mourning because of being afraid.

And to be afraid, too, is always *a weakening thing*. The man who can keep calm in the midst of difficulty is better able to meet it. If he is at sea in a storm, if his mind is quiet, he is likely to steer his vessel safely through the danger. But if he is perturbed and cast down with agitated alarm, we can have but little confidence in him, for we know not where he may steer the boat! A man who is afraid often runs into worse dangers than those from which he seeks to escape. He plunges himself into the sea to escape from the river—and it is as though he fled from a lion—and a bear met him.

To be afraid, then, is generally a very mischievous thing. And though sometimes exceedingly excusable, yet full often it is also exceedingly dangerous. David, however, here gives us the cure for fear, “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.”

I shall not have time this evening to take all the fears and amazements which distress humanity, but there are four or five which we will mention and which may comprehend the others—

I. SOMETIMES WE ARE AFRAID OF TEMPORAL TROUBLES.

If some of you have such a smooth path in life that you are untried in this respect, yet the great proportion of mankind have a hard fight to find bread to eat and garments with which they shall be clothed. And in the lives of the poor, especially, there must often be sad times when they are afraid lest they should not be able to provide things necessary and should be brought to absolute starvation. Such a fear must very often afflict those who are in extreme poverty. And you, too, who are in business, in this age of competition, you are, no doubt, frequently afraid lest, by a failure in this direction or in that, you should not be able to meet your engagements—and the good ship of your business should drive upon the rocks.

Such fears, I suppose, fall to the lot of all young tradesmen when they are starting in business but, perhaps, there are a few older ones who have done longer and rougher work and are quite free from such times of anxious fear.

And, brothers and sisters, even if we have none of these troubles about what we shall eat and what we shall drink, yet we have our domestic troubles that make us to be much alarmed. It is no small thing to see a child sick, or, still worse, to see your life’s partner gradually fading away and to know, as some do, that the case is beyond all medical skill—and that she, who is so dear, must be taken away.

And you wives, perhaps, are, some of you, dreading the hour when you may become widows and your little children may be fatherless. You have often been afraid as you have looked ahead to the calamity which seemed to overshadow you. God has not made this world to be a nest for us—and if we try to make it such for ourselves—He plants thorns in it so that we may be compelled to mount and find our soul's true home somewhere else, in a higher and nobler sphere than this poor world can give!

Now, whenever we are tried with these temporal affairs, David tells us we are to trust in God. "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You." I will just do this—after having done my best to earn my daily bread and to fight the battle of life, if I find I cannot do all I would, I will throw myself upon the promise of God, wherein He has said, "Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." I will believe that my heavenly Father, who feeds the ravens, will feed me, and that if He does not allow even the gnats that dance in the sunbeam to perish for lack of sustenance, He will not allow a soul that rests upon Him to perish for lack of daily bread. Oh, it is a sweet thing, though, perhaps, you may, some of you, think it a hard thing—it is a sweet thing when God enables you to leave tomorrow with Him and to depend upon your Father who is in heaven!

I speak to the tradesman and all who often have to do business in great waters, who seem to go from waterspout to waterspout and over whom all God's waves and billows seem to go—I believe you will find yourselves much stronger to do battle against these difficulties if it is your constant habit to commit all your cares to Him who cares for you. It will all go wrong with us, even in smooth waters, if we do not have God to be the pilot. And as to rough weather, we shall soon be a wreck if we forget Him! I know of nothing more delightful to the believer than every morning to commit the day's troubles to God and then go down into the world feeling, "Well, my Father knows it all." And then at night to commit the troubles of the day again into the great Father's hands and to feel that He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." It is sweet sleeping when you can have a promise for the pillow at your head! You know, perhaps, the good old story which is told of the woman on board ship who was greatly afraid in a storm, but she saw her husband perfectly at peace and she could not understand it. Her husband said he would tell her the reason, so, snatching up a sword, he pointed it at her heart. She looked at it, but did not tremble. "Well," he said, "are you not afraid? The sword is sharp and I could kill you in a moment." "No," she said, "because it is in your hands!" "Ah," he replied, "and that is why I

am not afraid—because the storm is in my Father’s hands and He loves me more than I love you!”

A little child was at play in a lower room and as he played away by himself, amusing himself, about every ten minutes he ran to the foot of the stairs and called out, “Mother, are you there?” and his mother answered, “Yes, I am here,” and the little lad went back to his sport and fun—and was as happy as happy could be—and until again it crossed his mind that his mother might have gone. So he ran to the stairs again and called, “Mother, are you there?” “All right,” she said, and as soon as he heard her voice again, back he went once more to his play. It is just so with us. In times of temporal trouble we go to the mercy-seat in prayer and we say, “Father, are You there? Is it Your hand that is troubling me? Is it Your providence that has sent me this difficulty?” And as soon as you hear the voice which says, “It is I,” you are no longer afraid! Oh, happy are they who, when they are afraid in this way, trust in the Lord!

A second great fear, through which some of you have never passed, but through which all must pass who enter into heaven, is a—

II. FEAR CONCERNING THE GUILT OF PAST SIN.

Do not tell me with regard to temporal troubles that they are sharp and bitter! Believe me, that trouble for sin is far more bitter and keen. Do you remember when God was pleased to awaken you from your long sleep—when you looked within and saw that you were all defiled, full of pollution and all manner of evil? Do you recollect how the thoughts pierced you like poisoned arrows—“God requires that which is pure.” “For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof at the day of judgment”? Do you recollect how it seemed as though hell flared up right before you where you stood and it seemed as though there was only a step between you and death! The terrors of the Lord got hold upon you, and the very marrow of your bones seemed to freeze as you thought about an angry God and of how you, in your sins, without any preparation, could meet Him! Oh, it is not so long ago with some of us but what we recollect being startled in our sleep under a sense of sin! And all day long the common joys of men were no joys to us, and though before we had been sprightly and cheerful like others—yet our mirth was now turned into mourning and all our laughter into lamentation!

Perhaps some of you are passing through this state of mind now. You are now conscious of your old sins. The sins of your youth are coming up before your remembrance. Now, if so, listen to what David says, “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.” Beloved, if you would ever get rid of the fear of your past sins, remember that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to suffer for the sins of all who will trust Him. All the

sins of all His people were reckoned as upon Him and all that they should have suffered on account of those sins, Jesus Christ suffered in their place! The mighty debt, too huge for us to calculate, was all laid upon Him and He paid it to the last farthing! He was sued and summoned at the court of the eternal justice, for the sins of His people were reckoned as upon Him—and all that they should have rendered with hands and feet, and brow and side, He discharged—the whole tremendous debt that was due to God, the debt caused by the sins of all His people were paid by Him!

Now, it is a blessed thing when sin burdens us to fly away to Christ and stand in spirit beneath the cross—and feel that under that crimson canopy, no flash of divine penalty shall ever fall upon us! “Smite me? Great God, You cannot, for have You not smitten the redeeming Christ on my account? Is it not recorded that for those who trust Him, Your Son is both surety and substitute? How, then, can You first sue the substitute and then afterwards sue the person for whom the substitute stood?” Faith thus clings to the cross and feels, no—*knows*—that all is safe! I would God that some of you who are lamenting over the burden of your sins and are pressed down by it, would look to the Son of God pouring out His life and would trust Him, for then your sins would be gone in a moment! Only look on Jesus and though you had committed all the sins that are committable by mortal man, yet Jesus Christ can put them all away! If every form of iniquity were heaped upon you till you were dyed through and through with it, like the scarlet that has been lying long a-soak in the dye, yet let the crimson blood of Jesus come into contact with your crimson sins and they—

**“Shall vanish all away,
Though foul as hell before!
Shall be dissolved beneath the sea,
And shall be found no more!”**

Now, I know it is very easy when we do not feel our sins to trust in Christ, but the business of faith is to trust in Christ when you *do* feel your sins! Brothers and sisters, it would be cheap faith to take Christ as the saints’ Savior, but it is the faith of God’s elect to take Him as the *sinner’s* Savior. When I can see marks of grace in myself, to trust Christ is easy—but when I see no marks of anything good, but every mark of everything that is evil and then come and cast myself upon Him and believe that He can save me, even me, and rest myself upon Him—this is the faith which honors Christ and which will save us! May you have it and such time as you are afraid of sin, may you trust in Christ! A third fear, which is remarkably common, is a—

III. FEAR LEST WE SHOULD BE DECEIVED.

Among the best and most careful of believers this fear intrudes itself, “Lest, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” Lest, after having been united to the church, I should prove to be a dead member and so be cut out of the living vine. All these fears have I met with. One has said, “I fear I was never chosen of God.” Another has said, “I fear I never was effectually called.” And yet a third has said, “I fear I never possessed the repentance that needs not to be repented of.” Still others have confessed, “I am afraid my faith is not the faith of God’s elect.” Very frequently have I heard this, “I am afraid I am a hypocrite,” which is one of the oddest fears in the entire world, for nobody that *is* a hypocrite was ever afraid of it! It is the hypocrite who goes on peacefully, without fear, confident where there is no ground for confidence. But these fears abound and, in some respects, they are healthy. Better to go to heaven doubting, than to hell presuming! Better to enter into life crippled and maimed, than having two eyes and hands, and feet, to be cast into the destroying fire! We cannot say too much in praise of assurance—and we cannot speak too much against presumption. Dread that! Shun it with all your might!

But when you and I are besieged by these doubts and fears—and I very often am—as to whether we are the children of God or not, what is the best thing for us to do? “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.” This is the shortcut with the devil! This is the way to cut off his head more readily than anyway else. Go straight to Christ! Do not stop to argue with Satan. He is a crafty old liar and he will be sure to defeat you if it comes to argument between you. Say to him, “Satan, if I am deceived, if all I have ever known up till now has been only head knowledge, if I am nothing but a mere hypocrite, yet now—

***“Black, I to the fountain fly
Wash me, Savior, or I die!”***

It is a blessed thing to begin again—to be always beginning and yet always going on—for no man ever goes on to perfection who forgets his first love, his first faith and forgets to walk in Christ Jesus as he walked in Him at the first!

Beloved, whatever may be the doubt that comes to you tonight, I beseech you remember it is still, “Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” If you have been a backslider, weep over it. If you have been a great sinner, be sorry for it, but still remember, “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” And, “Where sin abounded, grace does much more abound.” The gospel’s voice is still, “Return, you backsliding children, for I am married unto you, says the Lord.” “Come, now, let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson, they

shall be whiter than snow.” Come, come, come, you doubting ones, trembling and broken to pieces! Come again—a guilty, weak and helpless worm—and cast yourself into Jesus’ arms!

But we cannot tarry upon that. A fourth fear, which is frequent enough to cause Christians much distress, is—

IV. A FEAR THAT WE SHALL NOT HOLD ON AND HOLD OUT TO THE END.

Many thousands of God’s saints are quite unnecessarily troubled with this. Remember that where God begins to work, He does not ask *us* to finish. He always completes His own work. If you have begun the work of salvation, you will have to carry it on, but if God has begun the good work in you, He will carry it on and bring it to its perfection of completeness in “the day of Christ.” Yet there are thousands who say, “Should I be tempted, I might fall! Working as I do with so many others, none of whom fear God, but who sneer and ridicule at divine things, I might, perhaps, turn aside and prove like one of them.” It is very proper that you should have that fear, very proper that you should be distressed at it—

***“What anguish has that question stirred,
If I should also go!”***

But, dearly beloved, what time you are afraid, do not say, “I shall be able to hold out”—do not trust in yourselves, or you will trust a broken reed—but what time you are afraid, renew your trust in Christ! Go with the temptation which you now experience and which you expect to return tomorrow, to the Lord and He will, with the temptation, show the way of escape out of it. I remember a miner who had been a sad, drunken man, and a great blasphemer, but he was converted among the Methodists—and a right earnest man he was! But he seemed to have been a man of strong passions and, on one occasion when he was praying, he prayed that sooner than that he might ever go back to his old sins, if God foresaw that he would not be able to bear up under the temptation, He would take him to heaven at once! And while he was praying the prayer in the prayer-meeting, he fell dead! God had answered him. Now, if you are to be tried in the order of providence in a way that you cannot bear and there is no other way of escape for you, God will take you clean away to where no temptation shall ever come near you! What time you are afraid, put your trust in Him and all will be well!

The last fear I have to mention, and then I shall have done with my first text, is this—

V. THE FEAR OF DEATH.

There are some “who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage.” But Christ came to deliver such—and where Christ

works, He delivers us from that fear! Beloved, do you ever get afraid of death? You do, perhaps, when you feel very sick or when you are very ill and low spirited. You begin to look ahead and you say, “I have run with the footmen and they have wearied me. What shall I do when I have to contend with the rider on the pale horse? My trials have been so great that I have scarcely found faith enough to bear them! What shall I do in the last great trial of the swellings of Jordan?” Now, what ought you to do at the time you are afraid of dying, but to say with David, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in You”? Oh, fear not to die! If you are in Christ, death is nothing! “But the pain, the dying struggle,” you say. Oh, there is no pain in death! It is the life that is full of pain. Death? What is it? Well, it is but a pin’s prick, and then it is over. “Many lie a-dying for weeks or months together,” say some. No! Say they *live*, for ‘tis living that makes them full of pain and anguish, but death ends all that! Death is just the passing through the narrow stream that is the entrance in the fields where—

***“Everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers.”***

To be afraid to die must be because we do not understand it, for if believers know that to die is but to enter into the arms of Jesus Christ, surely they will be able to sing bravely with one good old saint—

***“Since Jesus is mine, I’ll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off this garment of clay!
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory, through death, led the way!”***

What time you are afraid of dying, trust in the living Savior, for in Him are life and immortality! Remember—

***“Jesus can make our dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast we lean our head,
And breathe our life out softly there.”***

He will keep you where you shall sing—

***“Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul would stretch her wings in haste—
Fly fearless through death’s iron gate,
Nor fear the terror as she passed.”***

You shall fear no fear and know no evil because He shall be with you! And you shall find that His rod and His staff do comfort you!

Now, brothers and sisters, I have taken you far, like a guide conducting a number of travelers up the first road on a mountain. And I think we have gathered something even there, but now I want you to go up still higher. I feel as if, in handling this text, we have been traveling third class to heaven, but now I want you to get into the first class!

Hitherto we have been going in a sort of parliamentary train, which will get to heaven safe enough, but I want you now to take the express.

My second text will let you know what I mean. It is in the 12th chapter of Isaiah and the 2nd verse—*“I will trust and not be afraid.”*

This is several stages beyond the first text. David says, “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.” Isaiah says, “I will trust and not be afraid,” which is far better! When David is afraid, He trusts in God, but Isaiah trusts in God, first, and then he is not afraid at all! I told you in the first case that there was disease, and that faith was the remedy, but you know prevention is always better than cure. I have heard of a man who had serious chills and he was thankful to have a medicine which helped him through it. But his neighbor said he should not be very thankful for that, for he had a remedy which prevented him from ever having the malady! So with you who are doubting and fearing—it is a good thing that faith can bear you through it—but how much better it will be if you get a faith that does not have these doubts, that lives above these fears and troubles!

Look! There are two vessels yonder, and a storm is coming on. I see a great hurrying and scurrying on the deck of one. What are they doing? They have a great anchor and they are throwing it out! The storm is coming and they want to get a good hold, for fear lest they should be driven on the shore.

But on the deck of the other vessel, I see no bustle at all. There is the watch pacing up and down as leisurely as possible. Why are they not in a panic? “Ahoy there! Ahoy! What makes you so calm and assured? Have you got out your anchor? Look! Your comrades in the other vessel, how busy they are!” “Oh,” says the watch, “but we had our anchor out a long while ago, before the storm came on and, therefore, we have no need to trouble, now, and hurry to throw it out.”

Now, you who are full of doubts, fears and troubles, you know the way to be safe is to throw out the anchor of faith! But it would be better if you had the anchor of faith already out so that you could trust in God and not be afraid at all!

Let us take the fears which we have already mentioned over again. Faith saves from—

I. THE FEAR OF TEMPORAL TROUBLE.

The man who fully trusts in God is not afraid of temporal trouble. You have read, perhaps, the life of Bernard Palissy, the famous potter. He was confined for many years on account of his religion, and he was only permitted to live at all because he was such a skillful workman that they did not want to put him to death. King Henry the Third of France said to him, one day, “Bernard, I shall be obliged to give you up to your enemies

to be burned unless you change your religion.” Bernard replied, “Your Majesty, I have often heard you say you pity me, but believe me I greatly pity you, though I am no king but only a poor humble potter. There is no man living that could compel me to do what I believe to be wrong—and yet you say you will be compelled—those are kingly words for you to utter!” And he could say this to the king, in whose hands his life was! Bernard was a very poor man. As I have told you, he used to earn his bread by making pottery. And he used to say, in his poverty, that he was a very rich man, for he had two things—he had heaven and earth. And then he would take up a handful of the clay by which he earned his living. Happy man! Though often brought to the depths of poverty, he could say, “I will trust, and not be afraid.”

Take as another example. Martin Luther. They came to Martin one day and they said, “Martin, it is all over with the Reformation cause, now, for the Emperor of Germany has sworn a solemn oath to help the pope.” “I do not care a snap of my finger for both of them,” he said, “nor for all the devils in hell! This is God’s work, and God’s work can stand against both emperors and popes!” Luther was a man who trusted—really, intensely—and because of this he was not afraid. Is not that much better than being afraid, and then having to trust to banish the fear? Now, God is with me, and come what may—

***“Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled.
Now I can smile at Satan’s rage,
And face a frowning world.
Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall—
I shall in safety reach my home,
My God, my heaven, my all.”***

Oh, if we can all get to this brave assurance of faith, happy shall we be in the midst of the worst trouble! Faith also saves from the—

II. FEAR CONCERNING PAST SIN.

He is in a blessed state who is delivered from such fear because he who is not is not afraid. One of you knows a man, perhaps, who has got into debt and who owed a great deal. But some little time ago a friend paid all his debts for him—and he has the receipt! Now, when he walks the streets, is this man afraid of the sheriff’s officer? Does he fear that he shall be arrested? Why, no! He knows he shall not, because he carries the receipt with him! Every man who trusts Christ perceives his own sin, but he also perceives that Christ paid for all his sin. He that believes has the witness of his pardon in himself which he carries with him as a receipt and which eases his conscience and prevents his fears. Oh, if you can but know that Christ died for you! If you can but rest alone in Him

so as to know that He is yours, then all the sins that you have ever committed, though you lament them, shall never cause you a moment's uneasiness, for they are drowned beneath the Red Sea of the Savior's blood and, therefore, you may say, "I will trust and not be afraid." As to that third fear which I mentioned—the fear lest we should be hypocrites, or—

III. LEST THE WORK OF GRACE SHOULD NOT BE RIPENED IN OUR HEARTS—

There is one way of getting rid of that fear entirely! If you take a sovereign across the counter, you may not know whether it is a good one—you may have some doubts about it. But if you get it straight from the Mint, I do not suppose you will have any suspicion of it at all! So when a man asks, "Is my faith right? Is my religion right?" If he can say, "I got it straight from the throne of God by trusting in the blood of Jesus Christ"—then he will know that he received it from headquarters—and there can be no mistake about it! A Christian has no right to be always saying—

***"Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"***

He may be compelled to say it, sometimes, but it is far better for him to come just as he is and throw himself at the foot of the cross and say, "Savior, You have promised to save those that believe! I believe, therefore You have saved me!" I know some think this is presumption, but surely it is worse than presumption not to believe God! And it is true humility to take God at His word and to believe Him.

I think I once illustrated this truth of God in this place in this way. A good mother has two children. Christmas is drawing near and she says to one of them, "Now, John, I shall take you out on Christmas day to such a place and give you a great treat." She promises the same to William. Now, Master John says to himself, "Well, I do not know. I do not know whether my mother can afford it. Or perhaps I do not deserve it. I hardly think she will take me—it will be presumption in me to believe that she will."

But as for little Master William, he is no sooner told that he is to go out on Christmas day than he claps his hands and begins to skip—and tomorrow tells all his playmates that his mother is going to take him out on Christmas day! He is quite sure of it. They begin to ask him, "How do you know?" "Why," he says, "Mother said so." Perhaps they mention some things that make it look rather unlikely. "Oh, but," he says, "my mother never tells lies and she told me she would take me, and I know she will!" Now, which of those children, do you think, is most to be commended—the bigger boy, who raised difficulties and suspected his

mother's word? Why, he is a proud little fellow who deserves to go without the pleasure! But as for his little brother, William, who takes his mother at her word—I do not call him proud. I consider him truly humble—and he is the child who really deserves the mother's fondest love! Now, deal with God as you would have your children deal with you! If He says He will save you if you trust Him, then if you trust Him, why, He will save you! If He is a true God, He cannot destroy the soul that trusts in Christ! Unless this Bible is one great lie from beginning to end, the soul that trusts in Christ must be saved! If God is true, every soul that trusts in Jesus must be safe at the last. Whatever he may be and whoever he may be, if he trusts his soul with Christ and with Christ, alone, He cannot be cast away unless the promise of God can be of no effect! "I will trust and not be afraid."

So, brothers and sisters, it will be with other fears—time fails us to mention them—whatever they may be. May you get into such a blessed state of confidence in the love of God, in the love of Christ's heart, in the power of Christ's arm, in the prevalence of Christ's plea, that at all times you may trust in Him and in nothing, whatever, be afraid!

God bring us all up to this second platform and give us divine grace to stay there—and happy shall you be and have a foretaste of heaven upon earth! Amen.

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WITNESSING AT THE CROSS

NO. 3363

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 17, 1913,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And one of the malefactors who was hanged, railed on Him, saying, If you are Christ, save Yourself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in paradise.”
Luke 23:39-43.

THE dying thief was certainly a very great wonder of divine grace. He has generally been looked upon from one point of view only—as a sinner called at the eleventh hour and, therefore, an instance of special mercy because he was so near to death. Enough has been made of that circumstance by others! To my mind, it is by no means the most important point in the narrative. Had the thief been predestined to come down from the cross and live for half a century longer, his conversion would have been neither more nor less than it was. The work of grace which enabled him to die in peace would, if it had been the Lord’s will, have enabled him to live in holiness. We may well admire divine grace when it so speedily makes a man fit for the bliss of heaven! But it is equally to be adored when it makes him ready for the battle of earth. To bear a saved sinner away from all further conflict is great grace. But the power and love of God are, if anything, even more conspicuous when, like a sheep surrounded by wolves, or a spark in the midst of the sea, a believer is enabled to live on in the teeth of an ungodly world and maintain his integrity to the end! Dear friend, whether you die as soon as you are born-again, or remain on earth for many years is comparatively a small matter—and will not materially alter your indebtedness to divine grace! In the one case the great Husbandman will show how He can bring His flowers speedily to perfection. And in the other He will prove how He can preserve them in blooming beauty despite the frosts and snows of earth’s cruel winter! In either case your experience will reveal the same love and power.

There are other things; it seems to me, to be seen in the conversion of the thief besides the one single matter of his being brought to know the Lord when near to death’s door.

Observe the singular fact that our Lord Jesus Christ should die in the company of two malefactors. It was probably planned in order to bring Him shame and it was regarded by those who cried, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” as an additional ignominy. Their malice decreed that He

should die as a criminal and *with* criminals—and in the center, between two—to show that they thought Him the worst of the three. But God, in His own way, baffled the malice of the foe and turned it to the triumph and glory of His dear Son, for had there been no dying thief hanging at His side, then one of the most illustrious trophies of His love would not have been gained! And we would not have been able to sing to His praise—

***“The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day—
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away!”***

His enemies gave our Lord Jesus an opportunity for still continuing the seeking, as well as the saving of the lost! They found Him an occasion for manifesting His conquering grace when they supposed they were heaping scorn upon Him. How truly did the prophet in the Psalm say, “He that sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision,” for that which was meant to increase His misery revealed His majesty! Moreover, though it was intended to add an ingredient of bitterness to His cup, I do not doubt that it supplied Him with a draught of comfort. Nothing could so well have cheered the heart of Jesus and taken His mind off, for just an instant, His own bitter pangs, as having an object of pity before Him, upon whom He could pour His mercy! The thief’s confession of faith and expiring prayer must have been music to his Savior’s ears—the only music which could in any degree delight Him amid His terrible agonies. To hear and to answer the prayer, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom,” afforded our Lord a precious solace. An angel strengthened Him in the garden, but here it was a man, nailed up at His side, who ministered consolation by the indirect, but very effective method of seeking help at His hands.

Furthermore, the long-continued testimony and witness for Christ among men was at that time exceedingly feeble and ready to expire, but the thief’s confession maintained it. The apostles, where were they? They had fled. Those disciples who ventured near enough to see the Lord, scarcely remained within speaking distance. They were poor confessors of Christ, scarcely worthy of the name! Was the chain of testimony to be broken? Would none declare His sovereign power? No, the Lord will never let that testimony cease, and lo, He raises up a witness where least you would expect it—on a cross! One just ready to die bears witness to the Redeemer’s innocence and to His assured coming to a kingdom! As many of the boldest testimonies to Christ have come from the stake, so here was one that came from a cross and gained for the witness the honor of being the last testifier to Christ before He died!

Let us always expect, then, dear friends, that God will overrule the machinations of the foes of Christ so as to get honor from them. At all times of the world’s history, when things appear to have gone to pieces and Satan seems to rule the hour, do not let us despair, but be quite sure that, somehow or other, the light of God will come out of darkness and good out of evil!

We will now come close up to the dying thief and look, first, at *his faith*; secondly, at *his confession of faith*; thirdly, at *his prayer of faith*; and fourthly, at *the answer of his faith*. First, then, may the Holy Spirit help us concerning this dying malefactor, to consider—

I. HIS FAITH.

It was of the operation of the Spirit of God and there was *nothing in his previous character to lead up to it*. How came that thief to be a believer in Jesus? You who carefully read the gospels will have noticed that Matthew says (Matt 27:44), “The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth.” Mark also says, “They that were crucified with Him reviled Him.” These two evangelists plainly speak of both thieves as reviling our Lord! How are we to understand this? Would it be right to say that those two writers speak in broad terms of the thieves as a class because one of them so acted, just as we in common conversation speak of a company of persons doing such-and-such, when, in fact, the whole matter was the deed of one man of the party? Was it a loose way of speaking? I think not! I do not like the look of suppositions of error in the inspired volume. Would it not be more reverent to the Word of God to believe that the thieves did both revile Jesus? May it not be true that, at the first, they both joined in saying, “If you are the Christ, save Yourself and us,” but that afterwards, one, by a miracle of sovereign grace, was led to a change of mind and became a believer? Or would this third theory meet the case—that at the first the thief who afterwards became a penitent, having no thought upon the matter, by his silence gave consent to his fellow’s reviling so as fairly to come under the charge of being an accomplice therein—but when it gradually dawned upon his mind that he was under error as to this Jesus of Nazareth, it pleased God in Infinite Mercy to change his mind so that he became a confessor of the truth of God, though he had at first silently assented to the blasphemy of his companion? It would be idle to dogmatize, but we will gather this lesson from it—that faith may enter the mind, notwithstanding the sinful state in which the man is found. Grace can transform a reviling thief into a penitent believer!

Neither do we know the outward means which led to this man’s conversion. We can only suppose that he was affected by seeing the Lord’s patient demeanor, or, perhaps, by hearing that prayer, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Surely there was enough in the sight of the crucified Lord with the blessing of God’s Spirit to turn a heart of stone into flesh! Possibly the inscription over the head of our Lord may have helped him—“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Being a Jew, he knew something of the Scriptures, and putting all the facts together, may he not have seen in the prophecies a light which gathered around the head of the sufferer and revealed Him as the true Messiah? Possibly the malefactor remembered Isaiah’s words, “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.” Or, perhaps, the saying of David, in the 22nd

Psalm rushed upon his memory, "They pierced My hands and My feet." Other texts which he had learned in his youth at his mother's knee may have come before his mind—and putting all these together, he may have argued, "It may be. Perhaps it is. It is. It must be. I am sure it is. It is the Messiah, led as a lamb to the slaughter." All this is but our supposition and it leads me to remark that there is much faith in this world which comes, "not with observation," but is worked in men by unknown instrumentalities. And so long as it really exists, it matters very little how it entered the heart, for in every case it is the work of the Holy Spirit! The *history* of faith is of small importance compared with the *quality* of faith!

We do not know the origin of this man's faith, but we do know that *it was amazing faith under the circumstances*. I very gravely question whether there was ever greater faith in this world than the faith of this thief, for he, beyond all others, realized the painful and shameful death of the Lord Jesus and yet believed! We hear of our Lord's dying upon the cross, but we do not realize the circumstances and, indeed, even if we were to think upon that death very long and intently, we shall never realize the shame, weakness and misery which surrounded our Lord as that dying thief did, for he was suffering the pangs of crucifixion at the Savior's side and, therefore, to him it was no fiction, but a vivid reality! Before him was the Christ in all His nakedness and ignominy surrounded by the mocking multitude—and dying in pain and weakness—and yet he believed Him to be Lord and King! What do you think, sirs? Some of you say you find it hard to believe in Jesus, though you know that He is exalted in the highest heavens. But had you seen Him on the cross. Had you seen His marred countenance and emaciated body, could you then have believed on Him and said, "Lord remember me when you come into Your kingdom"? Yes, you could have done so if the Spirit of God had created faith in you like that of the thief! But it would have been faith of the first order, a jewel of priceless value! As I said before, so I say again—the vivid sympathy of the thief with the shame and suffering of the Lord rendered his faith remarkable in the highest degree!

This man's faith, moreover, was singularly clear and decided. He rolled his whole salvation upon the Lord Jesus and said, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." He did not offer a single plea fetched from his works, his present feelings, or his sufferings—he cast himself upon the generous heart of Christ! "You have a kingdom—You are going to it. Lord, remember me when You come into it." That was all. I wish that some who have been professors for years had as clear a faith as the thief—but they are too often confused between law and gospel, works and grace—while this poor felon trusted in nothing but the Savior and His mercy. Blessed be God for clear faith! I rejoice to see it in such a case as this, so suddenly worked and yet so perfect—so outspoken, so intelligent, so thoroughly restful!

That word, "restful," reminds me of a lovely characteristic of his faith, namely, *its deep peace-giving power*. There is a world of rest in Jesus in

the thief's prayer, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." A thought from Christ is all he needed! And after the Lord said, "Today shall you be with Me in paradise," we never read that the petitioner said another word. I did think that, perhaps, he would have said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord for that sweet assurance. Now I can die in peace." But his gratitude was too deep for words and his peace so perfect that calm silence seemed most in harmony with it. Silence is the thaw of the soul, though it is the frost of the mouth—and when the soul flows most freely, it feels the inadequacy of the narrow channel of the lips for its great water floods—

"Come, then, expressive silence, muse His praise."

He asked no alleviation of pain, but in perfect satisfaction died as calmly as saints do in their beds!

This is the kind of faith which we must all have if we would be saved. Whether we know how we come by it or not; it must be a faith which rolls itself upon Christ, and a faith which consequently brings peace to the soul. Do you possess such faith, dear friend? If you do not, remember that you may die all of a sudden, and then into paradise you will never enter! Look well to this and believe in the Lord Jesus at once! And now in the second place, we are going to look at this man's—

II. CONFESSION OF FAITH.

He had faith and he confessed it. He could neither be baptized nor sit at the communion table, nor unite with the church below. He could not do any of those things which are most right and proper on the part of other Christians, but he did the best he could under the circumstances to confess his Lord!

He confessed Christ, first of all, almost of necessity, because *a holy indignation made him speak out*. He listened for a while to his brother thief, but while he was musing, the fire burned and then spoke he with his tongue, for he could no longer bear to hear the innocent sufferer reviled. He said, "Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man has done nothing amiss." Did this poor thief speak out so bravely and can some of you silent Christians go up and down the streets and hear men curse and blaspheme the name of Christ—and not feel stirred in spirit to defend His cause? While men are so loud in their reviling, can you be quiet? The stones you tread on may well cry out against you! If all were Christians and the world teemed with Jesus' praise, we might, perhaps, afford to be silent. But, amidst abounding superstition and loud-mouthed infidelity, we are bound to show our colors and avow ourselves on Christ's side! We doubt not that the penitent thief would have owned his Lord apart from the railing of his comrade, but as it happened, that reviling was the provoking cause. Does no such cause arouse *you*? Can you play the coward at such a time as this?

Observe next, that *he made a confession to an unsympathetic ear*. The other thief does not seem to have made any kind of reply to him, but it is

feared that he died in sullen unbelief. The believing thief made his confession where he could not expect to gain approval, yet he made it none the less clearly. How is it that some dear friends who love the Lord have never confessed their faith even to their Christian brothers and sisters? You know how glad we would be to hear of what the Lord has done for you, but yet we have not heard it! There is a mother who would be so happy if she did but know that her boy was saved, or that her girl was converted—and you have refused her that joy by your silence! This poor thief spoke for Jesus to one who did not enter into his religious experience—and you have not even told yours to those who would have communed with you and rewarded you with comfort and instruction! I cannot understand cowardly lovers of Christ! How you manage to smother your love so long, I cannot tell. Love is usually like a cough, which speaks for itself, or a candle which must be seen, or a sweet perfume which is its own revealer! How is it that you have been able to conceal the day which has dawned in your hearts? What can be your motive for coming to Jesus only by night? I cannot understand your riddle and I hope you will explain it away. Do confess Jesus if you love Him, for He bids you do it and says, “He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in heaven.”

Observe well that this poor thief’s confession of faith *was attended with a confession of sin*. Though he was dying a most horrible death by crucifixion, yet he confessed that he was suffering justly. “We, indeed, justly.” He made his confession not only to God, but to men, justifying the law of his country under which he was then suffering. True faith confesses Christ and, at the same time, confesses its sin. There must be repentance of sin and acknowledgment of it before God if faith is to give proof of its authenticity. A faith that never had a tear in its eye, or a blush on its cheek, is not the faith of God’s elect! He who never felt the burden of sin, never felt the sweetness of being delivered from it! This poor thief is as clear in the avowal of his own guilt as in his witness to the Redeemer’s innocence! Reader, could we say the same of you?

The thief’s confession of faith *was exceedingly honoring to the Lord Jesus Christ*. He confessed that Jesus of Nazareth had done nothing amiss—when the crowd around the cross were condemning Him with speech and gesture! He honored Christ by calling Him, Lord, while others mocked Him. He honored Christ by believing in His kingdom even while Jesus was dying on the cross and by entreating Him to remember him though he was in the agonies of death. Do you say that this was not much? Well, I will make bold to ask many a professor whether he could honestly say that throughout the whole of his life he has done as much to honor Christ as this poor thief did in those few minutes! Some of you certainly have not, for you have never confessed Him at all! And others have confessed Him in such a formal manner that there was nothing in it. Oh, there have been times when, had you played the man and said right straight out, in the midst of a ribald crew, “I do believe in Him whom you scoff and I know the sweetness of that dear name which you

trample under foot,” you might have been the means of saving many souls—but you were silent and whispered to yourself that prudence was the better part of valor and so you allowed the honor of your Master to be trailed in the mire! Oh, had you, my sister, taken your stand in the family—had you said, “You may do what you will, but as for me, I will serve the Lord”—you might have honored God far more than you have done, for I fear you have been living in a halting, hesitating style, giving way to a great deal which you knew was wrong, not bearing your protest, not rebuking your brother in his iniquity, but studying your own peace and comfort instead of seeking the Redeemer’s glory! We have heard people talk about this dying thief as if he never did anything for his Master, but let me ask the Christian church if it has not members in its midst—gray-haired members, too, who have never, through 50 years of profession, borne one such bravely honest and explicit testimony for Christ as this man did while he was agonizing on a cross? Remember, the man’s hands and feet were tortured and he was suffering from that natural fever which attends upon crucifixion! His spirit must have melted within him with his dying grief—and yet he was as bold in rebuke, as composed in prayer, and as calm in spirit as if he were suffering nothing! And thus he reflected much glory upon his Lord.

One other point about this man’s confession is worthy of notice, namely, that he *was evidently anxious to change the mind of his companion*. He rebuked him and he reasoned with him. Dear friends, I must again put a personal question. Are there not many professing Christians who have never manifested a tithe as much anxiety for the souls of others as this thief felt? You have been a church member 10 years, but did you ever say as much to your brother as this dying thief said to the one who was hanging near him? Well, you have meant to do so. Yes, but did you ever do it? You reply that you have been very glad to join others in a meeting. I know that, too, and so far so good! But did you ever personally say as much to another as this dying man did to his old companion? I fear that some of you cannot say so. I, for my part, bless and magnify the grace of God which gave this man one of the sweet fruits of the Spirit, namely, holy charity towards the soul of another so soon after he, himself, had come to believe in Jesus! May we, all of us, have it yet more and more! So much for the confession of his faith. Now a little, in the third place, about—

III. HIS PRAYER OF FAITH.

“Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” He *addressed the dying Savior as divine*. Wonderful faith this, to call Him Lord who was “a worm and no man,” and was hanging there upon the cross to die! What shall we say of those who, now that He is exalted in the highest heavens, yet refuse to acknowledge His deity? This man had a clearer knowledge of Christ than they have! The Lord take the scales from their eyes and make them pray to Jesus as divine!

He prayed to Him, also, as having a kingdom. That needed faith, did it not? He saw a dying man in the hands of His foes nailed to the cross—

and yet he believed that He would come into a kingdom! He knew that Jesus would die before long, the marks of the death-agony were upon Him—and yet he believed that He would come to a kingdom! O glorious faith! Dear friend, do you believe in Christ's kingdom? Do you believe that He reigns in heaven and that He will come a second time to rule over all the earth? Do you believe in Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords? Then pray to Him as such, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." May God give you the faith which set this thief a praying in so excellent a fashion!

Observe that *his prayer was for a spiritual blessing only*. The other thief said, "Save Yourself and us!" He meant, "Save us from this cross. Deliver us from the death which now threatens us!" He sought temporal benefits, but this man asked only to be remembered by Christ in His kingdom. Do your prayers run that way, dear friends? Then I bless the Lord that He has taught you to seek eternal, rather than temporal blessings! If a sick man cares more for pardon than for health, it is a good sign. Soul mercies will be prized above all others where faith is in active exercise.

Observe how humbly he prays. He did not ask for a place at Christ's right hand. He did not, in fact, ask the Lord to do *anything* for him, but only to "remember" him. Yet that, "remember," is a great word and he meant much by it. "Do give a thought to Your poor companion who now confesses his faith in You. Do in Your glory dart one recollection of Your love upon poor me and think on me for good." It was a very humble prayer and all the sweeter for its lowliness. It showed his great faith in Jesus, for he believed that even to be remembered by Him would be enough. "Give me but the crumbs that fall from Your table, and they shall suffice me. But a thought, Lord Jesus, but one thought from Your loving mind, and that shall satisfy my soul."

Did not his prayer drip with faith as a honeycomb with honey? It seems to me as if it laid soaking in his faith till it was saturated through and through with it, for *he prays so powerfully*, albeit so humbly. Consider what his character had been, and yet he says, "Lord, remember *me* when You come into Your kingdom." Note well that it is a thief—an outcast, a criminal on the gallows who thus prays! He is an outcast by his country's laws and yet he turns to the King of heaven and asks to be remembered! Bad as he is, he believes that the Lord Jesus will have mercy upon him! Oh, brave faith!

We see how strong that faith was because he had no invitation to pray. I do not know that he had ever heard Christ preach. No apostle had said to him, "Come to Christ and you will find mercy," and yet he came to Jesus! Here comes an uninvited guest in the sweet bravery of holy confidence in Christ's majestic love—he comes boldly and pleads, "Lord, remember me!" It was strong faith which thus pleaded. Remember, too, that he was upon the verge of death. He knew that he could not live very long and probably expected the Roman bone-breaker to give him, very soon, the final blow! But in the very hour and article of death he cried,

“Lord, remember me,” with the strong confidence of a mighty faith. Glory be to God who worked such a faith in such a man as this! We have done when we have mentioned, in the fourth place—

IV. THE ANSWER TO HIS FAITH.

We will only say that *his faith brought him to paradise*. We had a paradise, once, and the first Adam lost it. Paradise has been regained by the second Adam, and He has prepared for believers an Eden above, fairer than that first garden of delights below! Faith led the dying thief to *be with Christ* in paradise which was best of all! “Today shall you be *with Me* in paradise.” Whatever the joy of Christ, and the glory of Christ, the thief was there to see it and to share it as soon as Christ Himself!

And it brought him paradise *that very day*. Sometimes a crucified man will be two or three days a-dying. Jesus, therefore, assures him that he shall not have long to suffer and confirms it with a, “verily,” which was our Lord’s strong word of asseveration, “Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in paradise.” Such a portion will faith win for each of us, not today, perhaps, but one day. If we believe in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, we shall be with Him in the delights and happiness of the spirit world and with Him in the paradise of everlasting glory. If we commenced to believe at once and were to die immediately, we would be with Christ at once, as surely as if we had been converted 50 years ago! You cannot tell how short your life will be, but it is well to be ready. A friend was here last Lord’s Day of whom I heard this morning that he was ill—and in another hour that he was dead. It was short work. He was struck down and gone at once. That may be the lot of any one of you. And if it should be, you will have no cause whatever to fear it if you now, like the thief, trust yourself wholly in Jesus’ hands, crying, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

The lesson of our text is not merely that Christ can save in our last extremity, though that is true, but that now, at this moment, Jesus is able to save us, and that, if saved at all, salvation must be an immediate and complete act, so that, come life or come death, we are perfectly saved! It will not take the Lord long to raise the dead—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised incorruptible—and the Lord takes no time in regenerating a soul. Dead souls live in an instant when the breath of the Spirit quickens them! Faith brings instantaneous pardon! There is no course of probation to go through! There are no attainments to be sought after and no protracted efforts to be made in order to be saved. You are saved if you believe in Jesus! The finished work of Christ is yours. You are God’s beloved, accepted, forgiven, adopted child! Saved you are, and saved you shall be forever and ever if you believe!

Instantaneous salvation! Immediate salvation! This, the Spirit of God gives to those who trust in Jesus! You need not wait till tomorrow’s sun has dawned. Talk not of a more convenient season. Sitting where you are, the almighty grace of God can come upon you and save you—and this shall be a sign unto you that Christ is born in your heart, the hope

of glory—when you believe in Him as your pardon, righteousness, and all-in-all, you shall have peace. If you do but trust yourself in Jesus' hands, you are a saved soul and the angels in heaven are singing high praises to God and the Lamb on your account! Farewell.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-24.**

Verse 1. *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother.* This brother had been put to great shame. He was beaten before the judgment seat, if you remember, and now he has the great and lasting honor of being mentioned by the apostle with himself. God will honor those who bear dishonor for His name's sake. Be not ashamed even to be beaten for Christ—the stripes are stripes of glory!

2. *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.* The epistles were written to distinct churches, but they have a bearing upon all Christians. Hence the apostle says, "With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." Let us thank God no Scripture is of private interpretation—every promise belongs to all the seed. If you are a Believer, you may freely appropriate to yourselves whatever was said of old to any individual believer, or to any congregation of believers!

3, 4. *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.* Paul is a great preacher of divine grace and, therefore, he is a great giver of thanks. Grace should be followed with thankfulness. "I thank my God." What a beautiful expression! Not only, "I thank God," but, "I thank *my* God." He has God in possession! He has taken Him to be his own forever and ever! Beloved, have we all done the same? Can we say, "I thank my God"? You notice how often Paul, in the first ten verses mentions the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think it is 11 times. He was full of Christ. Not only did he love Christ in his heart, but he had Christ's name continually on his tongue, for he was not ashamed of the sweet name of Jesus Christ! Honey in the mouth, music in the ear, heaven in the heart is that sweet name of Jesus!

5. *That in everything you are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge.* The church of Corinth was a church of all the talents—it was not, however, a church so much of all the graces, and so it was a very poor example for us. I sometimes think that its mode of worship is recorded rather as a warning beacon than as an example to us. It caused, incidentally through the abundance of their gifts and everybody wanting to exercise his gift, great divisions, and there was an absence of humility and love in the church. However, Paul is thankful for what they have.

6, 7. *Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you. So that you come behind in no gift: waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* This is a fine trait in their character—they did look to the Second Advent—it operated upon them, it helped them in many ways. We cannot now mention all the holy uses which lie in the warning for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but it ought to be a good description of all Christians.

8, 9. *Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful.* Blessed is His name that He is. We are often very unfaithful. Man is always so, but “God is faithful.”

9, 10. *By whom you were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.* Where it is not so, the life of piety seems to ooze away. The blessing of God cannot rest upon a church unless we dwell together in unity, and for unity it is necessary that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

11-15. *For it has been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. Lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name.* It may have been an accidental circumstance that he did not happen to have baptized them, but he is glad of it, for he says that in the temper they were in, some of them would have made a boast of it.

16, 17. *And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.* There were other people who could baptize for him. It was enough that he should concentrate all his energies upon that one matter of preaching the gospel—not that he neglected the divine command—but that it was not necessary that he, any more than his Master, should personally baptize, for we read that, “Jesus Christ baptized not, but His disciples.” Not to put a dishonor upon the ordinance, but to let us see that the ordinance does not depend upon the man, but upon that sacred name into which we are baptized—and upon the true faith of the person baptized.

17. *Not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.* A very remarkable passage! Paul could have used the wisdom of words. In some of his epistles he gives us a specimen of his mighty rhetoric. He was a born master of speech. There was a touch of poetry in him and always a high logical power, but he would not use it in his preaching, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. You may do what you like with human wisdom—put a bit into its mouth and try to

lead it into obedience to Christ—but somehow or other its tendency is to rebel against Him!

18-21. *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God. You have only to study the history of the world at the time when Paul was writing, and you will see that the “world, by wisdom knew not God.” It had made itself exceedingly philosophical and sage, but if you weigh its wisest conclusions, you will find that they were only polished folly. There is nothing left us of all the wisdom of that period! Time itself has proved it—no, has disproved it!*

21, 22. *It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign. Some miracle, something that shall attest it in a supernatural way.*

22-24. *And the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Beloved, you know how true this is! It has been a wonderful power in you, and this day it is the only wisdom which you desire to possess!*

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SURVEYING THE FIELD

NO. 3364

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“And I arose in the night, I, and some few men with me: neither told I any man what God had put into my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.”
Nehemiah 2:12.

NEHEMIAH, it seems, prepared himself for action by taking a survey of the necessities of the case. Although he lived before our Savior's day, he certainly acted upon one of our Savior's maxims about counting the cost, lest, after having begun to build, we should not be able to finish. I like to picture to myself that man of God going by moonlight round all the waste places of the city, compelled here and there to dismount by reason of rubbish, clambering over the fallen stones, leaping, sometimes, with agility from crag to crag of the city's walls—getting in his mind a clear idea of all the city's desolation—and feeling in his heart the pressing, heavy weight and burden of the responsibility which God had thrust upon him. If he had begun his work carelessly and thoughtlessly, he might have failed in it, but having begun months before with prayer, having been guided by providence so far, yet even now the very first step he must take is a personal survey of the work and a thorough personal acquaintance with the necessities of the case.

Now, I know that there are here, on the weeknight at the service, many who love the Master and are anxious to do something in His cause. And I thought I might very profitably commend to them the example of Nehemiah in this respect. We shall consider Nehemiah, then, first as a *fine example to those who would seek the good of the church at large*; secondly, a *pattern to any of us laboring in any one distinct sphere*; and thirdly, I think I may apply the same principle in reference to *the personal work which is being done in our own hearts*. And before we conclude our meditation, I may ask you to take a quiet ride around the desolations of your own spirit and so get a clear view of what must be done before you shall become a city inhabited by God to His praise and glory! First, then, dear friends, I suppose I have here, as Nehemiah had, a few men and women earnest, resolved—disinterested men and women who are willing—

I. TO SEEK THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH, OF THE CHURCH AT LARGE.

Such men will allow the word of exhortation when I say to them, first, you and I are in the service of the great church of God and we must, like

Nehemiah, *firmly resolve that we will do it*. Our heart must be set upon this thing. It must not be with us a mere fancy which we have taken up as we might have taken up any other. It must not even be of a spasmodic kind, but our heart must be set towards the church of God because it is the home of our love, the place of our birth, the bride of Christ, and the hope of the world, the pillar and ground of the truth of God! If we have not such a view of the work to be done and a resolve that it shall be done—we certainly shall not succeed in it.

And, my brothers and sisters, we must, like Nehemiah, *be quite clear that we have no sinister motives*, no selfish ends to be answered! Nehemiah was in a high and good position as chamberlain or cup-bearer to the king, but he gave up that and left Shushan to the desolations of Jerusalem—a long and toilsome journey. Even when the city was built, though the place was the beloved of his heart, yet he does not seem to have had any prospect of remaining in it, for the king had set him a time for his return. And though he did stay there 12 years, yet it must have been by successive furloughs that he obtained this absence from the palace, so that he had no selfish objective whatever. If the city were built, he would not dwell in it. And if the temple-glories were restored once more, he would but once look upon them and then return again to the city of his employment and to the palace of the alien king at Shushan.

God will not bless us to the Christian church if we want to make a party to ourselves, or to take to ourselves the leadership. He will not acknowledge us in the work if we are merely seeking our own esteem, good name and fame under cover of zeal for righteousness and for the glory of God. No! There must be a resolution, but the resolution must be based on something better than the objectives of personal aggrandizement. There must be a devotion to God and a complete and perfect dedication and consecration of our souls to the good of the church and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Supposing that we have already, by divine grace, been called into such a condition? Then, further, we must learn, like Nehemiah, *the art of waiting*. He first prayed about Jerusalem, but he did not cease to hope. And when he came to the holy, though wasted city, he did not rush to the work at once, as our hot blood too often suggests to us to do. He knew that “raw haste” was “half-sister to delay.” He was there three whole days in which nothing was attempted. He did not seize a trowel in his hand and hasten at once to work, letting other people come and join him if they pleased, but he rode alone all-round the walls to inspect the damage and to estimate the cost in sacrifice and toil to repair it. We must be eager to labor, but we must also learn to wait. God’s servants will find that their Master does not always give them instant and immediate success, but that He is often pleased to glorify Himself by testing their faith. If you are a soldier, you must not expect to be always in the fight, but must sometimes lie, perhaps for tedious days and even weary months, in the trenches, just as our army had to lie before Sebastopol—worn out with waiting, anxiously wishing for the order to charge. So our

heavenly Lord, our great captain, sometimes teaches us patience, making us wait until the time shall come to do and dare. Fellow Christian, young man or aged believer, I am persuaded you will need to have in the midst of your toil for Jesus, to hear the word, "You must wait. Trust in the Lord and wait patiently for Him."

But after he had waited, Nehemiah set a further example to us. *He felt that he could act alone.* Throughout the whole book of Nehemiah you are struck with the singleness of the man and the potency of his individuality. He is quite prepared, if no one else will rise up to serve God, to serve Him by himself! And yet at the same time *he never refuses the help of others.* "And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem." He who would serve God to any purpose must be willing to serve Him all alone. If you cannot stand the brunt of being forsaken, you will scarcely do to be a soldier of the cross. Those whom Christ will greatly use must learn to be misunderstood, to be misrepresented by their brothers and sisters and in their more daring projects to be looked upon as being perfectly beside themselves. Yet they must count this among the cost and to be still prepared to stand to their work. Paul says, "At my first answer, no man stood with me, but"—sweet and mighty encouragement to your faith if you are alone!—"nevertheless, the Lord stood with me." Now, I think we shall find that it is not easy to couple the independence of a noble mind with the willingness to accept help from the few and the feeble, which at the very first are willing to gather around you. A man is apt to say, "No! I can act alone. These will but hamper me." And yet let us always remember that, though God has usually worked by one man, and though almost all the great wonders of the olden times were accomplished by personal courage and were feats of personal faith, yet at the same time He has frequently been pleased to ally to the one man a company of others, without whom the one man would have been feeble, indeed! Take the case of Gideon. We are told of "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and, of course, Gideon leads the van, but what would Gideon have done without the men that lapped? Those few and feeble folk with their pitchers and their torches must go with Gideon—and God will bless Gideon through them—and the world through the man and those who follow him! We must be willing, therefore, to take any help God may offer to us, and not be very particular about what that help is, so long as we are assured that God has sent it to us. We must be willing to lay aside our individual and sole reliance to come down from the high place of personal independence and work side by side with others, if it is the Lord's will.

Then, further, my brothers and sisters, if you and I should now have in our minds some great work for God, *we must be quite sure that we do not indulge in any boasting.* Oh, great things are going to be done! Oh, the wonderful prospectuses that some people have brought out of wondrous things that were going to regenerate the world—and the only purpose they have served up to now has been to increase the work in

some printing office! Nothing else has come from many of them. And you know there are people who really, by their own talk, should have turned the world upside down by now, but they have not done anything of the sort as yet. Perhaps the time may not yet have come, but with them it seems as if it never will come or could come! Nehemiah says, “Neither told I any man what my God had put into my heart to do at Jerusalem.” You will often find it best not to commit your plans to others. If you want to serve God, go and do it and *then* let other people find it out afterwards. You have no need to tell what you are going to do and, I may add, there is no need for your telling what you have done, for very, very frequently God withdraws Himself when we boast of what is being done. One of the greatest injuries to the revival in the north of Ireland a few years ago was that it was made to be a kind of show thing and people said, “Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts,” and after a while the glory departed—not because the workers on the spot, themselves, desired any such vain-glorying, but because some who were not of a like spirit gave occasion to the flesh in this respect. We must mind and take care that when we work for God, we keep always before us that we are not working as unto men and do not need men’s praise, but unto the Lord is the offering presented and the Lord alone shall have it!

I have not yet come to this midnight ride of Nehemiah’s, but I think it important to mention that he is again a pattern to us in our work for the church of God in that he was *absolutely sure that what he was doing was right*. He speaks of the thoughts and longings that he had as something which God had put into his heart to do. Get quite clear and assured of that, my brothers and sisters, or else go home. If you are not certain that the work you are about was given to you of God, and as positively and distinctly given to you as the work was given to Isaiah when the seraph touched his lips with the live coal from off the altar, you have no business to enter upon the work at all, for your whole strength will lie in a full conviction that your Master has sent you.

And now having brought the man before you, let me exhort you, dear brothers and sisters, if you long for the good of the church of God, to quietly take a walk round about her. Count her towers. Mark her palaces and her bulwarks. Do not go out and take notes and jottings as to what the world says Christ’s churches, or ought to be! Do not go with the view of seeing faults where there are none and railing at Christianity generally. That is a very heathenish practice, into which some persons constantly fall. But go with this solemn intent as before God, “Now, if I am to be serviceable to the church in any large measure, I must know what her present condition is.” My own solemn conviction is that a painstaking, judicious investigation into the present state of the Christian church will have the result of perfectly appalling you! It has been said, and there are abundant facts to prove it, that probably during the last 200 years, instead of Protestantism, taking it in the large sense of the word, making any increase in the world, it has rather been diminishing and that Popery has increased! It is also, I believe, very

certain to any of you that like to read the reports of many missionary societies, that the number of conversions worked under the missionaries abroad is so insignificant that it scarcely keeps up to the number of converts in years past! We have heard of a missionary returning after 12 years of labor and, on being asked if he knew of one heathen being converted under him, said he did not know of one! We feel that the whole field of missionary work everywhere—with but the exception, perhaps, just now of southern Africa and of the labors of some in China—is just simply working without results. Not but what we ought to work all the same if we have no results, for even then we must not fall back.

And the church of God in England is just the same. There is no increase. We know it is a matter of statistical fact that our own denomination, with the exception of London and one Welsh county, has made no progress whatever during the last 12 months. Statistics prove it to be in the same position now as then. The whole mass of Methodism, which was once so potent for good, has, I think, only received 100 increase on the year before—and it is questionable whether they have increased at all. So it is everywhere. New churches are built, but what is the information we get? Why, in several built in the poorer districts, the whole congregation might go into the vestry, and so the buildings are now practically useless, seats without occupiers because some of the preachers are men that cannot be understood by the common people. If they preach the gospel—and often they do not—they preach it after such a dull and lifeless fashion that it is not worthwhile going to listen to it! Now, if this is so, we must get the fact, saddening as it is, well worked into our hearts. The errors of some churches, the division of others, and the general coldness and deadness—oh, if we did but keenly realize these, I am persuaded that many of us would cry day and night unto God that He would make bare His arm in the midst of His own church! We should not go in and out of our pews feeling happy and comfortable because our own church may be prospering and because in our sanctuary souls are being saved—but there should be great searching of heart for the state of Zion! There should go up a weeping and a wailing unto God, until the set time to favor her. Even the set time should come because her children take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof! I would encourage you to get a clear view of the church at large and then, in God's strength, go forward to any work which God has given you for her good.

We shall not need much time, in the second place, to indicate that this is also—

II. THE RIGHT METHOD OF PROCEEDING WITH REGARD TO ANY SERVICE WHICH, IN OUR SPHERE, WE ARE RENDERING TO CHRIST.

Brothers and sisters, I hope you are all working for Christ. If Christ has saved you, can you do otherwise than live to your Savior? If, indeed, your sins are all put away by His precious blood. If you are wrapped in His spotless righteousness and accepted in the Beloved, I do trust that the love of Christ compels you to tell others of the way of salvation, and

to seek to bring in the wandering sheep of the house of Israel! Now, if I am right in my belief that you are engaged in some departments of Christian service, I am sure I shall be judicious in saying to you—*take a thorough investigation of the work in which you are engaged*. If it is to teach a class of children, lay those children on your heart! Think a great deal about them. Think about them by night, as Nehemiah thought of Jerusalem, and remember that they have souls, that those souls are under condemnation—that nothing but the precious blood can deliver them—that if they are not so delivered, sooner or later those boys and girls of yours will perish! Yet said our Lord, “It is not your Father’s will that one of these little ones should perish.” Get that solemn fact thoroughly worked into you. Mothers, fathers, you have children committed to your care. You are longing for the conversion of these little ones. Now I want you to get a full estimate of the character of each child! You have peculiar opportunities of riding around, as it were, your little city. Mark the different constitutions, the special weaknesses and defects of that boy and the blemishes and sins of that girl—and always keep this before your minds—that your children, like the children of others, need the regenerating of the Holy Spirit and the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ! Do not take a light view of sin in your children any more than sin in others’ children. The hate of God against sin is as real and intense in their case as in others until they are born-again! When you sit down to breakfast with them, think, “Ah, my dear child, I shall not meet you in eternity unless you are brought to the cross!” Look the girl in the face, as you see her growing up to womanhood, and say to yourself, “Ah, my Lord! In mercy bring her to sit at Your feet as Mary did, and learn of You, or else she shall be no joy to me, for I must be parted from her in the world to come.”

Take, I say, a full survey of each child’s condition and of its future ruin—and you will be most likely to be a blessing to the child if with your whole heart you are thus earnest and careful.

Now, my dear hearers, most of you are working with me in this place. Let us now go around the walls of this Tabernacle and find you out, as it were. Well, here are a great number of church members—between three and four thousand—all professors of religion! But are all saved? Ah, there is an inquiry! *We know they are not!* We have used our best judgment in this question. We have urged upon them continually to make no profession unless they are sincere, but alas, the sad faces of some and their ultimate departure from the truth of God prove that they went out from us because they were not of us! I know this is one of the worst parts of the wall with me. There is no grief that stings our heart like this, when Demas forsakes Christ, having loved this present evil world, or when some—overtaken by the lusts of the flesh or the pride of life—crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame! It is a mercy when such hypocrites are found out and put away, but oh, it is a grievous injury to the church which they have disgraced!

Then, next, let us think of this. There are a number of people who always occupy these seats. They belong to them—they are *their* seats and they have been sitting in them, some of them, ever since the house was built! And some of them were in the former house and have been under our ministry now for these 13 years. And yet some of them are not saved! A gentleman told me the other day he was surprised to hear that the church was half as large as the congregation—or more, and he said, “That is a very great thing!” “No,” I said, “*that is a very little thing*, for when we were at Park Street the church was larger than the congregation.” That is to say, there were more saved souls among us than there were seats for hearers, so that the members of the church could not all come at any one time. And my soul will not be satisfied until this Tabernacle becomes much too small to hold the church if they were all to come together at one time. I shall be very glad, indeed, if they swarm off and go elsewhere, and form other churches. I shall be most happy if they do that! But still, I shall always be looking forward to seeing all those saved who have sittings here. You know that at Park Street it came to this—on one occasion when a man wanted to take a seat, he came to me and said—I remember him well—“Sir, I understand that if I take a sitting here, I should be expected to be converted, but I cannot count upon that.” “No, my good friend,” I said, “I know not, but still, if you take a seat, let us hope you will be.” “Oh,” said the man, “is that what was meant? I heard somebody say that when persons took seats, you expected them to be saved.” Well, some do, and why should we not? Ought we not to expect that if they hear the gospel preached, God will bless it to them?

We do trust that day will soon come, but meanwhile we may go around this place and say that a great many who have seats here are unblest, unsaved, have no desires after Christ, but are dead while they live!

Well, then, you are painfully struck, in the next place, with the *many casual hearers who come here and are not saved*. It was once well said by someone, that if sinners were scarcer than they are, we would think a great deal more of them! If there were only one unsaved soul now remaining in London, why, the whole church would be awake and in earnest to pray for that one soul! But when I say to you that, Sabbath after Sabbath, these aisles are thronged, and these pews, too, and that yet a very large proportion of the congregation remain unconverted—why, you hear it and you say, “Well, it is a very sad fact”—but it does not impress your hearts! We do not get the same impression of human ruin that Nehemiah got as he rode round Jerusalem. I wish we could. I wish we could think it over, resolve it in our minds and resolve it yet again until it came to be painful to us to think that so many human beings to whom the gospel is preached should remain callous to its influence! And so many to whom Christ, Himself, shall become a savor of death unto death, and not of life unto life!

Thus would I urge each brother and sister here, who is working for Christ, to get a clear view of the needs of the case.

And now, lastly, I shall be happy if I shall be successful in this last point. It will be well for us, individually, to—

III. TAKE A LITTLE JOURNEY AROUND THE CITY OF MANSOUL WITHIN.

Let me speak to every professor here. You say, “I am a believer in Jesus.” Well, brother, sister, then you can have no objection to look within, to search your heart! Ride around your soul. How about the tower of prayer? Is that well-kept? Are you much with God in secret? How about the castle of communion? Do you maintain fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ? How about the gate of humiliation? Do you bow before the Lord, humbly acknowledging what you owe to Him, or has pride been pulling down the cornerstone thereof? How about the gate of holy zeal? Is that wide and in good care, or has it been burned with fire and taken away? What about the wall of your love? Does that stand erect as it used to do? Have you not heard of one of old of whom it was said, “Gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knows it not”? May not that be your case? If you will spend an hour or two tonight when all are asleep; if you should lie awake and commune with your own heart upon your bed, it might be a wondrous blessing to you; if you shall honestly look at yourself, not flatteringly; if you shall determine to know, as God shall teach you, the worst of your case, and if you should desire to see which grace is fainting, which holy passion expiring, which sacred feeling ready to die—oh, it shall be well with you! Examine yourself, whether you are a Christian! This is a duty which cannot too often be performed. Ask the Lord to examine you. Say to Him, “Try my reins and my heart: search my inward soul: see if there is any wicked way in me: and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Oh, that some men would be more careful about the garden of their souls! But they let the weeds grow and they see them not! Like the sluggard, they do not want to see what will involve so much toil, but tossing upon the bed of presumption, from side to side, they dream of comforts and consider themselves to be safe, while all the while presumption is stealing away from them all their goods and making their garden to be a wilderness! Come, you slumberer, up! God help you up! Mistake no longer presumption for assurance! Recollect that assurance will stand the fullest examination, but if you dare not examine yourself, depend upon it—you are a presumptuous soul! I suggest this to the professor.

And now I want to suggest the same thing to *some of you who are unconverted*. Some of you, perhaps, who have come in here tonight do not often listen to the gospel and you wonder what I am doing, talking about riding around a city. Well, I want you to *ride around yourselves*, as it were, to take stock of your heart—to make calculations about your present state. Now, I will venture to say that some of you are not happy. You know you are not. You do not seem as if you had anything to live for,

but to work hard at the shop, or to go to business. If you make money, it does not satisfy you. Time was when if you went to the theater, you spent a very glorious night, but now if you go there—well, it seems a very dreary sort of stuff to you—and the enjoyments you once got on with so well are very empty things to you now. I am glad to hear it! I am glad to hear it! I should like you to keep on thinking about this, and you would soon find that, in addition to the world's not satisfying you, you need a great deal more to content you than this world can ever give you! I wish, dear friends, you would think of yourselves, for when we get men to think, the battle is half won! Thoughtless persons are on the outskirts of hell, but thoughtful persons God blesses! Heedless and Too Bold went on and fell over the precipice and were dashed to pieces, but he who, being checked, waked and said, "Where am I? I do not know," and began to look about him, found himself just on the brink of ruin. But he had just time enough to start back and so was saved.

My dear friend, if you are not a converted person, do you not know that all your past life has been a waste? God made you, but you have never served Him! Why, if you make a tool, you expect it to be of use to you. God made you, but you never serve Him. If you keep a dog or a cat, you expect to have some pleasure from the creature. God has been keeping you all these years and what have you ever done for Him? If a man keeps a horse, it does him service, and when God makes a man, it is but reasonable that the man should do Him some service—and yet you have not. So your life has been a dead waste as to its noblest ends. And as for the present—why, that is no better! You are not living as you wish to live, and as *for the future*—no, no, no—do not say, "I won't think about that." Be a wise man and *do* think of it! You cannot escape the future any more than I can. You and I must die—and after death the judgment follows—and an appearance before God. Now, my dear hearer, be bold enough to look ahead. Oh, but you do not like the prospect! Well, but nevertheless gaze upon it, for it will be for your soul's good to know what it is to die without Christ and to rise again without Christ! And when you have got an estimate of that, it may be you will say, "No, I cannot endure this! Jesus, I throw myself into Your arms. Save me, and I shall be saved!" Oh, that men would but take stock of their souls and it would do them good. What a routing-out there is of corners! What long, long hours of extra toil at our great shops to take stock. Nobody thinks of going on in business without taking stock every now and then, or if he did, he would soon find himself in the bankruptcy court. Every good trader knows there must be a stock-taking. Why should not men take stock of their souls? How is it that here they say, "Oh, let well enough alone! I daresay it is all right," and so at last wake up and find themselves eternal bankrupts with nothing wherewith to pay, shut up in the prison out of which they can never escape?

May God the Holy Spirit press home these words so feebly spoken, and if any sinner here shall be led by the sight of himself to tremble before God, let him remember and rejoice that there is life for a look at

the Crucified One! Whoever trusts in Christ is saved! Rest wholly in Him; cast yourself upon Him. As the swimmer gives up to the water, that it may support him, so do you, and thus shall the grace of God that brings salvation appear unto you!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
NEHEMIAH 1: 1-11; 2:1-6.**

Verses 1, 2. *The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left in captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.* This good man was, of course, one of the banished Jews, but he had greatly prospered. He had risen in the empire of Ahasuerus until he had come to be great—even to be one of the chamberlains of the empire. But his heart was towards his poor people—his fellow Jews that were in poverty. Now, whenever God exalts a Christian in a temporal position, he ought not to disown his poor brethren, but his heart should go out towards them to see what he can do for them. It is a shame for any man to forget his country. Does not the Pole still say, “No, Poland, you shall never perish”? And we admire such patriotism. And the same feeling should be in every Christian breast. We should love the church of God even as Nehemiah loved the chosen race from which he had sprung. So when he met with Hanani, the conversation was all about the poor brethren that remained at Jerusalem.

3. *And they said unto me, the remnants that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.* A sad story they had to tell! Ezra had assisted in somewhat rebuilding the temple, but little had been done for the private dwellings and for the walls and public buildings of the city. It was in a sad and wretched state—and the Jews were despised and reproached. Nehemiah was a great man, but he was sorry to hear this. He felt as if he was a fellow sufferer with his poor brethren.

4. *And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.* Was it his concern? Was it anymore his concern than that of other men? Yes, he felt it to be his—and the tender heart which he had towards the people of God made him feel it to be peculiarly his. If nobody else did anything, he must! And, oh, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, whenever you see the cause of God in a sad estate, lay it to heart—weep, lament and pray—feel that you have an interest in it! Christ is your Savior. Of the church you are a part. These blessed interests of sovereign mercy belong to you. Take them to yourself and say, By God’s help, I will lay myself out for the progress of His cause. “I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.”

5, 6. *And said, I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keeps covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His commandments—Let Your ear now be attentive, and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant, which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel, Your servants and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against You: both I and my father's house have sinned.* He seems to act like a priest for God, taking the sin of the people upon himself and confessing it. If they were hardhearted, and would not confess, he would, and pour out his complaint before God!

7-10. *We have dealt very corruptly against You, and have not kept Your commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments which You commanded your servant Moses. Remember, I beseech You, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, If you transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations. But if you turn unto Me and keep My commandments and do them: though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heavens, yet will I gather them from there and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set My name there. Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.* You see what an admirable prayer this is. There is a full confession of sin—an acknowledgment of the justice of God in having punished His people. But then there is a quoting of the divine word—a putting of the Lord in remembrance that He had made such-and-such a promise! That is the very backbone of prayer! If you go to the bank, the main part of the transaction is to put the check—the note of hand—upon the counter. You get no money otherwise! So when you go in prayer, the main part of prayer must lie in pleading the promise, “You have said it. You have said it.” Hold God to His word with a sacred daring of faith. “You have promised. You have declared. Now be as good as Your word.” Then notice another plea he has. He says he is pleading for God’s servants—His redeemed—redeemed by great power! Oh, it should always make us feel strong in prayer when we recollect that God’s people are very dear to Him and He has done great things for them—therefore He loves them and for those whom He loves, surely He will work great deliverances! These are arguments. There ought to be great argument in prayer if we hope to prevail.

11. *O Lord, I beseech You, let now Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name, and prosper, I pray You, Your servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.* That was king Artaxerxes, whom he rightly viewed as a man, for, great as he was—all-potent king of Persia—yet still but a man! Nehemiah consoles himself in the prospect of having to go in before him to ask favor at his hands.

11. *For I was the king's cupbearer.*

Nehemiah 2:1. *And it came to pass in the month Nisan. Three or four months after he began to pray.*

1. *In the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king.* We have in some of the old slabs and carvings some singular pictures of the dainty way in which the kings of Persia and Media were served by their cupbearers. They always spilled a little wine upon their left hand and drank first, for fear the king should be poisoned. So the greatest men of the different provinces of the empire were called by turns to act this part before the king. It was a piece of state ceremony.

1. *Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.* And there was a law—one of those stupid Median laws—that no man was to come before the king with a sad countenance. It was supposed that the king must be so serenely happy, himself, that none might come there unless they were happy, too. Nehemiah had been able to obey this rule, but on this occasion he did not because he could not.

2-6. *Therefore the king said unto me, Why is your countenance sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, and said unto the king, Let the king live forever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchers, lies in waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what do you make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you would send me unto Judah, unto the city of my father's sepulchers, that I may build it. And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him). Who was probably, Queen Esther and, therefore, abundantly agreeable that such a work should be done for her own nation. "The king said unto me."*

6. *For how long shall your journey be? And when will you return? So it pleased the king to send me: and I set him a time.* He was a valued servant. They did not wish to part with him. And if he would go for a time to do this business, yet they took steps to assure he would return. There are some servants that I know of, who, if they were to go away, their masters would not be particularly anxious that they should come back again! It is well when a man is so in favor with God that his piety acts upon his ordinary life and he becomes in favor with men, also. That is a poor, miserable religion that does not make its possessor a good servant. Yes, in whatever station of life we may be placed, we ought to be far more valuable to those round about us on account of our fearing God! May we always be of such a character that if we were gone, we should be missed. "I set him a time."

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PICTURES OF HAPPINESS

NO. 3365

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 31, 1913,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Happy are the people who are in such a state;
happy are the people whose God is the LORD.”
Psalm 144:15.***

SOMETIMES God’s people are unhappy when they ought to be happy. God observes this. Therefore He tells them when they possess the materials of happiness and gives them a description of the peace and prosperity of those who are truly happy men. Thus recollecting the choice mercies which surround them and not attaching so much importance to the little trials of the day, they may become of God’s mind and feel themselves to be as happy as He declares they are. The pure in spirit are said by our Savior to be blessed. They often think themselves to be cursed and feel as if there were no blessing for them. But blessed they are, for Jesus knows whom He has blessed! And though God’s people are sometimes in their own consciences, unhappy; they are a happy people and to be congratulated on their condition notwithstanding. They have reasons for happiness. They have satisfactory grounds for happiness. They have springs of happiness. They have future prospects of happiness. If you are God’s people, you cannot err in exercising faith about this thing. You are numbered with those who are the happiest people under heaven!

The text speaks not only of the persons, but also of the condition of God’s people—a condition which I believe is, to a great extent, parallel to our own as a Christian church. It seems to me that we have, according to the gospel standard of interpretation, all the privileges, all the blessednesses, which, in the verse preceding the text, David ascribes to this happy people. I shall ask you, therefore, to look at these things, that each particular may be an incentive to gratitude. He declares here—

I. THE ELEMENTS OF HAPPINESS.

First, David accounts those to be *a happy people who are in a healthy and vigorous condition*. The sons have “as plants grown up in their youth. And the daughters as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace.” It is a great blessing to a church to have in her midst fruitful, earnest young men, yes! And I will say that whatever their age may be, it is no small measure of a church’s strength to have her sons about her, who, having grown up and become mature in knowledge, mental force and spiritual vigor, bear fruit unto the glory of God!

There has been a tendency in the Christian church to decry instrumentality. But God always has worked by instruments. So far as we know, He always will. When Christ ascended up on high and led captivity captive, the gifts which He received for men were men, apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, and the like. It is no small riches to a church to have in her midst men—teachers qualified to teach and seeking to save as well, to become evangelists—in this way and in any other way, thus aiming to promote the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Ah, unhappy is that church where her sons are all slumbering, where they are all stereotyped in their beliefs and in their several states never make any advance, feeling no throbs of sacred ambition, never caring to come to spiritual attainments, resting satisfied with the lowest possible eminence of divine grace, without any desire to advance to a high degree of love to God! Blessed is that church where her sons seek to grow up and to bear fruit unto God! And not less blessed to have in her midst sisters who are like those pillars we sometimes see in public buildings—beautifully fluted, carved, polished—the very adornment of the structure, placed at the corner, cornerstones that help to cement the entire structure and bind it together! It seems to me to be one of the peculiar gifts of the Christian sisterhood to be the means of holding the entire fabric of the Christian church in sacred love! And though in our belief they ought not to do this by public speech, yet by quiet conversation, active sympathy and the patient endurance and holy tenacity of affection, they may help to keep the church well bolted together, well barred and banded, well cemented, so that the stones of the church shall not be detached, the one from the other. Happy is the church that abounds in Christian matrons and younger women willing to be serviceable for Christ!

If I remind you that this is our happy case, you may, perhaps, think little of it and lightly esteem the cause for gratitude. But were you in some churches where there are not men nor women enough to take the Sabbath school—and such churches I have visited—where there are none, positively none to assist the pastor, where the whole work must be confined to a one-man ministry because the rest of the members do not seem to be alive in the sacred service—if you were members of such churches, you would deplore their lamentable poverty both day and night! God has made it otherwise with us—let us bless His name and, while thanking Him, acknowledge that we are happy to be in such a state!

Next to that the Psalmist describes *plenty as a peculiar pleasure*. “That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store.” Bountiful provision of the gospel! The ministry is to have all things desirable for Christians if they are to be made happy. Unhappy they who can seldom hear a sermon, or who, hearing it, might well have spared their ears the trouble of listening to the words! Thrice happy they who hear the pure truth of Jesus Christ, even though it is spoken in a rough manner and in

a style that has no enchantments for the soft lovers of rhetoric and elocution! If ever you are laid up a while upon a bed of sickness, you may heave a deep sigh for the privilege you scarcely know how fully to appreciate till you lose it, that you can go up to the House of God! I heard but the other day from one who has been unable to worship with us for months such words as these, “Oh, Ziona, Ziona, the loved of my heart, when shall the day return that I shall again rejoice with the multitude that keep holy day and lift up my song with them, and bow my head in the midst of the great congregation?” By your regrets which you will feel when you are thus laid aside, value the privilege while you possess it—the privilege of having an open Bible expounded and of being able to join with the whole company of the faithful in the worship of the most high God! If at any time the Word has been marrow and fatness to you; then think yourselves happy, yes, rejoice tonight, and give to God the gratitude of your souls!

Further, the Psalmist represents *multitude as being a cause of thankfulness*. “That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets.” Sheep are always a favorite type of the servants of the Lord Jesus. I cannot, nor indeed, need I, enter into the illustration—you yourselves understand it so well—but the peculiar blessing is when these sheep are multiplied by thousands and by ten thousands. Alas, for the church when she is satisfied with an increase of one or two during a year! Ah, miserable church that shall be content if the pool of baptism is never stirred by those that profess their faith in Jesus or if at the sacramental table there should be no fresh visitors at the feast of love! Ah, miserable state of religion in which the churches shall think this to be their fit and proper condition and shall say they are comfortable while the world is perishing and none cares for souls! Oh, what a joy it is when every member of a church becomes fruitful in leading others to Christ! I know this is much the experience of my dear brothers and sisters in church fellowship here. The greater number, I believe, are striving to be missionaries for Christ. I wish I could honestly hope that all were so doing. It is to the shame of those who are not doing so that they can sit side by side with earnest Christians and not be more earnest themselves! Yet I thank God and take courage as I remember many of you who, by tears and prayers, and afterwards by earnest labors—some of them of the most self-sacrificing kind—have gone forth to bring others to Jesus, so that from a handful of men we have multiplied and shall multiply yet as the dispensation of God’s grace shall be continued to us!

Now, brothers and sisters, these may not seem to some selfish spirits any great things to rejoice in. But lovers of Christ, who have some of Christ’s likeness in their hearts, will account it a matter for which to clap their hands and indulge in holy mirth when souls are converted! Is it not better to see a sinner saved than to see your purse full or your lands extending? Should it not give you greater joy that Christ is glorified than

that anything, however desirable, should transpire for your own carnal gratification? Let Him reign if I perish! Let the crown sit well upon His head if I am trodden like mire in the street! Let Him be King of kings and Lord of lords even if His poor servant dies forgotten and unknown!

The next blessing mentioned in the Psalm is *the happiness of God's people is their strength*—"That our oxen may be strong to labor." I think here, by oxen, there is mystically and spiritually intended all the workers of the church, but especially ministers of Christ. Paul expressly calls these the oxen—"You shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn." It is a blessed circumstance when those that try to plow any part of God's field are qualified for the work. Whenever I see a man driving a horse with a lead that is too much for it, I thank God it is not my task to have such work as that! A company of people attempting a work for which they are not qualified either by gifts or grace is an unhappy spectacle. If God makes men strong to labor so that their labor is their delight and the service of God is a very recreation to them, it ought to be and it must be a cause of thanksgiving! Perhaps some of you have been refreshed of late. I know my Sunday school teachers can bear me witness. You have had such visitation from God that teaching in the Sunday school has become a greater joy to you than it ever was! There are, I know, others of you whose service to Christ is by no means misery. You go forth to the battle not with dolorous sounds, but with music in your hearts, with a happy beaming of your eyes, with the precision of saints and with the attendant symbols of victory! Be thankful for this, for it is no small blessing when the laborers are strong for their work.

Then comes *the blessing of peace*—"That there be no breaking in, nor going out." No secession fomented by discord. No heresies invading the midst of the happy family and rending asunder hearts that should be as one. If it should ever be your wretched lot to be a member of a church that has been distracted by schism and discord, you will confess that, perhaps of all things in Christian experience, there is nothing that humbles the soul more, nothing that wounds the heart more and that does more mischief to the inner life than personal jealousies and the party divisions they occasion! It is an unspeakable blessing when God keeps so many hearts in holy union! We so easily divide. Our tastes are naturally so different. There are such varieties of circumstance and of temperament among us—some rich, some poor, some lively and cheerful, some gloomy and desponding—it is not likely that a company of men will all agree together year by year without some jarring, where peace rules and there are no breakings forth of the waters of strife! Everyone ought to devoutly bow his head in a gratitude which he cannot express and say, "Lord, with You there is no breaking in nor going out."

The last mercy which David mentions is that of *satisfaction*—"that there is no complaining in our streets." And can we not appropriate this when, instead of hearing the voice of murmuring on the right hand and on the left—murmuring against the preacher, murmuring against the

officers, murmuring against one another—each one is encouraging his fellow to do the work of the Lord and all are unanimous together in this sole regret, that we can't love more, can't work more, can't glorify God more? Oh, this makes a happy church! It is evidence of a people near to God. Theirs is a happy case.

Now, brothers and sisters, these things may have in them little interest for strangers, but they will have, I trust, some force, though I put them thus hurriedly to you who have been with us from the beginning and whose history has proven how God has multiplied His blessings. Unworthy of the least of all His mercies we were and the church was brought low by affliction and sorrow till it seemed as though our name would be blotted out from His Israel and Ichabod was written on our wall—but God turned His hand in mercy upon us! That is 15 years ago. And by the space of these revolving years He has never ceased to bless. We have had no startling phenomena of revival. We have had no excitements such as have passed over different parts of the Christian world. But steadily, as though all had been regulated by an ever-progressing geometry, we have gone on to increase and to multiply—and have been led on from service to service in the name and strength of the Lord God! Not one particle of this is ascribable to human agency, only so far as God may have pleased to use it! The whole of it belongs to God! We then, at least, whatever others may say, ought to keep in the same frame of mind in which we were last Monday evening when we gathered round that communion table, instant in prayer, constant in fellowship, continuing to be happy in blessing and praising and magnifying the Lord!

II. THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS.

The latter part of the text carries us up to higher ground. Happiness, a practical outflow from the favor which God shows, is traced to its source, the God of all grace, and accounted for by the covenant relations into which He has entered. "Yes, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." Now, beloved, our God is the Lord, our God is Jehovah! Let me refresh your memories with this truth of God in two or three of its aspects that you may remember and act in the spirit suggested by them. Our God is the Lord!

He has revealed Himself to us in that character. We knew Him not. We said, "Who is the Lord that we should obey His voice?" When we heard of Him in the preaching of His truth, it only reached our outward ears—we felt no power in our spirits till it pleased God to reveal Himself to us. It was years ago with some of us—it was only a few months with others of you. Oh, I charge you, go back to that blessed day when those blind eyes were opened and when that dead heart began to feel the divine light! Oh, then it was you said, "He is my God." You did not come to Him and ask Him to be your God, but He who gave Himself to you in the eternal covenant before the world was, in the fullness of time, gave Himself to you by His effectual grace, making you willing to accept Him and to kiss

His silver scepter! Yes, you have been changed from an enemy into a friend! Your back is no longer toward your God—

***“But now subdued by sovereign grace,
Your spirit longs for His embrace.”***

Now bless Him for that with all your heart tonight!

Moreover, He is your God because *you have been brought to acknowledge Him as such*. Most of you have been baptized into the name, the one glorious name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—and by that act you declared to all men that you would be dead to all the world besides and alive only to Christ! You came forward years ago, moved by earnest zeal, and you said, “Let others do as they will, but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.” This work of grace led you from believing with the heart to confession with the mouth. I trust that many a time since then you have stood in the gap for God when His name has been dishonored by the ungodly and that you have avowed it in your family and business that you are the Lord’s servant. While others have disregarded His law and oppressed His truth, my soul follows hard after Him unto shame and derision! And I will follow where my Savior leads! Now you are happy to be able to do this.

Happy are the people who acknowledge God to be the Lord! Be happy tonight, then, and show your happiness by praising the name of the Lord in your heart. The Lord has been your God since then, inasmuch as you have believed in Him. In the day of trouble your soul has found peace by confiding in His goodness. When you have felt the weight of sin, you have got rid of that weight by coming to the pardoning God. Oh, the mere professors do not know what it is to take God as He really is! They take Him to be, what shall I say?—to be anything but their almighty sovereign! They take the Lord to be their lackey, to help them in some grievous hour when they can’t help themselves—to be their make-weight, in an emergency to supply a few of their deficiencies. They pick and choose His commands. They will be fruitful enough in duties that bring *them* honor, but they are barren enough in any duties that are sacred—that only belong to God and their own soul. As to outward ceremonies, they can indulge abundantly, but to spiritual religion they are utter strangers! They have never taken God to be altogether their God. Why, that means something more than Master, more than Father, more than King! Oh, do you know what it means? Is He all-in-all to you? That is what Godhead is—all-in-all. Do you take Him to be all-in-all to you, henceforth and forever? Happy are the people that can say that in very truth! It may cause them loss. It may often make their course run contrary to flesh and blood. But if they acknowledge God to be their Lord, so as to give Him entire obedience as His grace enables them, they are pronounced happy by the highest authority—and happy they shall be, come what may!

We have taken God to be our God, not merely to trust in Him, but, to go further, *to enjoy Him*. Have you not had sweet enjoyment with your

God, beloved, when He has brought you to feel that all things around you might be shadows, but that God was true? Have you never so realized God in your little chamber that you forgot there was a world of sin and sorrow, and care—and only remembered Him? Have you never felt as you have come down from that mount of fellowship, that when the atheist said there was no God, you could laugh him to scorn, for your spirit had seen Him face to face and your soul had come into contact with the soul of the infinite God, and you had as truly communed with Him as ever man communed with his fellow, or ever heart had fellowship with heart! Yes, oh, seek this yet again! Yes, let it be your element to live in the enjoyment of communion with God, for those are the happy people who, to the highest degree by inward fellowship, take God to be their God!

And then, over and above that, having enjoyed something of the Lord, we have *taken the Lord to be our God that we may serve Him*. It has been our delight, when we have had opportunities, to try and spread abroad the theme of His great and glorious name. You have chosen to give Him of His substance—I trust you have not held back any of the talent which your Master has entrusted to you. In proportion as any man or woman here answers to the description we have been reviewing—in that proportion shall they be truly happy! If you have but partly trusted and partly communed, and partly served, your happiness may well be shallow. But if you have trusted with your whole heart, leaning your entire weight upon the Lord—and if you have loved with all the power of your passion and communed day by day in closest fellowship with Him—if you have served Him with your whole heart, soul and strength—then happy are you! God declares you such and in the highest degree you certainly shall be such, world without end!

The believer who has thus taken God to be his God is happy because he has a portion with which he never can grow discontented. Men outgrow their books. Students come to look on the volumes they once valued as being worn-out things. Men outgrow their friends—those that were once their superiors, they can outstrip. Men outgrow their substance and their wealth. The comfort they once had in these things they find no longer. The most pleasant pleasures of the world are the first to expire as men advance—especially as they grow old—that which once contented them becomes vanity of vanities in their account! But no man outgrows his God! No soul ever runs at such a rate that he passes beyond the powers that God has given him! No, beloved, but the more our capacities are enlarged and our desires expanded, the more perfectly satisfied are we with the Lord our God! He that has this portion has one that can never be taken away from him. The world did not give it and the world cannot steal it. The devil has tried full often to take away from us our God, but he shall never do that. Time may rob us of our health. The world may rob us of our wealth. Sickness may deprive us of a thousand comforts, but there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord! Our inheritance cannot be alienated—

it is where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal!

Hence the Lord's people are a happy people because they have a portion they can die with. They have a pleasure that can make their dying pillow soft! And they have riches they can take with them through the last grim river—can pass its floods without losing a single farthing of their heritage—no, can pass the flood and land upon the other shore to enter more fully into the bliss which God has prepared for them that love Him!

I wish we were all such happy people! I wish we were, all of us, happy to the fullest degree! If you are not, you may be! If you are not, if you trust in Christ, you shall be, if you come empty-handed and simply take Christ to be your Savior! He never did reject one, yet, and never shall! He will accept you tonight and put you in the same happy case as others of His people. I know there are some here that are hard to comfort, but the Master, I trust, will do it yet, for He releases the prisoners and delights to find out the hard cases and to deal with them! If there is a dungeon door that no key can open, He delights to come with the mighty hammer of His Word and smash the door in pieces and give the spirit liberty! May He do that tonight, and then we will sing together of His pardoning power. Amen!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 103; 1 CORINTHIANS 1:25-31.**

This Psalm is a song of exulting thanksgiving, of overflowing joy and praise! Let each one of us read it as speaking for himself. Let it, here and now, be our own personal tribute of peculiar mercy received by each of us!

Verse 1. *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.* If things without are not joyous, let all that is within wake itself up to praise my God! He will hear me, even though I speak not. If I keep the praise within myself, He will hear the music of my soul. “Bless His holy name.”

2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* Do it again. If you have blest Him once, bless Him again. Does He not multiply to bless you? Bless Him repeatedly, continually! Then never weary of the work. Repeat yourself in grateful praise.

2. *And forget not all His benefits.* Your poor memory has often been the grave of His mercy; but now calls for a resurrection, and let His mercies rise before your eyes, and let your praises rise with them. “Forget not all His benefits.”

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities*—Yes that is done. Tonight you are a forgiven sinner. “All your iniquities,” and they were very many, have gone from you once and for all! Will you not sing about that?

3. *Who heals all your disease*—You are raised up from the bed of pain. What is still better, the Lord is at work with your sinful nature, purging and cleansing you of your corruption—healing you of your pride, your sloth, your unbelief. Will you not praise Him for this? “Who heals”—goes on to heal—continues to heal—“all your diseases.”

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction.* Who has redeemed you with His own precious blood and given you a life above all life—the life of God within you—a *redeemed* life! Oh, by the precious blood that bought you, will you be silent? Will you not sing about redemption? Is it not the sweetest theme to sing about that ever can be imagined?

4. *Who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies.* Treats you like a king! As a king gives to a king, so gives He His mercies to you—crowns you! What? Shall a crowned head refuse to praise Him who crowned it? No! “Bless the lord, O my soul!”

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things.* He might have left you to pine in spiritual hunger, but instead He has fed you—made you to know what is good, to love what is good, to feed upon that which is good—and to rejoice in that which is good! Will you not praise Him for this?

5. *So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.* Oh, you are strengthened! You grow young again, your faith is revived, your hope is brightened, your love has been stirred up and the smoldering flame begins to burn anew with vigor! Will you not bless Him who restores you after this fashion? Surely, you cannot refuse to praise.

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* Let the poor of the earth praise Him for this! Let the despised—those who are trampled on—exult in the fact that God is the executioner of the proud and the executor of the poor. “He executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.”

7. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.* He is a God who makes Himself known! He might have hidden Himself behind His works, instead of which He has given us a revelation—a revelation in the Old Testament which made David sing! But you and I have a revelation in the New Testament—not made to Moses this time, but to great David’s greater Son! Shall we not praise Him for making known His ways and His acts to us in the person of His Son, in a bright and lustrous manner unknown before? “My soul, bless you the Lord.”

8. *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* And should not this make us plenteous in song? So good a God to such great sinners! Merciful—full of mercy and gracious! Full of grace, love and kindness! So slow to anger and so quick to forgive! O my soul, be you slow to murmur! Be you quick to praise!

9. *He will not always chide.* So that even you, who feel His chidings tonight, ought to bless Him because they last such a little while. Such are our faults that if He were always chiding, we could not find any fault with Him. But He will not always chide. He will sometimes. He makes us

know the folly of our hearts when we wander from Him, but, “He will not always chide.”

9. *Neither will He keep His anger forever.* It is very short-lived towards His people. In fact, it is not anger of that sort which He lets loose against rebels, for He has said, “I will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.”

10. *He has not dealt with us after our sins: nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Come, will you not praise Him for this? If He had dealt with us according to our sins, we certainly would not have been in the house of prayer. We would have been now in the house of punishment! We would have been driven from His presence instead of being invited to seek His face! “He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”

11. *For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.* Sing loud, then, and praise Him greatly, for His mercy is so great!—

**“Loud as His thunders shout His praise,
And sound it lofty at His throne!”**

What music can be equal to such mercy as this?—“As high as the heaven is above the earth.” Surely, the best music our lips can give, and better than that, should be offered to Him!

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* Oh, what a mercy this is! In the third verse, you see, He gave us the note upon which here, in the 12th verse, He enlarges—“Who forgives all your iniquities.” How does He forgive them? Why, “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” They were ours! We could not deny them, but He has removed them—taken them right away from us and laid them on a scapegoat. That scapegoat has carried them away—they will never be found again. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” Now comes in the next note. The third verse was, “Who heals all your diseases.” This is what He says of it—

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him.* While they are sick in body and while He looks at them with great tenderness, feeling for them, suffering with them—

14. *For He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust.* He knows that our sickness is but a premonition of that death which will dissolve this mortal frame, which is only kept together by a continuous miracle. It is strange that such a heap of dust as our body is, does not dissolve much sooner. That it should return to the dust from where it came is no wonder. The wonder is that it returns not at once—and it would, were it not for that next mercy mentioned in the fourth verse, “Who redeems your life from destruction.” He is singing about that now. “He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust.”

15, 16. *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more.* Shall we sorrow about this? No, for we

remember that we have another note yet in the fourth verse, “Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.” So He chants that again in the 17th verse.

17, 18. *But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them.* Mercy for ourselves! Mercy for our children! What a blessing this is—that our father’s friend is our friend, and is the friend of our children, too! As David loved Mephibosheth for Jonathan’s sake, so does God still look upon the children of His children and keeps His covenant with them!

19. *The LORD has prepared His throne in the heavens.* Blessed be His name, He crowns us and we are glad that He should be crowned, too! “Who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies.” And here we see Him—who it is that crowns us. “The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens.”

19, 20. *And His kingdom rules over all. Bless the LORD, you His angels—*As if David could not do it well enough, himself, and so he called in the angels to help him! You bright spirits that behold Him day and night and circle His throne, rejoicing with your never-ceasing symphonies, lend me your harps and tongues! “Bless the Lord, you His angels.”

20, 21. *That excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto this voice of His word. Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts.* Sun, moon, and stars, the hosts of heaven, and all creatures that dwell in this lower sphere of whatever form you are, burst forth into song and extol Him! And oh, men—the bests that should be the hosts of God—when you are made willing in the day of His power, go forth to praise Him! “Bless the Lord, all you His hosts.”

21. *You ministers of His, that do His pleasure.* You servants of His, whether you are wind, and rain, and snow, or whether you are intelligent agents, so long as you are doing His pleasure, praise Him as you do it!

22. *Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.* In the spirit of that, I think, we must always sing our hymns of praise unto God. No, more, our whole life should be a Psalm of joyous thanksgiving and thanks-living!

1 CORINTHIANS 1:25-31.

In this chapter the apostle magnifies the cross of His Lord as God’s greatest gift to the world and as the highest glory of God’s self-revelation to men! He praises God that the Corinthian Christians have experienced the saving grace that comes by faith in the sinner’s sacrifice on Calvary. He rejoices, too, that that same grace has taught them to look forward to the Savior’s return in glory. But he is compelled to reprove them for some divisions and rivalries that sprang from their glorying in gifts rather than graces. This leads him to remind them how God had disparaged mere

worldly wisdom by saving mankind by the death of Jesus. And he brings all to a very practical application in the verses that we now ponder.

25. *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* And yet you will perceive that the church is always looking after wise men after the flesh. If it can find these, it immediately cringes before them, and asks these learned doctors to teach it something more than the simplicities of Christ. This is the old disease of the church! May God yet cure her.

26. *For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.* There are a few such. Remember how the Countess of Huntingdon used to say that she was very thankful for that letter “m,” for it does not say “not any noble,” but “not many noble are called.”

27, 28. *But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised has God chosen, yes, and things which are not—Seem scarcely to have an existence, not worth notice, not put down in the list of existences.*

28, 29. *To bring to nothing things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence.* This is what flesh always likes to do. Proud flesh we speak of, and all flesh is such. Flesh has a great tendency to swell, to corrupt—it is easily puffed up—but God will not have it so. What is flesh to God? Did not He make all things? Shall the thing formed boast itself against the former?

30. *But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* In fact, we have everything in Christ! We have in His prophetic office, wisdom. In His priestly office, righteousness and sanctification. And in His royal office, in which He paid the price of our salvation, we have redemption!

31. *That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.* Here is room for glorifying and it is our duty to glory in God. Let us do so more and more!

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DELIVERANCE FROM THE POWER OF DARKNESS

NO. 3366

**A SERMON
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***“He has delivered us from the power of darkness.”
Colossians 1:13.***

DARKNESS is used in Scripture to express a great many things. Sometimes it represents *sorrow*. “A night of weeping” is a common expression among us. We speak, too, of, “walking in darkness and seeing no light.” We commonly say to one another that our minds are in a dark and gloomy state when we are surrounded by the fogs and mists of sorrow. Taking it in this sense, how often might we say of our heavenly Father, that, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness”? He has helped us in our temporal difficulties and circumstances, or He has whispered, “As your days so shall your strength be,” and He has turned our night of weeping into a morning of gladness, put away the sackcloth and ashes, and given us the oil of joy! Blessed be His name for all this! Let us not be ungrateful, nor forget the many times when He has turned our mourning into dancing and our sackcloth into scarlet and fine linen.

But darkness frequently signifies, too, in Scripture, *ignorance*. We were once so in darkness that we were blinded. “The God of this world” has blinded our eyes, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine in upon us! “We who were sometimes darkness, are now light in the Lord.” Christ’s mission had for one of its many gracious purposes and ends the taking away of the darkness of human ignorance and the pouring of light upon the intellect of man. I thank God that many of us, though we know comparatively little, do know that whereas we were once blind, now we see! We do know something of ourselves so as to be humbled—and we know, too—something of the gracious God, so as to rejoice that we are saved by Him! God has, therefore, delivered us, in that sense, from the power of darkness. Let us be thankful for that. Pant for more knowledge, but oh, believer, be grateful for what you have! Remember that the little you already know of saving truth is inestimably precious, for to know Jesus Christ is eternal life! And if, on this side of the grave, you never learn any more, yet you know that which should set your tongue eternally in holy motion with a rapturous song of thankfulness to Him

who has taught you such priceless truth! Yes, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.”

Darkness, too, frequently represents *Satan and the mysterious spiritual influence which he exerts upon the human mind*. He is called “the Prince of Darkness.” Darkness seems to be his element. God is the “Father of lights,” but Satan seems to be the father of the gloom and the dark!

Two elements are now at war in this lower world—Christ, the light, the true light, and Satan—sin—thick darkness, a darkness which may be felt—the Egyptian darkness in which we are naturally born and out of which we are not delivered except by the supernatural power of God exhibited through the plan of salvation by His grace! Beloved, we still are tempted by Satan, but we are not under his power! We have to fight with him, but we are not his slaves! He is not our king. He has no rights over us. We do not obey him—we will not listen to his temptations. By the grace of God, we mean, notwithstanding all his opposition, to fight in his very teeth and to win our way to heaven! He “has delivered us from the power of darkness.” Oh, what a mercy this is—that man, such a poor creature as he is, should be able to escape from the power of that master spirit Diabolus, Satan, the destroyer! That was a wonderful moment when, according to Bunyan’s description, Hopeful and Christian found that the key was turned in the lock and that they could get out of Giant Despair’s castle. That was a wonderful moment, I say, when, according to Master Bunyan, the key turned in the great lock which locked the iron gate. To use John Bunyan’s own words, he says, “That lock went damnable hard.” In all the new editions of “Pilgrim’s Progress,” it is put, “That lock went desperately hard.” That is the more refined way of putting it, but John Bunyan meant just what he said and implied that there was a sense of the wrath of God upon the soul of man on account of sin, so that he felt as if he were even near to hell itself! And yet, at such a time, the key did turn in the lock and the Iron Gate was opened. You recollect that just at the moment, old Giant Despair woke up, and was going to pursue the pilgrims and lay hold upon them when he was seized with one of his fainting fits. Oh, what an escape from Giant Despair! And yet this is little compared with escaping from Satan! Satan is the prince of the power of the air—and human despair is but one of his servants, one of the black officers in his infernal regiment! To escape from Satan, himself! Oh, let it be sung in heaven! Let angels who have never fallen help us to sing in triumph over those fallen spirits from whom we have been rescued by divine grace! “He has delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.”

I prefer tonight, however, as we cannot talk about all these things, and the field is so very wide, to consider the word, “darkness,” here, in the

restricted meaning of *sin*. Sin is a tremendous moral and spiritual darkness which has spread over the human mind. But we are told in the text and we have felt it in our personal experience, that “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.”

Let us speak, first, of *the power of darkness from which we are delivered*; secondly, upon *the statement here made concerning it*; and thirdly, of *the inferences which inevitably flow from the statement*.

First, then, let us speak a little upon—

I. THE POWER OF SIN FROM WHICH WE HAVE BEEN DELIVERED—as it is here set forth—under the suggestive image of “the power of darkness.”

What is “*the power*” of darkness? I suppose everyone will admit that it is *a power which tends towards slumber*. It is a composing power. God has given us the night in which to sleep. Whether or not there is any absolute power in darkness to engender sleep, I do not know. But I do know this that it is much easier, when reclining on your bed, to sleep in the dark than it is to sleep in the full glare of the sun. There seems to be some sedative influence about darkness, something which assists a man to fall into a state of inaction which we call, “sleep.” Now, beloved, look upon the race of men; they are under the power of darkness, and in consequence, they sleep. Does not the apostle say to us who are delivered from that power, “Let us not sleep as do others”? “They that sleep,” he says, “sleep in the night,” that being the proper time for sleep—the night with its raven wing seeming to engender sleep—“but let us that are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of love.” If you look abroad in the world, I say, you will see men under the soporific influence of sin given to slumber. Do you believe that men would go on to sin as they do if it were not that sin stupefies them, prevents their using their reason, drowns their conscience and will not permit them to judge accurately concerning things that differ? Why, can you imagine that a man would run the risk of everlasting misery for the sake of a few days of carnal delight if he were not, by some means or other, besotted and made a fool of by sin? Can you conceive that a man would hear the tidings of pardoning mercy through Jesus Christ and be solemnly assured that if he turned from the error of his ways, God would accept and receive him—and that then he would treat that message with levity and go his way, even to ridicule it, if it were not that sin has made him so unreasonable, even in these matters, and made him, if not an idiot, a madman, so that he will not think? He willfully chooses his own mischief, ruins himself and that with a sort of Satanic malice against himself as well as against God—choosing rather to inherit eternal misery than to give up the poor delights of time—choosing rather to feast upon the empty husks of this world than to come and sit down at the table of

mercy and eat and drink of the grace which God has provided! So, then, it is very clear—observation shows it to us and we also have felt it in ourselves—that sin has a soporific, a drowsing, a sleep-giving power! It makes men careless and indifferent. Makes them say, “I’ll chance it! I do not care what the future may bring!” It makes a man go right to the very edge of hell with his eyes blindfolded and his heart like Nabal’s heart—which was turned to stone—careless even of the “terrors of the Lord” and of “the wrath to come”!

But blessed be His holy name! “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.” I hope we do not sleep. “Oh, Christian, if you are careless, if you are asleep, if tonight your heart is heavy and dull, I should like to come and whisper this right into your soul, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.” We are now to be active, earnest, zealous and full of devoted life! If they sleep who are unconverted, they only act according to nature. They are in the dark. They, therefore, sleep. What can they do otherwise? But you are in the light of God, you know that you are saved, you rejoice in Jesus Christ! Oh, sleep not, my brothers and sisters, but seeing that there are but a few hours in your day, work while the day lasts and make it your pleasure and your delight to spend and to be spent in the service of Him! “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.”

A second power of darkness lies in *concealment*. It is the power of darkness to hide things. What a darkness we had last night! Trying to get home from ministering abroad, I thought I would never be able to find my way. One could hardly see one’s hand in that dense fog which encompassed one. Houses and trees that one would have known in a moment and that would have told one where one was, were all concealed. One could see nothing! It would be a very small world, indeed, if it were no larger than what could then be seen. Darkness hides things. No matter how glorious yonder landscape may be as you stand upon the mountain’s brow—if the sun has gone down and if night has spread its wings over the whole, you can see nothing! It may be very well for the guide to tell you that yonder is a silver lake, and there the Black Forest, and that far away are the brows of mountains covered with their eternal snows, but you can see nothing—night has effectually blotted it all out! Now, the power of sin is just like that. It hides from the human mind what that mind ought to see. The man is lost, but he does not know it—he cannot see the rocks that are just ahead. The man has soon to stand before the bar of God and receive his sentence, but he does not know it. I mean his heart does not know it. He trifles on, caring for none of these things. As for the plague that is in him, in his ruined state, he does not believe it. He hears the truth of God that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, but he is indifferent to it and as to the dear and precious things of the covenant of grace, he does not care for them. No

matter how rich may be the mercy, nor how pure the consolation, he knows nothing at all about them, for he is in the dark! It is all dark, dark, dark with him amid the blaze of noon!

I think I may honestly and humbly say that I do try to speak as plainly as any man can speak—and care nothing about mighty fine words—and yet I do not doubt but that scores come into this house and go out of it, saying, “Well, I do not understand it!” How could they? They are under the power of sin which makes the plainest truth perplexing and hides from their eyes that which the merest babe in grace can plainly see!

But, beloved, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.” Now we can see, blessed be His name! The first sight we had so alarmed us that we almost wished we could not see! It was a sight so terrible, but when, afterwards, we looked to Jesus upon the cross and found there was life for that look at the crucified One—and when since then we have learned to look continually to Him and to find in His wounds our healing, and in His death our life—oh, I hope we are thanking God every moment of our existence that “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.” Now we can see in Him our Father, who was once to us, “the unknown God.”

Now we can see in Jesus, to whom we were once strangers, our own dear elder brother. Now we can look at the river of death without being alarmed at it, for beyond it we can see the turrets and pinnacles of the new Jerusalem glittering with jasper and with carbuncle—and we are anticipating the happy day when we shall sing with the saints above! Sweet thought is it that with these eyes of ours, we shall see our Savior! Yes, He has delivered us from the concealing power of darkness!

In the third place, darkness has a *depressing and an afflicting power*. Are you not all conscious, if you are shut up in a dark room that your mind seems to sink in the dark? Why, our little children, who are the simplest specimens of humanity—and let us know the truth at once—can hardly be punished more severely (though I hope we never do so punish them, for it would be very wicked to do so) than by being shut up in the dark! They cannot bear it, cannot endure it, and at first, when the little one even goes to bed in the chamber alone in the dark, it feels afraid. What must not those persons have suffered who were shut up in the dungeons at Venice—dungeons below the watermark of the canal, where not a ray of light, perhaps, did ever come, except by the jailer’s candle—shut in there, hour after hour, unable to know the day from the night, but finding it one long and dreary night! The cruel oppressor would not have thought of it unless he had known that the darkness was so uncongenial to us that it depresses our spirits. Now, when some men have eyes given to them and can really see, sin is like darkness to them. Of course, it is not to some of you. A blind man sees as well in the dark

as he does in the light, but as soon as ever you get eyes, God begins to deal with you till you feel that sin is darkness to you! Oh, what darkness is this! Well do some of us remember when we walked in the darkness of our sin. We tried to kindle a fire and to light ourselves with the sparks of our own good works, but we failed in every attempt and we would have been in the thick Egyptian night even now if it had not been that He delivered us from the power of darkness! Now, we know that we still, alas, sin, but it does not fill us with despair because there is an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous!

Now, we come to our Father every night, and bowing low in reverence before Him, we mourn that we have sinned during another day, but we do not mourn with a hopeless sorrow, for we remember that—

***“There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”***

We know that when we were plunged into that fountain, our foulest stains were cleansed right away and now we give thanks unto the Father who has delivered us from the depressing power of sin! Oh, Christian, if you are downcast tonight about this, if you cannot say the text in this sense, go to your heavenly Father, pray to Him and ask Him to enable you to look to Christ just as you did at first! Perhaps you have too many good works of which to boast—and that is why you are so depressed. Throw them all away and come, now, as a poor, empty-handed sinner, having nothing to which to trust but the finished work of Christ! You may depend upon it, that doing this, your peace will yet be like a river because your righteousness, being Christ’s imparted to you, will be like the waves of the sea. Then shall you sing, “Thanks be to Him who has delivered us from the depressing power of darkness.”

I cannot dwell upon these points, though they are all interesting, but must now notice, fourthly, that there is what I may call *the fascinating power of darkness*. It is strange, but it is true, that there are many who love darkness. I said just now that this was contrary to nature, and so it is in one sense. Unfallen nature could not bear darkness, but fallen nature loves it! Hear what God says about it, “Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.” Night is the time of the world’s merriment. Then the thief steals out to do his deeds of evil. “They that are drunk, are drunk in the night,” and then is the time for “wantonness and chambering.” As the apostle says, it is the hour of evil! Darkness seems to be attractive to some men. Strange is it, but it is so. The fascinating power of sin is just like the fascinating power of darkness. I have sometimes thought that sin might well be compared to those serpents which fascinate their prey. It may be some poor little animal—the snake looks and looks, and the little creature, instead of running

away, looks at those bright, sparkling eyes till the poor hare, or rabbit, or whatever it may be, instead of escaping, stands as though it were a statue, perfectly tranquil and fascinated with the glare of the serpent's eyes! And then in a moment the snake darts at it and devours its prey! So is it with sin and there are some here, perhaps, who are under its fascinating power tonight. They know, for they have often been told, that sin is their deadly enemy—and yet it is so pleasant, it is so enchanting, so enticing! As they picture the wizard as being able to strike men into stone, or able to make them do his will, so does sin seem to do and then, at last, it destroys the man who once found pleasure in it! It is a cupbearer to you and comes with smiling face, holds out the sparkling goblet and says, "Drink, my Lord! See the beaded bubbles sparkling on the rim! Drink! For it moves itself aright and sparkles. Drink! And it shall put a flush into your veins and make your blood tingle and leap and let you know a thrill and a joy you have never known before!" And when you get the cup to your lips, you may not be able to take it away again, though, as you drink, it will scald the lips and throat and burn the very vitals! And as you drink on, especially if you drink of the cup of lust, you shall feel another thrill that shall make the very bones rot, and the very marrow to decay till you wish you had never been born and curse bitterly the day in which you came into this world to be partaker of a poison so terrible, so loathsome, so like an ante-past of hell! Oh my God! Grant that if there are any young men or women here who have already drunk of that cup, that by Your help they may dash it down once and forever! But it is fascinating, fearfully fascinating—and when once a person begins to drink of it, it is seldom that he stops until he drains the very dregs of eternal ruin! But thanks be unto God, for "He has delivered us from the power of darkness."

It cannot fascinate us now. I know you, you fair witch! I know you, you painted harlot! Though you might have deceived me once, I know you now! My Savior has shown me superior charms. He has taught me the mischief that comes from loving the world and the things thereof—and now you tempt me in vain! I hope there are many here who can say, "He has delivered us from the fascinating power of sin, from the power of darkness."

I cannot stop on this point, however, but must notice the fifth thing. There is about darkness *an emboldening power* to some men. Darkness makes the child afraid, but it makes the evil man bold! It is in the dark that the lion comes out after his prey and all the beasts of the field go forth to get their food. The sun would frighten them, but boldness comes to them with the darkness. And oh, there is a wonderfully emboldening power to some men in sin! Perhaps, my dear friend, you have come in here tonight, but you have said this afternoon that which you would not

have said 10 years ago! Ah, young woman, you have already done that which you would have shuddered to have done only 12 months ago! Ah, merchant, you have already entered into a doubtful transaction which you would have scorned some months back! You see, you did wrong by little, and as you did one wrong, you got courage to do another, and another, and another! There is the darkness of sin over your minds—you have grown bolder in sin, but that is a poor courage which depends upon the darkness—it is, in fact, the darkness of Satan! It is because of his supreme darkness of mind and spirit that Satan is the boldest of all spirits in contending with the God of heaven and earth. Beware of the brow of brass! It is a grand thing for a Christian to be like a pillar of iron against evil, but it is a mark of reprobation to become like an iron pillar against God and against His truth—and some men do become such. They sin until their sin engenders a second nature!

At first, when sin catches us in its net, it is with the tiniest spider's cobwebs that can scarcely be seen. And they seem as though you could break from them in a moment. Then they become silken bonds—then firmer, still, until a man seems to be enveloped in a tangle of cables—and every cable hardens and becomes as iron or triple steel until at last there is no escaping, for sin gathers daily force until it gets a monstrous power over men! Men will now say and laugh at a thing which once made them shudder! And do an action and then wipe their mouths and say, "Aha! Aha!" An action which once he would no more have thought of doing than trying to mount without wings above the skies! Hazael said, "Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?" And yet, dog or not, he did the very thing he thought it impossible for him to do! Now, I trust if we have been delivered from the power of sin in this respect, that we are no longer to be found doing wrong—and that if we *have* done wrong, we are humbled on account of it. Then should we be contrite and broken in spirit—and instead of boasting, snapping our fingers, and saying, "It is nothing"—we should go to our beds ashamed, or go to our Father's face blushing, mourning, weeping and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" What a blessed thing it is to have a broken heart! Thank God for a tender conscience, and if you have one, never tamper with it. Oh, young man, never tamper with a tender conscience! It is such a blessing to have it. Oh, cultivate it, and pray the Lord to make your heart more and more tender concerning sin that you may hate it with a perfect hatred! He has delivered us from the power of sin.

Once more, and I shall leave this point. Darkness seems to have about it a kind of *prophetic* power. If we were not warned by our astronomers when an eclipse was coming, I have no doubt that half the world would be dreadfully frightened as soon as the sun became darkened. People would say to one another, "The judgment is coming." That is their general thought. If the day gets unusually dark, they think something

horrible is going to happen and they want to know whether this is not the time when the judgment may be expected, and so on. Darkness seems to be a prognostication of evil. Such is sin. My dear hearer, if you hear the voice of sin, it tells you in your sober moments—it cannot help telling you—that there is a judgment to come. “Be sure your sin will find you out.” “God will bring every work into judgment.” For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account at the last day. But the Christian knows that to him the darkness of sin prognosticates nothing of the kind! He stands beneath the cross of Christ and he knows that sin spent itself upon Jesus upon that cross so that it might not touch, for a single moment, the soul that believes in Jesus! Now, notwithstanding everything, the Christian can say, “I am forgiven. I am a monument of grace. I am a sinner saved by blood! I rejoice that for me sin has been put away and I am, therefore, saved.” Thus, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness.”

Now, I shall need your attention for a little upon the second truth of God found here, which is—

II. THE STATEMENT HERE MADE CONCERNING THE POWER OF DARKNESS.

Observe that, in the first place, it is *a statement full of assurance*. “He has delivered us.” Paul does not say he hopes so, but definitely asserts, “He *has* delivered us.” Brothers and sisters, can we speak in the same positive manner? Let us not be content unless we can, for if we have believed in Him, “He has delivered us.” If, indeed, our trust is in His finished work and perfect righteousness, then He has delivered us! It is not a matter of argument, or a thing about which to raise a debate—it is so—it must be so, for every soul that is in Christ, He has delivered from the power of darkness and translated into His own kingdom!

Observe, again, it is a statement *full of intelligence*. The person who uttered it knew what he was saying. He was a sound divine, for he says, “*He has* delivered us.” He does not say, “We have got out of it somehow,” but, “*He has* delivered us.” I wish some persons could have much clearer notions than they have about who it is that saves. If salvation comes of man—well, say so! And if sinners save themselves by all manner of means, give them the credit, the glory, the praise of it! But if it is God who saves, then let Him have the sole and perfect honor for it! “Salvation is of the Lord.” Sinner, you should not try to save yourself! You cannot do it! If you could, why did Christ come to save you? Your salvation does not rest in your hands. “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” All the matter of salvation rests with the eternal Father, through Jesus Christ. He is the Alpha and the Omega of our salvation. The person who wrote this verse, then, it seems, was a

sound divine, for he ascribes the glory where it ought to be ascribed. “He has delivered us.”

Then, next, it is *a statement full of gratitude*. If you look at the connection, you find it says, “Giving thanks unto the Father.” What a delightful grace gratitude is! It is such a heavenly thing to be thankful. I wish we spent a little more time about it, being dissolved by God’s goodness, looking at all that He has done for us and at all our demerit, which renders that love the more wonderful! What joy is there in gratitude—to fall speechless at the foot of the cross and feel the thanks we cannot speak, or to stand up and sing, “Blessed be His name,” or to tell others the loving-kindness of the Lord and to say, “He has dealt graciously with me and He will deal graciously with me.” Brothers and sisters, be much in the sacred and holy palace of gratitude! You cannot have anything that will more strengthen you for service than holy thankfulness to God for His favors. We might have said a good deal more upon that last point, but we leave you to say it to yourselves! And so we will close with the third truth of God that shines here, namely—

III. THE INFERENCES THAT MAY BE DRAWN FROM THIS STATEMENT.

The first inference is a doctrinal one, but as I have already touched on this, I only briefly hint and then leave it. Here it is. Deliverance from the power of sin is as much the work of God as deliverance from the guilt of sin! Where we look for justification, there must we also look for sanctification, for as we are justified through Jesus Christ, we must also expect to receive sanctification from a heavenly source. We cannot receive the one blessing through the spirit and the other through the flesh. We would infer from the text, speaking doctrinally, that in order to our sanctification and our deliverance from the power of sin, we must look to our heavenly Father, altogether and alone.

The next evidence is *experimental*. “He has delivered us.” Now, then, I ought to feel in my soul that I am so delivered—and if I do not so feel—I ought to be wretched until I do feel it because this has been the experience of every true Christian sooner or later. He has delivered us from the power! We may be in darkness sometimes, but it shall not have power over and enslave us. Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace. Let the experimental inference then be, “I am resolved to be happy, yet I will—I will rejoice in God, for He has delivered.”

The next inference is *practical*. If we are delivered from the power of darkness, do not let us put ourselves under its power again, and do not let us temporize with it. You would fancy, from the actions of some professors that they were not delivered from the power of darkness at all, but were only helped to keep away from some conspicuous sin. When I hear some people talk about fox-hunting Christians, card-playing

Christians, Christians who are never at prayer-meetings, Christians who have no zeal for souls, it seems to me that they might just as well talk about angels who are not in heaven, or angels who never obey the voice of God! Why, these are sham Christians! They are not genuine Christians—they are of the world and do the things of the world! We may conclude that their hearts and natures are worldly, for if they were spiritual, they would love spiritual things, and their hearts would be engaged in spiritual exercises. Brothers and sisters, the grace of God has not come into us merely to keep us away from some few notable vices, but to deliver us altogether from the power of darkness! And if I can sometimes go into sin—just occasionally by way of pleasure—it proves that I am a stranger to the deliverance which Jesus Christ gives to His really called and regenerated people!

And now the last inference is *a hopeful* inference. If He has delivered us from the powers of darkness, He will deliver us all the way through! If He has done this great thing for us, what will He not do for us? If He has delivered us from the tremendous power of sin, He will certainly deliver us from the power of death! If sin is taken away, why need we fear? Has He delivered us from the power of darkness? Then He will certainly help us in our daily troubles. Did He give His own dear Son to put away our sin—and will He not give us bread and water? If He has covered our souls with the beautiful robe of righteousness that Christ has woven, will He let us lack for ordinary raiment? Oh, let us be of good cheer! The good God of grace cannot be a bad God of providence! He who feeds us so well on heavenly bread cannot starve us for lack of bodily bread! He has delivered us! We have already received the greatest mercy—and you may be quite sure of the smaller ones! When Sir Francis Drake was overtaken by a storm in the Thames off Greenwich, “What?” he said, “afraid of a storm? Been round the world three times and afraid, now, of being drowned in a ditch? No!” And surely we who have circumnavigated a whole world of discipline and trouble over whose heads the waves and billows have rolled; we do not mean to be drowned in this present trouble! Do you, my dear friend? You shall not perish in this ditch! You shall get safely home! He who has delivered you from the power of darkness will never withdraw His hand and help until He brings you within the pearly gates, puts the crown on your head, the palm branch in your hand, the snow-white robe on your shoulders and the new song of everlasting joy in your mouth, even praise forevermore! Be of good courage, then!

And then there is this inference for some of you who are not converted. *If God has delivered us, why should He not deliver you?* Why, some of us who have been delivered seemed very unlikely to ever be delivered! We did not want to be! We loved darkness rather than light

and yet He delivered us from it. We were, some of us, very hardhearted. Some of us had plunged very deep into sin. There are some here who are wonders of divine grace! They were once wonders of sin and yet the love of God looked them up and brought them out—fetched them from the bar of the gin palace, fetched them out of the theater, brought them even from the brothel, some of them, and washed and cleansed them and made them sit among God’s people, love His ways and rejoice in His dear name! And why should not God do the same with you? I know 20 reasons why He should not, but I will tell you one thing He has said, “Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” So if you come to Him, He will not cast out even you!

The way to come to Him is to trust Him. That is, trust Christ to save you and it is all done, and you are saved! That is the great work. When a soul, sensible of sin, sees that Christ, by His blood, made atonement and comes and throws himself upon that sacrifice of the cross, then sin is pardoned! Then because the sin is pardoned, the forgiven sinner is grateful and he says, “I will not go on in this sin.” So he puts it away and he is led into a life of holiness by the mercy of God. Oh, that we could all say in the words of the text—and if we cannot all say it tonight, I hope we shall soon be able to do so—“Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and has delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.”

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PAUL AS A PATTERN CONVERT

NO. 3367

A SERMON
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“However for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.”
1 Timothy 1:16.

IT is a vulgar error that the conversion of the apostle Paul was an uncommon and exceptional event and that we cannot expect men to be saved now-a-days after the same fashion. It is said that the incident was an exception to all rules, a wonder altogether by itself. Now, my text is a flat contradiction to that notion, for it assures us that, instead of the apostle as a receiver of the long-suffering and mercy of God being at all an exception to the rule, he was a model convert, and is to be regarded as a type and pattern of God’s grace in other believers. The apostle’s language in the text, “for a pattern,” may mean that he was what printers call a first proof, an early impression from the engraving, a specimen of those to follow. He was the typical instance of divine long-suffering, the model after which others are fashioned. To use a metaphor from the artist’s studio, Paul was the ideal sketch of a convert, an outline of the work of Jesus on mankind, a picture of divine long-suffering. Just as artists make sketches in charcoal as the basis of their work—which outlines they paint out as the picture proceeds—so did the Lord, in the apostle’s case, make, as it were, a picture or outline sketch of His usual work of grace. That outline, in the case of each future believer, He works out with infinite variety of skill and produces the individual Christian, but the guiding lines are really there. All conversions are, in a high degree, similar to this pattern conversion. The transformation of persecuting Saul of Tarsus into the apostle Paul is a typical instance of the work of grace in the heart.

We will have no other preface, but proceed at once to two or three considerations. The first is that—

I. IN THE CONVERSION OF PAUL, THE LORD HAD AN EYE TO OTHERS, AND IN THIS PAUL IS A PATTERN.

In every case the individual is saved, not for himself, alone, but with a view to the good of others. Those who think the doctrine of election to be harsh should not deny it, for it is Scriptural—but they may to their own minds soften some of its hardness by remembering that elect men bear a marked connection with the race. The Jews, as an elect people, were chosen in order to preserve the oracles of God for all nations and for all

times. Men personally elected unto eternal life by divine grace are also elected that they may become chosen vessels to bear the name of Jesus unto others. While our Lord is said to be the Savior especially of them that believe, He is also called the Savior of all men—and while He has a special eye to the good of the one person whom He has chosen—yet *through that person* He has designs of love to others—perhaps even to thousands yet unborn!

The apostle Paul says, “I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.” Now, I think I see very clearly that *Paul’s conversion had an immediate relation to the conversion of many others*. It had a tendency, had it not, to excite an interest in the minds of his brother Pharisees? Men of his class, men of culture, who were equally at home with the Greek philosophers and with the Jewish rabbis, men of influence, men of rank, would be sure to enquire, “What is this new religion which has fascinated Saul of Tarsus? That zealot for Judaism has now become a zealot for Christianity—what can there be in it?” I say that the natural tendency of his conversion was to awaken inquiry and thought and so to lead others of his rank to become believers. And, my dear friend, if you have been saved, you ought to regard it as a token of God’s mercy to your class. If you are a working man, let your salvation be a blessing to the men with whom you labor. If you are a person of rank and station, consider that God intends to bless you to some with whom you are on familiar terms. If you are young, hope that God will bless the youth around you. And if you have come to older years, hope that your conversion, even at the eleventh hour, may be the means of encouraging other aged pilgrims to seek and find rest unto their souls. The Lord, by calling one out of any society of men, finds for Himself a recruiting officer who will enlist his fellows beneath the banner of the cross! May not this fact encourage some seeking soul to hope that the Lord may save him, though he is the only thoughtful person in all his family—and then make him to be the means of salvation to all his kindred?

We notice that *Paul often used the narrative of his conversion as an encouragement to others*. He was not ashamed to tell his own life story. Eminent soul-winners, such as Whitefield and Bunyan, frequently pleaded God’s mercy to themselves as an argument with their fellow men. Though great preachers of another school, such as Robert Hall and Chalmers, do not mention themselves at all, and I can admire their abstinence, yet I am persuaded that if some of us were to follow their example, we would be throwing away one of the most powerful weapons of our warfare! What can be more affecting, more convincing, more overwhelming, than the story of divine grace told by the very man who has experienced it? It is better than a dozen tales of converted Africans and infinitely more likely to win men’s hearts than the most elaborate essays upon moral excellence! Again and again, Paul gave a long

narrative of his conversion, for he felt it to be one of the most telling things that he could relate.

Whether he stood before Felix or Agrippa, this was his plea for the gospel. All through his epistles there are continual mentions of the grace of God towards himself—and we may be sure that the apostle did right to argue thus from his own case—it is fair and forcible reasoning and ought by no means to be left unused because of a selfish dread of being called egotistical! God intends that we should use our conversion as an encouragement to others and say to them, “Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will tell you what He has done for my soul.” We point to our own forgiveness and say, “Do but trust in the living Redeemer and you shall find, as we have done, that Jesus blots out the transgressions of believers.”

Paul's conversion was an encouragement to him all his life long to have hope for others. Have you ever read the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans? Well, the man who penned those terrible verses might very naturally have written at the end of them, “Can these monsters be reclaimed? It can be of no use whatever to preach the gospel to people so sunken in vice.” That one chapter gives as daring an outline as delicacy would permit of the nameless, shameful vices into which the heathen world had plunged! And yet, after all, Paul went forth to declare the gospel to that filthy and corrupt generation, believing that God meant to save a people out of it! Surely one element of his hope for humanity must have been found in the fact of his own salvation—he considered himself to be, in some respects, as bad as the heathen, and in other respects even worse! He calls himself the *foremost* of sinners (that is the word) and he speaks of God having saved him foremost, that in him He might show forth all long-suffering. Paul never doubted the possibility of the conversion of a person, however infamous, after he had himself been converted! This strengthened him in battling with the fiercest opponents—He who overcame such a wild beast as I was can also tame others and bring them into willing captivity to His love!

There was yet another relation between Paul's conversion and the salvation of others, and it was this—*It served as an impulse*, driving him forward in his lifework of bringing sinners to Christ. “I obtained mercy,” he said, “and that same voice which spoke peace to me said, “I have made you a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name among the Gentiles.” And he did bear it, my brothers and sisters! Going into regions beyond that he might not build on another man's foundation, he became a master builder for the church of God. How indefatigably did he labor! With what vehemence did he pray! With what energy did he preach! Slander and contempt he bore with the utmost patience. Scourging or stoning had no terrors for him. Imprisonment, yes, death itself, he defied—nothing could daunt him! Because the Lord had saved *him*, he felt that he must, by all means, save some. He could not be quiet. Divine

love was in him like a fire and if he had been silent, he would, before long, have had to cry with the prophet of old, "I am weary with restraining." He is the man who said, "Necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." Paul, the extraordinary sinner, was saved that he might be full of extraordinary zeal and bring multitudes to eternal life! Well could he say—

***"The love of Christ does me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men!
With cries, entreaties, tears to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave.
My life, my blood, I here present,
If for Your truth they may be spent!
Fulfill Your sovereign counsel, Lord!
Your will be done, Your name adored!"***

Now, I will pause here a minute to ask a question. You profess to be converted, my dear friend. What relation has your conversion already had to other people? It ought to have a very apparent one. Has it had such? Mr. Whitefield said that when his heart was renewed, his first desire was that his companions with whom he had previously wasted his time might be brought to Christ. It was natural and commendable that he should begin with them. Remember how one of the apostles, when he discovered the Savior, went immediately to tell his brother? It is most fitting that young people should spend their first religious enthusiasm upon their brothers and sisters. As to converted parents, their first responsibility is in reference to their sons and daughters. Upon each renewed man, his natural affinities, or the bonds of friendship or the looser ties of neighborhood should begin to operate at once, and each one should feel, "No man lives unto himself."

If divine grace has kindled a fire in you, it is that your fellow men may burn with the same flame! If the eternal fount has filled you with living water, it is that out of the midst of you should flow rivers of living water! You are blessed that you may bless—whom have you blessed? Let the question go round. Do not avoid it. This is the best return that you can make to God—that when He saves you, you should seek to be the instruments in His hands of saving others! What have you done? Did you ever speak with the friend who shares your pew? He has been sitting there for a long time and may, perhaps, be an unconverted person—have you pointed him to the Lamb of God? Have you ever spoken to your servants about their souls? Have you broken the ice sufficiently to speak to your own sister, or your own brother? Do begin, dear friend.

You cannot tell what mysterious threads connect you with your fellow men and their destiny. There was a cobbler once, as you know, in Northamptonshire. Who could see any connection between him and the millions of India? But the love of God was in his bosom and Carey could not rest till, at Serampore, he had commenced to translate the word of God and preach to his fellow men! We must not confine our thoughts to the few whom Carey brought to Christ, though to save one soul is worthy

of a life of sacrifice—but Carey became the forerunner and leader of a missionary band which will never cease to labor till India bows before Immanuel! That man mysteriously *drew, is drawing and will draw* India to the Lord Jesus Christ! Brother, you do not know what your power is! Awake and try it!

Did you never read this passage—“You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him”? Now, the Lord has given to His Son power over all flesh, and with a part of that power Jesus clothes His servants. Through you, He will give eternal life to certain of His chosen—by you and by no other means will they be brought to Himself! Look about you, regenerate man! Your life may be made sublime. Awaken yourself! Begin to think of what God may do by you! Calculate the possibilities which lie before you with the eternal God as your helper! Shake yourself from the dust and put on the beautiful garments of disinterested love to others and it shall yet be seen how grandly gracious God has been to hundreds of men by having converted you!

So far, then, Paul’s salvation, because it had so clear a reference to others, was a pattern of all conversions. Now, secondly—

II. PAUL’S FOREMOST POSITION AS A SINNER DID NOT PREVENT HIS BECOMING FOREMOST IN GRACE AND, HEREIN, AGAIN, HE IS A PATTERN TO US.

Foremost in sin, he became also foremost in service! Saul of Tarsus was a *blasphemer* and he is to be commended because he has not recorded any of those blasphemies. We can never object to converted burglars and chimney-sweepers of whom we hear so much, telling the story of their conversion. But when they go into dirty details, they had better hold their tongues! Paul tells us that he was a blasphemer, but he never repeats one of the blasphemies. We invent enough evil in our own hearts without being told of other men’s stale profanities. If, however, any of you are so curious as to want to know what kind of blasphemies Paul could utter, you have only to converse with a converted Jew and he will tell you what horrible words some of his nation will speak against our Lord! I have no doubt that Paul, in his evil state, thought as wickedly of Christ as he could—considered Him to be an impostor, called Him so, and added many an opprobrious epithet. He does not say of himself that he was an unbeliever and an objector, but he says that he was a blasphemer, which is a very strong word, but not too strong, for the apostle never went beyond the truth. He was a downright, thorough-going blasphemer who also caused others to blaspheme. Will these lines meet the eye of a profane person who feels the greatness of his sin? May God grant that he may be encouraged to seek mercy as Saul of Tarsus did, for “all manner of sin and blasphemy” does He forgive unto men!

From blasphemy, which was the sin of the lips, Saul proceeded to *persecution*, which is a sin of the hands. Hating Christ, he hated His

people, too. He was delighted to give his vote for the death of Stephen—and he took care of the clothes of those who stoned that martyr. He hauled men and women to prison and compelled them to blaspheme. When he had hunted all Judea as closely as he could, he obtained letters to go to Damascus, that he might do the same in that place. His prey had been compelled to quit Jerusalem and flee to more remote places, but “being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them unto strange cities.” He was foremost in blasphemy and persecution! Will a persecutor read or hear these words? If so, may he be led to see that even for *him*, pardon is possible! Jesus, who said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” is still an intercessor for the most violent of His enemies!

He adds, next, that he was *injurious*, which, I think, Bengel considers to mean that he was a despiser. That eminent critic says—blasphemy was his sin towards God, persecution was his sin towards the church, and despising was his sin in his own heart. He was injurious—that is, he did all he could to damage the cause of Christ and he thereby injured himself. He kicked against the pricks and injured his own conscience. He was so determined against Christ that he counted no cost too great by which he might hinder the spread of the faith! And he did hinder it terribly—he was a ringleader in resisting the Spirit of God which was then working with the church of Christ. He was foremost in opposition to the cross of Christ!

Now, notice that he was saved as a pattern, which is to show you that if you also have been foremost in sin, you also may obtain mercy as Paul did! And to show you yet again that if you have not been foremost, the grace of God, which is able to save the chief of sinners, can assuredly save those who are of less degree! If the bridge of grace will carry the elephant, it will certainly carry the mouse! If the mercy of God could bear with the greatest sinners, it can have patience with you! If a gate is wide enough for a giant to pass through, any ordinary-sized mortal will find space enough. Despair’s head is cut off and stuck on a pole by the salvation of “the chief of sinners.” No man can now say that he is too great a sinner to be saved—because the chief of sinners was saved 1,800 years ago! If the ringleader, the chief of the gang, has been washed in the precious blood, and is now in heaven, why not I? Why not *you*?

After Paul was saved, he became a foremost saint. The Lord did not allot him a second-class place in the church. He had been the leading sinner, but his Lord did not, therefore, say, “I save you, but I shall always remember your wickedness to your disadvantage.” Not so! He counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry and into the apostleship, so that he was not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles! Brother, there is no reason why, if you have gone very far in sin, you should not go equally far in usefulness! On the contrary, there is a reason why you *should do so*, for it is a rule of grace that to whom much is forgiven, the same loves much—and much love leads to much

service. What man was more clear in his knowledge of doctrine than Paul?

What man more earnest in the defense of the truth of God? What man more self-sacrificing? What man more heroic? The name of Paul in the Christian church stands, in some respects, very next to the Lord Jesus! Turn to the New Testament and see how large a space is occupied by the Holy Spirit speaking through His servant Paul! And then look over Christendom and see how greatly the man's influence is still felt—and must be felt till his Master shall come! Oh, great sinner, if you are even now ready to scoff at Christ, my prayer is that He may strike you down at this very moment and turn you into one of His children—and make you to be just as ardent for the truth as you are now earnest against it, as desperately set on good as now you are on evil! None make such mighty Christians and such fervent preachers as those who are lifted up from the lowest depths of sin and washed and purified through the blood of Jesus Christ! May grace do this with you, my dear friend, whoever you may be.

Thus we gather from our text that the Lord showed mercy to Paul. That in him, first, it might be seen that prominence in sin is no barrier to eminence in grace, but the very reverse! Now I come to where the stress of the text lies.

III. PAUL'S CASE WAS A PATTERN OF OTHER CONVERSIONS AS AN INSTANCE OF LONG-SUFFERING.

“That in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.” Thoughtfully observe the great long-suffering of God to Paul. He says, “He showed forth all long-suffering.” Not only all the long-suffering of God that ever was shown to anybody else, but all that could be supposed to exist—all long-suffering—

***“All Your mercy's height I prove,
All its depth is found in me,”***

as if he had gone to the utmost stretch of his tether in sin—and the Lord had strained His long-suffering to its utmost!

That long-suffering was seen, first, *in sparing his life* when he was rushing headlong in sin, breathing out threats, foaming at the mouth with denunciations of the Nazarene and His people. If the Lord had but lifted His finger, Saul would have been crushed like a moth! But almighty wrath forbore and the rebel lived on. Nor was this all—after all his sin, the Lord allowed mercy to be possible to him. He blasphemed and persecuted at a red-hot rate—and is it not a marvel that the Lord did not say, “Now, at last, you have gone beyond all bearing, and you shall die like Herod, eaten of worms”? It would not have been at all amazing if God had so sentenced him. But He allowed him to live within the reach of mercy, and better still, He in due time actually sent the gospel to him and laid it home to his heart. In the very midst of his rebellion the Lord saved him! He had not prayed to be converted, far from it! No doubt he

had that very day along the road to Damascus profaned the Savior's name and yet mighty mercy burst in and saved him purely by its own spontaneous native energy! Oh mighty grace, free grace, victorious grace! This was long-suffering indeed!

When divine mercy had called Paul, *it swept all his sin away*, every particle of it—his blood shedding and his blasphemy, all at once, so that never man was more assured of his own perfect cleansing than was the apostle! “There is therefore now,” he says, “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” You know how clear he was about that—and he spoke out of his own experience! Long-suffering had washed all his sins away. Then that long-suffering, reaching from the depths of sin, lifted him right up to the apostleship, so that he began to prove God's long-suffering in its heights of favor. What a privilege it must have been to him to be permitted to preach the gospel! I should think sometimes when he was preaching most earnestly, he would half stop himself and say, “Paul, is this you?” Especially when he went down to Tarsus, he must have been surprised at himself and at the mighty mercy of God. He preached the faith which once he had destroyed! He must have said many a time after a sermon, when he went home to his bedchamber, “Marvel of marvels! Wonder of wonders, that I who once could curse have now been made to preach—that I, who was full of threats and even breathed out slaughter, should now be so inspired by the Spirit of God that I weep at the very sound of Jesus' name and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord!”

Oh, brothers and sisters, you do not measure long-suffering unless you take it in all its length from one end to the other and see God in mercy not remembering His servant's sin, but lifting him into eminent service in His church. Now, this was for a pattern, to show you that He will show forth the same long-suffering to those who believe! If you have been a swearer, He will cleanse your blackened mouth and put His praises into it! Have you had a black, cruel heart, full of enmity to Jesus? He will remove it and give you a new heart and a right spirit! Have you dived into all sorts of sins? Are they so shameful that you dare not think of them? Think of the precious blood which removes every stain! Are your sins so many that you cannot count them? Do you feel as if you were almost damned already in the very memory of your life? I do not wonder at it, but He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! You have not gone farther than Saul had gone, and therefore, all long-suffering can come to you and there are great possibilities of future holiness and usefulness before you! Even though you may have been a street-walker or a thief, yet if the grace of God cleanses you, it can make something wonderful out of you! Full many a lustrous jewel of Immanuel's crown has been taken from the dunghill! You are a rough

block of stone, but Jesus can fashion and polish you and set you as a pillar in His temple!

Brother, do not despair! See what Saul was and what Paul became—and learn what you may be! Though you deserve the depths of hell, yet grace can lift you up to the heights of heaven! Though now you feel as if the fiends of hell would be fit companions for such a lost spirit as yourself, yet believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall one day walk among the angels as pure and white as they! Paul's experience of long-suffering grace was meant to be a pattern of what God will do for you—

***“Scripture says, ‘Where sin abounded,
There did grace much more abound.’
Thus has Satan been confounded,
And his own discomfit found.
Christ has triumphed!
Spread the glorious news around!
Sin is strong, but grace is stronger!
Christ than Satan more supreme!
Yield, oh, yield to sin no longer,
Turn to Jesus, yield to Him—
He has triumphed!
Sinners, henceforth Him esteem.”***

Again—

V. THE MODE OF PAUL'S CONVERSION WAS ALSO MEANT TO BE A PATTERN. And with this I shall finish. I do not say that we may expect to receive the miraculous revelation which was given to Paul, but yet it is a sketch upon which any conversion can be painted. The filling up is not the same in any two cases, but the outline sketch. Paul's conversion would serve for an outline sketch of the conversion of any one of us. How was that conversion worked? Well, it is clear that there was nothing at all in Paul to contribute to his salvation. You might have sifted him in a sieve without finding anything upon which you could rest a hope that he would be converted to the faith of Jesus! His natural bent, his early training, his whole surroundings and his life's pursuits all lettered him to Judaism and made it most unlikely that he would ever become a Christian. The first elder of the church that ever talked to him about divine things could hardly believe in his conversion. “Lord,” he said, “I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem.” He could hardly think it possible that the ravaging wolf could have changed into a lamb! Nothing favorable to faith in Jesus could have been found in Saul—the soil of his heart was very rocky, the plow could not touch it and the good seed found no root-hold. Yet the Lord converted Saul and He can do the same by other sinner, but it must be a work of pure grace and of divine power, for there is not in any man's fallen nature a holy spot the size of a pin's point on which grace can light! Transforming grace can find no natural lodging in our hearts—it must create its own soil, and blessed be God, it can do it, for with God all things are possible! Nature contributes nothing to grace and yet grace

wins the day! Humbled soul let this cheer you! Though there is nothing good in you, yet grace can work wonders and save you by its own might!

Paul's conversion was an instance of divine power and of that alone, and so is every true conversion. If your conversion is an instance of the preacher's power, you need to be converted again! If your salvation is the result of your own power, it is a miserable deception from which may you be delivered! Every man who is saved must be operated upon by the might of God the Holy Spirit—every jot and tittle of true regeneration is the Spirit's work! As for our strength, it wars against salvation rather than for it. Blessed is that promise, "Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power." Conversion is as much a work of God's omnipotence as the resurrection—and as the dead do not raise themselves, so neither do men convert themselves!

But Saul was changed immediately. His conversion was once done and done at once. There was a little interval before he found peace, but even during those three days, he was a changed man, though he was in sadness. He was under the power of Satan at one moment and in the next he was under the reign of grace! This is also true in every conversion; however gradual the breaking of the day, there is a time when the sun is below the horizon, and a moment when it is no longer so. You may not know the exact time in which you passed from death to life, but there was such a time, if you are, indeed, a believer! A man may not know how old he is, but there was a moment in which he was born. In every conversion there is a distinct change from darkness to light, from death to life, just as certainly as there was in Paul's. And what a delightful hope does the rapidity of regeneration present to us! It is by no long and laborious process that we escape from sin! We are not compelled to remain in sin for a single moment. Grace brings instantaneous liberty to those who sit in bondage. He who trusts Jesus is saved on the spot! Why, then, abide in death? Why not lift up your eyes to immediate life and light?

Paul proved his regeneration by his faith. He believed unto eternal life. He tells us over and over again in his Epistles that he was saved by faith, and not by works. So is it with every man! If saved at all, it is by simply believing in the Lord Jesus. Paul esteemed his own works to be less than nothing and called them dross and dung, that he might win Christ and so every converted man renounces his own works that he may be saved by grace alone. Whether he has been moral or immoral; whether he has lived an amiable and excellent life, or whether he has raked in the kennels of sin, every regenerate man has only one hope—and that is centered and fixed in Jesus alone! Faith in Jesus Christ is the mark of salvation, even as the heaving of the lungs or the coming of breath from the nostrils is the test of life. Faith is the grace which saves the soul and its absence is a fatal sign. How does this fact affect you, dear friend? Have you faith or no?

Paul was very positively and evidently saved. You did not need to ask the question, “Is that man a Christian or not?” for the transformation was most apparent! If Saul of Tarsus had appeared as he used to be, and Paul the apostle could also have come in, and you could have seen the one man as two men, you would have thought them no relation to one another. Paul the apostle would have said that he was dead to Saul of Tarsus, and Saul of Tarsus would have gnashed his teeth at Paul the apostle! The change was evident to all who knew him, whether they sympathizes in it or not. They could not mistake the remarkable difference which grace had made, for it was as great as when midnight brightens into noon. So it is when a man is truly saved—there is a change which those around him must perceive. Do not tell me that you can be a child at home and become a Christian, and yet your father and mother will not perceive a difference in you! They will be sure to see it. Would a leopard in a menagerie lose his spots and no one notice it? Would an Ethiopian be turned white and no one hear of it? You, masters and mistresses, will not go in and out among your servants and children without their perceiving a change in you if you are born-again! At least, dear brother or sister, strive with all your might to let the change be very apparent in your language, in your actions and in your whole conduct. Let your conversation be such as becomes the gospel of Christ that men may see that you, as well as the apostle, are decidedly changed by the renewal of your minds!

May all of us be the subjects of divine grace as Paul was—stopped in our mad career, blinded by the glory of the heavenly light of God, called by a mysterious voice, conscious of natural blindness, relieved of blinding scales and made to see Jesus as one all in all. May we prove in our own persons how speedily conviction may melt into conversion, conversion into confession and confession into consecration!

I have done when I have inquired how far we are conformed to the pattern which God has set before us. I know we are like Paul as to our sin, for if we have neither blasphemed nor persecuted, yet have we sinned as far as we have had opportunity. We are also conformed to Paul’s pattern in the great long-suffering of God which we have experienced. And I am not sure that we cannot carry the parallel farther—we have had much the same revelation that Paul received on the way to Damascus, for we, too, have learned that Jesus is the Christ! If any of us sin against Christ, it will not be because we do not know Him to be the Son of God, for we all believe in His deity because our Bibles tell us so. The pattern goes so far—I would that the grace of God would operate upon you, unconverted friend, and complete the picture by giving you like faith with Paul. Then will you be saved as Paul was! Then, also, will you love Christ above all things, as Paul did, and you will say, “But what things were gains to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellence of the

knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.” He rested upon what Christ had done in His death and resurrection, and he found pardon and eternal life at once and became, therefore, a devoted Christian!

What do you say, dear friend? Are you moved to follow Paul’s example? Does the Spirit of God prompt you to trust Paul’s Savior and give up every other ground of trust and rely upon Him? Then do so and live! Does there seem to be a hand holding you back and do you hear an evil whisper saying, “You are too great a sinner”? Turn round and bid the fiend depart, for the text gives him the lie. “In me, *first*, has Jesus Christ showed forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on His name.” God has saved Paul. Back, then, O devil! The Lord can save any man, woman or child and He can save me! Jesus Christ of Nazareth is mighty to save and I will rely on Him. If any poor heart shall reason thus, its logic will be sound and unanswerable. Mercy to one is an argument for mercy to another, for there is no difference, but the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him!

Now I have set the case before you and I cannot do more. It remains with each individual to accept or refuse. One man can bring a horse to the trough, but a hundred cannot make him drink. There is the gospel—if you want it, take it—but if you will not have it, then I must discharge my soul by reminding you that even the gentle gospel—the gospel of love and mercy has nothing to say to you but this, “He that believes not shall be damned.”—

***“How they deserve the deepest hell,
That slight the joys above!
What chains of vengeance must they feel
Who break the bonds of love!”***

God grant that you may yield to almighty love and find peace in Christ Jesus!

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“Your judgments are a great deep.”
Psalm 36:6.

CONSIDER the word, “judgment,” in whatever light you please, this sentence is true. There is much of mystery connected with the terrible calamities which afflict the earth, devastate nations, destroy cities and sweep away the relics of the past. There is much of mystery about the judgments of God upon the wicked in this life—how they prosper for a while and are suddenly cut down—how they grow fat like oxen and then are taken away to the shambles. The judgments of God regarding the wicked in the world to come are also “a great deep,” not to be spoken of with levity. A solemn subject is that of the future punishment of the ungodly—“a great deep,” a deep where some, I am afraid, speculate so deeply that the risk they run is imminent—they may drown themselves in hell.

But I prefer tonight to take the text as it may refer to *God’s dealings with His own people*. He deals with them in judgment, not, I think, as a penal offense, vindicating the inflexible justice of the law by the terrible vengeance He inflicts on the transgressor as He will deal with the wicked at the last dread assize. I mean not that. I rather interpret it of the salutary discipline and painful chastisements of God’s hand which are called “judgments” in Scripture. They do not come by chance, nor upon us at all merely as a matter of sovereignty, but they are sent in wisdom, because God judges them to be necessary. They are weighed out to us with discretion—given to us by prudence. It is a sweet name, I think, for affliction—not that I look upon affliction as a judgment upon me for sin, which I cannot do, now that I have seen sin punished in Christ, but I look at my afflictions as being sent to me according to the all-wise judgment of a kind Father, not at all without consideration, but always according to His infinite wisdom and prudence, dealt out in measure and at proper times, according to the infinite judgment and wisdom of God. In a word, they are called, “judgments,” not because they are judicial, but because they are judicious!

Now, these dealings of God with His servants, always wise and prudent, are frequently like great deeps. This evening I shall simply work out three or four thoughts which arise out of that metaphor.

I. THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE ARE OFTEN UNFATHOMABLE.

We cannot discover the foundation or cause and spring of them. Some of God’s servants who are earnestly desirous to provide things honest in

the sight of all men, though they are industrious and energetic and use proper prudence, do not find themselves able to prosper in trade. They are thwarted in all their purposes. There seems to be a kind of fatality connected with all their enterprises. If they do but touch a business or a bargain which will turn into gold with the traffic of others, it melts under their hand into dross. Now, it is not always that this can be explained. "Your judgments are a great deep"—a matter to be perceived as a fact, but not to be explained by reasoning.

Sometimes in a family a dear child is born and is a great comfort to its parents. It seems, indeed, to be sent in love, to heal some old wound and to make the house happy! And then just as suddenly as it came, it is removed. Why? Ah, here, again, is another deep which a mother's anxious heart would like to fathom, but which it is not for her to explore. It is a great deep.

Children will be spared to us and just when they are ripening to manhood and womanhood, and we hope to see them settled and established in life, it happens—as it happened to one of our beloved friends in this church this afternoon—that we have to stand at the open grave, and say, "Earth to earth, dust to dust." Why God takes away the holy and the good, the amiable and the lovely when they appeared to be most useful, we cannot understand. It is a great deep.

Oftentimes, too, it happens that when a man is surrounded by his family and all his household are dependent upon his exertions with a business just beginning to prosper, while he bids fair to live for many years, he is cut down as in a moment—his wife is left a widow—his children are orphans. He seems to be taken away at the very worst time, just when he could least be spared. The anxious wife may say to herself, "Why is this?" but she can only say in return, "I cannot comprehend it, it is a great deep."

I might thus go on recounting instances, but they have transpired before us all in our lifetime. And if they have not occurred to us yet, they certainly will. Trials and troubles will come upon us quite beyond our measuring line. We shall have to do business in deep waters where no plummet can by possibility find a bottom! "Your judgments are a great deep."

But why does the Lord send us an affliction which we cannot understand? I answer, *because He is the Lord.* Your child must not expect to understand all his father does, because his father is a man of ripened intellect and understanding, and the child is but a child. You, dear brother, however experienced you may be, are but a child, and compared with the divine mind, what intelligence have you? How can you expect, therefore, that God shall always act upon a rule which you shall be able to understand? He is God, and therefore, it becomes us oftentimes to be dumb, to sit in silence and feel and know it must be right, though we equally know we cannot see how it is so.

God sends us trials of this sort *for the exercise of our divine graces.* Now, is there *room for faith?* When you can trace it, you cannot trust it. If you can understand all that He does, there is room, then, for your

judgment rather than for your faith and for your reliance on His judgment. But when you cannot understand it, submit yourself to Him! Say, "I know that God is good. Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him; though I walk in darkness and see no light, yet shall not an unbelieving word cross these lips, for He is good and must be good, become of me what may." Oh, then it is that faith is faith, indeed—the faith that brings glory to God and strength to your soul! Here is room, too, for *humility*. Knowledge puffs up, but the feeling that everything is beyond our knowledge, that we are nonplussed and cannot understand—the sense of ignorance and incapacity to understand the dealings of God—brings humility to us and we sit down at the foot of Jehovah's throne. Beloved, I think there is hardly a grace which the Christian has which is not much helped by the deeps of God's judgments. Certainly love has frequently been developed to a high degree in this way, for the soul at last comes to say, "No, I will not ask the reason—I will not *desire* the reason—I do so love Him! Let His will stand for a reason. That shall be enough for me. It is the Lord—let Him do what seems good to Him." We love not those whom we are always bringing to book and questioning about all they do, but when love comes to perfection it admires all, it believes all to be right and to be perfect. And so, when love comes to perfection with reference to the most perfect God, then it is that everything that is done is endorsed without examination—everything, even though it is shrouded in darkness—is believed in without a question. It must be right, for You, Lord, have done it!

Many other reasons why God calls His people thus to feel His judgments occur to me. One I may give, then I will leave this point. *We have sins which we cannot fathom*, dear brothers and sisters, and it is little marvel, therefore, if we have also chastisements which we cannot fathom! There are depths of depravity within our heart that call for other deeps, as deep calls unto deep, and there are consequences of sin within us which we are not able yet to reach, consequences that are following us in secret and damaging us in very vital point. It needs that the medicine should be of a searching kind to follow the disease into the recesses of our soul where understanding cannot pry. Some of those deep judgments are like secret, potent, subtle medicines, searching out certain secret devils that have found their way into the caverns of our spirit and hidden there. Perhaps an affliction which I can understand is meant to direct my attention to some known sin—but it may be that the trial which I cannot understand is dealing deadly blows against a mortal ill, which, if not thus destroyed, might have been solemnly prejudicial to my own spirit.

I leave that thought with you—expect that God's judgments will sometimes be unfathomable. In the next place—if God's judgments are a great deep—

II. THEN THEY ARE SAFE SAILING.

Ships never strike on rocks out in the great deeps. Children, perhaps, may fancy that a shallow sea is the safest, but an old sailor knows better. While they are off the Irish coast the captain has to keep a good

look out, but while he is crossing the Atlantic he is in far less danger. There he has plenty of room and there is no fear of quicksands or of shoals. When the sailor begins to come up the Thames, then it is that there is first one sandbank and then another, and he is in danger, but out in the deep water, where he finds no bottom, he is but little afraid. So, mark you, in the judgments of God. When he is dealing out affliction to us, it is the safest possible sailing that a Christian can have. "What?" says one, "trial safe?" Yes, very safe. The safest part of a Christian's life is the time of his trial. "What? When a man is down, do you say he is safe?" "Yes, for then he need fear no fall! When he is low, he need fear no pride. When he is humbled under God's hand then he is less likely to be carried away with every wind of temptation. Smooth water on the way to heaven is always a sign that the soul should keep wide awake, for danger is near! One comes at last to feel a solemn dread creeping over one in times of prosperity. "You shall fear and tremble because of all the good that God shall make to pass before you," fearing not so much lest the good should depart as lest we should make an ill use of it and should have a canker of sloth, or self-confidence, or worldliness growing up in our spirits! We have seen many professed Christians who have made shipwreck—in some few instances it has been attributable to overwhelming sorrow—but in ten cases to the one, it has been attributable to prosperity! Men grow rich, and of course, they do not attend the little chapel they once went to—they must go somewhere where a fashionable world will worship! Men grow rich and immediately they cannot keep to that road of self-denial which once they so gladly trod. The world has got into their hearts and they need to get more. They have got so much and they must get more! An insatiable ambition has come over them—and they fall—and great is the sorrow which their fall brings to the church! Great the mischief which it does to the people of God!

But a man in trouble—did you ever notice a real child of God in trial? How he prays! He cannot live without prayer! He has got a burden to carry to his God and he goes to the mercy-seat again and again. Notice him under depression of spirits. How he reads his Bible! He does not now care for that lighter literature which beguiled him many an hour before. He needs the solid promise, the strong meat of the kingdom of God! Do you notice now how he hears? That man does not care a fig for your flowers and your fine bits of rhetoric—he needs the Word of God! He needs the naked doctrine. He needs Christ! He cannot be fed on whims and fancies. He cares a great deal less about theological speculation and ecclesiastical authority—he needs to know something about eternal love, everlasting faithfulness and the dealings of the Lord of Hosts with the souls of His people, of the covenant and of the suretyship engagements of Christ! Ah, this is the man who, if you notice him, walks tenderly in the world. He walks holding the world with a very loose hand. He expects to be often in the way, and hopes to be up out of the way, for the world has lost its attraction for him!

I say again, God's judgments are a great deep, but they are safe sailing, and under the guidance and presence of the Holy Spirit, they are not only safe but *they are advantageous*. I greatly question whether we ever grow much in grace, except when we are in the furnace! We ought to do so. The joys of this life with which God blesses us ought to make us increase in grace and gratitude, ought to be a sufficient motive for the very highest form of consecration, but, as a rule, we are only driven to Christ by a storm—the most of us, I mean. There are blessed and favored exceptions, but most of us need the rod, must have it and do not seem to learn obedience except through chastening—the chastening of the Lord! Here I leave that second thought. Thirdly, God's judgments are a great deep—

III. BUT THEY CONCEAL GREAT TREASURE.

Down in those great depths, who knows what there may be? Pearls lie deep there—masses of precious things that would make the miser's eyes gleam like a star. There are the wrecks of old Spanish galleons lost these centuries ago, and there they lie, huge mines of wealth, but far down deep; and so with the deep judgments of God. What wisdom is concealed there, and what treasures of love and faithfulness and what David calls, "very tenderness," "for in very tenderness," he says, "have You afflicted me." There is as much wisdom to be seen in some of the deep afflictions of God—if we could but understand them, we would see as much wisdom in them as in the creation of the world! God smites His people artistically. There is never a random blow. There is a marvelous degree of skill in the chastening of the Lord. Hence we are told not to despise it, which, in the strongest meaning of it, means that we are to honor it! We honor the chastisements of our parents, but infinitely more the chastisements of God. "For they verily chastened us for a few days after their own pleasure, but He for our profit," and there is a way of chastening us for profit.

Now, brothers and sisters, I said there were treasures concealed in the great deeps which we cannot yet reach, and so in the great deeps in which God makes us to do business there are great treasures that we cannot come upon at present. We do not, perhaps, as yet, receive, or even perceive, the present and immediate benefit of some of our afflictions. There may be no immediate benefit—the benefit may be for hence and to come. The chastening of our youth may be intended for the ripening of our age. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." The affliction of today may have no reference to the circumstances of today, but to the circumstances of 50 years ahead! I do not know that that blade required the rain on such a day, but God was looking not to February as such, but to February in its relation to July, when the harvest should be reaped. He considered the blade not merely as a blade and in its present necessity, but as it would be in the full corn in the ear. There are certain marks that an artist makes upon the block that you cannot see the reason of as yet—and they spoil the apparent likeness of the block and marble to the image which you know he wishes

to produce—but then those lines are to be worked out, by-and-by! They are scratches now, but they will be lines of beauty soon, when he comes to finish them. So, a present trial may even lame us for present service, damage us—I will even go the length of saying—for years to come and make us go groaning and brokenhearted, so as to be of comparatively little service to the church and of very little joy to ourselves. But then afterwards—afterwards as Paul puts it—it bears the peaceable fruits of righteousness in those that are exercised thereby. Why will you not let the Lord have time? Why will you be in a hurry? Why will you stand at His elbow and perpetually say, “Explain this today and show me the motive and reason of this in this present hour”? A thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night! The mighty God takes mighty time in which to work out His grand results! Therefore, be content to let the treasures lie at the bottom of the deep for a while. But then faith may see them. Faith can make the deep translucent till it sees the treasure lying there—and it is yours and though you may not at this hour be able to be at it—yet you shall have it, “for all things are yours.” Everything that is stored up in the great deep of the eternal purpose, or in the deep of the manifest judgment, everything there belongs to you, O, believer! Therefore rejoice in it and let it lie there till such a time as God may choose to raise it for your spiritual enrichment. God’s judgments are a great deep—

IV. AND THEY WORK MUCH GOOD.

The great deep, though ignorance thinks it to be all waste—a salt and barren wilderness—is one of the greatest blessings to this round world! If, tomorrow, there should be “no more sea,” although that may one day be a blessing, it would not be so today, but the greatest of all curses! It is from the sea that there arises the perpetual mist which, floating by-and-by in mid-air, at last descends in plenteous showers on hill and vale to fertilize the land. The sea is the great heart of the world—I might say the circulating blood of the world! We must have it. It must be in motion. Its tides, like a great pulse, must be felt, or the world’s vitality would cease. There is no waste in the sea—it is all needed. It must be there. There is not a drop of it too much. So with our afflictions which are Your judgments, O God! They are necessary to our life, to our soul’s health, to our spiritual vigor. “By all these,” said one of old, “do men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit.” Rising up from my trouble is the constant mist which is afterwards transformed into sacred dew, which moistens my life. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted,” said David. “Amen!” say all the afflicted ones. A thousand sick beds shall bear witness to the blessedness of the trial. A thousand losses and crosses that have been borne by the faithful now help the sweetness of the harmony of everlasting hymns in the land of the blessed. “Oh, blessed cross,” said one, “I fear lest I should come to love you too much! ‘Tis so good to be afflicted!” May God grant to us that at all time, instead of trying to fathom the deep, we may understand that it is useful to us and be content. Lastly, if God’s judgments are a great deep—

V. THEN THEY BECOME A HIGHWAY OF COMMUNION WITH HIMSELF.

We thought at one time that the deep separated different peoples—that nations were kept asunder by the sea. But lo, the sea is today the great highway of the world! The rapid ships cross it with their white sails, or with their palpitating engines they soon flash across the waves. The sea is the world's great canal—a mighty channel of communication. And so, brothers and sisters, our afflictions—which we thought in our ignorance would separate us from our God—are the highway by which we may come nearer to God than we otherwise could! They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business on the great waters, these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. You that keep close in shore and have but small trials, you are not likely to know much of His wonders in the deep—but if you are made to put out far to sea, where deep calls unto deep and the noise of God's waterspouts astounds the spiritual mariner, then it is that you shall see God's wonders—wonders of faithfulness, wonders of power, wonders of wisdom, wonders of love! You shall see them and you shall rejoice to see them! These troubles shall be as fiery chariots to bear you up to God. Your afflictions, wave upon wave, shall wash your soul, like a tempest-tossed boat, nearer to the haven. Oh, but this is a blessed thing when God's judgments bring us nearer to Him! Old Quarles has a quaint idea when he represents God as swinging a flail in judgment—he says if you would get away from it, you must get close to His hands, and then you are out of the reach of the swing of the blow. Get close up to God and He will not smite! Get near to God and the trials cease!

You know, trials are sometimes weights to keep men down, but you have seen many a machine in which one weight going down lifts another weight up. And there is a way by faith of adjusting the consecrated pulleys so that the very weights of your affliction may lift you up nearer to God! The bird with a string and a stone to its feet cannot fly and yet there is a way that God has of making His birds fly even when they are tied to the ground! They never mounted till they had something to pull them down! Never ascended till they were compelled to descend! They found the gates of heaven not up there, but down here! The lower they sank in self-estimation, the nearer they came to the everlasting God who is the foundation of all things!

Thus, brothers and sisters, I have brought you to the last thought—may the Holy Spirit bring you to make it your own. May God's deep judgments lead you to deeper communion.

Dear child of God, you that are in trouble tonight, the voice of that trouble is to you—get nearer to God! Get nearer to God. God has favored you, favored you with an extraordinary means of growth in His grace. To use Rutherford's simile, He has put you down in the wine cellar in the dark. Now begin to try the wines on the lees well-refined. Now get at the choice treasures of darkness! He has brought you on to a sandy desert—now begin to seek the treasures that are hid in the sand. Believe that the

deepest afflictions are neighbors always to the highest joys and that the greatest possible privileges lie close by the darkest trials. If the bitterer your sorrow, the louder your song at the last—there is a reason for that—and that reason faith may discover and experience live upon.

May God bless the tried ones here! But there are some here, perhaps, who are in trial and have no God to go to. Poor souls! Poor souls! Poverty and no God! Sickness and no God! A life of toil, and no heaven! A slavery of penury on earth and then driven forever away from God's presence! Oh, how pitiable! How pitiable! Pity yourselves and remember that it need not always be so. You may have a heaven, you may have present bliss. Here is the gospel—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Oh, if you can but trust Him who bled upon the cross, you shall have comfort for your present trouble! You shall have pardon for your past, present and future sins! The Lord bless each one of you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 73; 37:1-10.**

TITLE, "A PSALM OF ASAPH." He was a great singer, but he could not always sing. In the first part of the Psalm he felt rather like groaning than singing—and you shall find that those who sing the praises of God the sweetest, sometimes have to hang their harps upon the willows and are silent. The strong temptation through which Asaph passed is one which is very common. You find another account of it in the 37th Psalm. It may help your memory to notice that it is the 37th and the 73rd Psalm (transpose the figures) which are both upon the same subject—the temptation caused to the people of God by the prosperity of the wicked.

Verse 1. *Truly, God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.* It must be so. Whatever argument my soul may hold about it, I will set that down, to begin with as a certainty—"Truly, God is good to Israel." He cannot be unkind or unfaithful to His own people! It cannot be possible, after all—however things may look—that God is a bad God and a bad Master to His own servants!

2. *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped.* Am I, then, one of His people or not? I know He is good to them, but how about myself? Perhaps some here will never question themselves in that way, and if they were led to do so, they would think it was of the devil. I do not think so. I think it is rather of the devil to keep us from questioning ourselves. I remember what Cowper said—

***"He that has never doubted of his state,
He may—perhaps he may—too late."***

Let us delight in full assurance, but let us keep very clear of presumption and that assurance which cannot bear self-examination is presumption, depend upon it! When a man declines to search himself and test himself, there is something doubtful, if not rotten in his estate—and it is time he began to say, "As for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had well near slipped." This is how it came about—

3. *For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.* I know that wicked men are fools. Asaph and David had often said that before. Yet says he, “I was a greater fool, still, that I was envious of these fools—when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

4, 5. *For there are no pangs in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.* Many of them keep up a hypocritical profession through a long life and die in a stupefaction—so that conscience never awakens and they pass out of the world loaded with guilt—and yet talk about being accepted before God! How can this be? Where is the justice of it?

6. *Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain.* As kings wear chains of gold, so is their pride to them.

6. *Violence covers them as a garment.* They are not ashamed of it. They get to be so bold in sin that they wear it as an outside cloak!

7. *Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.* Superfluities! They never have to ask where a meal will come from. They have more than they need.

8. *They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens.* Such big mouths—such blasphemous words—have they, that they attack God Himself! There is nothing too high for them to drag it down—nothing too pure for them to slander. “They set their mouth against the heavens.”

9. *And their tongue walks through the earth.* Like the lion seeking its prey, they take long walks in their slander. Nobody is safe from them.

10, 11. *Therefore his people return here: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?* God’s sorrowing children have to drink of the bitter cup while these proud ones are eating of the fat of the land!

12-14. *Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all the daylong have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.* When Asaph got into this unbelieving state of mind, it looked as if all his care of his character and all his desire to serve God were wasted, for the wicked prospered, while he was chastened! It is a strong description which he gives of his state. “All the daylong have I been plagued.” Not by the half-hour, but by the whole day—plagued and weeping as soon as he was out of bed—chastened every morning! He almost seemed to be sorry that he was a child of God, to be so roughly handled. He almost, but not quite, wished that he could take the portion of the wicked, that he might enjoy himself as they did and might prosper in the world as they did.

15. *If I had said, I will speak thus, behold, I would have offended against the generation of Your children.* That was very wise of Asaph. He thought, but he did not speak. Some persons say, “You may as well out with it.” You may as well keep it in! No, a great deal better—if you have it in your own heart, it will grieve yourself—but if you speak it out, you will grieve others. If you wear sackcloth, brothers and sisters, wear it round

your own loins, but do not wear it as your outside garment. There is enough sackcloth in the world without your flaunting it before everybody else's face! If you must fast, remember your Master's words, "You, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast." He gave us that precept in order to avoid Pharisaic ostentation, but we may also follow it from another motive, namely, that we may not spread sorrow in the world. There is enough of depression of spirit, enough of despondency, enough of heartbreak without our saying a word to increase it among the sons of men—

***"Bear and forbear, and silent be—
Tell no man your misery,"***

lest you bring another into it, unless, indeed, you meet with a strong man who can help you. Then you may tell your sorrow to get relief. But tell it not to the children.

16. *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.* "Too painful" to keep it. "Too painful" to speak it out and grieve other people.

17. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood their end.* Asaph went to his God. He got to Christ, whom he foresaw, for the person of Jesus Christ is the sanctuary of God! Some people call these buildings sanctuaries. They have no authority for so doing. "God dwells not in temples made with hands." He may have done so under the Old Covenant, but not now. Christ is the sanctuary of God and when we get to Him and come into fellowship with God in Him, then we begin to learn something! "Then understood I their end."

18. *Surely You did set them in slippery places.* There they are—on a mountain of ice, bright and glittering! Up aloft, where others see, admire and wonder at them. But oh, how dangerous their pathway!

18. *You cast them down into destruction.* They are not left to slip, but a hand overthrows them—flings them down from the heights of their prosperity to the depths of unutterable woe!

19, 20. *How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes, so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.* As if God slept today and let these images of prosperity exist as in a dream, but by-and-by He wakes. His time of judgment comes and where are these prosperous men? They have gone. The "baseless fabric of a vision" has melted into thin air and "left not a wreck behind." It is not. It is gone!

21. *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.* I felt a heart-pain. I felt my whole nature go amiss, as if there had been calculi causing the deepest possible misery in my reins.

22. *So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You.* I saw no farther than a goose! Like a beast that cannot look into the future, I judged these men by today—by the pastures in which they fed and the fatness which they gathered there. "I was as a beast before You." Now notice the splendid connection of these two verses. I will read them again—the 22nd and the 23rd. "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before You."

23. *Nevertheless I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand.* What a strange mixture a man is! And a godly man is the strangest conglomerate of all! He is a beast and yet continually with God. View him from one side—he is ignorant. View him from the other and he has an unction from the Holy One and he knows all things! View him from one point of the compass and he is naked, and poor, and miserable! View him from another quarter and behold he is complete in Christ and “accepted in the Beloved!” They know not man who do not know that every true man is two men!

24. *You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.* I, the fool that envied fools, yet, “You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.”

25. *Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.* Now he has got out of the temptation! He is not going to seek for prosperity that he may rival the wicked in their wealth. No! He sees that in having God, he has all he needs. Even though he should continually be plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning, his portion in God is quite enough for him. He will not murmur anymore!

26. *My flesh and my heart fail.* I see what a poor thing I am. I allowed my flesh and my heart to get the mastery over me and I got caught in this trap.

26, 27. *But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For, lo, they that are far from You shall perish: You have destroyed all them that go a whoring from You.* A strong word, but none too forcible, for every heart that seeks delight away from God is an unchaste heart. It has got away from true purity even for a moment in pouring out its love upon the creature.

28. *But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works.*

PSALM 37. Verse 1. *Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity.* A common temptation. Many of God’s saints have suffered from it. Learn from their experience. Avoid this danger. There really is no power in it when once the heart has come to rest in God. But it is a sad affliction until the heart does get its rest. “Fret not because of evildoers.”

2-4. *For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the LORD.* Make Him your delight, and take care that you do really delight. Feel a fullness of joy in Him.

4. *And He shall give you the desires of your heart.* Because when the heart delights in God, then its desires are all such as God can safely grant. He does not say to every man, or even to every praying man, “I will give you the desires of your heart,” but, “Delight yourself in the Lord,” and then He will.

5. *Commit your way unto the LORD.* Give it up to Him to rule it, and to guide you and lead you in every step. “Commit your way unto the Lord.”

5, 6. *Trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday.* It is better to trust our character with God than with the ablest counselor. Scandal may pass over a fair name for a while and cloud it, but God is the avenger of all the righteous! There will be a resurrection of reputations, as well as of persons at the last great day. Only we must commit it to God.

7, 8. *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil.* A fretful spirit soon comes to be an angry spirit—and when we begin to be jealous of evildoers; we are very apt to become evildoers ourselves! Many an honest man has snatched at hasty gain because he was envious of the prosperity of the unrighteous. And then he has pierced himself through with many sorrows in consequence. But “fret not yourself in any wise to do evil.” There is an old proverb that it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright. Therefore, when you are in temporal trouble, ask the Lord to fill you with His grace, for then you will stand upright, and by-and-by, you shall be delivered.

9. *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.* If there is anything good to be had here, men that wait upon God shall have it! If there is any grain of wheat amidst these heaps of chaff, believers that trust the Lord shall find them!

10. *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be.* How transient are their joys! Their wealth which they accumulate, the beauty which they think is upon their estate—all this is but as the painted colors of the bubble, which is scarcely seen before it vanishes. Will you envy this? Will you envy a little child his playthings, which will be broken in an hour? Will you envy a madman the straw crown which he plaits and puts upon his head when he thinks himself a king? Oh, be not so foolish! Your inheritance is eternal and you are immortal! Why should you envy the creature of an hour? “For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be.”

10. *Yes, you shall diligently consider his place.* His mansion, his house, the grand figure that he cuts in society.

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MAN HUMBLLED, GOD EXALTED

NO. 3369

A SERMON

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“And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.”
Isaiah 2:17.

THIS is the case when God visits a nation with *terrible judgments*. When the Jews were led away captive into Babylon, the great men of the land were bound in chains and treated as common slaves. And as they marched across the weary wilderness, the iron entered into their souls. Then was the loftiness of their spirit bowed down and the haughtiness of the king and the princes, who laughed at the prophet, was laid low.

So also when God is pleased to send *famine* upon a land, then again man has to humble himself. It is not easy to say, “I am my own. Who is Lord over me?” When the barn is empty and when the wine vats no longer burst with new wine. Famine is a wondrous leveler—and when the king of Samaria went through his straitened cities—where women had eaten their own children in the straitness of the siege, I think there was none brought so low as the king—none so humbled as the highest and none so base as the haughtiest!

It is so, too, when *pestilence* comes. With equal foot, it kicks at the door both of the palace and of the cottage. Then the prince must mourn because his first-born dies—and majesty must sit in weeds when desolation is in the palace.

God has wondrous ways of making men feel that they are but dust, but when nothing else can serve His turn He will sweep whole dynasties away, as men remove an anthill when it has become a nuisance. Yes, He will shake mighty nations, and make “eternal cities,” as they were called, only to stand as the memorials and the wrecks of greatness! The Lord, in all the works of providence hitherto, if you analyze the pages of history, you will find has been constantly bringing down high looks and making the haughtiness of man to be humbled. Indeed, this seems to be God’s great work! And if any man should say to me, “What is God doing?” I would answer, “He is lifting up the lowly and he is casting down the proud! He seems always to be engaged in this, as though it were His natural work and He delighted in it—the taking down of those nests that

were built among the stars—and the stooping in the almightiness of His love to pick up the beggar from the mire and set him among the princes, even among the princes of His people.”

What is thus constantly being done in His providence will be continued to be done until the haughtiness of man shall be completely driven away—until in this world there shall be no place for any majesty, but the majesty of the King of kings—until beneath the cape of heaven there shall be but one name before which men shall bow, one throne which alone shall be august in men’s minds and only one name by which all the families of the earth shall be named! “In that day,” when all the earth shall be filled with His glory, as the waters cover the sea, it shall be said, “He has thrown down the high looks of man and the Lord, alone, is exalted!”

But I want to come to something more distinctly personal to ourselves. This text is certainly true, though in so applying it we may seem to be wresting it from its original setting and connection, it is certainly true in *the economy of grace*. Man in all matters of religion and in all his dealings with God, is proud, but it is amazing how apparently humble men will be when they worship false gods. They will cut themselves with knives and roll themselves in the mire. We have known some votaries to kneel before the representation of the Virgin Mary and lick the very pavement with their tongues by way of penance—and perform the most degrading rites in honor of their false gods. Man seems to be humble enough in his dealings with a false deity, but as soon as ever he comes to deal with the true God, the first things that have to be got out of him are his pride, his high looks, his haughtiness~ Oh, strange is it that before the Majesty of heaven a worm of the dust should think himself great, and that in the blaze of the infinite purity of the thrice-holy God a mass of corruption like man should fancy himself to be good! But so it is! One of the greatest works of grace in the heart is to humble our pride.

Going now into this subject with as much brevity as possible, we shall observe, in the first place, that—

I. THE PLAN OF SALVATION, ITSELF, AIMS AT THE BOWING DOWN OF THE LOFTINESS OF MAN AND AT THE EXALTATION OF GOD.

This is very apparent to us at once when we remember that *there is no plan of salvation at all for man except as a sinner*. The plan of salvation necessarily considers man as needing salvation and as being lost. Its very first promise is forgiveness, which implies sin. It begins to talk with man of pardon and justification, which implies guilt and a lack of righteousness. If there is anybody here that is not a sinner, there is nothing in the Bible for him! As old Wilcox well observes, “Christ can save everybody except the self-righteous.” He came into the world to save sinners, but not the righteous. He is the physician for any form of

disease, except that form of disease which consists in not being diseased. "The whole," says He, "have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." If you are a sinner, there is some relation between you and Christ. But if you proudly say in your heart, "I am better than other men. I am not as the thief, or the harlot. I need not wash in the fountain which they need so much, for I am clean." I tell you, man or woman, there is no Christ for you, no pardon for you, no justification for you, no heaven for you! Your self-righteousness, like an iron bar across the gates of paradise, shuts you out forever! Your good works can do for you what your sins need not do—they may ruin your soul forever by making you too proud to come to Christ. The plan of salvation appeals to men as sinners! It comes to them on no other terms but as sinners—and thus it is evidently meant to bring down man's high looks.

Moreover, it not only treats men as sinners, but *as dead sinners*. There is not a complimentary word to human nature within the covers of the Bible. It says, "You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins"—and this was said of New Testament saints who had warm praise from the apostle Paul! They had been originally dead. If you want an image of human nature, you will find it in the rottenness of Lazarus when he had been dead four days! The gospel comes to give life to the dead! It comes to deal out everlasting life to those who have lost it and could never have obtained it except as a gift from heaven. Now, is not this humbling to the high looks of men? What? Must it be so—that I must see, "Death," written upon all my hopes, upon all my doings, upon all my willings? Must all these be written down as being dead things? It must be so. And if you do not know this, you do not know vital godliness as yet, for the grace of God deals with you in your natural estate as being lost and utterly ruined and undone!

Another humbling point in the plan of salvation is that *it distinctly informs the sinner that the way of salvation is in no sense or manner in himself, but is altogether in another*. It tells him that if he is saved, his salvation is entirely the work of Him who, though He was God, yet condescended to become man that He might lift manhood up into companionship with Godhead! It says the sinner, when he prostrates himself upon his knees, "Your prayers are well enough, but they avail not with the eternal Father to put away sin. Blood! Blood! Blood must flow, not tears alone!" It tells the sinner that all his merits and his good works cannot obtain salvation for him. It bids him look to Christ and mark the crimson currents as they spring from those matchless wounds, that mouth of mercy, those gates of paradise, those fountains of immortality, those sources of all our richest treasure and abiding peace! It tells the sinner that the head that once was crowned with thorns must be

crowned with the glory of His salvation, if he is saved at all, and that the man who was despised and spat upon when here below must be honored and adored above by him as his Savior, and his only Savior, or there is no salvation for him! This, too, has a tendency to bring down the high looks and to lower the haughtiness of man.

Perhaps, however, there is nothing in the gospel which grates more upon some men's pride, touching, as it were, the very marrow of their bones, than the doctrine, not only that man is a sinner, and a dead sinner, and is saved by the work of another, but that *the very will to be saved is determined not so much by himself as by God*. I do not know a text that makes a sinner grind his teeth more than this one—"So then, it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." You remember that amazing expression of the Savior's, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." "You have a will. You are responsible. You are free agents, but that will of yours, you have so wickedly set against Me that you will not come unto Me that you may live! You refuse Me—you will not accept My grace—you will sooner starve than come to the feast of mercy." Many a man has turned on his heel and said, "I will not hear this any longer," and then we are reminded of those who left the Master because of certain truths of God which He taught, and we say, "Will you also go away?" Oh, you who have had your haughtiness brought down, I believe you will be swept out of that idea and will acknowledge that you never came to Christ of your own free will, but only of sovereign grace. You do not deny it, for you are always conscious of it, that unless your will had been moved by sovereign grace, and constrained by the blessed interposition of the divine Spirit, you were as obstinate as the heifer unaccustomed to the yoke, kicked against the pricks and would not come to Christ that you might have life! Now, this part of the plan of salvation tends to bring down high looks.

There is another point which I must notice and which is not always understood, but it is a mighty bringer-down of high looks, viz., the understanding of this—that our *depraved nature is not in the plan of salvation supposed to be either improved or improvable*. Are you startled at such an assertion? Well, if you have read the Word of God, you will have found plenty of warrant for it. All that God Himself can do for your depraved nature as it now stands is to kill it and let it be buried when dead! The ordinance of baptism is intended to set forth this very truth of God—that you must be dead and buried to the old life, and the new and true life that you are henceforth to live does not spring out of the ashes of the old, like the phoenix out of the ashes of the departed one, but is an emanation of the Holy Spirit! "Created anew in Christ Jesus." It is not that the carnal man is ever reconciled to God, for it is plainly declared that it is "enmity against God," and cannot be reconciled! The carnal

mind cannot even understand spiritual truth! The carnal mind knows not the things which are of God, for they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. The process by which a man is practically saved is this—a new nature is put into us! That new and incorruptible nature immediately begins to contend with the old Adam, “the body,” as Paul calls it, “of sin and death.” This causes a conflict, a conflict which is constantly maintained, and which at certain times is extremely intense and makes the subject of it to cry out, “Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Or, “From this body of death, this death which has taken such a tangible form as to be to me a realizing tangible thing—a very body of death—who will get me rid of it?” He does not ask that it may be improved, but that he may be delivered from it! He does not ask that it may be changed, but that a new nature may come in and trample it down and rise superior to it!

Oh, brothers and sisters, how humbling this is! To think that all Christ found in me when He met with me was so utterly good-for-nothing that all He could do with it was to bury it—and all the life that I had when Christ met with me was in His sight such death that He had to quicken me with an entirely new life—and to make the old life die daily! Happy, happy day when it is completely dead and gone and the new life, delivered from the bondage of corruption, shall rise into glory! Now, this is a humbling doctrine. I am, however, persuaded that it is both a doctrine declared in God’s Word and a doctrine verified by human experience, so far as that experience is Christian experience. All this is intended by our gracious God to bring down the high looks of man and to humble the haughty and the proud.

But now, in the next place, while the plan of salvation aims at this—

II. THE FIRST WORK OF SALVATION ALSO SECURES IT TO A VERY LARGE EXTENT.

When the grace of God comes into a man, it comes with an axe in its hand. It does not come at first to build up, but to pull down. I think we should beware of being too suddenly filled with strong confidence and assurance. I do not say beware of too suddenly believing in Christ! That is a blessed thing and is a sinner’s present business. When the Holy Spirit gives faith—joy and peace come immediately. But I believe that, as a general rule, God strips before He clothes, and when He means to build a house for His own indwelling, He does what every wise architect does—He first digs out the deep foundations. An early work of grace in the soul is *conviction of sin*. We who speak to hundreds and thousands of souls—for we speak without exaggeration when we say we have seen thousands of souls under conviction of sin—we observe this, that conviction of sin is a wondrous puller-down. When a man begins to feel his sin lying heavy

upon his heart, when his iniquity is continually before him, as David puts it in the 51st Psalm, then his high looks are gone. Have you ever seen a rich man in the anguish of conviction? You would not know him from a beggar then! His purse-pride has gone! All his wealth gives him but little comfort. “My sin! My sin! My sin!” he says. “Would to God I were as poor as the paupers in the workhouse, if I were but rid of my sin! What is my wealth while I have my sin?”

Have you ever seen the man of knowledge, the man who knows everything, the sharp, quick, critical man, who takes everybody up and thinks he can set all the world right—have you ever seen him under a sense of sin? He feels himself to be a fool at once, and would sit down on a bench with the infant class in a school if there he might learn of a Savior, being content to give up all his wisdom and to be a babe in Christ! And have you ever observed the man who was naturally of a high and haughty disposition, who reared up among his fellows—have you ever seen how he acts when God’s hand is on him? Why, he would hide himself anywhere—and he envies even the meanest and most obscure of the children of God! Once get a sight of sin, and those things which now prop us up will all give way and we shall be beggars in the face of all the world when once we see how exceedingly sinful a thing our sin is! Some of us have passed through this season of deep penitential humbling before the Lord and we can bear our witness that when the Lord casts us down, there is nothing that can lift us up but the hand of the Lord Himself! For when we did try to rise, our wings melted like the wax wings of Icarus and we fell to the ground broken in pieces.

But if conviction humbles, let me say that *conversion humbles* a great deal more! It is thought, perhaps, by you that as soon as you find pardon you will not be so humble as you were. Distrust the pardon that does not humble you! Be persuaded that the forgiveness which does not make you lie low in the dust is no forgiveness at all, but a mere fancy of your infatuated heart! When the Lord pardons a sinner, that sinner feels that he could sink and go out of sight. As soon as Peter’s boat began to fill, it began to sink—and as soon as our boat gets full of mercy it begins to sink! Peter, too, said, “Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man.” And so we feel as if the abundance of God’s mercy taught us more than ever a sense of sin. I do not think that a sense of sin is such a heart-breaking thing as a sense of mercy, for sometimes a sense of sin is attended with a despair which steels the soul and makes the mind hardened against God. A criminal may know himself to be guilty, very guilty, but yet if he feels sure that there is no mercy for him, he is like a hunted stag at bay which turns upon its oppressors and fights for dear life. But when a man is conscious of guilt, and then receives a free pardon from his offended God, then he knows not what to do! He is

broken in heart, first with his unworthiness, and next with the mercy of God! God compares His word in one place to a hammer, and in another place to a fire. Now, why are the two put together? Why, because there are some rocks, which, after a line of fire has been made across them, will crack readily in a fissure as soon as the hammer is used! Now, the hammer of conviction, when it comes upon the cold heart, frozen with despair, may break that heart, but oh, when the fire of God's love comes and the hammer, too, then surely the rock gives way and our stubborn will flies into pieces before the Lord, broken by His fire—

***“Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found.”***

Some say they do not believe this point. If there is anyone of you who has passed through conviction of sin without soul-humbling, I pray God to show you that such a conviction of sin as you have had is not the work of His Spirit! If you have not been led to see this, then, whatever you may have seen of the corruption of your own heart, you have not seen yourself aright. And, on the other hand, if, in coming to Christ, you have been able to keep anything with which to feed your pride, anything in which you can glory, anything of which you can say, “This is mine. This is not Christ's. This came from my own good nature and excellent disposition and not from the Most High”—then you have need to go to Christ again, for you have never yet been to Him aright! All that our unregenerate nature spins must be unraveled. All the pottery that unregenerate nature burns in her kiln shall be broken as with a rod of iron! But that which comes from Christ is grounded, bottomed, and stayed upon the rock of eternal mercy! That shall stand, and only that! Oh, this is indeed the way in which God, in the hearts of His people, brings down the loftiness of man, lays low his haughtiness and makes the Lord, alone, to be exalted! Thirdly—

III. THIS SAME WORK IS CARRIED ON IN THE AFTER-WORKS OF GRACE.

I cannot single out all these—it would take too long for this evening—but let us just pick out four of the works of grace in a Christian in his advance in the spiritual life.

The first is *his growth in grace*. I am sure that as the Christian grows in grace, he grows in humility. Or, at any rate, if there is a growth which is not accompanied by a deeper sense of unworthiness and feebleness than existed before, then it is a supposed growth, not a real one! The farmer is very glad when he sees his root plants growing upwards for a time. He likes to see the green leaf, but he will shake his head to the boy who is pleased with the green leaf only. “Oh,” he says, “I want to see it grow downwards as well as upwards—I want the root—that is the most precious thing.” If it does not grow in the root, in the underground part,

it is but of little value to him. It is well for the Christian, when he has plenty of humility and when he can spread out the very roots of his life and draw up nourishment from the precious Word of God. We must grow in humility! It was remarked by an excellent divine that growing souls think themselves nothing, but that grown saints think themselves *less* than nothing, and I suppose that when they are fully grown they fail to find language in which to express their sense of insignificance! The apostle Paul, I suppose, committed an error in grammar when he said, "Less than the least of all saints." It may be bad grammar, but it is precious truth! Everyone who has come to such knowledge as the apostle—and I am afraid there are not many of us who have grown to that!—can truly say that he is "less than the least of all saints." As the Lord then enables us to grow in grace, brothers and sisters, our proud looks will come down and God will be exalted!

In the next place, *if the Lord Jesus Christ shall favor us with communion with Himself*, it will have the same result. You have sometimes, in happy moments, been with the Savior on the Mount. We scarcely like to speak of these things here, but we have had times when, before we were aware, our souls made us like the chariots of Amminadib. But no chariot of Amminadib could have set forth our rapture! We have had such fellowship with Jesus that, though these eyes have never seen Him, yet we have been conscious of His presence, joyful and sure that He was near! He has kissed us with the kisses of His lips—His love has been better than wine. Now, no man ever came out of the place of communion proud. If there is one thing that always goes with it, it is a prostration of spirit in the presence of the precious Savior! See Jesus and be proud? Impossible! Lean your head upon that bosom and be exalted? Impossible! You will feel, when you have seen the Lord that henceforth you must blush to think that you are so little like He and love Him so little. This is another way in which God brings down our high looks—it is a very blessed way of doing it—may He use it more and more!

A third way of bringing down our high looks *is really to make His children practically active*. It is thought by some that activity and usefulness have in them a strong tendency to lift us up in pride. I suppose they have, but I believe that idleness has far more—that nobody is so proud of his strength as the man who has never tried it and that very likely some of those gentlemen who are so apt to pray for the workers lest they should be exalted, and who sit down and do nothing themselves—are much the prouder people of the two! Let me say to you, brothers and sisters, that of all the temptations that the workers have, they are not so often tempted to pride as they are to some other things. Take the preacher, for instance, who has to preach twice a day and be the pastor of a multitude of souls. Well, he succeeds upon some one

occasion, but he has no time to cradle himself upon that because the trumpet sounds for another battle—and he has to feel that he needs fresh strength! He cannot lift up the banner, for he has to sharpen his sword again! When nightfall comes, he has still some work to do for his Master and the first ray of the morning's light sees him still busy. He has no time to congratulate himself upon what he has performed! He is compelled to—

***“Forget the steps already trod,
And onward press his way.”***

I should prescribe to any Christian here tonight, who feels tempted to pride, to attempt some great work for Christ that is a little above his present strength! And when he has done—to let him try something a little above even that! And if he can do that, to go still further! If you always have something on hand more than you can do, and which puts a strain upon your faith and upon your earnestness, I believe it will be one of the best cures for pride and one of the best things, through God the Holy Spirit's power, to make you see your own insufficiency and to bring your haughtiness down.

Well, dear brothers and sisters, so base are we naturally that the fourth way of bringing us down is the most common one—not by communion with Christ, nor by activity, so much *as by affliction*. Must it always be that? Must it always be that? They are bad children who always need the rod, but there are some Christians who seem as if they never would obey without it! “Be you not as the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle lest they come near unto you.” Oh, what hard mouths we have and with what a sharp bit of affliction are we driven—and how we champ that bit, sometimes, and would gladly get it out of our mouths! And if we could do so, we would dash on to our own destruction! The only way that God has to keep us right is to give us, every now and then, a touch with His whip. Blessed be God for it! It is hard to bear, but oh, how profitable it is! Blessed be God for slander! It cuts us to the quick, but oh, how beaded with blessings has it been to us! Blessed be God for depression of spirit! We have groaned under it, some of us, till our life has become a burden to us—but if we had not been so depressed when alone, we would never have been able to bear the prosperity which God has given us abroad! We thank His blessed name, for by all these means, in some way or other, the loftiness of man shall be brought down, the haughtiness of man shall be made low and the Lord alone shall be exalted!

Let us look forward to the works of grace which are yet incomplete, but which are soon to be completed. Let us anticipate the day when the Spirit of God shall complete His great work—when the old nature in us

shall be utterly conquered and when the new nature, born of God—shall reign in its greatest vitality and fullest development!

Then shall we be, before the eternal throne, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness and decked with the jewels of our perfected salvation! Then, indeed, shall every haughty look be gone and every proud thought be banished! And in that day the Lord alone shall be exalted! Then shall our one song be, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be the glory. Unto Him who loved us and loosed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God, unto Him be glory forever and ever." I shall not detain you much longer, but we ought not to leave this subject without mentioning yet another truth of God that our text suggests.—

IV. THE EFFECT OF THE WORKS OF GRACE WHICH GOD DOES IN HIS CHURCH AT LARGE IS TO BRING DOWN THE LOFTINESS OF MAN.

Dear friends, we believe, and some of us believe it very firmly, that God is going to visit our churches with a revival. We have seen indications of the coming blessing. In connection with this one church and it is but an instance of several others, the very presence of this multitude on a Thursday evening is, to some of us, one of the most hopeful signs that there is a spirit of inquiry growing! And on Monday evenings I see the greater part of this area filled with people who come only to pray. I am not conscious of having stirred you up particularly of late, but I have seen a very marked change over the whole face of things. Why, for the last two or three months, our friends who keep the gates outside, although we have always had as many as we could by any process hold, yet find themselves now compelled to shut the gates in the face of hundreds and even of thousands—although before we scarcely knew where to put those who came within the walls, yet there were not so many sent away! The mass who come here has become perfectly astounding to us all. We can hardly realize it. We think it is a good sign if they are willing to hear—and when they will come and even tread upon one another in their desire to hear the gospel! But a better sign than that is that last Tuesday week, that day of fasting and of prayer, left an impression on the ministers present which they can never forget. And last Tuesday, when we met in our association, the ministers present all said, "Why cannot we have such a day of fasting and prayer?" Ah, indeed, why not? We all agreed that there should be such a day. Then when the delegates and representatives of most of the Baptist Churches in London came, they said, "Cannot we come?" Well, we had not thought of that. "Oh," they said, "you cannot keep us out! We should like to consecrate a whole day to fasting and prayer." "Yes," we replied, "we are right glad to find your hearts so warmed to it." Some asked if all the deacons and elders of Baptist churches could not come, and they were

told, "Yes, certainly." And I believe that on Monday, the 5th of November, you will find us by hundreds met together to spend the day, from ten until six, in humiliation and prayer to God for a blessing!

This came so spontaneously, without any plan or proposal, everybody desiring it, that I took it at once as being a token for good! I am glad that the good old Puritan preaching and fasting has come back to our churches. There are certain demons that afflict mankind that will not go forth without prayer and fasting, and when many are not only willing, but eager to spend a day entirely for this, it is a good sign! God never sets us praying and longing without meaning to bless us, only here is the point—as sure as ever God blesses us, He will be sure to take us down. We are mistaken if we think He is going to bless us for our own exaltation! If any of you want a blessing for your own self-glorification, you will be wonderfully mistaken! If I, as your pastor, should ask for the conversion of sinners that I might be able to say, "Oh, there are so many added to the church in a year," I shall not get it, or if it should come, there will come with it some stinging rebuke that will make the soul cry out to God! You must mind that God is in it and then we shall have the blessing! And the only thing that will hinder it is our getting any sinister motive, or any idea that we can exalt *ourselves*! I say, brothers and sisters, that if we seek God's blessing for the mere extension of our denomination, we shall seek it from a wrong motive. We must seek it for God's glory and for that only, for the Lord will bring down our high looks as well as the high looks of other people! And the more He loves us, the more will He be sure to do this, for what He will not tolerate in sinners, He will not bear in His saints. What I cannot put up with in strangers, I will never endure in my own friends, and so will the Lord chasten His people if they are proud and haughty. Let us then wait and expect to receive a blessing, but let us also expect to be humbled by it. Lastly—

V. WHERE DEEDS OF MERCY DO NOT PROVE THE TRUTH OF THIS, DEEDS OF JUSTICE WILL CONFIRM IT.

I will say but a few sentences, but let them be caught by your ears and seized by your hearts. In this house tonight there are some of you who are not reconciled to God by the death of His Son. You have never humbled yourselves and taken the Lord's Christ to be your only hope. Now, mark this—if you will not come down by grace, you must and shall come down by judgment! You will be humbled, sinner, if not to penitence, then to remorse! If not to hopeful conversion, to hopeless despair! Every high look shall be brought down in the day when He shall sit upon the great white throne and call the quick and the dead to judgment. "Rocks, hide us! Mountains, fall upon us! Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne!" Who said that? Why, the very man

who once said, “Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men are.” Yes, sirs, and the very man who once said, “Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?” He it is who now cries, “Hide me, hide me from the accusing face.” Behold, you despisers, wonder and perish! If you will not be humbled at the cross, you shall be humbled at the throne of judgment! If mercy wins you not, judgment shall subdue you! If you will not bend, you shall break! He who will not melt in the fires of love shall be consumed in the furnace of wrath! Oh, my hearer, what a dread alternative is this! “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little! Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him!”

There is a wonderful power in humiliation. Ahab humbled himself and though it was not with a saving humility, yet the curse did not fall upon him as it would have done. Even in a natural humiliation there may be some withdrawal of temporal chastisement, but if the Lord shall give you true brokenness of heart, remember it is written, “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” There is not one word in the Bible against a humble soul. There is not one curse against a sinner who feels his need and comes empty-handed! Come, poor needy one, poor helpless one, you ruined sinner, without any hope of yourself, you bankrupt sinner, come—

***“Tis perfect poverty alone,
That sets our soul at large.
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.”***

When we have done with self and with all self’s hopes, projects and plans—and trust only in the finished work of Jesus—then may we rejoice, for we are saved and saved eternally!

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OUR LEADER THROUGH THE DARKNESS

NO. 3370

A SERMON
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 AT THE MILDMAY PARK CONFERENCE, 1890.

***“Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of His Servant?
 Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the
 name of the LORD and rely upon his God.”***
Isaiah 50:10.

“Behold I have given him for...a leader.”
Isaiah 55:4.

I DESIRE to speak to you, dear friends, not only of Jesus as our leader, but of following Him *in the dark*. Can you see Jesus in the dark? Yes. We sometimes see Him better in the dark than in the light. If you will go outside in the daytime and look up, you will not be able to see a single star. But if you will get into the bucket of a well and go down into the darkness, very soon you will behold the stars. To descend may sometimes be the shortest way to ascend. Certainly, to suffer is the road to the land where there is no suffering—and to be in present darkness may be the nearest way to eternal light. All light, but that which comes through Christ, Himself, hinders rather than helps our sight of Him. He is best seen by His own light. Begone, sun! Begone, moon! Begone, you candles! He is the Sun of Righteousness and where He is, there is light enough! All earth-born light hinders the vision of His face. I fear that many, trusting in the greatness of their mental light, have become blind to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Blessed is he who sees Christ by Christ—the crucified in the light of His five wounds—the risen one by the brilliance of His own life!

Darkness—can it fall upon a child of God? He is a child of light—shall he walk in darkness? Not in darkness in the sense of ignorance, sin and death, but in the sense of gloom and sorrow! Saints may have much of it. The heir of heaven sometimes knows a midnight. But if he is with Jesus, following Him as his leader (and that is my topic), then he is in a safe condition. The words of one of our songs are ringing in my ears—

***“Anywhere with Jesus!
 Anywhere with Jesus!”***

Better in the dark with Jesus than in the light, yes, than in heaven, itself, without Him—

***“Not all the harps above
 Can make a heavenly place,
 If Christ His residence removes,***

Or but conceals His face.”

Give us Christ and we will make no hard terms about darkness, or light! Only let us be with Him and it is enough. “Forever with the Lord” is only another word for glory everlasting!

Adam, I suppose, was created in the daylight and he wandered about in the garden enjoying his God and the fair works which surrounded him. When night came on, darkness was a new phenomenon to him. He must have wondered at it, but since he had no sin, his childlike trust in God would not permit him to be afraid. He laid himself down to rest without a fear. It was a memorable night for him. In the dark he lost something, but the loss was a great gain. In the morning, when he woke up, he found someone there—the very one he needed. She was there, whom the Lord had made for him, since, “it was not good that man should be alone.” So have you and I found the darkness coming on and we have been distressed for a moment—but when we have thought of God we have found rest. Then we may have lost a good deal in the darkness, as we thought, for we were conscious of an inward pain taking away what we thought to be a vital part of ourselves—but when we came out of the gloom into the morning light, a joy was ours which we had not known before—a joy that has been our companion and our comfort to this very day! Brothers and sisters, I have lost nothing by the darkness. I say, “I,” for everyone must bear witness for himself. I believe every child of God can say the same. Do not the dews fall at eventide? Could we bear the perpetual shining of the burning sun? Is not the morning freshness so great a joy that it compensates us for the night by which we reach it?

As I thought over my theme, “Jesus, our leader in the dark,” I began to fall in love with the dark. There are two parts to my subject—if one seems gloomy, the other is bright enough! Following Christ is a lightsome theme! The darkness may be very dark, but I say I have almost fallen in love with it when Jesus comes to me therein and makes it His pavilion! Rutherford declared that the cross which he carried for his Lord at last came to be so dear to him that he was half jealous of it, lest he should begin to love the cross with a love rivaling his love to his Lord! Darkness of soul in itself is horrible, but the rich fruit it has brought to us has made us cease to dread it. We now can thank God that the evening and the morning make up the day—and the evening is as much a part of the day as the morning. The nights of our lives are as rich as the days. The agony is as useful as the rapture. The depression is as instructive as the exaltation. Let us think, then, of—

I. THE DARKNESS THAT CHRISTIANS MAY KNOW.

Well, surely we may say, first, that in some respects we are always in the dark while here below. We must wait with patience “until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.” Our Lord here on earth may be said to have been always in the dark in comparison with the glories which He left, in contrast with the bliss that He has reassumed. To be here at all,

was to Him to be in the dark. The ever-blessed Son of the Father was away from the home country and its splendor—he was among sinners and His heart was pained with human sin, His ears were vexed with ungodly speeches, His eyes were filled with tears because of obstinate rebellions! He was all tenderness and yet His soul was among lions. It must have been a constant trial to His holy, sensitive spirit to have dwelt in the midst of sinners. So in a certain sense we, also, are always in the shade compared with what is coming. “It does not yet appear what we shall be.” He is coming! He is coming! The axles of His chariot are hot with speed. He cries, “Behold, I come quickly.” When He comes, the glory of His presence will make the greatest joys that we have ever known to seem but twilight, as compared with the full day of His appearing! If His life was so truly in darkness, we must not wonder if our lives are the same.

We are not, however, dependent upon natural light any more than He was. If a Christian can only be happy when his feelings are right, I should be afraid that he is trusting in his feelings! If you are only confident when your frames are delightful, I should be afraid that you are resting in your frames and feelings! Faith is a principle which has its root, deeper feelings. We believe whether we see or not. We believe whether we feel or not. We believe in Christ upon the testimony of the Father concerning Him—that testimony is enough for us even if there are no attendant signs. Our happy experience of salvation is a pleasant confirmation of the Word of the Lord! And when it seems to fail us, we still believe. God is not changed because we tremble! Christ is not altered because we are in fear! The ground on which we stand for salvation is not our attainments, nor our experiences, nor our communions. We stand upon the finished work of Christ in which we believe, whether it is dark, or whether it is light. The young Christian will say, “I believe that I am saved because I am so happy.” He is no more correct than the old Christian would be if he should say, “I believe that I am saved because I am unhappy.” Let me explain myself. The value of feeling depends upon its *cause*. All happiness in the young man is not a proof of piety. He might be happy if he had received a large legacy, or had been invited to a party of pleasure. All unhappiness in the old Christian is not good evidence of grace—by no means would such an assertion stand! And yet, if we sigh and cry because of the abominations of the city, we have therein a strong evidence of our being on the side of Christ and righteousness. If we mourn our imperfections and lack of spotless holiness, our very sighing and crying are proofs of heavenly life and salvation! The heart is clean, and the course of the soul is heavenward when the heart can never be satisfied with anything short of perfect holiness.

Had we not been quickened, and quickened to a high degree, too, we would have been content with dim signs of holiness. But now nothing but perfection will content us—we are unhappy when even the least mist comes between us and God—and these feelings prove how much we love Him and how our very element is to dwell in unbroken communion with Him. We are not dependent, therefore, upon happiness or unhappiness as the ground of our confidence. Christ loved me and gave Himself for me—this is the rock upon which I stand! He died effectually for every soul that trusts Him. I trust Him and this is the token that He has redeemed me from my sins. I am His. Here is my rock of refuge! I stand on Christ's righteousness, be it dark or light. The ground of a Christian's faith is not moved in the least degree by the time of his spiritual day, or the state of wealth in his experience. Could we sit forever on the top of Tabor, we would be no safer than if we were made to dwell always in the Valley of Humiliation, longing for brighter days. Christ! Christ! Christ! In Him we are safe!

Yet, dear friends, there are glooms which fall to the lot of some of God's best people. I would have you beware, my brothers and sisters who have made a great advance in grace, and are very joyful in the Lord, of judging your fellow Christians. I have noticed with sorrow on the part of some, whose shoelaces I am not worthy to unloose, that, nevertheless, they are hard towards the lambs and the lame of the flock. Because they have not reached your own high attainments, do not condemn them! If you have strong faith, you may condemn unbelief, but do not condemn weak believers, who may have beautiful points of character, although they are as yet mere babes in grace! Have you never heard of the strong cattle, of whom the Lord said, "Because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns till you have scattered them abroad; therefore will I save My flock and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle." Beware lest you become proud of your attainments and unkind to those beneath your level! I believe that there is such a thing as being so long in the light that you do not believe that others are in the dark. Or, if they are, you judge them to be weak and foolish and you are apt to scold them. Brother, you cannot scold the darkness into light! A little sympathy will do far more than what you are pleased to call *faithful* upbraiding. That word, "faithful," sometimes means "cruel."

None can doubt that some excellent children of God are often in gloom through *bodily sickness and weakness*. There are forms of sickness which bring no depression with them. You might suffer from them through life and never be saddened. But there are certain forms of disease which touch not only the bone and the flesh, but also the mind. The pain of the mind encroaches upon the spirit and the spirit is darkened with trouble. "Oh, but they ought not to be troubled." Granted, but they *are* troubled, and I have noticed this—that your very strong

men, yes, and your very strong ministers, too, who can say rather sharp things about the weak—and may be justified in saying them, yet, nevertheless, are not themselves beyond incurring the same rebukes! Great teachers may not make good sufferers. When the hot iron touches them, it is another thing from what it seemed to be. It sounds fine for them to say that we ought not to be cast down, but ask their wives what these strong men are like when their head aches, or their heart is out of order! When nights grow long and weary with sleeplessness, do they show all the faith of which they now speak? Ah, brothers, the flesh is weak!

But our Lord knows all about sickness—“He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.” No form of sickness is beyond the sympathy of Jesus. Nothing is sweeter or more reviving than His fellow feeling. One does not know how sympathy works so effectively, but it does operate marvelously. A little girl said to her mother, “Mother, poor widow Brown has asked me to come in every day and see her. She says that I comfort her so! Mother, I don’t know anything that I do to comfort her. I would wipe all her tears away if I could, but when she sits and cries, I go and put my cheek against hers and I cry, too. And she kisses me and says that I comfort her.” Just so. One poor human being can cheer another by fellow feeling, but how much more can Jesus do it! Oh, to feel your Master’s tears drop on your cheek! When you are weeping, then you read that “Jesus wept.”—

***“In every pang that rends the heart
The man of Sorrows had a part.”***

Another cause of great gloom is frequent with us—it is *bereavement*. I will not say much about it, lest I needlessly draw up the sluices for many a widow, or wifeless husband or fatherless child. How often does the mourner judge that he has laid the best part of himself in the grave! However dear they were, they could not stay with us—perhaps, because they were so good that it was necessary that Christ should have them away from earth. He prayed for them, “Father, I will that they be with Me where I am”—but we kept on praying the other way—“Father, we will that they be with *us* where we are.” Our Lord’s prayer conquered ours! It should do so, for they were more His than ours since He had bought them with His blood. We should never pray against our Lord, but when we do, may His prayer always have the preference, as it will. Yet bereavement has brought many a Mary and Martha very low.

“Jesus wept” at the grave of Lazarus. Here, too, we see that the Master is near akin unto us. I believe that if we want to know the weeping Savior, we must weep. We always see our Lord, to a great extent, like ourselves. If we are pilgrims, He comes to us as a wayfarer, as He did to Abraham. If we are in conflict, like Jacob, He comes to wrestle with us. If we are in trouble, He meets us, like Moses, at the burning bush. If we are soldiers, like Joshua, He meets us as captain of the Lord’s host. If

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are in the furnace, the Son of God makes the fourth in the fire! As we are, so does He become, that as He is, so may we become! Our bereavements are a part of the way in which we see and follow our Lord.

And *poverty*, too. Many of you have never known poverty. I do not wish that you should, for poverty is a very heavy cross to many of the children of God. It hinders them when they would give to the Lord's cause and hampers them in their work for Him. This, perhaps, is not so lamentably true as they think. When poverty involves crushing toil, long hours of labor and scarcely enough bread to keep body and soul together, then it is, indeed, a burden. Dire poverty has hung like a cloud over many a child of God. There is a poverty which the poets love—it dwells in a thatched cottage whose porch is overgrown with woodbine. Perhaps if the poets had rheumatism through the wind blowing through the decaying walls, they might not sing of it quite so sweetly. But in London we have a poverty that has neither porch nor woodbine—poverty that has no cottage, but a single room where scarcely the decencies of life can be preserved. Beloved, if you have to suffer from this gloom, remember that the Son of Man had not where to lay His head.

Another gloom has shadowed many here present in their measure and upon some, in special, it has loomed tempestuously. It is the cloud of *slander and reproach*. If you have preserved your garments unspotted; if you have sought nothing but the glory of God and yet you find everything that you do misrepresented, your words misconstrued and yourself abused—this is truly a trial. Slander is no bed of roses, nor a test to be desired but, oh, how easy is it then to see Jesus and how sweet it is to follow Him! “He was despised and rejected of men.” If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, they have not left another name that is bad enough for us! We might in very modesty wish to have a name a little lower than our Lord's, guided by the same motive which made a great saint consider ordinary crucifixion too great an honor, and therefore, entreated to be nailed to the cross with his head downwards! Would you not be content to be called something worse than Beelzebub? Might you not gladly accept such a name as winebibber and madman, that you might come in behind your leader? “Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself,” and then sing—

**“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach may be,
I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
For You'll remember me!”**

Gloom also falls upon the Christian in *time of desertion*. I do not know whether Judas had sons and daughters, but I have seen several persons who bear a family likeness to that son of perdition. “He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me,” is a sentence often repeated. “It was not an enemy that reproached me—then I could have borne it—

but it was you, a man my equal, my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together and walked unto the house of God in company.” This, also, is an oft-told tale. Yet fret not too much because of ingratitude, fickleness and treachery. Is it not written, “Cursed is he that trusts in man”? All men are liars! Can you not be content to take the inevitable? Your Master had His Judas. Shall not you have yours? “Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.” It may be so with you all the more because you desire to be faithful to your Lord.

The worst cloud of all, I think, is *deep depression of spirit* accompanied with the loss of the light of God’s countenance. Sickness, poverty, slander—none of these things are comparable to depression! “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?” Do you know what exceeding heaviness means? I pray that you may have but very little of it, but if you do have it, remember Him who said, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Those words were once a great comfort to a child of God dying in despair. Though an eminently gracious man, he was in the dark. He could not find his God and he knew that he was soon to pass into eternity. I do not think our heavenly Father often puts His children to bed in the dark, but if He does, they will wake up in the light of God in the morning! This man of God said to the minister who visited him, “O sir, although I have trusted Christ for years and have served His cause, I have lost Him. What will become of a man who dies feeling that God has deserted him?” The wise pastor answered him, “What became of the man who, just before His death, cried, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ Is He not on the highest throne of Glory even now?” The sick man’s mind was lightened in a moment! He began to say, as the Lord Jesus did after the dark sentence, “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit,” and he died in peace. Yes, God loves His people quite as much when He leaves them in the dark, as when He sets them at His right hand in the light! Measure not God’s love by His providences, nor even by His manifestations of them. Measure it by the gift of the only-begotten, for Jesus is the only measure of the immeasurable love of God our Father! Yes, a child of God may be in depression for many a year. Timothy Rogers was the victim of despondency for many years and yet he came out into the light and then wrote his experience in his memorable book, *Trouble of Mind*, which has been of great service to others in like condition. I hope that none of you will wish to be in soul darkness. Some trembling people acquire a sort of perpetual palsy of fear. They have become so shut up in doubt that they are afraid to come out of it into the light of faith. Come out of your hiding places, you troubled ones! Do not make yourselves one line lower in spirits than you can help! But if you should be long in depression and that depression should turn to despondency, and that despondency should curdle into despair, believe in God! Say with Job, “Though He

slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” If I cannot see His face with delight, yet in the shadow of His wings will I rejoice!

I come now to the more especially practical part of my sermon.

II. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH THIS DARKNESS IS PERMITTED.

There were three aspects of the darkness which our Lord endured in which we should resemble Him. First, He was in darkness *for education*. “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.” Our Mediator went to school and His schoolbooks were “the things that He suffered.” Do we learn much out of any other books? Is not our best schoolmaster the one named adversity? Are not our best schoolbooks printed in the old black letter? We make but small account of any other. Our Lord Jesus learned obedience. Some people, when they get into the dark, think that they can make no progress, but must lie still. Say not so! Our greatest progress should be made in the dark. We should grind most when the wind blows hardest. A friend of mine went to Australia and on board of his ship there were a number of gentlemen of different degrees of ignorance, one of whom was a complete greenhorn. He had never been to sea before. I do not think he had been anywhere else. When it came to be night, he said, “Where do they put up tonight?” My friend said, “What do you mean?” He replied, “You do not mean to say that they will go on sailing in the dark?” “Certainly,” replied my friend. But the other said, “Why, they may run into something, for they cannot see their way.” “No,” my friend answered, “and they will not see their way till we get to our destination, unless they touch at the Cape! And they will travel as fast in the night as in the day.” So they did. Who but a fool would have thought otherwise?

Growth in divine grace must go on in the dark, as well as in the light. I have been told that plants do most of their growing at night. Surely, Christ’s plants grow very fast after a period of darkness which has been sanctified to them. I half wish for some friends that I know that they might have just a day or two of darkness. I hope I am not unkind. I know one who would wish to sympathize if he could, but he has never had an illness. And when he does sympathize, it is a remarkable thing that he should be able to do it. You think of him with wonder, as you would think of an elephant picking up a pin! He does it, but it seems out of his line—it does not come to him naturally. Our Lord learned *obedience towards God* through His sufferings. If you think of it deeply, it was a very great lesson for Him to learn. The ruler of heaven and earth, whose will was law, had to learn obedience! He speaks, and legions of angels fly at His commands—and yet He has to learn to obey! Now that He is here on earth, in the fashion of a man, He becomes an obedient servant. Have you and I ever learned that lesson? It is not every Christian that has learned obedience of the commonest sort. I know some Christians who would think it dreadful to obey ecclesiastically. “Obey them that have the rule over you,” is not a pleasant Scripture to them. They will have no

pastor. Nobody ever was set over them. I am sure I am devoutly grateful that I was not, for it would be a very uncomfortable office to guide such unruly spirits! Obedience is one of the lessons of wisdom which this age needs to learn, for everybody must be master or mistress nowadays. We all desire to rule and we all feel that we could do it far better than the present leaders are doing! He who has the least wisdom and has failed in business half a dozen times, is the very person who believes himself to be the most fitted to be Prime Minister! We do not love obedience, but we have to learn it. The rod is our teacher's instrument—this darkness, this heaviness, is pressing us into true service. We are now to follow Jesus in the dark by learning obedience as He learned it. The Lord prosper us in this!

We have next *to learn sympathy*. I have hinted at that already. "We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Our glorious elder brother learned sympathy by suffering! By His passion He learned compassion. Whenever we suffer, let us regard it as a part of our education and so follow Christ closely to learn of Him, as He learned of the Father. See yonder text, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; and you shall find rest unto your souls!" First we come to Him by faith and He *gives* us rest. That is one sort of rest. Then, by obedience, we take His yoke upon us and we learn of Him, and we find rest—another degree of rest. The one is given and the other is found, but there is no finding the second rest except with the yoke upon our shoulders and learning of Christ!

Education in the dark helps to keep us from self-dependence. I sometimes sing—

***"If today He deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He tomorrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within—
All to make us
Sick of self, and fond of Him."***

The angel wrestled with Jacob. We usually speak of Jacob's wrestling with the angel. I suppose that he did so wrestle, for there cannot be a wrestle at all without two being in it. But the main point of the conflict was that the angel wrestled with Jacob. What wrestling God has had with us to get our self out of us! We are such Jacobs—we are plotting, scheming—and crafty. God would beat us down as to this fleshly wisdom and when He has laid us low as Jacob and made us lame, then He will knight us, and we shall come off the field as prevailing princes of Israel! The death of self-dependence is the joy and triumph of faith! And this often comes through darkness. God bless the darkness, then, for our education—and may we follow Christ by complete obedience to God!

I spoke of three things. The second is for *usefulness*. Our Lord went into the dark to save the guilty sons of men. We cannot follow Him in the central darkness, where all the storm clouds gathered, for that was substitutionary. Into that awful winepress, where He went alone as our sacrifice, we would not think of intruding! But nevertheless, there is a cup of which He has said—"You shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall you be baptized." We have no atonement to make. "It is finished." Yet for the ingathering and saving of the elect of God, it is necessary that the church of God, in many of its members, should pass into the darkness.

I will tell you a story. It shall be none the worse because it is of myself, for we are gathered here to bear and hear personal testimony. One Sunday I preached a sermon from this text—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" What I then spoke was in the agony of my heart, for I felt that I was, myself, for a while, forsaken. Such was the sorrowful dread of my spirit.

I could not tell why I should have been made to feel in this way. I was not sick. I could see no physical cause. I had not wandered from God and I could see no moral cause. But after the sermon there came into the vestry a man of about sixty, whose very hair seemed to stand on end and his eyes were bright with a strange luster. He took my hand and stood and held it, and wept. I looked at him and I saw that I had before me a man dazed, if not crazed. "Birds of a feather will flock together." It struck me that he was a madman and I was not much mistaken. Then he said to me, "Nobody ever preached my experience before! I have now been for years in a horrible gloom of great darkness and could not find God, but this morning I learned that I was not the only man in the thick darkness, and I believe that I shall get out." I answered, "Yes, that was the reason why I was put into the dark, that I might help you. And now that I know the reason, I am already out of the prison!"

I had many interviews with that man. I piloted him back from the gulf of insanity. I was enabled, by God's grace, to lead him into joy and peace, so that he could resume his daily calling. The Lord's servants have to experience many things which are not so much for themselves as for usefulness towards others—and we ought to be content to have it so. You cannot help a man if you know nothing about him and therefore, the Lord sends you into many a thick wood and dark valley that you may meet with His own redeemed in their wanderings. If you did not know the wilderness, how could you act as a guide through it? So it is for usefulness that God calls us there—and as Jesus went there to save, let us learn from Him the great grace of self-sacrifice!

I have done when I have added the third thing. Darkness may come over the soul that we *may give glory to God*. Our Lord Jesus passed through the darkness that He might glorify the Father's name. The lesson which He set before us was that He still believed. Read the 22nd

Psalm. See there the faith of the much hunted “hind of the morning.” He goes back to his early infancy, when God cared for him. “You are He that took me out of the womb.” He goes back to ancient history—“Our fathers trusted in You: they trusted, and You did deliver them.” Read that Psalm carefully and mark that the sufferer’s faith never failed him. Dear friends, can your faith stand in trial? “I have great faith,” says one. Yes, there was a staff that stood by a brook and looked at the reflection of his antlers in the water, and said, “What fine horns I have! My friends in the herd no sooner hear the bay of a dog than they take to their heels. But I, with such fine horns, will fight any dog, or, for that matter, any pack of hounds! Let them come up and they shall see what my horn can do.” So he said—and he was a fine fellow, was he not? Landseer might have been proud to sketch him! That is the very picture of a man full of untried faith. Presently there was heard the yelp of some poor puppy—and where was our stag? His heart was not as strong as his horns and his legs were carrying him far away from the dog! So it is with untried faith. You must not be sure of it for a moment. Fear will destroy it in the day of trouble.

Our Lord had abundant and abiding faith. I will only quote one instance of it—His faith in prayer to God in Gethsemane. There are two parts in that wonderful prayer of His in the garden. “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” We dwell too exclusively upon the full surrender at the end—please notice the prayer itself. “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” When you are in the dark, go to God and plead with Him to take the gloom away! Ask Him to take the cup from you—and be bold to go as far as your Lord did—which is a very long way, indeed, for He said, “If it is possible.” Go to that length! I would encourage the child of God in the dark to “possess his possessions,” to make real use of promises and expect help. We do not always trust God as being what He declares Himself to be, but sometimes if we would but do so, our darkness would come to an end! I remember in my own case, after a period of continued pain with little sleep, I sat up, as best I could, one morning in my bed, in an agony of pain—and I cried to the Lord for deliverance. I believed fully that He could deliver me then and there, and I pleaded my sonship and His Fatherhood. I went the length of pleading that He was my Father and I said, “If it were my child that suffered so, I would not let him suffer any longer if I could help him. You can help me. And by Your fatherly love I plead with You to give me rest.” I felt that I could add, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” But I did the first thing, first—I pleaded with my Father and went first where Christ went first, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.” I shall never forget my success in this appeal! In real earnest I believed God to be my Father and threw myself upon Him—and within a few minutes I dropped back upon the pillow, the pain subsided, and very soon I slept most peacefully. God

loves us to believe Him and to plead earnestly with Him, for even if He does not think it best to grant our request, He will be pleased for us to go on to number two, and with full submission cry, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

You can hardly prove that you have any will to surrender if you have not first brought it before the Lord in fervent prayer! Pray about the matter up to the hilt, and then sheathe the prayer in submission, if it is not the Lord’s will. O brothers and sisters let us learn this last virtue! Faith healing is grand but faith enduring is grander! Glorify God by believing that His will is right and that the strokes of His rod are kind. Use both edges of the sword of faith! Believe for deliverance *from* sorrow, or for deliverance *in* sorrow. Anyhow, honor the Son by fully trusting Him. This is the way to follow your leader, who said, “I will put my trust in Him.”

Oh, that the Lord our God may be with you all in the hour of darkness! If it is not so now, may it may be very soon! I would have you lay by these truths of God in store for future use. When one is very happy, the suspicion lurks at our feet that this is too good to last. Therefore, the poet of experience said—

***“We should suspect some danger near
When we perceive too much delight.”***

Let it, then, be settled in your minds that you will trust only in the Lord and keep your expectation only upon Him. Come fair, come foul, come wind, come rain, come hail, come tempest, or come all the brightness of a fruitful summer, it shall make no difference to us, for ours is not the confidence which changes with the weather, but that which has its foundation among things eternal and immutable—

***“And when your eye of faith is dim,
Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim!
Still at His footstool bow the knee
And Israel’s God, your strength shall be!”***

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NO. 3371

A SERMON
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“Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, on this wise you shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless you, and keep you: the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.”
Numbers 6:23-27.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.”
2 Corinthians 13:14.

IT seemed to me that as this was the last of the Thursday evenings of the dying year and I should no more meet some of you who only come here on Thursday evenings during this year, it would be well for us to close the year as our Master closed His life on earth, with a benediction—and oh, it will be a rich enjoyment in the year to come if, by God’s grace, we shall be able to grasp and make our very own the precious things which are here presented to the whole redeemed family of the living God! I shall begin, therefore, first of all with—

I. THE AARONIC BLESSING.

This was pronounced at the close of the public tabernacle service when the people were about to separate, the one from the others. It is said by the Rabbis to have been only spoken at the morning sacrifice, but not in the evening because, say some, the old faith of the few gave them the early blessing. But it remained for Christ to come in the eventide of the world, at the end of time, to give us the evening blessing, the blessing of the great, eternal, evening Sacrifice.

It is worthy of notice that the word, Jehovah, which is put in capital letters in our English version, occurs three times—three blessings—and each time the word has a different accent in the original Hebrew. And the Rabbis, although they did not know the meaning of it, or pretended not to know, yet all agree that there is some significant mystery therein. The word would not be accented thus differently unless there were some different shade of meaning intended. I believe we have here the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. “The LORD bless you and keep you.” Is that

the blessing of the Father? “The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.” Is that the blessing of the Son? “The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” Is that the blessing of the great forgiving Holy Spirit? I think it is very likely. At any rate, this threefold blessing from the Jehovah, whose name is mentioned three times, may direct our thoughts to the glorious Trinity, the Trinity in unity, whom we cannot understand, but on whom our faith rests and in whom our love finds delight and repose!

Let us look at these three blessings. “*The LORD bless you and keep you.*” When we bless God there is nothing more than well-saying and well-wishing. But when God blesses us, it is well-doing! We cannot bless God in the sense of giving to Him so as to add to His riches or to His glory, for He is the infinitely great, the inconceivably glorious and nothing that we can do can add to Him. We can only bless Him by expressing our thanks to Him, paying to Him our reverent love. “The LORD lives, and blessed be my Rock.” “Blessed be the name of the LORD from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.” But when God blesses us, I say, it is well-doing! He blesses us in our very creation and much more in our new creation. It is a blessed thing to be born, but a much more blessed thing to be born-again! He blesses us in our food—but much more in giving us Christ who is the bread to keep alive and nourish our soul’s best life! We are blessed in being clothed, but infinitely more blessed in being wrapped about in the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is a blessing to be a member of a kind, loving, happy family—but it is an unspeakable blessing to be a member of the family of Christ and adopted into the family of God!

What a blessing it is, my brothers and sisters, to have sin pardoned, to have righteousness imputed, to have sanctification worked in us—in short, to enjoy all the privileges and benedictions of the New Covenant! Now, I think some of us can say, “God has blessed us, oh, how richly.” Blessed us sometimes when we did not perceive the blessing, for many of God’s mercies come, as it were, in at the back door of our house. We do not see the mercies, and when we do, we are too often ungrateful and forget them. What blessings we have received in trouble—in deliverance from trouble—in sustaining us in it! Oh, what blessings have we not had? Some of you, perhaps, have had very remarkable mercies during the year. Now, while the blessing is pronounced, “The LORD bless you,” let your reply be, “The LORD has blessed me!” This will encourage you to expect that He will continue to do the same. And what blessings, my dear friends, may we hope will be in store for us during the coming year? Many troubles, I have no doubt, are in store for us. If we were to have a telescope here this evening and we could look through it and see the

future, those would be very foolish who looked! He would be the wise man who said—

***“This will set my heart at rest—
What my God appoints is best.”***

For if that telescope were here and you were trying to look through it, you would be sure to breathe on the glass with your hot breath—and in your anxiety you would see nothing but clouds and darkness—whereas, very likely, there would be nothing of the sort there. Leave that matter with your God! The future, though it may possibly have trial and trouble, will still be blessed if you are God’s servant. One thing there is of which you can be quite confident—He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Another thing will also be fulfilled, “As your days, so shall your strength be.” You are very poor, are you? Yet, at any rate, none can rob you of this assurance—“Your bread shall be given you: your water shall be sure.” If you are fearing many trials, this promise is your special fortifying—“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” You have God’s word for it, “Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God.” If, during the next year, it is appointed unto you to die, you may still say, “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” “The LORD bless you.” As I say that to each believer here, knowing that the Lord will so bless you, may your soul look forward, not with dread, but with hope! “The LORD bless you” was the wish of the priest under the old law, and it is always the nature of God to confirm what He bids His servants desire. “The LORD bless you.”

Now, observe the blessing which is said to spring out of that, “The LORD bless you, *and keep you.*” And no small mercy it is to be kept by God! Where would we be if He did not keep us in a moral and spiritual point of view, yes, and in a natural point of view, too? It is God that keeps our lives from death and our bodies from perishing. Perhaps, during the past year, some of you have been kept when in storms at sea, or when you have been upon a railway, or when you have passed through places infected with disease. It is no small privilege to hear the Lord say, “He will give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways: they shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” The Lord has blessed us and kept us in that sense during the past year. Oh, brothers and sisters, what a privilege to be kept from falling into sin! He is ill-kept who is his own keeper! He is worse kept who has his brother for his keeper! But he is splendidly kept

who has God to be his shield on his right hand, his glory and his defense.

During the past year we have seen some high professors put out like candles and the foul odor of their fall has filled the church with nausea and depression. We have known some who were like bright stars who have turned out to be only meteors—and their once dazzling brilliance has suddenly died out in greater gloom. Why are we still kept? We have had enough temptation to cast us down! Enough tinder here, inside our hearts, to have made a great blaze! How is it we are still unburned and walking in the paths of righteousness?

Must we not say, “The Lord has blessed us and kept us”? Let us, then, without reserve, commit our souls to Him for the future. Let us not fancy that we shall not fall. Oh, that is a thought that is very apt to twine itself around us like a serpent! “I am not so giddy as some people! I am not at all likely to do what some young people have done and get into this sin, and that sin. I have had so much experience, I shall be able to stand!” That is the very man that is likely to fall! We are never so weak as when we think we are strong, and never so strong as when we know we are weak and look out of ourselves to our God! Distrust self, then. There would not be such a supplication as, “The LORD bless you and keep you,” if you did not need keeping. Trust in God for your help. If you fear temptation, let this be your prayer, “Lead us not into temptation,” and if you trust in God, you will pray, “Deliver us from evil.” You will be tempted during the year that is soon coming, but He will, with the temptation, make also a way of escape. He will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able to bear! You shall go through the wilderness leaning on your Beloved and you shall not slip, though the way is ever so smooth, nor trip, though the road is ever so rough. You shall be upheld, for God is able to hold up in perfect safety those who stay themselves upon Him. “The LORD bless you and keep you.” Holy Father, we breathe the prayer to You as we read this blessing! Pronounce it upon us now by the mouth of Your own dear Son, and let us now and until life’s latest hour be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!

Now, take the next blessing bestowed, through Aaron, upon the people. “*The LORD make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.*” I understand by the expression, “The LORD make His face to shine upon you,” His being completely reconciled to us. As they would say in the Hebrew, a man’s face frowned, his countenance fell, when he was at enmity or angry with another. But when he was his friend and genial towards him, then his face revealed it, it began to beam or shine! Now, this is the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is through Him that God’s face is made to shine upon us. The Lord would have no favorable regard

towards a sinner as such while his sins still lay upon him because of impenitence and lack of faith. The Lord's love might come to him as an elect creature, but viewing him merely as a sinner, he would be the subject of divine disapprobation!

But when the sinner is washed in the blood of Christ, when the sinner is justified through the righteousness of Jesus, then the Lord looks upon him with pleasure. That very man who was an heir of wrath becomes a child of love! and he who would have been driven from God's presence with, "Depart, you cursed," is established in Christ's heart with "Come, you blessed." Now, dear friends, I hope many of us have already received, during the past year, this great blessing, "The Lord make His face to shine upon you." Don't you feel that you have, tonight, to look up to God and do not feel any fear? You know that He is not frowning upon you! He is reconciled unto you—you are reconciled unto Him. You may say, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed." And you are persuaded that as God looks upon Christ, and upon you in Christ, you are well-beloved in Him. Well now, as it has been, so it shall be, for if God once makes His face to shine in the sense of His favor, He never takes that favor away! You may not see it. You may think He is angry with you, and in another sense, He may be, but legally, and so far as concerns the law and its power of condemnation, there is not a single thought of anger in the mind, or feeling of displeasure in the heart of God towards any one of those who rest in Jesus!

You are accepted in the Beloved. God sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel. As He looks upon them in His Son, He sees them without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

"*The LORD make His face to shine upon you.*" Well, and what springs out of that? Why this, "*and be gracious unto you.*" Because God is thus favorable towards us through His dear Son, divine grace comes to us. And what a great, all-comprehending word is that! Grace! It has many meanings and includes a whole universe of blessing! Grace—it is the free and undeserved favor of God! Grace—it is the mighty operation of that favor, effectually working in them that believe! Grace—it is that which enlightens us to see our lost estate—that which leads us to see the all-sufficiency of Christ! Grace—this works faith in us, gives us love to God! Grace creates our hope, carries on the work within our souls and completes it, too! Grace—it is a term so comprehensive that I would need the whole of this evening, yes, and longer, too, to enumerate the mighty catalog comprised and packed, as it were, in this golden casket of the word, grace! "The LORD be gracious unto you." Well, now, beloved, He has been gracious to us in the past. Oh, the grace of God to me!—

***"Oh, to grace how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be!"***

Can you say the same? Look at what a sinner you have been and yet how favored! Look at your backslidings! Look at your ingratitude and yet His mercy does not cease—

“Oh, to grace how great a debtor!”

Let your hearts say it, if your lips do not. And now, beloved, He will be gracious to you in the future as He has been in the past. Every mercy received is a pledge of mercies yet to come! He knew what He was doing when He began with us, and therefore, He will not leave off. If He had meant to destroy us, He would not have shown us such things as these. The great master worker would not have built the house so far if He did not mean to finish it. All His previous grace and glory will be wasted and evaporate if He should not complete His redeeming work. Therefore, I am sure that after advancing so far with His glorious purpose, He will finish it, and if necessary, in the teeth of men and devils! He has begun and His right arm, which always goes with His grace, will surely carry it through to the end. “The LORD make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.”

But now, thirdly, “*The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.*” Is this the voice of the Holy Spirit? Whether it is so or not, does not greatly matter to us tonight. “The LORD lift up His countenance upon you.” Does not this mean, “The LORD give you a conscious, a delightful sense of His favor”? Wishing to see a difference—I will not insist upon it—wishing to see a difference, I put the second blessing as meaning God’s being reconciled. But the third blessing as meaning God manifesting that reconciliation and giving His children the enjoyment of His favor. Now, God’s people do not always have this—it is not always sunshine. “The evening and the morning were the first day,” and there is evening as well as morning in the day of God’s people. God always loves His people, but His people do not always know it. Because of their sins, they do not always enjoy it. Oh, what a blessing it is when the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in the soul—when we can say, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” When we get out of these mists and fogs and can see the sun once more shining clear and bright, beloved, it is heaven on earth! It is the true ante-past of heaven above, when the Lord lifts up His countenance upon you! I have no doubt the original allusion is to a father whose child has done wrong and he says, “Now, sir, get out of my sight, you have grieved and vexed me. You shall not see my face.” The child goes upstairs to bed—anywhere out of his father’s sight. And after a while, when the father hears he has been penitent and sees his tears, he smiles again upon him, gives him a kiss and presses him to his heart. May God the Holy Spirit give us just that! May every one of us have it!

We have, some of us, had it during the past year. We grieve to confess that we did backslide, but when we returned again, we found Him just as willing to receive us as at the first and He lifted up His countenance upon us once again! We said, “Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation,” and He did so! We asked Him to take away His wrath from us, and we found that “His anger is but for a moment.” When weeping came to us for a night, joy appeared in the morning. It will be just the same with us during the next year. If we transgress and repent, and return to Him, we have an actual promise that He will forgive us. Now, what says the text? “The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” There is no peace like the peace which we have with God, and no peace with God like that which comes from a sense of His assured love! And belief in Christ for the pardon of sin gives us the blessing of non-condemnation. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” But this sense of non-condemnation may sometimes be destroyed through weakness of faith. We may be brought very low and our peace may be disturbed, but when we come back to the cross, and look once more to Him who died there, He is our peace and we see in Him that our peace is made with God—and then our peace becomes like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea! I think it would be impossible for me to describe peace. You must feel it to know it. Peace with God is like that clear shining we sometimes see after a heavy shower of rain. With the thunder and lightning it seemed as if heaven would be torn in pieces and all the earth shaken, and then, suddenly, it is all over and the sun shines forth! There is a rainbow with its many colors on the clouds, and all the flowers lift up their drooping heads, each one loaded with a gleaming benediction—and all the earth fragrant and smiling and seeming to steam forth the incense of gratitude! Now, after the storm of the conviction of sin, when the Spirit of God comes, it is as quiet and peaceful as that. And after a storm of trouble—and I know what that means—after a hurricane of trial, we can take all our distresses and cares and lay them down at God’s feet and feel that we need not care about them anymore!

But if my Father did not undertake them, I would not, for I cannot. He has promised He will, if I cast my cares upon Him. You sometimes walk out of this place when God has blessed your soul and feel, “Now, I do not know what may happen, and really I do not care what does. My heart is resting on my God—I have left it all to Him and I am sure it will be right, whatever may come.” Like Jonah, you may lose your gourd, but you cannot lose your God! You may see dark weather before you, but still you can go to Him who cannot fail you—and there shall your soul have repose. Now, that is the peace of God which passes all understanding, and therefore, it must surpass all expression. The peace of God which

can only be known by the man who enjoys it—a peace which the world does not give and cannot destroy, but which heaven, itself, can work in the soul! Now, may we have this blessing, “The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”

If we stopped here tonight and went no further, provided we got these blessings and fed upon them, it would be quite enough. Let me just read that text again clearly. “The LORD bless”—now the next word is the very pith of it, and let it be read now to each one of you, my good sisters and brothers, you who are young in years and young in divine grace, never mind who it is, so long as you are resting upon Christ—Jesus, the great High Priest, speaks from the eternal glory and He says, “The LORD bless *you*.” “Oh, but I do not deserve it!” Just so, but, “the LORD bless *you*.” “I am so unworthy, I am so backsliding!” Yes, but the Lord Jesus Christ knows all, covers all. We will read it, then, “The LORD bless *you—you*, and keep *you*: the LORD make His face to shine upon *you*, and be gracious unto *you*: the LORD lift up His countenance upon *you*, and give *you* peace.” Oh, have you got that worked into your very hearts? It will be like a bundle of myrrh that you may keep in your bosom and it will sweeten your soul the whole year round, making you to know that you are blessed in and of the Lord who made heaven and earth!

Now, I shall ask your attention for a little while to the second blessing, that spoken in God’s name by the apostle Paul, in the second Epistle to the Corinthians. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” Here we have—

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT BENEDICTION.

This second blessing is precisely like the first as to its essence and substance. But there is some little difference as to the expression and circumstance. The first thing that strikes me in reading it through, as it almost always does when I pronounce it, is this—you notice *it begins with the Lord Jesus Christ*. The Lord Jesus is the second person of the blessed divine unity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—but this benediction begins with the Son of God. Why is that? In the order of doctrine and fact, all infinite blessings begin with the Father. He is the fountainhead of creation. He is the fountain, Christ the channel and the Holy Spirit produces the grand results. Father first, Son next, Spirit third. But in the order of experience—the order in which the blessing comes—it is always the Son first. “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” Not the Father first, but the Son first! What a sinner learns to comfort him first is not that the Father loves Him. No. He learns first of all that Jesus Christ died for sinners because God loves Him—and so he puts his trust in Him. The first thing a poor believer gets, then, is grace through Jesus Christ. After that, perhaps, he may sometimes think that God the Father has no love

towards him, but as he begins to read his Bible and to experience more of divine grace in his heart, he finds that God the Father is full of love. So, then, he goes on and gets the love of God the Father. And when he knows this, perhaps he often wonders what communion may be of, and fellowship. And when he hears some of those delightful hymns which we sing at the Lord's Supper, he thinks he shall never get to them—to talk with God, to have communion with Christ—but, by and by, as the Lord leads him on, from being a babe, he grows to be a man and he gets into communion with the Holy Spirit. Babes in grace know “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” But as they grow they discover “the love of God our Father.” And as they grow still more, they come to “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.” The three things are put in the order of experience, not in the order of fact, nor the order of doctrine.

Having noticed that, just observe the three blessings as they come. “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, “though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be made rich.” You know His great poverty—you know His great grace which brought Him from yonder starry heavens to lie in a manger, to live in obscurity for 30 years and to die upon the cross in pains that cannot be told. Now, grace comes to us through Christ, and therefore, it is said, “by His grace.” He is the golden pipe through which it all flows. Believing in Him, we receive the mercy of God! Coming through Him to the mercy-seat, we obtain unnumbered favors by virtue of our union with Him. As the branch derives sap and then fruit from the vine, we derive grace from Him. He is to us the channel of all the good gifts of our heavenly Father. “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with you all.*” Be with you all—it is not in the singular—it is not to each one. It is, “with you *all*,” because the genius of the gospel is expansive. You notice the Redeemer's prayer. It is not *My* Father. No, but “*our* Father which are in heaven ” And the gospel's benediction, though it is personal—blessed be God for that—yet it is also expansive—“be with you *all.*” We are to think of all our brothers and sisters. When we get a blessing, we are to look upon ourselves as part of the divine family. When we come together to break bread, we do not come, each one alone—though it would be the Lord's Supper if only one man were there—but we come there in humble fellowship, one with the other! “Eat, drink you all, of this,” said Christ. “Take, eat, this is My body.” He would have all His disciples come there and partake. And so with this blessing of the grace of Jesus Christ—may it be with you all!

Has it been with us all during the past year? There are not so many here tonight as usual. May I, therefore, put the question to each one personally? Has it been with you—and you—and you? Have you, my hearers, known daily the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? Have you stood

by faith at the foot of the cross and felt that you rested your all on Him? If so, I know you possess His grace. He it is who has given you power to trust Him wholly and absolutely. All the grace there is in His great heart and mind belongs to you!—

***“Plenteous grace with Him is found,
Grace to cover all our sins.
May the healing streams abound,
Make and keep us pure within.”***

May it be with you all!

Next comes *“the love of the Father.”* It is from the love of God that everything blessed and blessing springs. We must not imagine that Jesus Christ died to induce His Father to love us—a very foolish and pernicious idea that! God the Eternal Father always loved His people and Christ has removed the sin which restrained the shinings of the most glorious manifestations of that love—but He loved before Christ died. You know you can boast—

***“‘Twas not to make the Father’s love
Towards His people sure,
That Jesus came from realms above!
‘Twas not the pangs He bore
That God’s eternal love procured,
For God was love before.”***

That fountain sprung up eternally! It was a well that needed no digging. Oh, dear friends, I trust we know what the love of God means. Has it not been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us? We shall know it in years to come, for where it once takes possession it never departs. Once in Christ, in Christ forever! In Christ’s love you have begun a banquet which will never end. “May the love of God be with you all,” is meant for all God’s people. But is that love present with all? If you have not tasted God’s love, you do not know what life, true life, means. The richest, the most celestial, the most transporting joy that mortal mind can know is a full assurance of the love of God! Dear hearer, do you love Christ? Can you answer the question, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” Then, if you have love for Christ, pure and true love and trust, if it is the fruit of God’s love to you, then be of good cheer! May the love of the Father be with you all your days!

Then comes *“the communion of the Holy Ghost (Spirit).”* That is a very ugly word—“Ghost.” A better translation of the original Greek word would be, “Spirit.” “Holy Spirit,” and I sometimes wish that we always called Him by that name. It is far more expressive. The word, “ghost,” bears such a strange and weird meaning, now, that it were better in this connection entirely to abandon it! The word, “communion,” means not only the Holy Spirit coming to us and having converse with us, but

communion means co-partnership. When the churches in Macedonia made a collection for the poor church in Judea, Paul called the collection, “communion,” because by means of giving money to the church in Judea they had a fellowship, something like having all things common—that is the perfection of fellowship!

Now, the Holy Spirit, if I may use the expression, has all things common with God’s people. He gives to them all things. “He shall lead you into truth.” What the Spirit knows and teaches us, we are able to bear. He knows the mind of God. He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. He gives us to participate in all that He possesses. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of peace. He gives us peace. He is the Spirit of holiness and sanctification—rather, He is the Spirit of light—He kindles light in our souls. He is a sacred fire. He baptized the church in fire. Everything that the Holy Spirit is and has, He is and has for the Church of God and in common with the church of God! Now, what an unspeakable blessing this is, to enter into a sacred co-partnership with God the Holy Spirit! To talk with Him, to live with Him, to feast with Him, to have Him to be ours and for us to be His! Now, may such a communion as this be with us! I question whether we have ever got up to the fullness of this.

I think I told you the other evening the story of a good woman who was a little distressed in her mind and who, in reading the passage, “Your Maker is your husband,” said, “Now, I won’t be distressed any longer. When my husband was alive, I took care to live up to my income and now I will take care to live up to my heavenly husband’s income.” Oh, I wish to get hold of living up to God’s income, for all He has is given to His people! What rich lives we would have if we were to participate in all that He has! We would be continually feeling His power in our souls. Have we done this? May each one of you say, “Lord, give me to know the communion of the Holy Spirit all my days, until I shall be taken up to dwell where You reveal Yourself without a veil between!”

Now, in closing, you see the difference between the two benedictions is this—the second blessing is really *exhibited*, the first a little veiled—something like Moses, when his face was too bright for the people to look upon, he put a veil upon his face. So the blessing Aaron pronounced is not so distinct or clear as the apostolic blessing. Note, again, that the blessings in the second benediction are *deeper*—they are traced up to their source in the Triune Godhead, “Grace, love and communion.” The one is a deep, the other a great deep. Note, yet again, that they are wider. The blessings of the Old Testament are individual and personal—to “you.” The blessings in the New Testament are to the Corinthian church and to all the churches—“with you all.”

In the first case there was a confirmation and in the second case there is one also—"Amen," which is the divine confirmation of this benediction.

But I notice in the apostolic benediction there is one thing which there is not in the first, namely, *the communion*, that is, the privilege—the privilege which comes to a child of God in this age of bliss when Christ is fully revealed. Did you ever notice that when John was born, an angel appeared to his father, Zacharias, to announce that Christ was come? No sooner did that bell begin to ring to tell that Christ was coming, than what happened? The greatest blessing was about to be pronounced, and therefore, the smaller blessing had to be silenced. When Zacharias came out, he was expected to bless the people, but what did he do? He could not speak a word—he was speechless and he beckoned with his hand—and that morning the assembly went home without the benediction! The priest could not pronounce it. Now, I dare say they said one to another, "What a strange thing it was. We always had that benediction before, 'The Lord bless you, and keep you,' but this morning the priest could not speak a word." You and I know what that means. We must stop that one because there is a better coming! God seemed, as it were, to give notice to His people, "I am about to hush the voice of Aaron because Melchisedec is coming. I am about to stop the sound of the symbolic, because the real priest is coming. I am about to hush the voice of Zacharias because the Son of God is now to appear and declare that the fullest blessing of Jehovah will rest upon His people."

Now, let us go our separate ways tonight, guided home, I trust, safely and rightly. And let us feed upon and make our soul's bread the two precious texts that have been before us. And I am not afraid but that you will be like those who went out to gather the manna—you shall each have enough! He who needs much shall have in abundance and he who requires little shall have no lack. Let us close by singing the blessing and go our way to turn all life into a song of gratitude for God's rich benedictions! Amen.

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

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CONVERSION AND CHARACTER

NO. 3372

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1913,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors opened, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do yourself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas. And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house. And they spoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”
Acts 16:24-34.

THE work of God at Philippi went on very quietly and successfully in the hands of Paul and Silas. It was the commencement of the gospel in Europe and very auspicious were its circumstances. The good work was intimately connected with prayer-meetings, which for this reason should always wear a charm for Europeans.

Godly women met together for devotion. Paul spoke to them and households were converted and baptized. The work went on delightfully, but the devil, as usual, must put in his foot! To any who judged according to the sight of the eyes, it must have seemed a most unfortunate circumstance that a poor woman having a spirit of divination came in Paul’s way. It was a sad ruffling of the gentle stream of prosperity when, on account of his casting the demon out of her, the apostle and his companion were dragged by the mob before the magistrates, shamefully beaten and thrown into prison. Now the preacher’s mouth would be stopped, as far as the people of Philippi outside the jail gates were concerned. No more of those delightful prayer-meetings and Bible readings and opening up of the Scriptures. Surely there was cause for the deepest regret. It might have appeared so, but like a great many other incidents connected with Christian work, the

matter could not be judged by the outward appearance, for the Lord had a secret and blessed design which was being answered by the apparent disaster! Servants of Jesus Christ, never be discouraged when you are opposed, but when things run counter to your wishes, expect that the Lord has provided some better thing for you! He is driving you away from shallow waters and bringing you into deeper seas where your nets shall bring you larger draughts. Paul and Silas must go to prison because a chosen person was to be converted in the prison who could not otherwise be reached!

No, it was not only one person who was to be saved, but eternal love had fixed its eyes upon a whole house! The members of this elect family could by no other means be brought to Christ but through Paul and Silas being cast into prison! And, therefore, into prison they must go—to do more by night in their chains than they could have done by day if they had been free—and to bring to Christ some that would be more illustrious trophies of the grace of God than any they could have gathered had they been preaching in the streets of Philippi! God knows where it is best for His servants to be and how it is best for them to be! If He foresees that they will do more good with their backs scarred than they would have done if they had escaped the flagellation, then their bodies must bear the marks of the Lord Jesus and they must rejoice to have it so! Brothers and sisters, we do not like the sick bed—we would not choose aching limbs—especially those of us who are of an active disposition and would be perpetually telling out the love of Christ! And yet in our temporary imprisonment we have seen the Lord's wisdom and have had to look back with thankfulness upon it. Oh, children of God, your Father knows best! Leave everything in His hands and be at peace, for all is well. May the Holy Spirit work quietness of heart in you.

Our subject is the jailer of Philippi, and first, we shall say a little as to *what kind of man he was before conversion*. Secondly, we shall consider *what was the occasion of his conversion*. And then, thirdly, we will notice *what sort of convert he made* when the grace of God brought him to Jesus' feet.

First, then—

I. WHAT SORT OF MAN WAS THIS JAILER BEFORE HIS CONVERSION? He is a remarkable instance of the power of divine grace, but he ought not to be spoken of as a notably great transgressor, for of this there is no trace, whatever! He was, like ourselves, full of sin and iniquity, but we find no record of anything especially bad about him. I see no reason why Mr. Wesley should so severely stigmatize him as he does in his lines—

***“What but the power which wakes the dead
Could reach a stubborn jailer's heart,
In cruelty and rapine bred,
Who took the ancient murderer's part?”***

***Could make a hardened ruffian feel,
And shake him over the mouth of hell?"***

On the contrary, we shall be able to show that the jailer's salvation is an instance of the grace of God saving one of an admirable moral character, one in whom there were most commendable points—a man of such regularity and decision that he was not so much saved from vice as from self-righteousness! I take it, from the little we know of him, that he was a fine specimen of stern Roman discipline—a *man full of respect for those in authority and prompt in obedience to orders*. He was a jailer and he had to act, not on his own responsibility, but on the command of others, and this he scrupulously did. When we read, "having received *such a charge*," we infer that he carefully followed the tenor of his orders and attentively observed the weight which the magistrates threw into them. He, therefore, thrust the apostle and his friend into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. You can see that he was thorough-going in obedience to authority, for afterwards, although he might have liked to retain the apostle and Silas in his house, yet, when the magistrates sent him word, he spoke to his beloved guests as an official was bound to do, waiving, in some respects, the friend, and tersely saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now, therefore, depart and go in peace." It strikes me that he was an old soldier—a legionary who had fought and done rough work in his younger days and then settled down, appointed on account of his good behavior to the important post of governor of the jail of Philippi. With his family about him, he occupied himself in attending to his duties as a jailer and carried them out with the strictest regularity. For this he is to be commended—for it is expected of men that they be found faithful.

I say, then, that I regard him as an instance of a man whose mind was molded according to the Roman type, a person subservient to discipline and strict in obedience to rule. I grant that there was a little harshness about his fulfilling the orders concerning Paul and Silas, for he seems to have "*thrust*" them into the dungeon with some violence. But we cannot object to their being placed in the inner prison, or to their feet being made fast in the stocks, because his orders were that he should keep them safely—and he was only doing his best to secure this. He was not responsible for the order of the magistrates and when the prisoners were brought to him fresh from the lictor's rods with a strict charge, what was he to do but to obey it to the letter? He did so and does not deserve to be called a ruffian for it. His ruling idea was that he was a servant of the government and bound to carry out his instructions—and was he not right? Such men are very necessary in government employ—I cannot tell how public business could be done without them.

Notice that before he went to bed he saw that the prison doors were all fastened and the lights put out. Even Roman jailers were open to bribes

and though lights had to be extinguished at a certain hour of the night, it was still possible to burn your lamp if you placed a little oil upon the jailer's palm. But there was no lamp in the jail of Philippi, for when the keeper, himself, needed a light, he had to call for it. All lamps were out at the proper time and all chains were on every person—for the narrative says that, by the earthquake, "Every man's chains were loosed," which they could not be if they were already unbound. The inmates were all secured in their cells and the whole building was in due order. This shows that the keeper of the prison attended to his business thoroughly, nothing turning him aside from the most correct observance of his instructions.

Well, all being shut up, he has gone to bed and is fast asleep, as he should be, in the middle of the night, so as to be fit for *his morning's work*. But what happens?—

***"Paul and Silas, in their prison,
Sang of Christ, the Lord arisen!
And an earthquake's arm of might
Broke their dungeon gates at night."***

See how every timber in the house quivers and he awakes out of his sleep! What is his first thought? To my mind, it is fine to observe that he has no terror for himself or family, but at once rushes from his room to look to the prison below. Seeing the prison doors open, he was alarmed. He does not seem to have been in any alarm about his wife and his family, though the earthquake must have shaken the rooms in which they were, but his one concern was his prison and its contents. Under the seal and authority of the Roman Emperor, he was bound to keep the prisoners safe—and when he wakes, his first thought concerns his duty. I wish that all Christians were as faithful in their offices as this man! When as yet he was unenlightened, he was *faithful to those who employed him*. It is a grand thing when a man, placed in an office of responsibility, has his work so much upon his mind that if he starts up in the middle of the night and finds the floor under him reeling with an earthquake, the main thing he thinks about is the duty which he has engaged to fulfill. It ought to be so with Christian servants, with Christian trustees, managers and confidential clerks—and indeed with all Christian men and women placed in offices of trust! Your chief concern should be to be found faithful—it was so with the jailer.

Now notice, as he finds the prison doors open, this stern Roman *fears that he shall be disgraced*, for he feels sure that the prisoners must have fled. Naturally they would escape when the doors were open and as he could not confront the charge of unfaithfulness in his office, he drew his sword in haste and would have killed himself. For this proposed suicide he is to be most severely censured, but still note the stern Brutus-like fidelity of the man. He cannot endure the charge of having allowed his prisoners to escape, but would rather kill himself. Is it not singular that

this Philippi was the place where Cassius committed suicide? Where Brutus also slew himself? Here this man would have added another name to these who laid violent hands upon themselves—and all because he feared that he would lose his character? He preferred death to dishonor. All these things show that he was a man sternly upright and determined to perform his duty. I am always doubly glad when such men are saved, because it does not often happen—such persons too often wrap themselves up in the sense of having walked uprightly towards their fellow men. And because after the lapse of many years, they stand high in public esteem and everybody says the country never had better servants, they are apt to forget their Master in heaven and their obligations to their Lord—apt to have a blind eye towards their own shortcomings and to be little inclined to sit as little children at the feet of Jesus, unless some wondrous deed of divine grace is worked upon them! Hence we admire the grace of God which brought such a man trembling to the apostle's feet!

The jailer was *a person of few words*. He was not a great talker, but a prompt actor. We only know three things that he said. First, he called for a light. And next he cried, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" a terse, laconic question—respectful, earnest, to the point, having not a word too much or too little in it. His other speech to Paul was of the same order when he said, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now, therefore, depart and go in peace." You would not expect a jailer to use very flowery language—he was accustomed to measure his syllables when he spoke to his prisoners, never uttering a word beyond the statute in that case made and provided. Thus he had acquired a hard, businesslike style of speech. Men of such a type are often cold as so many statues. We find it hard to warm their hearts, and therefore, we bless the grace of God which made this man's heart to burn within him and snapped the bonds of cold routine, so that, after his conversion, he feasted the ministers of Christ and rejoiced with all his house!

It may be well to make one more remark. It is evident that he was *a man of action, of precision and decision*. Once let him know what is to be done, and he does it! He acts as a man under authority having wardens under him. He says to this man, "Go," and he goes. And he acts mechanically as his superiors command him. He was a man who, I suppose, opened the prison doors always to a minute at the right time in the morning for those who went out to exercise, measured out the meals of the prisoners to the ounce and shut up the cells and put out the lights exactly at the fixed hour at night. I see it in him. Precise obedience is his main point. When he was bid to believe, he believed. He was also immediately baptized. What he lacked in speech, he made up in deeds. He obeyed the Lord Jesus immediately, then and there. I love to see a man brought to Christ who has orderliness and decision about him.

Some of us are rough beings, needing a deal of combing to bring us into shape. But certain others are shapely after their way from the first and all that they need is spiritual life. When the divine life comes, their habits are in beautiful consistency with the inward law of obedience and holy order. Still, it is not often that persons of this class are saved, for these very orderly people frequently think that they have no sin and so the warnings addressed to sinners do not come home to them. For instance, a man says, "Never since I took my position as manager of my master's business have I wasted an hour of his time, or a shilling of his substance." This is well, but the devil is ready with the suggestion, "You are a good and faithful servant. What need have you to humble yourself before Christ and seek His mercy and grace?" It is a most blessed thing when this tendency is overcome. I see the divine splendor of grace as much in the conversion of the faultless moralist as in the repentance of Manasseh, or of that woman who was a sinner, of whom we spoke a little while ago. It is as hard to deliver a man from self-righteousness as from unrighteousness, as difficult to deliver one man from the frostbite of his own orderliness as to save another from the heat of his unbridled passions. Converts like the jailer are very precious and very sweetly display the love and power of God! Now, secondly—

II. WHAT OCCASIONED THE JAILER'S CONVERSION?

The narrative is short and we cannot, therefore, get much out of it. I think, however, that we are warranted in believing that this man had received some measure of instruction before the earnest midnight cry of, "What must I do to be saved?" Perhaps the often repeated testimony of the Pythoness had been reported to him, for it must have been a matter of general notoriety throughout the town of Philippi that this woman, who was supposed to be inspired, had testified that Paul and Silas were "servants of the Most High God." It is also very possible that when he was fitting on the irons to these holy men and roughly thrusting them into the inner prison, their quiet manner, like sheep at the slaughter, and perhaps their godly words, also, may have carried information to his mind. What he saw and heard did not savingly impress him, for he showed the apostles no sort of courtesy, but, as I have already said, was somewhat harsh with them. "He thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks," so that at that time he had no belief in their mission and but small respect for their character. He felt, it is clear, no compunction, for he went up to his chamber and fell asleep—nothing of any importance was on his mind, notwithstanding what the apostles may have said to him. A young divine in a flowery sermon described the jailer as converted through hearing Paul and Silas sing at midnight. A very beautiful picture he made of it, but it had the drawback of being untrue, for the jailer did not hear them sing. "The prisoners heard them," for they were all down in the vaults under the jailer's house, but it is

clear that the keeper of the prison did not hear them, for he was asleep until the earthquake startled him.

I have also heard it said that he was converted through fear of death—a most ridiculous remark, for how could he be afraid to die who was going to kill himself? No, he was too brave a man to be moved by terror. He was afraid of nothing but of being suspected of neglect of duty. He was a soldier without fear and without reproach, dreading dishonor infinitely more than death! He was a stern disciplinarian and thought little of his own life or the lives of others. He would have ridden in the charge of Balaclava, with all the rest of them, bravely enough—

***“His not to reason why—
His but to dare and die.”***

You can see that it was not fear that brought him to the feet of the apostle. I do not doubt that some are brought to Christ by fear of death, but one is a little suspicious of such conversions—for he who is frightened to the Savior by fear of death may possibly run away from Him when he perceives that his fear has no immediate cause.

Others, too, have thought that he was made to tremble because he was afraid of being brought before Caesar for permitting his prisoners to escape. That fear may have hurried him into the desperate intent of suicide, but it was not the cause of his conversion, for all distress upon that point was gone before he cried out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” In fact, he came to Paul and Silas because that fear had been banished by hearing the calm and brave voice of the apostle as he said, “Do yourself no harm: we are all here.” It was not even a fear of censure from the magistrates which compelled him to tremble, for that, also, had been removed by finding the prisoners still in their cells. And though the whole of these things together make up the circumstances of his conversion, they cannot be put down as the cause of it, since this last, especially, had ceased to operate upon him when he fell trembling at the apostle’s feet.

What was it, then, which led to the jailer’s faith and baptism? I answer, partly the miracle that the doors were opened and the prisoners’ chains loosed by an earthquake. And coupled with that, the fact that none of them had escaped. What gladness filled his bosom! He would not be arraigned, after all, for being unfaithful to his trust. How strange that the prisoners were all there. What a conflict was there in his spirit! What anxiety and what sudden quelling of his alarm! There was no need to commit suicide lest he should be blamed, for there was nothing for which to blame him. What deliverance for him! An awful power was abroad and yet it had taken care of him. A mingled feeling of mystery and gladness created astonishment and gratitude in his bosom. He could not make it out, it was so singular—he had been brought to the verge of a precipice—and yet was safe. “Do yourself no harm: we are all here,” rang out like

music in his ears! He felt a solemn awe of those two prisoners whose voices had reassured him. Their voices had been to him as the very voice of God sounding forth along those corridors out of the innermost cells. Their bold, truthful, confident, calm tones had astonished him! He had seen before something very singular about those two men, but now the very tone in which they conveyed to him the glad intelligence which banished his worst fear filled him with deep reverence towards them—and he feels that no doubt these men are the servants of the Most High God, and therefore, he calls for a light, breaks in upon their darkness and brings them out.

While this was transpiring, he was brought very near to the world to come by the fact of the sword having been so near his breast, by the earthquake that had started all the stones of the dungeon, by the singular power of God miraculously holding every freeman as fast as if he had been bound and by the presence of men whom he perceived to be linked with deity. This nearness to things unseen caused him to look over his past life. He was calm, despite the confusion of the night, for he was not a man to be frightened. But conscience, which in him was quick and prompt, from the very habit of obedience, reviewed his past life, judged it and condemned it—and he felt that he was a lost man because of his multiplied shortcomings before the living God, whose servants were there present. For this reason he cried out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” It was none other than the blessed and eternal Spirit, unfolding before him his life which he had thought to be so correct, making him to see the evil of it and striking him down with a sense of guilt and a dread of consequent punishment! So far we trace his convictions to an awakened conscience visited by the Spirit of God.

His full conversion grew out of the further instructions of the apostles. That answer was very like his short question in fullness of meaning—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.” This was condensed gospel for him. And then followed a blessed commentary upon it, when the apostle spoke the word of the Lord both to him and to all his house. All this lit up his mind, which was already willing to receive the truth of God, a mind which, from the very habit of obedience, was quick and prompt to accept the sway of the Lord Jesus. He received the Word of God in the love of it most sweetly, God the Holy Spirit blessing it to him while he listened. There was plain teaching and a simple heart to receive it—and the two together made quick work of it and made resplendent that strange midnight which was, henceforth in that house, regarded as the beginning of days!

Now, dear friend, I want you to thank God for the circumstances which surround any man’s conversion, for all things are well ordered. If the Lord has been pleased to call you by His divine grace, do not begin judging your conversion because the circumstances were not very

remarkable! And do not suspect your friend's sincerity because there was no earthquake in connection with his new birth, for the Lord may not be in the earthquake, nor in the wind, nor in the fire, but in that "still small voice" which calls the heart to Jesus! The matter is not how you came to Christ, but are you there? It is not *what* brought you, so much as *who* brought you. Did the Spirit of God lead you to repentance? Are you resting at the cross? If so, then, whether, like Lydia your heart was gently opened, or, like this jailer, you were startled and awakened, and thus made to perceive grand Truths to which you had been a stranger before—it does not matter as long as Christ is believed in and your heart yields itself to His blessed sway! Our third point—and may the Spirit of God help us in it—is to notice—

III. WHAT SORT OF CONVERT THIS MAN MADE.

First, you are quite sure he made a very *believing* convert. The gospel command came to him—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house"—and he did believe, believed firmly, without raising questions or discussions, without delays, or hesitations! How many there are among those whose conversion we seek after who meet us always with a, "but." We put the truth of God plainly and they reply, "Yes—but—" Then we go over it again and put it in another shape, and they still say, "But." We tell them that salvation is by believing in Jesus Christ and they answer "*but.*" This man, however, had no, "buts." He was told to believe and he did believe—and who would not—who knows how true the gospel is? Who will not believe what is true? Who will not rely upon that which is divinely certified? Why should we reject what thousands have proved to be true by a gladsome experience? Ah, unbelief, what an enemy you are to multitudes who hear the gospel! But you were utterly cast out of the jailer—he heard the command to believe, and though he had received slender instruction, he nevertheless believed unto eternal life. He was a convert full of faith!

Next, what a *humble* Christian he was. He fell down at the feet of the servants of God, not feeling himself worthy to stand in their presence. And then, though their jailer, he took them up into his house and waited upon them with gladness. The man who is really born-again does not demand the best seat in the synagogue, nor disdain to perform the meanest service. It is poor evidence of a renewed heart when a man must always be the fore horse in the team, or else he will do nothing at all! He who knows the Lord loves to sit at Christ's feet—the lower the place, the better for him. He is even glad to wash the saints' feet, yes, he thinks it an honor! If you Christian people must dispute about precedence, always fight for the lowest place! If you aspire to be last and least, you will not have many competitors—there will be no need to demand a poll, for the lowest seat is undisputed. Humility is the way to a peaceful life—and the

jailer began to practice it in his behavior to his prisoners, who were now his pastors!

What a *ready* convert he was! In that one midnight he passed through several stages—hearing, believing, baptizing, service, rejoicing and fellowship—and all within an hour! No long waiting for him! I wish more converts were like he. What slow coaches we have to deal with. You travel by broad-wheeled wagon to heaven, even you who rush along by express train in the world's business! Yes, you must attend to the world, and my Lord and Master may wait your convenience, as Felix puts it! But this should not be. As soon as you know what your Lord would have you to do, every moment of unnecessary delay is a sin! The jailer had been prompt in other duties and he was just as decided with regard to divine things! He was such a convert as we like to have in our churches to set an example of quick obedience to the great captain of our salvation. Soldierly habits sanctified by grace are greatly needed in the church of God—would God we saw more of them!

Then see what a *practical* convert he was! “He took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and set meat before them.” All that he could do, he did at once, and his wife and children were all busy to help him. It is not easy to fit up a feast in the middle of the night, but the good wife did her best—cold meats were brought forth from the stores and such good cheer as they had was set out so that the two good men, who, no doubt, needed refreshment, were sufficiently supplied. I think I see that midnight festival even now! How the young children caught up every word which was spoken by the holy men and how glad they were to see them at their table! They all believed and were all baptized, and therefore they were all eager to do something for the men of God. How pleased they were to fetch the good men up into the best parlor—how eager to put them into the easiest chairs and let them sit in comfort, or recline at their ease. They did not wait till morning, but showed kindness without delay! This is the sort of convert the church needs—one who delights to serve the Lord and is no sooner converted than he sets to work in his own hearty way! May the Lord send us scores of such conversions!

Friend, have you ever done anything for the Lord or His cause? “No, sir. Nobody has set me anything to do.” What? Live in these busy times and *need* somebody to find you Christian employment? Why, you are not worth setting to work! He who lives in a great city and cannot find something to do for God had better not get off his knees till he has asked his Lord to have mercy upon his lazy soul! Here are people dying all round us, and being lost forever through ignorance, drunkenness and sins of every kind—and yet a young man of 21 stands up and says that he cannot find anything to do! You are idle. You are very idle! Does not Solomon say, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your

might?" You need not open your eyes to find good work to do, only put out your hand and there it is! For the love of Jesus, begin to serve Him as this jailer and his wife and family did!

Notice, again, that they were very *joyful* converts. He "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." The apostle was happy that night. His poor back was smarting, but his heart was leaping within him! And Silas, too, who had shared the scourging, he also shared the joy! How lovingly the jailer looked upon his two instructors, how tenderly he washed their stripes. As he had thrown them into the inner prison, so he brought them into his own house. What overflowing joy was in his heart! I think while he was waiting at the table, he would, every now and then, stop and wonder at what divine grace had done! Would he not ask the apostle to teach him that Psalm which had been sung below stairs? I am sure he would have sung heartily had he known that hymn which you so much delight in, wherein each one declares—

"I am so glad that Jesus loves me!"

Joy ruled at that midnight feast, and well it might, for the prison had become a palace and the jailer an heir of heaven!

This man was an *influential* convert, for, through this conversion, all his house was led to believe. And he was also a *sensible* convert, which is worth notice, for it is not every Christian that is wise and prudent. Some zealous people are in a hurry to give up their secular callings. Such would say, "I cannot be a jailer any longer. I must give it up." A Roman jailer would have much to do which would grate upon Christian feelings, but there was nothing positively wrong in the office. Somebody must be jailer and who so fit for the post as a man who knows the Lord and will, therefore, manifest a gentle, humane spirit? Who so fit to have poor creatures entrusted to him as one who will not swear at them, or treat them roughly, but who will seek their good? Why, I think if a man wanted to be a missionary to those who needed him most, he might desire to be a jailer, for he would be sure to get at the very people who most require the gospel! The Philippian convert was in his right place, and instead of saying, "Ah, I must give up my situation and live with Christian people," he was wise enough to stay at the jail and abide in his calling.

Observe that when the magistrates tell him that Paul is to go, he does not violate their order out of zeal for the faith. He had no right to keep Paul as a guest in his house against the magistrates' will, or he would gladly have retained him. But being bound by his office and by the fact that his apartments were part of the jail, when Paul was told to go, he said to him, "Now, therefore, go in peace." The words look somewhat curt, but no doubt he uttered them in such a kind and courteous manner that the apostle quite understood him. Then Paul went down to Lydia's house and I dare say the jailer came down to see him there, so

that if they could not meet at the jail without breach of regulations, they could meet at Lydia's hospitable abode. He was quite right in maintaining the discipline of the jail and his sincere affection for the apostle at the same time.

My own belief is that he and Lydia were ever afterwards two of the kindest friends that the apostle ever had—and were chief among those who contributed of their substance to his necessities. Paul took no money from any but the Philippians. Though other churches offered to contribute, Paul declined. But when the Philippians sent to him once and again, he accepted their gifts as a sacrifice of sweet smell. He said within himself, "All the family send this gift. All Lydia's household and all the jailer's household are believers, so that no member of the family will grudge what is sent to me." One likes to see brought into the Christian church those who will continue in their business and make money for Jesus Christ and lay themselves out to serve the Lord in a practical fashion. Many a man gets into a pulpit and spoils a congregation who, if he had stuck to his business and made money that he might help the poor, or aid the cause of missions, or support the church of God, would have been more truly serving the great cause. He was a sensible convert, this jailer, and I rejoice in him!

And now, if I have been addressing anybody not a jailer, but a person in a position of trust, and if you have a feeling that you have done faithfully, I am glad of it. I am not going to dispute your claim to integrity towards man, nor to undervalue honesty and faithfulness, but oh, remember, you need to be saved! Notwithstanding your moral excellence, you will be lost unless you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Do see to this. May the Holy Spirit lead you at once to accept the gospel of grace, for you need it even as others. May you become a firm believer in Jesus, and may the church find in you a willing and earnest helper.

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MAN'S SCORN AND GOD'S SUCCOR

NO. 3373

A SERMON

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*"My friends scorn me; but my eyes pour out tears unto God."
Job 16:20.*

WE know that Job's sorrows were recorded, not for his honor, but for our profit. We are told to consider the patience of Job and truly we might often be sustained, cheered and comforted if we would but look upon that patriarch in the depths of his grief. We are "born to sorrow" and if our cup is not embittered with it tonight, we must not expect to be long without a taste of the gall in our mouths.

There is one particular sorrow, however, which appertains to the early days of our spiritual life, concerning which I intend to speak tonight. It is the sorrow caused by the scorning of us by our friends. This becomes a very little sorrow to us in later days, but at the first it is a "trial of cruel mocking," and a very severe one. I suppose the advanced Christian at last can even come to "rejoice in tribulations" of this sort—he counts it to be an honor—he rejoices and is exceedingly glad when men say all manner of evil against him falsely for Christ's name's sake. But at the first there is nothing, perhaps, more staggering to the young Christian than to find that his "worst foes" are they of his own household and that they who should have cherished and nurtured in him the piety which is so excellent a flower, do their cruel worst to nip it in the bud!

Without further preface, therefore, we shall try, as the Holy Spirit shall teach and help us, to speak to you upon *a very common trial*, "My friends scorn me." And then, yet again, meditate on *a remarkable resort and exercise*, "But my eyes pour out tears unto God." First, then, let us think upon—

I. A VERY COMMON TRIAL.

"My friends scorn me." What is it they do? They *scorn* me. I shall apply the text tonight to scorn on account of religion. It is lately, my dear young friends—I address myself particularly to you—it is lately that you have been impressed. It is lately that you have considered your ways. There has been an evident alteration in you. You have become of a serious cast of mind. You are now a seeker—you desire salvation. For this reason your friends scorn you. Perhaps they say that you are so miserable that they cannot bear your company. Probably the remark is correct and you feel it to be so, but they do not know that this misery of yours will end in perfect joy. They do not comprehend this rough plowing of your soul, which is preparatory to the joyful harvest. They do not

understand that the good physician often uses the lancet and opens wide the wound before He comes with His downy fingers to close it and to heal it. You are miserable and you might expect them, therefore, to be the more gentle with you and to help your faith as much as possible, but instead of that, they continually tell you that your company is altogether unbearable—and so they scorn you. Meanwhile, they also insinuate that the attention which you are now paying to religious matters is with a sinister motive and design. They say that you are a hypocrite! They cannot understand that there can be such a thing as religious sincerity. To them it is all hypocrisy. They suppose that all those who seek to live godly lives in Christ Jesus are merely making a pretense with a view to some personal advantage. Do not be surprised if they insinuate that you “cant,” if they mimic any tone that may be peculiar to you—if in any and every way possible they throw in your face the insinuation that you are false and hypocritical. And, perhaps, they also twit you with your faults, which are, alas, too many—and are near the surface—and so very easily visible to them.

The old proverb says, “It is easy enough to find a stick with which to beat a dog,” and it is very easy for our friends with whom we live to rake up some fault of ours, to exaggerate it, and then to strike us as hard as they can with it! Very difficult, indeed, would it be for us to live so as to give them no such opportunity. Even when most careful, our very carefulness is sneered at as sanctimoniousness! And if we are particular, then we are severe, rigid, and worst of all, “Puritanical.”

So that, do what we will, we must expect to have faults laid at our door. This is hard to bear. Your friends, in this respect, scorn you. And all the while they also tell you that, make what pretenses you may, it is not at all likely that any good will come out of your religion. It is, they say, an old wives' fable and a cunning story. They have never proved the power of it in their own souls—they know no better, and therefore, they tell you to eat, drink, and be merry—fools as they are to think that this poor flesh and blood ought to have the first care before the soul that is born for better things! Fools, I say, as they are, to think that it ever can be wisdom to live for this little span of time and to forget eternity, which knows no end! Yet they will tell you to live while you live, that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, to snatch the present joy. They say, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die and leave the spirit-world and the land that is to be revealed to those speculative minds who may care for such things!” And so, with a hoarse laugh, they would dismiss religion from you, or persuade you, if possible, to forget it. But, my dear friends, you cannot forget it, for if God is dealing with you! His arrows stick fast in the soul. When the Spirit of God comes to deal with a man, if all the devils in Hell and all the sinners on earth should laugh around him all day long, it would only drive the shafts deeper into his soul! He who has never felt the power of the world to come is easily driven out of his profession, but he who has once been plowed and harrowed by the mighty plowman of conviction can never forget it! I recollect when my

sins lay heavy upon me. I would not have been ashamed to have stood up before a parliament of kings and said that I knew sin to be exceedingly sinful, and that I thought that the sentence of my condemnation had gone forth from God. Yet, as to having any Scriptural thoughts, they were squeezed out of me by the rough hand of my conscience. I knew that sin was evil before God and that sin would destroy my soul. How could I doubt it when the hot sweat of horror stood on my brow at the thought of my past life? Doubts then soon fled to the winds! Ah, if God is so dealing with you, sore as the trial is, of being mocked by unbelieving friends, you will bear it and will come out of the ordeal none the worse! But still, meanwhile, I remind you that Job himself had to say, "My friends scorn me."

Who are these people who scorn you? They *are your friends* and that makes it the harder to bear. Caesar said, "Et tu Brute?"—"And you, Brutus? Do you stab?" So, too, one of our Lord's sharpest griefs was, "*He that eats bread with Me* has lifted up his heel against Me." It is hard for a young Christian to be persecuted by the father to whose judgment he has always looked up with respect. Harder still is it for a Christian woman to find the partner of her bosom steeled against her for the truth of God's sake. Oh, how they can get at our hearts, these husbands and these wives of ours—and if they happen to be enemies of Christ, what wounds they can make! "My friends scorn me." You would not mind if it were merely the workpeople in the shop. You could escape from them, but you cannot escape from your own family. You would not mind it if the ribald herds around you mocked and taunted you, but some of your friends are people of excellent character in all points but one! One thing they lack, but the other things they have in such a degree that you almost blush to think that they excel you—and then it is very difficult to have a jeer from such. You had hoped that they would sympathize with you, instruct you and encourage you—but the very people to whom you looked for assistance have turned against you! One thing let me say—if those who have thus scorned you are merely "friends," and are not related to you, they prove that they are *not* true friends—part from their company, I pray you!

But if they are those with whom Providence has united you with such bonds, that you must look upon it as being a part of the cross which you have to carry, well, then, you must take up that cross daily, even though it is a heavy and painful one, that you may follow your Lord and Master, Jesus Christ! When the three holy children were cast into the furnace, it was at least out of doors and away from their dwelling. And but for God's rescue it would have destroyed them. But to have a furnace indoors and to have it always blazing—to go home every night into that furnace and to feel each day that the coals are heaped upon you, and still to hold on and refuse to bow the knee to evil, but still remain the true servant of Jesus Christ—oh, the ordeal is terribly severe! Job said that his enemies scorned him and why should you be allowed to escape, or expect to come

off better than Job? I do trust that this will be in the nature of a good thing for you. It will make you feel less dependent upon an arm of flesh. It will drive you to God and I am sure that those make the strongest Christians who have to come out most distinctly and separately from their fellows. It is the very best enjoyment. The Covenanters tell us in their lives that the happiest seasons they ever had were among the bogs, swamps, mountains and the brown heath of Scotland when Claverhouse's dragoons were after them! Then Christ seemed doubly precious to them, when the world had cast them out on the heath. Oh, there is no talk with Christ so sweet as that which He gives His people when they walk up the bleak side of the hill with Him, with the snow blowing in their teeth! Then He covers them with the mantle of His love and lets His soul out in springs of love, comfort and delight to them! Some of you who do not have persecution might almost wish to have it that you might know those dear delights, those intimate communing which Christ gives to His people in the day of battle and in the time of torment! Your friends may scorn you, but "there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother." Come to Him and He will not scorn you, but will be your great Comforter!

Your friends scorn you, but why do they do so? They do it you know not why. If it is on account of religion, I think I know the philosophy of it. They scorn you because *you are different from them*. I saw a canary light on the roof of a house opposite to a window where I was standing—and in almost a second afterwards some 30 or 40 sparrows surrounded it and began pecking away at it—and the reason was very obvious. It was of a different color from themselves. If it had been a sparrow, of their own dark, smoky, dusty hue, they would have let it alone. But here was a golden-winged stranger from the sunny isles and they must persecute it! And so, if you are a bird of paradise, you will find that word of the prophet to be true, "My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird—the birds round about are against her." So you will find the birds round about you—the ravens, hawks and vultures—against you. You are not understood, you know. If you are a true Christian, you cannot be understood! The greatest puzzle to a worldly man is a Christian! He is moved by motives which the worldling cannot understand. He is influenced by fears and hopes to which the worldling is a total stranger. They did not know your Lord—why should they know you? They crucified the Lord of glory, not understanding that He was God, and so "it does not yet appear" what you are, nor does the world value you at your proper worth. Do not be astonished at it—it is partly malice and partly ignorance that leads men to scorn you! If, my dear friend, you are a thorough-going Christian, you must not expect to escape scorn! Your life is a standing protest against the lives of others! You fear God, and they do not. You cannot live as they live. You cannot talk as they talk and when they note even your silence, it becomes provoking to them! If the world could have its way, it would not have a Christian living in it. "No," the worldlings would say, "That man is a living provocation to our

conscience—he thrusts thorns into our pillows and will not let us rest.” I am thankful if this is the case with you. And if so, it accounts for very much of the scorning which your friends pour upon you; I will not dwell upon the subject, however; you will have to find out the reason probably in your later experience.

But now, what is *the best thing for you to do* if your friends scorn you? Well, do not defend yourself! Do not get bad-tempered about it. Do not answer them. The best reply is, in most cases, complete silence. Only speak when you are quite sure that it is better to speak than to hold your tongue. Never give scorn for scorning. Remember that a worldly man may resist evil if he will, but Christ says to his friends, “I say unto you, resist not evil, and when you are smitten on one cheek, turn the other also.” I know that many of those good old non-resistance texts are looked upon as being quite out-of-date—as part of the Bible that is not to be preached. Well, when I get information from the skies that the text is to be covered over or silenced, I will say nothing about it—but as long as I find it there, I must say to you that that which men of the world call “pluck” and “fine spirit” very often comes only from the devil! Why are there fights and wars? They come from your own lusts. The Christian’s only answer to the persecutor is the answer of the anvil to the blows of the hammer. He bears them, bears, bears them and breaks the hammer by bearing them! This is how the Christian church triumphs. She has never made a good hand at carnal weapons. It was an ill-day for our Puritan sires when they took up arms. It did religion no good in this land but I believe, threw it back for a long time. It is for the Christian church to suffer and to suffer on in confidence and in faith, and to make the world see that the anvil will outlast a thousand sets of hammers and will triumph when they are all broken to dust! You, dear friends, especially will find it to be your wisest, as well as the most Christian course, to bear everything that is put upon you and to make no return except by being kinder and more generous than ever towards those who are most unkind to you!

Let me say, however, take care that you do not give any cause of offense. It is very easy for a man to make a martyr of himself when it is not his religion, but his particular way of holding it that brings on the martyrdom. Some people, really, are so ferocious in their convictions, so grim in their conscientiousness and so continually obtrusive that if they are persecuted, it is their *manner* that is persecuted and not the gospel which they profess to hold! Do not give people an opportunity of opening their mouths against you, but pray God to make you very wise, so that, as in Daniel’s case, they may find nothing against you, save only touching the Lord God whom you worship. And then, that being done, if you are still scorned by your friends, look upon it as coming from God’s hands and that will very much soften it. Ask the Lord what is His purpose in it, what lessons He has to teach you. It may be it is to keep your pride down, or to strengthen you for some future conflicts or labors

in His cause. And when you have waited upon Him for direction, rejoice and be exceedingly glad that you are permitted to suffer at all for Christ's sake and so in patience you shall possess your souls. Walk uprightly before God, live as Christ lived, and, my dear friend, the day will come when you shall have outlived all this enmity and when those who now mock you will respect you. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." At such a time, it may be some will be won by your gentleness and your holy conversation to become Christians, too, and what a joy that will be to you!

Now, I know that what I have been saying does not belong to a great many of you. But still, I must sometimes take texts which will apply to these special cases, especially as just now there are many who have been saved at the Agricultural Hall, and here, and elsewhere, and to whom the struggle for conscience' sake is quite a new thing. And a word or two by way of comfort to them I am sure you will not grudge. And now we shall turn to the second part of the sermon, and we find the patriarch engaged in—

II. A REMARKABLE RESORT AND EXERCISE.

His friends were scorning him, but he did not answer them. He had a sharp word or two, certainly, but still the direction of his mind and the bent of his spirit went another way. He thought of God, and forgot them. Herein is wisdom. When you are perplexed with a trouble, when you are mortified by some wicked person, do not let that thing always fret you. Have you ever noticed how you may torment yourselves with some little thing if you like? There is a fly in the room and that fly may be almost as much a trouble to you as though it were an eagle if you let its buzz be always in your ears. And if you keep on thinking about that buzzing fly, you can magnify it into a big dragon with wings. But if you forget it, and go on with your writing or your needlework, the fly may buzz away 50 times as much, but it will not trouble you! It is a very blessed thing, when, having a care which you cannot get over, you take it to God in prayer and so get over it. I will tell you what I have sometimes done with some of my difficulties. I have turned them over—I have looked at them in all shapes and ways—I have considered every way of getting over them. I have been vexed, troubled and distressed for the time, and at last I have come to feel, "Well now, I cannot do anything with this. It is a hard shell—I cannot crack it. But I have frequently been enabled by grace to deliberately take that matter and put it upon the shelf and say, "By God's grace I will never think about that again as long as I live—I have done the best I could with it, Lord, and if it does not get right, that is now Your business and not mine—I will be done with it forever." Sometimes you will find that the trouble will get right as soon as you leave it alone. It is just your meddling with it that makes the difficulty. You do not see that at the time, but as soon as you just get out of the way, the whole thing becomes right at once! God's wheels of providence grind much more accurately than any of the wheels of our mental calculations. And when we are altogether out of joint, then it is that God comes in and shows us

what His wisdom and power can do. Leave, then, the scorning friends, and betake yourselves to your God!

It is a very great mercy, let me say, that we may go to God when we are cast out by our friends—that if there are no other ears that will listen, God's ears will always listen—and that if in all the earth there should not remain a sympathizing heart, there is the heart of the man, Christ Jesus, still to be appealed to! And we shall never appeal to the sympathies of the Son of God in vain. Oh, my brothers and sisters, when every other door is shut, the door of God's grace is always open! Let all other ports be blocked, your vessel can always run into that one harbor which all the devils in hell cannot close—the harbor of infinite love and unfailing care. "Trust you in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." In your darkest seasons, your very worst times—fly to your God and He will deliver you!

It seems from the text, however, that all Job could do was to pour out from his eyes a flood of tears. The word, "tears," is not in the original Hebrew, but it is put into the translation, as it is supposed to give simpler sense to our ears. His "eyes poured out," however, by which he meant that he did not so much pour out tears as his very heart, itself. As that grand old expositor, Joseph Caryl, says, "Job's heart was hot within him and the steam of his fierce trouble distilled itself in drops of tears which fell upon the ground." It was *Job's inmost soul that he poured out before God*. Now, there are many kinds of tears, but the best kind are those described in the text, "tears unto God." What a capital sermon somebody might make out of that! "Tears unto God"! Tears not poured out to men, nor unto the earth, nor unto myself, but unto God! Tears put into His bottle. Libations poured at the foot of His altar. Tears wept for God—for God to see, for God to hear, for God to think upon—for God to accept. Not tears for tears' sake, but tears like those of the penitent, tears in the privacy of one's loneliness, tears only unto God! I hope, dear friends, there are some among us who know the meaning of these tears. Some of you, I trust, are even now pouring forth the tears of repentance. Oh, those are blessed tears, tears of repentance that are tears unto God! It sometimes falls to my lot to have to talk to people about their sins. Sometimes they wish that I should do so and when I have tried to set their sins in their true light, tears have come. There have been tears because the offense has damaged the young man's character; tears because it injured the young man's friends; tears because a mother was grieved. Well now, when I have seen all these tears, I have been glad of them, such as they were, but they are not all the tears that we need. If you can only get one tear because the sin grieved *God*, it is worth a whole bottleful of the other tears! To see sin in the light of God's countenance is to truly see it. David hit the nail on the head when he said, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." My dear hearer, you may be very sorry that you did wrong because it brought you into trouble. You may be very sorry, indeed, because you cannot take the

position in life which you once occupied—but that is not a repentance that can serve you before God! But if you are sorry to think that you have grieved God. If, like the prodigal, you say, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Your sight”—these are tears unto God and are such as He receives!

The next kind of tears unto God are *the tears of desire*. I wish these were more frequent. Those are the prayers that prevail with God which are well salted with tears. I am afraid that the most of us do not pray as we should, but if we want to prevail, like Jacob, we must remember that Jacob wrestled with the angel and then he prevailed. Weeping, which reveals the soul's wrestling, will often do what nothing else can in bringing us great benedictions.

We have all felt the power of tears over our own feelings and affections, but the power of tears over God, who shall describe it? The blood of Jesus secures all He wills, and when our tears look towards and plead the blood of Jesus, then those tears cannot be refused.

My dear hearers, if you cannot get peace, do not cease praying until you have obtained it. If you long for your sins to be pardoned and have been praying a long time for this—it may be for weeks or months—pray again tonight and do not give up praying until you know you have prevailed with God. Can you bear to perish? Can you endure to be cast away? If you cannot, then be importunate! Lay hold upon the horns of the altar and let this be your vow, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” Then, when it comes to tears, you will get it. When it comes to your very soul being poured out before God, then shall God say unto you, “Your sins are forgiven you. Go in peace.”

Once more. These tears may be *tears shed on behalf of others*. We would prevail for the salvation of others if we thought more of their cases when on our knees, and worked our souls more thoroughly into tempests of sacred and holy passion on their behalf. We cannot expect to see our children saved unless we can weep over them. We must not expect to see our congregations blessed unless our soul bleeds for that congregation. And when I say, “tears,” I do not mean those drops from only the eyes, for some of us could not cry if our souls depended on it, and yet we may, though we let fall no watery tears, shed some of the best tears—tears dropping like sweet-smelling myrrh upon the altar of the all-seeing God! Oh, we must get to feel that we cannot let men die! We must get to feel as if we should die ourselves if they were lost! We must feel so desperately in earnest about it that we cannot sleep, nor go our way in peace unless such-and-such persons be turned unto God and find peace in Jesus! If this is our spirit, we shall have our desire and we shall see our beloved ones saved.

Thus, then, it seems that Job, instead of dealing with his enemies, spent his time in dealing with his God, and as words failed him, he took himself to the more potent rhetoric of tears and so melted his way into God's heart, resting by faith upon the merits of the Redeemer who was

yet to come! Do the same, my dear friends, and God will give you the blessing you need!

But some of you say, "I would never think of weeping before God! I have no dealings with God." No, but He will have dealings with you. If you should not now repent of your sins, you shall repent someday, but that shall be when repentance is too late! Tears of repentance here on earth are signs of divine grace, but tears of sorrow in hell are only signs of bitter and destroying remorse! "There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Oh, may God the Holy Spirit convict us of sin here and now, while there is a hope of mercy, that we may fly to Jesus' wounds, be washed in His blood and be saved—for if not, rest assured that we shall be convicted of sin one day when sin can never be pardoned, but the undying worm of self-accusing shall gnaw at our consciences forever, and forever and forever! Ah, my dear hearer, do not boast because you cannot repent! Do not play the fool after that fashion, but rather ask God to break your heart of sin and so help you to repent! A tender conscience is such a blessing that you may well bemoan yourselves until God bestows it. Remember, however, that Jesus Christ can give a tender heart. It is one of the blessings of the covenant of which He is the surety. "A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them. I will take away the stony heart and give them a heart of flesh." Plead that covenant promise! And if you plead it now, believing in Jesus and trusting in Him, you shall get that new heart! You shall get a heart that can weep before God and so you shall be accepted through the righteousness of Jesus and your tears and your supplications shall prevail!

I may never speak to some of you again, but oh, I should like to leave that thought with you that to suffer for Christ is honor and that to weep before the Lord is the truest pleasure! But if you have despised in your heart those that are persecuted, remember that day when Christ shall come, and all His holy angels with Him! If you laugh at Christians now, you will no longer laugh, but lament then! Your song then—or rather wail—shall be very different from the one you sing now. Oh, may you now, while yet life lasts, and the day of mercy is not over, seek Jesus, cast in your lot with His people, take up His cross, that by and by you may wear His crown, suffering now—if necessary—in sharing His reproach and shame, that then you may be delighted with His glory!

The Lord Himself grant it to every one of you! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 22:1-22; SONG OF SOLOMON 1:1-7, 2:1-7.**

PSALM 22.

Stand and look up at Christ upon the cross and look upon these words as His. He Himself is the best exposition of this wondrous Psalm.

Verses 1, 2. *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent.* Gethsemane!—there is the key—a prayer unanswered at that time—“If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” It was not possible. He must drink it. “In the night season I am not silent.”

3. *But You are holy, O You that inhabit the praises of Israel.* No hard thoughts of God, even when He was forsaken. A forsaken Christ still clings to the Father and ascribes perfect holiness to Him.

4-6. *Our fathers trusted in You: they trusted, and You did deliver them. They cried unto You, and were delivered: they trusted in You, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and not a man: a reproach of men, and despised of the people.* How low did Christ descend for our sakes not only as low as man, but still lower! Never was godly man forsaken of God, and yet Jesus was—so He is lower than we are while He hangs upon the tree “a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”

7, 8. *All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that He would deliver Him, let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.* Was not this just what they said at the cross? Ah, little did they know that He saved others—Himself He could not save, because a matchless love held His hands there, as with diamond rivets.

9, 10. *But You are He that took Me out of the womb: You did make Me hope when I was upon My mother's breasts. I was cast upon You from the womb: You are My God from My mother's belly.* He remembers His wonderful birth. He was God's, indeed, from the very first.

11. *Be not far from Me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.* They have all gone. Peter and all the rest have fled. There is none to help. And there stand the Scribes and Pharisees and the great men of the nation.

12-14. *Many bulls have compassed Me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round. They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water.* All dissolved—nothing could hold together—quite spent and gone.

14. *And all My bones are out of joint: My heart is like wax.* He felt the inward sinking fever brought on Him by the wounds He had upon the cross. “My heart is like wax.”

14-16. *It is melted in the midst of My body. My strength is dried up like a potsherd: and My tongue cleaves to My jaws: and You have brought Me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed Me.* There they are—the cruel multitude—thrusting out the tongue and hooting at Him. “For dogs have compassed Me.”

16. *The assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me.* The hind of the morning is now surrounded by the dogs. He cannot escape.

16, 17. *They pierced My hands and My feet. I may count all My bones: they look and stare upon Me.* Horrible, to the tender, modest soul of

Jesus, were those vile stares of the ribald multitude as they gazed upon Him.

18-22. *They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture. But be not You far from Me, O LORD: O My strength, hasten You to help Me. Deliver My soul from the sword; My darling from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth: for You have heard Me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare Your name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise You.* The sun that was darkened, now shines again. The Savior's griefs are over. A calm is spread over His mind. He is about to say, "It is finished!" and His heart is comforted. We leave that passage there.

SONG OF SOLOMON 1.

Now, concerning our love to Him, let us read a few verses of the Song of Solomon, first chapter. You have been introduced to the Beloved, red with His own blood, but never so lovely as in His passion.

Verses 1, 2. *The song of songs, which is Solomon's. Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.* No name. Is any name needed? What name is good enough for Him, our best Beloved? He plunges into the subject through excess of love! He forgets the name. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth."

2, 3. *For Your love is better than wine. Because of the savor of Your good ointments Your name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love You.* There is such a sweetness in the name. It is not like a box of ointment shut up, but like a sweet perfume that fills the room. For the merits of Jesus are so sweet that they perfume heaven itself! It was not on Calvary alone that that sweet ointment was known—it was known in the seventh heaven!

4. *Draw me, we will run after You.* We want to get near to Christ, but we cannot. "Draw me," we cry, "we will run after You."

4. *The king has brought me into His chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your love more than wine: the upright love You.* The wine shall help us to remember Him tonight when we come to His table, but we will remember Him more than wine.

5. *I am black, but comely, O you daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.* A strange contrast is a believer. He is black in himself, but he is comely in Christ. In himself he is foul as the smoke-dried tents of Kedar—but in his Lord he is as comely and rich as the curtains of Solomon!

6, 7. *Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother's children were angry with me: they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept. Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?* A few verses of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

Song of Solomon 2:1. *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.*
So He is, and much more than that—

***“Nature, to make His beauties known,
Must mingle colors quite unknown.”***

So rich is He—rose and lily both in one—

***“White is His soul, from blemish free,
Red with the blood He shed for Me.”***

2. *As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.* His church stands out like a fair lily in a thorn-brake—separate and distinct—often suffering, standing where she does not wish to be, but all the lovelier by contrast. But if Christ praises His church, she praises Him again.

3, 4. *As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.* So full of joy is she that she can bear it no longer. She seems ready to faint with bliss!

5-7. *Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am love sick. His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me. I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem—*By every lovely, timid, tender, chaste thing—

7. *By the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, till He please.* If I have fellowship with Him—if I am near His cross—if I am drinking in His love, oh, do not hinder me! Do not call me away! Do not break the spell, but let me go on with this blessed daydream, which is truer than reality, itself, till I see Him face to face, when the day breaks and the shadows flee away!

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SIN'S TRUE CHARACTER

NO. 3374

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

“Exceedingly sinful.”
Romans 7:13.

INTO the connection of these words our time, which is very short this evening, will not permit us to enter. It was something like this—Paul was showing that the Law could not make a man holy and he observes that he had, himself, found that when the Law came into his heart, it excited in him a desire to act contrary to its precepts. There were some actions which he would not have thought of performing until he found that they were forbidden—and then immediately he felt a desire to do them at once! To this a grave objection was raised. This were to make the Law aid and abet sin! Not so, replies the Apostle—it was not the Law that made him sin, for the Law is good—but it was the sinfulness of his heart that could thus turn that which was good into an occasion of evil. He further showed that this was the very design of the Law as given by Moses—to make clear how sinful sin was. The purpose for which it was sent was not to make men holy, but to make men see how unholy they were! It was not the cure of the disease, much less the creator of it, but it was the *revealer* of the disease that lurked in the constitution of man!

Now, what I want to call your attention to is that Paul here calls sin, “exceedingly sinful.” Why didn’t he say, “exceedingly black,” or, “exceedingly horrible,” or, “exceedingly deadly”? Why, because there is nothing in the world so bad as sin! When he wanted to use the very worst word he could find to call sin by, he called it by its own name and reiterated it—“sin,” “exceedingly sinful.” For if you call sin, black, there is no moral excellency or deformity in black or white. Black is as good as white and white is as good as black. And so you have expressed nothing. If you call sin, “deadly,” yet death in itself has no evil in it compared with sin. For plants to die is not a dreadful thing, rather it may be a part of the organization of Nature that successive generations of vegetables should spring up and, in due time, should form the root-soil for other generations to follow. If you call it, “deadly,” you have said but little. If you need a word, you must come home for it. Sin must be named after itself! If you need to describe it, you must call it, “sinful.” Sin is “exceedingly sinful”

The text may suggest a broad argument and a special application. Our endeavor shall be to show you, then, that sin is in itself, “exceedingly sinful” and yet there are some signs of which it may be said with peculiar emphasis that they are “exceedingly sinful.”

I. SIN IS IN ITSELF “EXCEEDINGLY SINFUL.”

It is rebellion against God and “exceedingly sinful” because it interferes with the just rights and prerogatives of God. That great invisible Spirit

whom we cannot see, whom even our own thoughts cannot encompass, made the heavens and the earth and all things that are—and it was His right that what He made should serve His purpose and give Him Glory. The stars do this. They jar not in their everlasting orbits. The world of matter does this. He speaks and it is done. The sun, the moon, the constellations of Heaven, yes, and the terrestrial forces, even the billows of the sea and the ravings of the wind—all these obey His behests. It is right they should. Shall not the potter make of the clay what he wills? Shall not he who uses the axe, fashion what he chooses for his own pleasure? You and I, favored in our creation—not inanimate clods, not worms having only sensations, without intellect—we who have been favored with thought, emotion, affection, with a high spiritual existence. Yes, with an immortal existence—we were especially bound to be obedient to Him that made us. Ask your conscience, do you not feel that God has rights towards you? Ask yourselves, if you make or preserve anything, call it your own and it is your own—do you not expect it to answer your end, or do your bidding? Why have you forgotten Him that made you? Why have you spent your powers and faculties for anything but His Glory? Ah, it is “exceedingly sinful” when the crown rights of Him upon whose will we exist are ignored, or impudently contravened! Yet according to the part we take in sin, we trample on His edicts and set at nothing His jurisdiction.

How exceedingly sinful is *this rebellion against such a God!* Muse on His attributes and consider His majesty, for He is not merely infinitely powerful, wise, all-sufficient and glorious, but He is supremely good! He is good to the fullest extent of goodness! He is a God whose Character is matchless! Not like Jupiter, to whom the heathens ascribed every vice, nor like Juggernaut, the bloody god of Hindustan! He is a pure and holy God whom we worship! Jehovah, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises. Now, it is conceivable that if God were some vast Being who had a natural right to our service, yet if His Character—(forgive, great God, the supposition!)—were severe without pity, rigorous without clemency, harsh without forbearance, there were some pretense why daring spirits should lead a rebellion against the oppressor. But our Father, God, the great Shepherd-King—who shall frame an excuse when we, for a single moment, revolt against Him, or lift a finger against His will? It were Heaven to serve Him! The angels will tell you this! It were bliss to do His will. The perfect spirits all proclaim this! Ah, sin is base, indeed, a rebellion against a monarch's gentlest sway, an insurrection against parent's most tender rights, a revolt against peerless benignity! Oh, shame on you, Sin! You are, indeed, “exceedingly sinful!”

What an aggravation of the sinfulness of sin is this—that *it rebels against laws of which all are just!* The table of the Ten Commandments contains not one commandment but what is founded upon the essential principles of right. If a law were proclaimed in England which violated the principles of equity, to break that law might be the highest duty! But when the laws of our country are just and right, it is not only an offense against the natural power of the State, but an offense against the understanding and the conscience of right when a man breaks such a statute! God's Laws have not only the Divine Authority, but they have also this recommendation, that they are all harmonious and adapted to the rela-

tions of our being. Was it not the State of Massachusetts that at first passed a resolution when they were about to make statutes, that they would be governed by the Laws of God until they found time to make better? Will they ever find opportunity to make better? Could any man strike out a clause and improve it? Could he add a sentence and mend it? No! The Law is holy, just and good! And, rightly understood, it naturally forbids evil and simply commends good—only good! Oh, Sin! You are sinful, indeed, that you should dare to revolt against that which in itself is right and just, virtuous and true!

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters—this may touch some of us to the quick—sin is “exceedingly sinful” *because it is antagonistic to our own interest, a mutiny against our own welfare*. Selfishness is a strong principle in us all. That which is good for us and personally advantageous should be regarded with tenacious attachment and were we wise, would be pursued with strong enthusiasm. Now, whenever God forbids a thing, we may rest assured it would be dangerous. God’s commands are just like those notices, more suggestive of kindly warning than of stern prohibition, which we see upon the park waters in the days of frost, “Dangerous.” God simply tells us that such-and-such a thing is fraught with peril, or it leads to destruction. What He permits or commends will be, if not immediately, yet in the long run, in the highest degree promotive of our best interests. God does but, as it were, consult our well-being and prosperity when He gives us Laws. Doesn’t it seem a vicious thing, indeed, that a man will recklessly dare to slight himself in order to sin against his Maker? God says to you, “Do not thrust your arm in the fire.” Nature says, “Do not do it.” And yet when God says, “Do not commit fornication or adultery, do not lie, do not steal”—when He says, “Draw near to Me in prayer, love Me,” these commands are in themselves as naturally wise as the injunction not to thrust your hand into the fire, or the counsel to eat and drink wholesome food when hunger and thirst require! Yet we spurn these commands. Like a child that is bidden not to drink of the poison cup, but will drink of it. Like a child that is refused the sharp tool lest he cut himself. And he will cut himself—not believing in his father’s wisdom, but credulous of his own judgment because the cup looks sweet, it must be harmless—because the edged tool glitters, it must be a proper plaything! Know it, man, you do, when you sin, cut and tear yourself! Who but a madman would do that? If you neglect to do the right, you neglect to feed yourself with that which nourishes, and to clothe yourself with that which is comely! Who but an idiot would lend himself to such folly? Yet sin has made us such idiots and such madmen and, therefore, it is “exceedingly sinful!”

Sin, if we rightly consider it, *is an upsetting of the entire order of the universe*. In your family you feel, as a father, that nothing can go smoothly unless there is a head whose discretion shall regulate all the members. If your child should say, “Father, I am determined in this family that, whatever your will is, I will resist it, and whatever *my* will is, I will abide by it and always carry it out if I can,” what a family that would be! How disorganized! What a household! Might we not say, what a Hell upon earth? There sails tomorrow a ship from the Thames under command of a captain, wise and good, who understands the seas. But he has

scarcely reached the Nore before a sailor tells him that he shall not obey, that he does not intend either to reef a sail, or to do anything aboard the vessel that he is bid to do. "Put the fellow in irons!" Everybody says it is right. Or a passenger coming up from the saloon informs the captain that he does not approve of his authority and, throughout the whole of the voyage he intends to thwart him all he can. If there is a boat within hail, put that fellow on shore and do not be concerned if he lands in a muddy place! Get rid of him somehow! Everybody feels it must be. You might as well scuttle the ship and cut holes in her sides, as tolerate for a moment that the rightful central authority should be unshipped, or that every man should determine to do what is right in his own eyes! The happiness of everybody on board that vessel will depend upon order being kept. If one man is to do this, and another to do that, you might almost as well be shut up in a cage with lions, as be in such a vessel! Now, look at this world—it is but a floating ship on a larger scale—and who ought to be Captain here but He who made it, for His mighty hand alone can grasp that awful tiller! Who can steer this gigantic vessel over the waves of Providence—who but He? And who am I, and, my Hearer, who are you that you should say, "I will ignore the Lord High Admiral! I will forget the Captain! I will rebel against Him"? Why, if all do as you do, what is to become of the whole vessel, what of the whole world? When disorder is introduced, confusion, sorrow, dismay and disaster will be sure to follow!

If you want proof that sin is exceedingly sinful, *see what it has done already in the world*. Lift up your eyes and survey that lovely garden where every beautiful creature, both of bird and beast, and every flower of unwithering loveliness, and everything that can delight the senses are to be discovered in the sunlight. There are two perfect beings, a man and a woman, the parents of our race— then enters sin. The flowers are forthwith withered, a new wildness has seized upon the beasts, the ground brings forth her thorns and thistles and the man is driven out in the sweat of his face to earn his daily bread! Who withered Eden? You did, accursed Sin! You did it all! See there—but can you bear the sight?—clouds of smoke, rolling pillars of dust, the sound of clarion, the yet more dreadful boom of cannon! Listen to the shrieks and cries! They flee—they are pursued—the battle is over! Walk over the field. There lies a mangled mass of human bodies cut and torn, riddled with shot, skulls splintered with rifle balls, pools of blood! Oh, there is such a scene as only a fiend could gaze on with complacency! Who did all this? From where come wars and rumors but from your own lusts and from your sins? Oh, Sin, you are a carnage-maker! Sin, you cry, "Havoc," and immediately let loose the dogs of war! There had been none of this had you not come. But the spectacle multiplies in our vision. All over the world you have but to wander and you see little hillocks more or less thickly scattered everywhere. And if you analyze the dust that blows along the street and interrogate every grain, it will probably tell you it was once a part of the body of some man who in generations past died painfully and rotted back to mother earth! Oh, the world is scarred with death! What is this earth today, but a great Aceldema—a field of blood, a vast cemetery? Death has worm-eaten the world through and through. All its surface bears relics of

the human race. Who slew all these? Who slew all these? Who, indeed, but Sin? Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death!

Should your venturous wings of imagination dare the flight to a land that is full of confusion and without any order, I scarcely dare ask you to follow me, nor if you *could* follow, would I venture to lead the way across the stream that parts the land of mortals from the regions of the immortals! Across that valley of the shadow of death, you might look on the gloomy region of wretched souls where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched—if you dared to peer into that dismal pit that has no bottom, that place wherein spirits condemned of God are put away forever and forever from all light of hope and restoration! But you shudder even as I shrink back in very horror from that place where God's wrath burns like a furnace—and the proud that do wickedness are as stubble—and the nations that forget God are forever consumed! Who lit that fire? Where is he that kindled it? It is Sin! Sin did it all. No man is there except for sin. No man that ever breathed was ever cast away except as punishment most just, for sin most grave! Sin is, indeed, “exceedingly sinful.” Not even now have I reached the climax, nor must I venture the description. The worst phase is neither death nor Hell. But on Calvary's tree the Lord, Himself, who loved us and came to earth to bless us, proved the sinfulness of sin when Sin nailed Him to the tree and pierced His side. And sinners, rejecting Him with many a jibe and sneer, exclaimed, “We will not have this Man to reign over us.” In the agonies of Jesus, in the shame and spitting, in the woes and anguish that He endured, we read the sinfulness of sin, written as in capital letters, that even the half-blind might see! Oh, Sin, murderer of Christ, you are “exceedingly sinful!” My time has failed me, or I had meant to have enlarged upon—

II. SOME PARTICULAR SINS THAT ARE EXCEEDINGLY SINFUL ABOVE ANY ORDINARY TRANSGRESSION.

I mean sins against the Gospel. I will just give the catalog, that everyone here who is honest with himself may search and see whether he is guilty. To reject loving messengers sent from God, godly parents, earnest pastors, affectionate teachers—to reject the kind message that they bring and the yearning anxiety that they feel for us is “exceedingly sinful!” To resist the loving Gospel which talks to us only of mercy, pardon, adoption and redemption from Hell and exaltation to Heaven—to reject that is “exceedingly sinful!” To resist the dying Savior whose only motive in coming to earth must have been love, whose wounds are mouths that preach His love, whose death is the solemn proof of love—to despise, to neglect, to ignore Him—this is “exceedingly sinful!” To sin against Him after having made a profession of loving Him. To come to His Table and then go and sin with the ungodly. To be baptized in His name and yet to be unjust, dishonest, unrighteous—this is “exceedingly sinful!” To be numbered with His Church and yet to be of the world. To profess to be His followers and yet to be His enemies—this is “exceedingly sinful!” To sin against light and knowledge. To sin knowing better. To sin against conscience. To push conscience to one side. To do violence to one's better self. To sin against the Holy Spirit, against His admonitions, warnings, promptings, invitations—this is “exceedingly sinful!” To go on sinning af-

ter you have smarted. To continue to sin when sin costs you many pains and difficulties. To push onward to Hell, as if riding a steeple-chase, over post, and bar, and gate, and hedge, and ditch—this is “exceedingly sinful!”

Some of you here, tonight, are in this, exceedingly sinful. Oh, How I have pleaded with some of you! I have cried to you to come to Jesus. I have warned some of you again and again. If I am called to make answer at the judgment bar, I must say, “Amen,” to the condemnation of many of you! I shall be obliged to confess that you knew better—that some of you drink when you know how wrong it is! That some of you can swear. That some of you are thieves. Some of you sin with a high hand and yet I scarcely know why you come to this Tabernacle again and again and again! You love to hear my voice and yet you cling to your sins—your sins that will surely damn you! Let me be clear of your blood! I will not mince matters with you or talk with you as if you are all saints when I know you are not—and as if you are all going to Heaven, when, alas, many of you are still swiftly spreading your wings to fly downward to Hell! Oh, may God arrest you, or otherwise the brightness and the light in which you sin will make your sin the darker and the plainer—and the warnings you hear will make your condemnation the more overwhelming when it comes!

But why must it come? Why will you die? Why are you set on sin? Why do you love mischief? I see often in the gas-light of my study poor gnats come flying in if the window is but ajar—and how they dash against the flame—and down they fall, but have scarcely recovered strength before up they fly again unto their destruction! Are you such? Are you mere insects, without wit, without knowledge? Oh, you are not, or else were you excusable! Come to my Savior, poor Souls! He is still willing to receive you! A prayer will do it. Breathe the prayer! A broken heart He will not despise. A look at Him will do it. A faint glance at Jesus pleading for you will do it! Holy Spirit, make them give that glance! Oh, by Your Irresistible Power, compel them to look and live! Oh, it shall be! God be thanked, it shall be! You shall look tonight and God shall have the Glory! And though you are “exceedingly sinful,” yet shall you, through the precious blood, be fully forgiven—and I hope exceedingly grateful for the great forgiveness which Jesus brings! The Lord bless you, for His name's sake. Amen.

[The original title of this sermon is “SIN'S TRUE QUALITY.”]

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51; ROMANS 7:7-25.**

PSALM 51.

There are many sweet notes in Christian music, but to my own heart there is none so soft, tender, sweet as the note of repentance. Full assurance rings out her clarion trumpet strain and we ought to be able to send it forth, but sometimes we are unable. Conquest over sin gives us Miriam's timbrel to dance to and it is well, but everyday use commends me to the harp strings of penitence! We ought always to be able to play on

those strings. They always fit our guilty fingers. They are always sweet to the ear of the Most High. Mr. Rowland Hill used to say that there was one friend of his whom he could not take to Heaven and whom he thought he would regret to leave—and that was sweet repentance. I suppose when God wipes every tear from our eyes we shall not be able to weep for sin, but until then—

**“Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,
And after none but Thee—
And then I would—(oh that I might!)—
A constant weeper be,”**

for these bitter sweets—these sweet bitters—are almost the choicest of our sorrow joys or joyful sorrows that we have this side of Heaven! Thus David sings.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness, according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* And really, Brothers and Sisters, if we cannot feel that we have need to say, “Have mercy upon me,” and if, indeed, this is not the habitual language of our soul, there must be something more wrong about us than even open sin! Not to be able to confess sin and not to be able to mourn it is one of the direst states of sin—in which even sin can be found—but to be able to say from the very soul, “Have mercy upon me—blot out my transgressions,” indicates that there is a soundness still in us by Divine Grace. Do you notice what a quick eye David has here for the softer attributes of God? Did ever any man put words together more pleasantly? “According to Your loving kindness”—“according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.” God never looks more beautiful than when He is seen through a tear! If, under a sense of sin, you see Him as the strangely forgiving God, oh, how pleasant a God He is, and how our hearts love Him!

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* It is not the punishment. The child of God has got away from the legal fear that dreads the punishment. The sin—the *sin*—is that which he loathes and hates. “Lord, get rid of it. I seem to need double cleansing. Wash me! Wash me thoroughly! And when You have done that, cleanse me, for there are stains that washing will not get out. Try fire, Lord, if water will not do it, but somehow wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.* It is thrown out on the surface. Health comes back when the disease manifests itself by an outward eruption. It is when you do not acknowledge it—it is when it is not before you—when you cannot perceive it—will not confess your sin—it is then that it is at the heart-strings killing you, murdering you! Confessed sin has the teeth taken out of it, but sin that is not felt and known, and still is there, breeds the canker of self-conceit and pride—and is deadly to the heart.

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* For in sin, this is the essence of it—that it is sin against God. You cannot get the worldly man to feel that. “I have done no hurt to my neighbor. I have not injured society.” But how different it is with the

child of God! It is against *God* that he has sinned. What if he has never left his chamber—if he has never done an action or said a word? Yet that proud heart of his that rebelled when he was full of pain—that murmuring spirit that would not accept the Lord's will—that is enough to lay him in the dust—and he mourns it and confesses it. "Against You, You only, have I sinned."

5. *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me.* It is not merely that I sinned, but I am sin! I am a lump of sin—a heap of iniquity—by nature so. It is not merely in me, but it is me—my very self! It is in my blood, my bones, my marrow. O God, can You cleanse me from this?

6. *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom.* And sin is a lie, and sin is folly. God desires truth and wisdom. Can He give us both of these? Yes, and He will—only let us acknowledge the untruthfulness and confess the stupidity, and put ourselves into His hands for His Infinite Grace to deal with us and He will yet do it. "In the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom."

7. *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* "With hyssop." Just as the priest took the bunch of herbs and put it into the basin full of blood, and stirred it round and round till he soaked the hyssop in the crimson and then sprinkled it upon the penitent, oh Lord, apply the blood of Christ to my soul! Purge with me hyssop"—

"And I shall be clean."

I shall not be clean any other way. This is the only cleansing and purification by the sacrificial Atonement. And You alone must do it. Lord, do it now!

8-9. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.* I do not want to hear it unless You make me to hear it. I would not be comforted unless You comfort me. Dread above everything, dear Friends, false comfort—false judgments of yourselves—high motions about your own attainments—grand ideas of your own standing in yourselves.

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* For there must not merely be a creation, but a daily renewal, or else what You have once created will soon be blotted and marred as Your first natural creation was. Go on from day to day to make and keep my heart pure within.

11. *Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.* Do not fling me away as a man pulls up a weed by the roots and throws it on a dunghill—

"Take not your Holy Spirit from me."

Oh, how often will the child of God have to pray this prayer? The Holy Spirit is in him and he knows it, but he grieves the Spirit—and when his heart is very tender this is his daily fear—lest the Spirit of God should depart from him. "Take not your Holy Spirit from me."

12. *Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free spirit.* I did know it once. What joy it is—the joy of Your salvation!

Give it back to me, O Lord. I cannot live on the old mercy! The recollection does not satisfy. It only makes me hunger. "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation."

13. *Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.* Nobody ever teaches the mercy of God so well as he that tastes it. Sinner, do you know what a good God my Lord Jesus is? He has forgiven my innumerable sins and, therefore, I love to speak of Him, and to speak of Him to such as you are, such as I am. "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." Dear Friends, if you know the Savior, be sure you tell all you know! Or if you cannot tell it all, tell as much as you can, and as long as you have got breath! And it may not be long. You may not have many more opportunities, for sickness comes so suddenly and puts the strong man aside so soon. Do use for God what time you have and tell of His love while you are yet in the land where men can hear it, and where you can speak of it. Let this be your prayer—"Then will I teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted unto You."

14. *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* He said that he would be a preacher? No, he said that he would be a singer. God's people feel that they cannot do too much when they get a sense of pardoned sin. They will be both preacher and presenter! They will preach! They will sing! They will have all the irons in the fire. They will not be afraid of turning their faculties to too many accounts.

15-17. *O Lord open You my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.* What a sweet verse that is! Have you got a broken heart tonight, dear Friend, and do you feel almost ashamed to bring it, because it is in such a broken condition? It is in the best possible condition! I have read accounts of meetings of God's saints met by the ten days together and talking all about great things that have been done for them and from the first to the last no indication of a broken heart or of a contrite spirit! I confess I could not understand it and did not want to understand it. I would rather stand with the poor publican behind the door five minutes and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," than sit ten days with perfect brethren to magnify and glorify God about what I thought He had done for me, because I am persuaded that in the latter case I should be always in danger of magnifying *myself*, rather than God—whereas in the former case I should be near the truth, and near where I ought to be. Oh, keep to this—"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

18, 19. *Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* Notice this. David felt that he had done something to pull down the walls of Zion. His bad example would do mischief to the cause of God and his prayer to be forgiven is not a selfish one, which deals only with his own particular blessing, or his own desire for mercy.

He wants the Church to prosper! He wants God's work to go on and so he cannot close the prayer, even of a penitent and broken heart, without crying, "Build You the walls of Jerusalem." In proportion as we think less of ourselves we shall think more of the Church of God, and more of the work of God in the land. To despise yourself is the way to honor God and His people. But when you honor yourself, you will first despise others, and it will go on by degrees to a dishonoring of God, Himself, from which may the Lord save us!

ROMANS 7.

This is Paul's own account of his inward conflicts. He longed to conquer sin. He wanted to become a free man and live always a godly and holy life, but he found that there was a battle within his nature.

Verse 7. *What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? God forbid! No, I had not known sin, but by the Law: for I had not known lust, except the Law had said, You shall not covet.* There are some who hope to overcome their evil propensities by the Law of God. They think that if they can know and feel the authority of the Law of God, that will have an awe over their minds and they shall become holy. Now the Law is, in itself, supremely holy. It cannot be improved. We could not add to it, or take from it without injuring it. It is a perfect Law! But what is its effect upon the mind? When it comes into an unrenewed mind, instead of checking sin, it causes sin! The Apostle says that he had not known lust, except the Law had said, "You shall not covet." There is a something about us which rebels against law the moment we come to it. There are some things we should never think of doing if we were not prohibited from them—and then there becomes a tendency at once in this vile nature of ours to break the Law of God.

8. *But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, worked in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the Law sin was dead.* If there had never been any Law, there could not have been any sin, because sin is a breaking of Law! The Law is good. We are not speaking about that. The Law is necessary, but still, such is our nature that the very existence of Law argues and creates the existence of sin. And when the Law comes, then sin comes immediately. "Without the Law sin was dead."

9. *For I was alive without the Law once.* I thought that I was everything that was good. I imagined that I was doing everything that was right. I felt no rebellion in my heart. I was alive.

9. *But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* I kicked at that commandment. My holiness was soon gone. The excellence which I thought I had in my character soon vanished for I found myself breaking the Law of God.

10-13. *And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Therefore the Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid! But, sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good: that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.* There was sin in his nature, but he did not know it. But when the commandment came, then that evil nature said, "I won't keep that com-

mandment,” and it took occasion at once to show itself by breaking that commandment. It was something like a medicine which many a wise physician has given to his patient. There is a deadly disease in the internals of the man and he gives him a medicine that throws it out. You see it on the skin. You feel the pain of it. It would have been his death anyhow. It can only be his death now, but now it is a part of the process of the cure to bring the disease where it can be seen. And so the Law comes into a man's heart and because of the rebellion of his nature, he kicks against the Law and sins. It does not make him sinful. It only shows that he *was* sinful, for a perfect Law would not make a perfect man sin! It would lead and guide him in the way of holiness. But a perfect Law coming into contact with an imperfect nature soon creates rebellion and sin. It is an illustration that is not good throughout, but still it is of some use. You have seen quicklime—you throw water on it. The water is of a cooling nature. There is nothing in the water but that which would quench fire, and yet when it is thrown upon the lime the consequence is a burning heat! So is it with the Law cast upon man's nature. It seems to create sin. Not that the Law does it of itself, but, coming into contact with the vicious principles of our nature, sin becomes the product of it. It is the only product. You may preach up the Law of God till everybody becomes worse than he was before. You may read the Ten Commandments till men learn what to do in order to provoke God! The Law does not create holiness. It never can.

14. *For we know that the Law is spiritual: but I am carnal.* Fleshly.

14. *Sold under sin.* Even now that I have become a Christian and am renewed by Grace!

15. *For that which I do, I allow not.* I often do that which I do not justify, which I do not wish to do again, which I abhor myself for doing.

16. *For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that I do.* This is the Believer's riddle. To say that this is not a Believer's experience is to prove that the man who says it does not know much about how Believers feel. We hate sin and yet, alas, alas, we fall into it! We would live perfect lives if we could, we that are renewed. We make no justification for our sin—it is evil and abominable—yet do we find these two things warring and fighting within.

16. *If, then, I do that which I would not, I consent unto the Law that it is good.* My inmost heart says the Law of God is good, though I have not kept it as I wish I had—yet my very wish to keep it is the consent of my nature to the goodness of that Law—and proves that there is a vitality about me which will yet throw out the disease and make me right in the sight of God.

17. *Now then it is no more I that do it.* The real “I,” the true “I,” the new-born “ego.” Thank God for that—to have a will to do good, to have a strong, passionate desire to be holy! “To will is present with me.”

17. *But sin that dwells in me.* I would be earnest in prayer, and my thoughts are distracted. I would love God with all my heart, but something else comes in and steals away a part of it. I would be holy as God is holy, but I find myself falling short of my desires. So the Apostle means.

18-20, *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find*

not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it. The true and real "I."

20. *But sin that dwells in me.* Oh, this accursed indwelling sin! Would God it were driven out. We do not say this to excuse ourselves—God forbid—but to blame ourselves that we permit this sin to dwell within us! Yet must we rejoice in God that we are born-again, and that this new "I," the true "I," will not yield to sin, but fights against it!

21. *I find then a Law.* Or rule.

21-24. *That, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man. But I see another Law in my members, warring against the Law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Now, the more holy a man gets, the more he cries in this fashion. While he is low down in the scale, he puts up with sin and he is uneasy. But when he gets to see Christ and get somewhat like He, the more nearly he approximates to the image of his Master, the more the presence of the least sinful thought is horrifying to him! He would, if he could, never look on sin again—never have the slightest inclination to it, but he finds his heart getting abroad and wandering when he would tether it down, if he could, to the Cross and crucify it there. And so the more happy he is in Christ the more desperately does he cry against the wretchedness of being touched with sin, even in the least degree. "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

25. *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* It will be done! I shall be delivered. I shall be perfect—

***"Oh, blissful hour! Oh, sweet abode!
I shall be near and like my God."***

Oh, to be without fault before the Throne of God—without tendency to sin, without the possibility of it, immaculately clean, with a heart that sends forth pure waters like the River of Life that flows from beneath the Throne of God! This is our portion! We are looking for it, and we will never rest until we get it, blessed be His name. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

25. *So then with the mind I myself serve the Law of God.* With the new nature.

25. *But with the flesh, the law of sin.* With the flesh—this old rubbishing stuff that must die and be buried, and the sooner the better! With my old corrupt nature I serve the law of sin. But what a mercy it is that the next verse is that, notwithstanding that, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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STANDING AND SINGING

NO. 3375

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1913,
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“My foot stands in an even place; in the congregations will I bless the Lord.”
Psalm 26:12.

YOU will remember our taking a pathetic verse for our meditation, some little while ago, which was the prayer of a saint in trouble, whose prayer was, “Look upon my affliction and my pain.” [See Sermon #741, Volume 13—A TROUBLED PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] We must now look upon the reverse of the picture and think upon a Christian in prosperity and joy, and perhaps, as there may have been some comfort to afflicted souls before, so there may be some instruction tonight to those who are prosperous.

It is worthy of remark, at the outset, that *the condition of a Christian cannot readily be judged by anyone but himself*. Certainly his outward condition is a very unfair test of his real state. When Paul and Silas had been scourged and laid with their feet fast in the stocks, they seemed to others to be very miserable. But when, in the dead of the night, they began to sing God’s praises and the prisoners heard them, they proved themselves to be among the happiest of men! So was it with David. When the Psalmist wrote this song, he was slandered and vilified—every evil thing was laid to his charge. This was the case externally, and yet within, his mind was at such perfect peace that he could say, “My foot stands in an even place.”

It seemed to the common onlooker as though his foot would slip, as though he were like one hurled from the Tarpeian rock to be certainly dashed to pieces—but his soul’s experience was the absolute reverse of this. He seems to say to them all, “Hoot at me if you will! Seek to trip me up as you please! God is high above you all, and in Him I shall still stand my ground, for, blessed be His name, notwithstanding every attempt of the enemy to throw me down, my foot stands in an even place and in the congregation will I bless the Lord.”

There are two things in the text to which I would call your attention. The first is *a believer in a happy position*. And the second is, *a believer engaged in a happy occupation*. His “foot standing in an even place,” a happy position; “Praising and blessing God,” a happy occupation. We have here, first, then—

I. A BELIEVER IN A VERY HAPPY POSITION.

Now, what does he mean by his “foot standing in an even place”? Well, is it not the very worst evil that a genuine Christian can suffer to fall into sin? To fall finally, would, of course, be our everlasting ruin. To fall at all, in any sense, is our greatest grief. Every true child of God would sooner sorrow a thousand times than sin once. His Father’s rod he has learned to love, but sin, even when it is the choicest pleasure, he has learned to hate. “Lord,” he says, “allow me to go anywhere except into sin. If the way is rough, so be it, if it is Your way, I will bless You for being in it. But if the road is ever so smooth, allow not my feet to tread it, if it is Bye-Path Meadow.” The worst evil that can befall a Christian, I say, is to fall into sin and continue to do so. On the contrary, one of the richest blessings that a Christian can enjoy is to be kept aright in his walk and conversation—year after year to wear a spotless character—year after year to be such a one as Daniel, that even the man’s enemies can find nothing against him except touching the law of his God. Oh, this is a great honor! This is a rare jewel! There are some of God’s servants who will get to heaven who never wore this jewel. They have been the Lord’s people, but yet their slips and falls have given them broken bones and troubled hearts—and they have been saved at the last “so as by fire.” But it is a choice mercy if the child of God is able not only safely to get into the harbor, but to get into the harbor without having touched a rock, without having sunk in a quicksand, without having suffered shipwreck—not only to come safely to heaven, but to have “an abundant entrance ministered to him” into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Now, dear friends, the standing which is spoken of in the text relates to *the secure standing of the child of God in respect to sin*—and it may be understood in two senses. Sometimes the Christian is in an even place with *regard to common, outward sin*. And secondly, he is at all times in an even place with *regard to the sin of other men*—there he stands in such an even place that sin touches him not.

First, I say there are some Christians who may take the language of the text *in regard to outward sin* and thank God that they are not just now exposed to vehement temptations. They are not journeying in slippery places, but their foot stands in an even place.

This may be occasioned by several causes. *Sometimes it is caused by providence*. My brothers, you have, perhaps, sometimes wished that you were rich. You have been in a little way of business and you have thought, “I wish I had a larger capital that I might launch out a little that I might speculate that I might get a larger income and accumulate at a faster rate.” Ah, you do not know. Those high places are slippery places, as some of late have proved to their own sorrow. You have need, instead of asking God to put you there, to thank Him that you are not so rich, that you are not therefore subject to the peculiar temptations incidental to great transactions of business, or great accumulations of gold.

Comparatively, you may sit down and thank God that you are not in this position, but that your “foot stands in an even place.”

You may be thankful, too, if you are not extremely poor, for extreme poverty, like extreme wealth, is a very dangerous position. When a person is extremely poor, he may be tempted to steal. If he should be able to overcome that, he will be tempted to envy and may be very jealous of those who are better off than himself. And I do not know a more miserable spirit than an envious one! Nothing can be more un-Christian than to be angry with my fellow man because he happens to have more of outward good, and of inward excellence, too, perhaps, than I may happen to have. Thank God that your lot is cast in the middle place! If Agur’s prayer is fulfilled in you—“Give me neither poverty nor riches”—if you have just enough to have food and raiment, be content therewith and say, “I thank God that providentially I am not exposed to the temptations of fashion and all its mazes, and I am not thrust into the temptations of penury with all its grief—in that respect my foot stands in an even place.”

How many a young man is dazzled with the idea of fame! “Ah” he thinks, “if I could but carve my name on that rock! If I could, I would mount higher than that last, and carve my name high up there!” Yes, but how many have rolled back, have tried to scale the battlements and have fallen to the bottom, mangled corpses?—

“The path of glory leads but to the grave!”

Be thankful, young man, if God should mark out for you a quiet path of usefulness in the Sunday school, or in some village station, or in some place where, in the midst of your little family, you may bring your children up as a godly parent should, and at last, before the clods of the valley shall close over you, you may have, before you go hence, to thank God that your foot stood in an even place, though it might have slipped if you had been called to a more dangerous point on the hill! It is best for us to be thankful for the position in which providence has placed us, for I suppose that most of us now present will see that we are not peculiarly exposed to either of the extremes, and therefore, in that sense our “foot stands in an even place.”

Sometimes this is the case not so much with regard to our own condition, as to the place of our abode and the surroundings of our family circle. How many of you young people ought to bless God that you are converted and live where you do! I know the temptation with some young persons is to wish to get away from the parental roof very early and to try to set up on their own account. Young woman, if you have a godly father and a godly mother, be in no great hurry to go away from the hearth where piety has been your joy! Young man, if you are apprenticed with godly people, do not be in such hot haste to be away from the place; this is a wicked city, and for every place where a young man’s foot may stand “in an even place” in it, there are 50 places where it will need all

the divine grace he has, and a great deal more that only God can supply to keep him from giving way to temptation!

I am afraid that now-a-days, such is the general business habit, as we say, and the fastness of our living, that many of our young people do not think enough of religious privileges. I have read of a Jew who would not trade in a certain town because there was no synagogue in it—he said he would rather be at another place because there was a synagogue there. And what the Jew felt in this respect, surely the Christian ought to feel far more! If you have to put up with far less money, yet if you have an opportunity of hearing the gospel, and mixing with God's people, be not in a haste to throw away your golden privileges for the sake of those poor brazen gains which are pitiful in comparison with spiritual wealth! It is a wonderful mercy—a mercy which some of my dear friends now present would prize very much if they could have it—it is a wonderful mercy, I say, to live in the midst of godly people! Contrast it to the living with the ungodly! There are those in this place now who, when they go home from this place of worship tonight, will hear oaths and blasphemy before they fall asleep. They will probably be startled in the morning by hearing the name of God profaned. Their religion provokes the animosity of their dearest friends! They cannot be at their work without hearing ribaldry and without being selected to be the butt of all the archers who shoot at them, sorely wound them and grieve them—for though there are no burnings at the stake now-a-days, yet there are “trials of cruel mocking,” and these “mockings” are sometimes very “cruel” indeed! There is all the difference between the plant in the sheltered corner of the garden and the other plant set out in the wild, bleak waste for every frost to nip! Be thankful, dear young friends, yes, and let us be thankful who are not so young, if we are placed in a position where we are not continually exposed to the vicious example, or to the frowns of gainsayers. Let us say thankfully with David, “My foot stands in an even place in that respect: and in the congregation will I bless the Lord for it.”

Besides this, *our foot may be kept by providence and grace combined.* Providence may have placed us where the ministry is instructive and established—and then our foot stands in an even place. I have known some shepherds of flocks, and in the short time in which it has been my privilege to preside here, I think I have seen them veer to all points of the compass. There are some I know now whose particular position in theology no one ever did know, and I suppose, will never be able to ascertain, for there seems to be no definite teaching, no declaration of doctrines, no laying down of established truths of God! And, mark you, it is a great mercy when the Lord teaches us something and makes us know what we do know, and when what we hear we understand and receive into our souls by the teaching of the Holy Spirit! It is a great mercy when we are not carried away by this fanaticism, nor the other enthusiasm, but when we are cast into connection with people who hold fast to the faith which is delivered to them and are not to be carried

about by every novelty, but are conservative of the grand old truths and hold fast to the doctrines of the cross of Christ! It may have been the lot of some of you, dear friends, to sometimes be members of one church and sometimes of another—sometimes of a church given to quarrel and to break up, or, on the other hand, members of churches that are taken up with every novelty. Oh, be thankful that you have, many of you young Christians, round about you, fathers in Christ and matrons in Israel who confirm you in the faith, under God, and through whom your foot has been made to stand in an even place. For this mark of grace, bless the Lord!

But to go still farther. Sometimes the Christian may thank God for his standing, not so much because of his position in life, nor because of the outward means of grace, but *because of the inward establishment and spiritual growth which God the Holy Spirit has given him*. Oh, what a mercy it is, Christian, if your experience has been your own and you are come at last to a settled state of rest of heart! The devil sometimes says to you, “You will never be able to attain to the glory and the kingdom—you will never overcome your foes.” But you can say, “Ah, in this respect my foot stands in an even place, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day.” Sometimes your outward troubles are very many and the fear is that they will be too much for you—but oh, what a mercy it is to be able to stand in an even place in that respect, and say, “Goodness and mercy followed me all the days of my life, and I am persuaded that they always will. Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for God will be with me to be my stay!” When experience and patience have produced in us unstaggering faith in God, what a blessed life we lead! But the unbelieving heir of heaven, the man of little faith and little confidence in God—he is blown about by every wind and every difficulty staggers him—he is ready to weep under every trial! But the true Christian knows that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work out for him a far more exceedingly and eternal weight of glory! He believes that Jesus walks the stormy waters. He can hear Him say, “It is I,” and he is not afraid. He feels that he cannot suffer shipwreck while Christ is in the vessel with him, and therefore, if not always rejoicing, yet he is calm and patient, waiting for the salvation of the Lord. I think I know some of you who have been for years in this condition. You are not now as you used to be—all in heaven one day and all in the depths the next. You are not as readily excited as you once were. An earnest prayer-meeting fills you with holy joy, but it does not transport you quite out of the body as it once did. On the other hand, if some sharp affliction should come upon you, it still distresses you, but it does not perplex you and cast you into despair as it would once have done! You are no longer an infant, but you have become a man or woman in Christ Jesus! You have grown strong. You are rooted,

grounded, and settled in the faith! Now, be very tranquil, dear friends, and thankful that you can say concerning these things, “I am not to be moved by them—temptations that were once formidable to me are so no longer, for I know the promise and the faithfulness of my God—and my foot stands in an even place.”

Once more. This may sometimes be peculiarly true of the Christian, *when he has been enjoying near, dear, and ripened fellowship with the Lord Jesus*. We sometimes stand on Tabor with our transfigured Lord! It is not always Gethsemane. It is sometimes the mount of the first glory and sometimes whatever occurs has no more effect upon us than tempests upon solid rocks! The joy of the Lord, the presence of our Savior, the light of His love, the feast at His banqueting table—these things become so all-absorbing to us that we can say with Dr. Watts—

***“Let earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled.
Still I can smile at Satan’s rage,
And face a frowning world.”***

Such a soul, all taken up with divine love, sitting at the feet of Christ with Mary, has neither room nor time for Martha’s cares and encumbrances, but can rejoice and say, “My heart is fixed, oh my God! My heart is fixed, I will “sing and give praise.” Such a one may be poor and yet cannot be poor! Such a one may be sick and yet must be well! Such a one may be alone and yet not alone, for his Lord is with him! I wish that you and I could more often say in this respect, “My foot stands in an even place, and in the congregation I will bless the Lord.”

Now you can see that all this view of the text is but occasional. But there is a view of the text that is permanent. As I have already said with regard to the great sin, the sin which is unto death, the sin which would destroy a Christian, every child of God may at every time say, “My foot stands in an even place.” The child of God may sin, but he cannot sin away his birthright. The heir of heaven may fall, and he may fall foully, too, but though he falls seven times, he shall be lifted up again—and the eternal hand of God shall keep him, even to the end! Beloved, it is our mercy to believe that—

***“Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever.”***

If you stand on the Rock of Ages, my dear brothers and sisters, you stand on a Rock which never can reel beneath you, and from which no power, either earthly or infernal, can ever tear you! If you are in the hands of Christ, you know what He says—“No one is able to pluck them out of My hands; My Father which gave them to Me is greater than I, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hands.” Oh, how safe they are, then, in the hands of Christ, first, and in the hands of God after—as if to give a double security, a two-handed guarantee—the power of Christ and the power of the eternal Father being both guaranteed to the safety of the believer!

But may the believer ever say within himself that he is safe? Beloved, he may never say that he is safe in himself! No, that were, indeed, but a lie! But he may always say that he is safe in Christ Jesus. He may never say, "My mountain stands firm; I shall never be moved." But he may say—

***"My life is hid with Christ in God,
Beyond the reach of harm,"***

And, "Because He lives, I shall live also." He may not say, "I know that I, by my own strength, shall persevere to the end." But he may say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day." The perseverance of the Christian is not ensured by the Christian's resolve to persevere unto the end, nor by the Christian's own power, nor by any plans which the Christian can adopt! That perseverance is secured by the promise of Christ, by the energy of the Spirit, by the watchfulness of God and by the faithfulness of God to His own covenant!

Oh, Christian, how happy are you to be loved with an everlasting love, to have your name written in an everlasting covenant, to know that if your house is not so with God, yet He has made with you an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure! Your foot stands at all times, in this respect, in an even place where justice and mercy are sweetly balanced, where justice and truth have taken away all irregularities, where the path is even and plain! Oh, let your tongue sing praises unto the Lord!

And now just a few words, and only a few words, though as earnest as possible, upon—

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S HAPPY OCCUPATION.

The Psalmist says, "In the congregation will I bless the Lord," and surely we ought to do the same. Oh, think, dear friends, in your own remembrance, how many professors have perished! I scarcely dare to look back upon them. They once floated as calmly upon the surface of the sea as you or I do. There they are. I see the broken hulks, the boards and broken pieces still tossing upon the surf! Can you see the corpses as they strew the ocean—corpses of warriors apparently as brave and as well armed as we are! There is Demas, he has made shipwreck. There is Judas, too, the first son of perdition. Now, brothers and sisters, if we have been kept, if our feet have been made to stand in an even place and we do not bless the Lord, the very stones will cry out against us! Why is it that we have not fallen into sin as many others have done? Why, indeed, but that the grace of God has prevented us? There was everything in us that would have led us into the same mischief—the same sin, the same unbelief, the same evil habit of departing from the living God—and if it had not been for preventing grace which has held us fast, we would have made shipwreck as well as others! Let us praise God if, after 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years, or perhaps more, we are still spared to

stand in the midst of the Christian church upholding our integrity! Surely we ought to say, "In the congregation will I bless the Lord."

And then, again, as the Christian ought to do it, so it is the *best thing that he can do, for nothing can be more useful to him*. I fancy if we praised God when we are in the enjoyment of mercies, we would keep mercies longer. If God had more gratitude from us when we are well, He would help us to continue in good health, but He knows that we need to be sick, sometimes, to make us know the value of health, and therefore, He sends us to the bed of sickness that we may learn a lesson of gratitude? And if we were more grateful, we might, perhaps, be spared some of our troubles. And so while we are kept standing, if we bless the Lord for it, it may be that He will continue thus to keep us, but if not, He may allow us to slip in order that we may learn where our great strength lies—and may thenceforth praise His name! Christian, to praise God will be of the utmost service to you. The fact is, you must praise somebody—and if you do not praise God, you will slip into praising yourself—and that will make you hateful in God's esteem, for the Lord hates a proud look. If you once begin to say, "It is my own goodness and the excellency of my natural temperament that have kept me," you will soon come down—and great will be the fall thereof. But if you praise God, it will keep you from, self-conceit.

To praise God is, also, one of the sweetest medicines for worldliness. Most medicines are very strange—sour or bitter. I sometimes think doctors make them thus, for many persons would not think them effectual if they were not nasty! Probably there might just as well be sweet medicines as bitter. I do not know why there should not be. Certainly praise, though it is sweet and pleasant, is profitable and curative, too!

It will cure you of worldliness quite as much as will sorrow. If you sit down to a loaded table and bless the Lord for it, the abundance will not give you "fullness of bread." If you go abroad in the world and God increases your wealth, and you are grateful for it, it will not eat as does a canker, nor injure you, but the gratitude you have will be a sweet corrective force to keep you from being a mere earth-grubbing mole—as you would have been if you had not been lifting your eyes to heaven and mounting up on the wings of praise, as the eagle does, with his face towards the sun! Praise God that you have been able to bear your prosperity and you will probably have a longer time of it, and you will get good out of it. Moreover, as you ought to praise God and it is useful to praise God, so let me say that it is *honorable to God that you should praise Him*. There ought to be somebody to speak well of Him, for this wicked world is constantly abusing Him. If a man's own children do not praise him, where can he expect to have a good name? Oh, you who are the children of God, I am afraid you sometimes give your God a bad character! Those long faces of yours; those dolorous tales about providential afflictions—when they hear and see these, the world says,

“Ah, we always said so—they are a miserable set and they serve a very hard Master!” But it is a gross lie! There never were servants that had such a good Master as we have! We love His house! We love His service! We love His wages! We love Him! We are the happiest people in all the world and though the worldling will have it that we must be wretched because we are religious, we reply, “Our religion is our joy and our comfort! It is our delight and our bliss! We wish we had more of it! We serve a blessed God and we will speak well of His name.”

To bless the Lord, while it is honorable to Him, *will often be useful to our fellow creatures*, and this should be the most practical point. David said, “In the congregation will I bless the Lord,” by which I understand he felt that his blessing God might be useful to others, else he might have shut himself up in his room and praised God there. David was not like some of whom we know. I hear of some about the country who say, “I shall not go to the place of worship in my village. I cannot get on with the minister. I buy Mr. so-and-so’s sermons and I find more truth in them, so I shall stay at home.” You remember the view the apostle took of this when he wrote, “Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is”—a very bad manner, let me say, by the way the apostle mentions it! If there are a few people of God anywhere, join with them, and if they are such a people as you cannot think of joining as people of God, open a place of your own! Make it a point of conscience that where you have a house, God shall have one, and that where there is a tent for you, there shall be an altar for Him! How much might the kingdom of God spread if Christian people everywhere took care of this! David could have praised God alone, it is true, but he was not satisfied with it. He loved that genial warmth, that glow of holy fire which always comes when hearts come together. And so he says, “In the congregation will I praise the Lord.”

There are several ways of doing this. You may praise the Lord, you know, by singing—and what a delightful employment that is! I sometimes wish we all knew how to sing. It is very well for us to sing our best, but that best might be a great deal better. Our Moravian friends can, nearly all of them, sing, and if you were to go to their settlement you would find all of them able to join in the sacred song. It is miserable work where there are two or three fellows in white surplices who get up to praise God, or where there is a big machine out of which the music is brought. I suppose the Lord does have mercy upon such folly, but how there can be anything like spiritual worship coming from a box of pipes I cannot understand! The hearts of God’s people praise Him out of living organs! We must bring something like spiritual worship and when we have learned to praise God with the understanding as well as with our hearts, surely it will be none the less acceptable to Him, but all the more! He ought to have the best of the best and when we bring Him our praise it should be the best praise that it is possible for even hearts to make!

But there are other ways of blessing Him. You who cannot sing, can perhaps *praise Him by your preaching*. Oh, how we can help the Lord when we speak well of His name from the pulpit! It enlarges the scope and sphere of our praise when we can call upon hundreds, or on these occasions here, in this house, upon thousands of others, and say, “Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together! Come, let us bow down and worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker—let us come into His presence with thanksgiving and unto His courts with joy.” It is sweet work to preach when our preaching is blessing God!

Some of you cannot preach and you cannot sing. Well, you can *bless God by your conversation*. May the Lord give us many of His servants to bless Him in the farmyard, in the counting-house, behind the counter and in the factory! To bless Him when they are driving their carts, whose hearts are so full of praise that they naturally speak well of God as they speak well of some good friend who has helped and prospered them! Let me enlist you to bless God this very night before you go to bed—bless Him, I mean, in talking to someone else to whom your testimony for God may be blessed. Now, I charge you—you who love the Lord Jesus Christ and are His followers—if He has treated you badly, tell of it, speak honestly!

If you have found Him to be a hard Master, tell it to warn others against Him! But I know you cannot! You dare not say a word against Him, though you can say ten thousand words for Him—and would do so if it were not for your bashfulness. You can all say—

**“Lord, unloose my stammering tongue.
Who should louder sing than I?”**

Tell others that you have tasted and handled the good word of life, that you have found it a delightful thing to weep the tears of penitence, to turn with faith to the Savior and trust in Him. Do you say, “To whom shall I tell it?” Go, husband, tell it to your wife! My good sister, tell it to your husband! Tell it to your child! Tell it to your brother! “Andrew first finds his own brother, Simon Peter.” You go and do the same! Tell others and so help them to praise Him, too!

And there is another way of blessing God, even without much time. A Christian can *bless God by his life*. I heard somebody say of a Christian brother at Manchester that “he preached with his feet.” Ah, that is a noble way of preaching! May we have many such preachers! That is to say, by practical living, by walk and conversation. May you praise God by your consistent cheerfulness! There are brothers and sisters in this place to look at whose face is always enough to make one feel happy! They are not better nor richer than many I know of, but they seem always happy. They seem to live with Jesus—and when they speak, they speak well of Him. I am sure they are the most likely people to bring in converts. Ask the Lord to make your face to shine. Pray that you may look at Him until you are changed from glory unto glory! You know what that means—that the glory there is in Christ may come upon you—from glory to glory—that

your face may shine like that of Moses, the light of God's countenance being upon you through your praising and blessing Him!

I am afraid my sermon has no relation to some here present, but I ask them whether God has not been good to them in many respects. They have been kept alive—let them be grateful for the mercies they have and let their gratitude lead them to penitence, to think that they have sinned against so good a God! Ah, my hearers, if you will but repent and come to Him, He will be found of you. Knock and His door will be opened. Speak to Him and He will hear and listen to you! Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and He will wash you in His blood and bring you to His Father's right hand in the kingdom! The Lord bless these words, spoken in much conscious weakness, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 37:17-40.**

17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous.* They must stand, therefore, for how shall he fall whom God upholds?

18-19. *The LORD knows the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.* These are bad times now. Everyone complains, and indeed, there seems to be abundant cause, for distress is universal. But let us fall back on the promise. "In the days of famine they shall be satisfied."

20-23. *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall be consumed; into smoke shall they vanish away. The wicked borrow and pay not again: but the righteous show mercy and give. For such as are blessed of Him shall inherit the earth: and they that are cursed of Him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and He delights in his way.* There is a mutual delight, you see. If we delight in God, God delights in us. He delights in the conduct of His people. When they walk with Him, He takes pleasure in every step that they take. What do you say, brothers and sisters? Have you tried to live today so that God may take pleasure in you? He cannot do it if we have lived carelessly, or fruitlessly, or selfishly, but when we live to Him, then the Lord delights in our way.

24. *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholds him with His hand.* Just going to fall, but in came the interposing hand. Grace catches us up when sin would throw us down.

25. *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* It was so unusual a thing that David had never seen it. I have several times seen the seed of the righteous begging bread, but in every case it has been because of their drunkenness or their laziness, or because of their own vice which they

brought upon themselves. But, as a rule, God takes care of the children of His children. He does not allow them to want. They may be brought into great straits, but He will not permit them to come to beggary.

26-29. *He is always merciful, and lends; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore. For the LORD loves justice, and forsakes not His saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever. There is a grand time coming (oh, that God would hasten it!) when truth and righteousness shall rule the earth, and then shall the godly have their portion! At the present time—*

***“Every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile.”***

But the day shall come when the vile person shall cease from off the earth and the saints shall have the kingdom.

30. *The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of justice. You may often judge a man by his mouth. The physician looks at the tongue to see how the man is—and so is a righteous man known by his mouth and his tongue, for he talks of justice.*

31-40. *The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut of, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man and behold the upright. For the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.*

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GOD'S ANSWER TO PERSISTENT PRAYER

NO. 3376

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1913,
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“There is a sound of abundance of rain.”
1 Kings 18:41.

FROM the narrative we may learn that *things can never be so bad but what God can bring deliverance in His own time.* The country had been parched in Palestine for three years. Travelers in the East will tell you how brown and burned that country looks at all times, but how it must have appeared when the clouds cleaved together and all the pastures were turned to dust, I can scarcely conceive. It must have been a terrible and piteous sight when the cattle had perished and the people were ready to die through famine and hunger. Yet, bad as it was, when the clouds had long ago vanished, when the children of three years old did not know what a drop of rain meant, when the skies seemed to be as brass above the heads of poor tortured mortals, then it was that the word came to Elijah, saying, “There shall yet be rain.” Courage, then! If the times should be full of danger, if there should be forebodings in the hearts of the bravest, if infidelity should threaten to put out the light of the gospel, or if Romanism should seem to blot out the name of Christ from under heaven, yet God can still appear! And if any one church is left and the Lord commands the clouds that they rain no rain upon her, her hedges be broken down, the wild boars out of the woods waste her and she seems to be utterly left, yet at the last hour of the day, when her hope all but expires, Jehovah, her friend, may come to help her! And so with us personally—if we are brought to the last handful of meal in the barrel and the last drop of oil in the cruse—if we are brought so low that now it seems relief would come too late, or could not possibly come at all, the Lord, who has His way in the whirlwind and who makes the clouds the dust of His feet, can now come from above! On cherubim and seraphim, right royally can He descend in speedy flight and bring help to His needy servants! Let us, therefore, drive despair away! There is no room for that in Jehovah’s world! As long as He still reigns, let the earth rejoice and let His people wait upon Him in hope.

Further, we learn another lesson, namely, that *when prayer has been exercised concerning anything, it is our duty and our privilege to expect the answer!*

We sometimes pray and receive nothing—but it is in most cases because we have asked amiss. Or if we are quite sure that our request was a right one, yet we have forgotten the canon or the law which says,

“Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavers is as the waves of the sea driven by the wind and tossed: let not that man expect to receive anything of the Lord.” Now, if we ask believingly, we are quite sure to ask expectantly! We shall go up to the top of Carmel to look for the cloud if we have believingly sought for the rain. We shall send Gehazi yet seven times if he perceives no sign of mercy at the first—and we shall continue in importunate prayer—still believing that Jehovah cannot lie and will, as surely as He lives, be as good as His word and fulfill His promise to those who trust Him.

How bold it was of Elijah to go to Ahab, even before that cloud had been seen, before he had sent his servant to look for it, and to say to him, “There is a sound of abundance of rain!” What was that sound? I know not. I do not suppose that Ahab heard it, or that anyone else, except Elijah, recognized it. The ears of true faith are very quick and keen. She hears the coming of the blessing, the footsteps of the angels as they draw near, by way of Jacob’s ladder. God has heard her, and she hears her God! God is quick to hear her whispers and her thoughts—and she knows “the secret of the Lord,” for it “is with them that fear Him.” And long before the eyes have seen, or the ears have heard, or it has entered into the heart of man to imagine it, she perceives that the blessing is coming! There are certain sacred instincts which belong to the faith of God’s elect, which faith always comes from God. We must remember its divine origin and that it keeps up its acquaintanceship with the eternal Father by whom it was begotten. Like the shell picked up from the deep sea which always continues to whisper hoarsely of the sea from which it came, so faith continues to hear the sound of Jehovah’s goings. If none else hears them, she perceives them!

I thought of using this fact tonight as an illustration of the truth of God that there are *certain* signs which faith can see of a coming revival in a church. We will take that first. Then, *there are certain tokens which faith can perceive of coming joy and peace in an individual heart*—of that secondly. In the first place—

I. THERE ARE CERTAIN SIGNS AND TOKENS FOR GOOD WHICH PRAYERFUL FAITH CLEARLY PERCEIVES WHEN AN AWAKENING—A GENUINE REVIVAL—IS ABOUT TO COME.

What are these signs? I do not know that they are perceptible at this time throughout the churches of London. I do not know that they are perceptible *anywhere*, but I do know that wherever they are, they are the shadows which coming events cast before them! And one of the first of them is this—*a growing dissatisfaction with the present state of things and an increasing anxiety among the members of the church for the salvation of souls*. To have no conversions is a very dreadful thing, but to be at ease without seeing conversions is at all times more dreadful! I could bear a suspension in the increase of the church, I think, with some degree of peace of mind if I found all the members distressed and disturbed about it!

But if we should ever come to this pass—God grant we never may!—that we shall see no conversions and yet shall all of us say, “Still, still our place is well attended. There are such-and-such persons who come—we ourselves are fed with spiritual food and, therefore, all is well.” I say, if it ever comes to that, it will be a thing to mourn over, both by day and night, for it will be a token that the Spirit of God has for a while forsaken us! Oh, that the churches in London where the congregations are but small, and where the conversions are but few, would be clothed in sackcloth and cast ashes upon their heads! Oh, that they would proclaim a day of fasting and humble themselves before the Lord in the bitterness of their souls, for when it came to this, Jehovah’s hand would turn towards them in bounty and they would soon become the joyful mothers of children! As long as a church is satisfied to be barren, she shall be barren! But when she cries out in the anguish of her spirit, then shall Jehovah remember her. He hears the cries of His people, but when she will not cry and is at ease in desolate circumstances, then the desolation shall continue and the sorrows be multiplied!

Dear friends, it should be a matter of personal heart-searching for you how far any of you are at ease in Zion, how far you are satisfied without doing good yourselves, for in proportion as you are such, you are tainting the church with evil. But, on the other hand, let me inquire whether you have learned to sigh and cry for all the sin of this huge city, for all the abominations of this, our country? Let me ask whether you ever laid to heart the teeming millions of the heathen populations who are dying without a Savior? If you do this—and if all of us do it—it cannot be long before God shall look upon the earth and send a shower of divine grace, for that *anxiety in Christian hearts* is the sound of the coming of abundance of rain!

Another indication of a large blessing near at hand is when *this anxiety leads believers to be exceedingly earnest and importunate in prayer*. When, one by one, in their own chambers they become the King’s remembrancers and plead with Him day and night. When by twos and threes in the family, the prayer becomes fervent and grows into a passionate cry, “Oh, God, remember the land and send a blessing!” When in the churches, the spirit of prayer needs not to be excited by appeals from the pulpit, but is general and spontaneous! When the members make it a matter of regular conscience and joyous privilege to attend the prayer-meetings and when there they do not preach sermons, nor deliver themselves of doctrinal disquisitions to their fellow men, but are like Elijah when he knelt at Carmel with his head between his knees, or else like Jacob, at Jabbok, when he said, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” Then be sure of the blessing coming, for this sign never yet failed! Whenever and wherever there is this abounding prayer, there must be abounding blessing before long! Baal’s worshipers may pray to him and he may not answer them. They may cut themselves with stones and cover his altar with their blood, but Jehovah always looks to the

earnestness of His people and will surely avenge His own elect, though He bears long with them. He will give them the desires of their hearts! May we see—as we have seen it in this church—may we see it renewed among us—may we see it in every part of Christendom, in every church in London, in every church throughout the whole British Empire, in America and wherever there are believers—a deep and awful anxiety for souls that will not let believers be quiet, but will give them to exercise an incessant pleading with God which will stir up His strength and cause Him to make bare His arm!

A third sign, and a far more approximate one because it is the result of the other two, is *when ministers begin to take counsel, one with another*, and to say, “What must we do?” The church is earnest. We, too, share the fervor. What must we do that we may be more useful, that we may win more for Christ?” It becomes the sign of a great blessing when men in the ministry will preach the gospel more fully, more simply, more affectionately, more in dependence upon the Holy Spirit than they have ever done before. In proportion as elocution shall be less regarded, rhetoric be less honored, long words less admired—but simplicity, plainness of speech, boldness and earnestness shall be sought after—in that proportion, depend upon it, the blessing will come! In vain the prayers of God's people and all their tears in that place where the ministry gives forth an uncertain sound!

How shall God bless His vineyard by a cloud in which there is no rain? How shall He water the plants of His own right hand planting from a cistern that holds no water? Ah, brothers, if any of you have been guilty of expounding philosophical themes when he ought to have been preaching the simple gospel—if we have been guilty of trying to get poetic sentences and flowery periods when our sentences ought to have been short and sharp like daggers in the consciences of men! If we have lifted up a mere dogma instead of exalting Christ, and have preached the letter and forgotten the spirit, may God forgive us this great offense and help us, from this time forward, to begin to learn how to preach, to begin to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn from Him how to touch the springs of the human heart and, by His Spirit's power, lead men to cry, “What must we do to be saved?”

Brothers in Christ who preach the gospel, it is in no spirit of mere criticism of the general ministry that I have offered these sentences! It is rather in criticism of us all and loving counsel to us all. If we are to obtain a blessing, depend upon it, we must come nearer to the cross! We must get to value human knowledge less and to value Christ infinitely more! And then, having these, we must cry aloud and spare not—and our message must always be concerning salvation. We must leave for a time the more difficult and deep things of God and we must keep hammering away at this one thing with all our might—that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life! Where this shall become commonly the case, there shall be the sound of an abundance of rain!

God send us more Haliburtons, more McCheynes, more Harrington Evans, more men of the stamp of John Newton, Mr. Whitfield and the Wesleys—and when we have these, we may take it as an indication that God is blessing us and that it is a sound of abundance of rain!

I have not quite concluded the list of these favorable tokens. There will be a certainty that the rain is falling. The first few drops will be wetting the sensitive pavement of the Christian church *when we shall see the doctrine of individual responsibility fully felt and carried out into individual action*. I believe—I do not know whether there are any of you among them—that there are a great multitude of Christian people who think that religion is a thing for ministers and that ministers ought to do all they can for the spread of the knowledge of the true religion. Of course, they include City Missionaries, Bible women and good people who can give all their time to such work! But the notion that every saved man is to be a minister in some sense, that every converted woman has also her share of ministry to perform for Christ, that it is not one member of the body that is to be active, while all the others are to be torpid and idle—of this they do not dream! When it shall be believed that there is as much work for the foot as there is for the head and as much for the uncomely parts as for those that have abundant comeliness—when the poor shall feel that the church cannot do without them and the rich shall perceive that they have their work to do in the circles in which they move—when the illiterate shall talk of Christ as well as the educated. When the nurse-girl, the servant in the kitchen, the workman at the loom and plow shall all be moved by one common impulse—when the divine enthusiasm shall blaze in the learned and in the ignorant, when it shall flash up in the heart of the members of Parliament, when it shall be found in the highest and lowest places of the land—when every Christian shall feel that he is not his own, but bought with a price—when he shall see the blood-mark stamped upon him and say with the apostle, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus,” when the consecrated life shall be lived, not in cloisters and nunneries, but in cottages, mansions, palaces—in the abodes of wealth and fashion as in the dwelling places of poverty. When God's men go out into the world as *God's men*, feeling that they are to live for Him fully, as Paul lived for Him fully, feeling that for them to live is indeed Christ—then, brothers and sisters, there will be a sound of an abundance of rain!

Verily, verily, I say unto you, you need not think of the conversion of Japan, India and China, nor of Ethiopia's turning unto God—we, ourselves, need to be converted to God first! The church of God is not fit to have a great blessing yet. If she is not first of all baptized in the Holy Spirit and in fire, she will not be qualified to do the great deeds that God intends her to do before long. The world shall be saved, but the church must first be quickened. The nations shall be converted, but the church of God must, first of all, be awakened! The fire shall go forth from Zion, but it must first burn furiously upon Zion's own hearth! Out of nothing

comes nothing—and if the church degenerates into nothing, she will do nothing. It is only when she possesses the divine life in the fullest vigor, that she shall be capable of doing work for God which shall glorify the name of the Lord Jesus! The church has now got all the conversions that she is qualified to get. God always gives every church as big a blessing as it is fit to have—and if it qualifies itself for more—it shall have more! God treats His churches as parents treat their sons. They give them but little money when they are children—a penny will do—but when they get to be young men, they shall have yet more. We have but little because we are fit to possess and use but little. We are not faithful in what is given to us—and if the one talent often lies wrapped in a napkin, how can we expect to have five or 10 entrusted to us?

God stir up the church, then, in the manner which I have tried to depict, and there will be “a sound of abundance of rain.” And now to change the line of thought, I want to—

II. HAVE A FEW MINUTES' QUIET TALK WITH PERSONS WHO ARE DISPIRITED.

Some of you have got into Giant Despair's castle. You have had a taste of his cruel crab tree cudgel lately. You have been taken to see the dead men's bones outside the castle and you have been told that there is nothing for you but destruction. Now, there is, I believe, to such as you are, with all your sad distress of mind, an indication that the famine and drought of your soul shall soon end. Such a condition as yours cannot always be. There are always signs of abundance of rain. Perhaps there are some such signs now in you!

This is one—*God always means to bless us when He empties us completely*—when we get to know that we are nothing and have nothing unless He fills us with His hidden treasure! If you were self-confident and felt that you could rally yourself—that you had still some stores to fall back upon—it is very likely that your present state would continue. But if you are brought to the ground, you cannot go any lower and you shall soon be lifted up! If it has come to be the darkest hour in the night, the day will soon dawn, the first beams will soon streak and redden the horizon! When you become so poor and needy that you dare not trust yourself in anything—when you feel as if you scarcely could open your mouth, but cry, “Open You my lips”—when you feel as if your wisdom were all turned to folly and your wit all gone, like a man at sea, staggering to and fro, reeling like a drunken man. When you feel that you cannot help yourself, then remember the old proverb that “man's extremity is God's opportunity.” You must empty the pitcher before you can fill it! You must get the purse emptied of all the bad money before you can put in the genuine coin. You must throw the chaff out of the bushel before you can put in the wheat. And God is emptying you of your self-sufficiency and carnal trust in order that now there may be a full Christ for empty sinners, a rich Christ for poverty-stricken sinners! If you have got a moldy crust of your own, you shall not have the bread of

heaven. If you have one brass farthing left of your own merit, you shall not have Christ—

***“Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large—
While we can call one mite our own,
We get no full discharge!
But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small,
As soon as we have nothing to pay,
Our God forgives us all!”***

Now, your being nothing and having nothing—your being helplessly bankrupt in spiritual affairs—is a token for good and I thank the Master for it!

There is sure to be a sign of abundance of rain, too, *when your soul begins to be unutterably miserable apart from Jesus Christ*. If you could find comfort in the joys of this world, I would fear it would be a long while before you would find peace. But if pleasures which were once so sweet have now become insipid or distasteful. If social joys are now shunned because you have an aching void within your heart which these cannot fill. If you get alone and sigh and cry because you need—you need, you scarcely know what—but still you feel you cannot rest until you find your God! That unrest, that dissatisfaction, disturbance, longing, sighing and pining all are good signs! “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” I think I can hear in that longing of yours a sound of abundance of rain! But there are better signs than any you can see in yourselves, for the most comfortable evidences we can ever bring from self are generally but miserable comforters, like those of poor Job. They begin by comforting and end by making us more wretched than before.

But here are some things that are signs of abundance of rain. The first is, *God has given His Son to die for sinners*. You are a sinner. You know it and you feel it. Now, a sinner is a sacred thing. The Holy Spirit has made him so by declaring that Christ came to seek and to save just such! If God has given His dear Son to bleed upon the cross as a substitute for guilt, surely He will deny nothing! “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?” Stand at the foot of the cross and as you hear the blood of Jesus falling, drop by drop, surely in the ears of faith there is a sound of abundance of rain!

But He lives. He is gone from the cross to heaven where He lives and intercedes before His Father's face. “Therefore also,” it is written, “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever lives to make intercession for them.” If you hear the voice of Jesus pleading with authority before the Father's throne, you feel certain that God will not refuse His Son's request, but will do to Him according to His petition. So that here is another sound of abundance of rain! “He made intercession for the transgressors”—that is you again. He makes

intercession for such as you are! Give Him, then, your cause to plead, nor doubt the Father's grace.

Another blessed sign of an abundance of mercy for poor burdened souls is *the gift of the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit has been given to us. It is a thing that we are to pray for, that the Holy Spirit may be poured out, but the Holy Spirit *is* poured out, *was* given to the whole church on the day of Pentecost in order that He might abide with us forever! The Holy Spirit, then, is here—the head of the present dispensation, ruling and reigning in the hearts of His people. But why does He come? To convince of sin; to give us repentance; to show us Christ; to lead us to Christ, to work faith in us, and to breed all the spiritual graces within our souls.

Oh, friends, however barren and dead we may be, the Holy Spirit can quicken us! And in the fact that He is given to His people there is another sign of abundance of rain.

But I think there is another we must not forget—and that is *that there is a mercy-seat*. I like, when I feel my own sinfulness and corruption, to think that there is still a mercy-seat. There it stands. I may not have gone to it as I ought. I may feel as if I never could go to it as I ought. My heart may be as heavy as a stone, but there is the mercy-seat and God does not mean not to bless me, or He would have taken that mercy-seat away! He would have said, “No, I forbid you to pray. I will never hear you again.” But as long as there stands that blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, why, who is it meant for? It is surely meant for the needy! It is meant for those who need to pray—and the blood upon it is an evidence that it is meant for the guilty who need pardon—

***“The mercy seat is open still,
Here let my soul retreat.”***

The very fact that I may pray is another sign of an abundance of rain!

And once more—is it not a sign of an abundance of mercy to a poor devil-dragged sinner who has been dragged, as it were, through a whole forest of temptations, through the brambles and briars of his sins, who is all wounded, torn, ragged and bleeding—is it not a sign of mercy to him that *there is the invitation always ringing from the gospel*, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest”? Always does that invitation stand! Never does it cease to call! This silver trumpet always sounds! The bell is always ringing—

“Come and welcome, sinner, come!”

“Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money, let him come: yes, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price.” Why that invitation? Is it mockery? Is it scorn or sarcasm? Does God invite intending to repulse? Does He set open the door of mercy meaning to shut it in the sinner's face? Impossible! God is willing to receive and bless, for God invites most freely. And, mark you, He does more than invite—He commands—and with the command there is a threat! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; He that believes not shall be condemned.” He makes it a sin not to believe—a sin not to have mercy upon yourselves—a sin not to take the mercy which

He freely gives! Yes, He makes this the greatest of all sins. This is *the* sin which causes men to perish, that they believe not in Christ. "He that believes not is condemned already, because He has not believed on the Son of God." Now, see how hearty God is in this matter. He first invites—will He reject you? Next, He commands you to come—can He cast you away when you do as He bids you do? Then He threatens you, if you do not come. How His heart of generosity is displayed here! He cannot refuse to save you if you trust Him. You, blackest, worst and vilest, if you trust Him, He cannot refuse you! He has threatened to destroy you if you do not trust—can He destroy you if you do? What a God were that! No! Cast yourselves upon Him! Fall flat upon the promise which He gives you in His dear Son and surely, so doing, you shall feel that great rain for which your thirsty soul is longing, for the very invitation is a sound of abundance of rain!

Christian brothers and sisters, I dare say some of you sometimes get very dry and feel as if you need an abundance of rain. Well, *that very sense of need, that inward craving*, will be a sign of its coming! Continue much in prayer, even when you do not get a blessing in it. An esteemed clergyman gives this advice to his friends—if they have not liberty in prayer, to be sure and use a form! I think that is about as bad advice as he could possibly have given! When you feel you have not liberty in prayer, pray in order to get liberty! Do not leave the mercy-seat till you do, but put up with no makeshifts. Do not resort to any of those legs of wood, iron and stone. Get to have real and living fellowship with Christ and dread above all things, the possibility of sham religion being put in the place of the real, living thing! Never be satisfied, dearly beloved, until you live every day in communion with Christ! Do not be content without the abiding presence of that gracious Sun of your soul, your blessed Savior! Without Him, this life is a very death—and the thought of the world to come a torment to the spirit! And when you feel you cannot do without Him, without the reality of His assured presence. When services will not do and the Bible, itself, will not do. Without getting Him, without getting heart-work and spirit-work, without getting the soul and sustenance of it—then it is that before long an abundant blessing will drop upon your soul!

The Lord make us uneasy and wretched out of Him—make us hungry and thirsty apart from Him! The Lord make us covetous beyond all covetousness after Him, dissatisfied beyond all peace of mind apart from Him! And when we get to that, He will feed us with bread to the fullest and give us the wines on the lees well-refined, that we may drink and rejoice! May God give a blessing to these words for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 7.**

While we are reading, let us also be adoring at the same time, for the words of Christ have a gracious divinity about them. They are infinite. They are omnipotent. There is a kind of life in them—a life which communicates itself to those who hear them. Our Savior did not preach sermons—He preached texts. All His sermons are full of golden sentences, not hammered gold leaf, like those of men, but ingots of solid gold and the gold of that land is good, the most fine gold. There is none like it. Thus He preaches in the seventh chapter of Matthew.

Verse 1. *Judge not that you be not judged.* Set not up for critics, especially in the act of worship. Probably there is no greater destroyer of profit in the hearing of the word than is the spirit of carping criticism.

1, 2. *Judge not that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.* When the Lord comes in judgment, He might almost decline to mount the throne, for He might say, “These men have already tried and condemned each other—let their sentences abide.” If He were to judge us as we have judged others, who among us would stand? But we may rest assured that our fellow men will usually exercise towards us much the same judgment that we exercise towards them.

3. *And why do you behold the speck that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye?* It is a beam. You do not see it because it is in your own eye. How is it that you can be so severe towards that which is in another, and so lenient towards yourself?

4, 5. *Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull the speck out of your eye and, behold, a beam is in your own eye? You hypocrite! First cast out the beam out of your own eye; and then shall you see clearly to cast out the speck out of your brother's eye.* There may be, dear friends, a great deal of hypocrisy about us, of which we are not aware, for when a man sees a fault in another and tells him of it, he says, “You know I am a very plain-spoken person. There is no hypocrisy about me.” Well, but there is, and, according to the Savior's description, this may be sheer hypocrisy because meanwhile in your own eye there is something worse than you see in your fellow, and this you pass over! And this is simply untruthful dealing and it amounts to hypocrisy. If you were really so zealous to make people see, you would begin by being zealous to see, yourself! And if you were so concerned to have all eyes cleansed from impurity, you would begin by cleansing your own, or seeking to have them cleansed.

6. *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again, and tear you to pieces.* It is a pity to talk about some of the secrets of our holy faith in any and every company. It would be almost profane to speak of them in the company of profane men. We know that they would not understand us—they would find occasion for jest and ridicule and, therefore, our own reverence for holy things must cause us to lay a finger on our lips when we are in the presence of profane persons. Do not let us, however, carry out one precept to the exclusion of others! There are dogs that eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table. Drop them a

crumb. And there are even swine that may yet be transformed—to whom the sight of a pearl might give some inkling of a better condition of heart. Cast not the pearls before them, but you may show them to them sometimes when they are in as good a state of mind as they are likely to be in. It is ours to preach the gospel to every creature—that is a precept of Christ, and yet all creatures are not always in the condition to hear the gospel. We must choose our time. Yet even this I would not push too far. We are to preach the gospel in season and out of season. Oh, that we may be able to follow precepts as far as they are meant to go, and no further.

7. *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* This is the simplest form of prayer. Follow up your prayer by the effort. “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Add force to your petitions and to your prayers. If the door blocks the way, knock until it is opened.

8. *For everyone that asks, receives, and he that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks, it shall be opened.* One way or another you will get the blessing if you are but persevering! And blessed is the man who is a master of the art of asking, but does not forget the labor of seeking an entrance through the importunity of knocking!

9, 10. *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?* Our Lord will give us the real thing. Sometimes we would be quite satisfied with an imitation of it. And sometimes we have to wait and be prepared for the reception of the real thing—it is infinitely better for us to wait for months than immediately to get a stone—better to wait for a fish than the next moment to have a scorpion! There were some in the wilderness who asked to be satisfied, and they were so, with the flesh of quails. They got their stones, they got their scorpions. But the Lord's people may sometimes find that they have to wait a while. God will not give to them that which is other than good for them.

11, 12. *If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him? Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.* Wonderful condensation of the two tables of the law! God help us to remember it. This is a golden rule and he that follows that shall lead a golden life.

13, 14. *Enter you in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in that way. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.* Do not be ashamed of being called narrow! Do not be ashamed of being supposed to lead a life of great precision and exactness. There is nothing very grand about breadth, after all. And I have noticed one thing—the broadest men I have ever met with in the best sense, have always kept to the narrow way, and the narrowest

people I know are those who are so fond of the broad way! I could indicate some literature which professes to be exceedingly liberal—it is liberal, indeed, in finding fault with everybody who holds the gospel, but its tone is bitterness, itself, towards all the orthodox! Wormwood and gall are honey compared with what the liberal people generally pour out upon those who keep close to the truth of God! I prefer to cultivate a broad spirit to a narrow heart—and then to talk about the breadth of the way.

15. *Beware of false prophets.* But as long as he is a prophet, people will respect him. Do not find fault with him, he is a clever man.

15-25. *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven. 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 say unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you that work iniquity. Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. For the best man will be tried, and perhaps all the more because he is such!*

26-29. *And everyone that hears these sayings of Mine and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine. For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

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*“And I was left.”
Ezekiel 9:8.*

SALVATION never shines so brightly to any man’s eyes as when it comes to himself. Then is divine grace illustrious, indeed, when we can see it working with divine power upon ourselves. To our apprehension, our own case is always the most desperate, and therefore, mercy shown to us is the most extraordinary! We see others perish and wonder that the same doom has not befallen ourselves. The horror of the ruin which we dreaded and our intense delight at the certainty of safety in Christ unite with our personal sense of unworthiness to make us cry in amazement, “And I was left.”

Ezekiel, in vision, saw the slaughter men smiting right and left at the bidding of divine justice. And as he stood unharmed among the heaps of the slain, he exclaimed with surprise, “I was left.” It may be the day will come when we, too, shall cry with solemn joy, “And I, too, by sovereign grace, am spared while others perish.” Special grace will cause us to marvel. Emphatically will it be so at the last dread day.

Read the story of the gross idolatry of the people of Jerusalem as recorded in the 8th chapter of Ezekiel’s prophecy, and you will not wonder at the judgment with which the Lord at length overthrew the city. Let us set our hearts to consider how the Lord dealt with the guilty people. “Six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lies toward the north, and every man with a slaughter weapon in his hand.” The destruction worked by these executioners was swift and terrible—and it was typical of other solemn visitations. All through history the observing eye notices lines of justice, red marks upon the page where the judge of all the earth has at last seen it necessary to decree a terrible visitation upon a guilty people. All these past displays of divine vengeance point at the coming judgment even more complete and overwhelming. The past is prophetic of the future! A day is surely coming when the Lord Jesus, who came once to save, will descend a second time to judge! Despised mercy has always been succeeded by deserved wrath—and so must it be in the end of all things. “But who may abide the day of His coming? Or who shall stand when He appears?” When sinners are smitten, who will be left? He shall lift the balances of justice and make bare the sword of execution. When His avenging angels shall gather the vintage of the earth, who among us shall exclaim in wondering gratitude, “And I was left.”? Such an one will be a wonder of grace, indeed, worthy to take rank with those marvels of grace of whom we have spoken in many former discourses in

this place! To each one of you, I put this inquiry—Will you be an instance of sparing grace, and cry, “And I was left”?

We will use the wonderfully descriptive vision of this chapter that we may, with holy fear, behold *the character of the doom* from which grace delivers us. And then we will dwell upon the exclamation of our text, “I was left,” considering it as the joyful utterance of *the persons who are privileged to escape the destruction*. And lastly, *the emotions which the escaped feel*.

By the help of the Holy Spirit, let us solemnly consider—

I. THE TERRIBLE DOOM from which the prophet in vision saw himself preserved, regarding it as a figure of the judgment which is yet to come upon all the world.

Observe, first, that it was a *just* punishment inflicted upon those who had been often warned—a punishment which they willfully brought upon themselves. God had said that if they set up idols, He would destroy them, for He would not endure such an insult to His Godhead. He had often pleaded with them, not with words only, but with severe providences, for their land had been laid desolate, their city had been besieged and their kings had been carried away captive! But they were bent on backsliding to the worship of their idol gods. Therefore, when the sword of the Lord was drawn from its scabbard, it was no novel punishment, no freak of vengeance, no unexpected execution. So, in the close of life, and at the end of the world, when judgment comes on men, it will be just and according to the solemn warnings of the Word of God. When I read the terrible things which are written in God’s book in reference to future punishment, especially the awful things which Jesus spoke concerning the place where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched, I am greatly pressed in spirit. Some there are who sit in judgment upon the great judge and condemn the punishment which He inflicts as too severe! As for myself, I cannot measure the power of God’s anger—but let it burn as it may—I am sure that it will be just. No needless pang will be inflicted upon a single one of God’s creatures! Even those who are doomed forever will endure no more than divine justice absolutely requires, no more than they, themselves, would admit to be the due reward of their sins if their consciences would judge aright. Mark you, this is the very hell of hell that men will know that they are justly suffering. To endure a tyrant’s wrath would be a small thing compared with suffering what one has brought upon himself by willful wanton choices of wrong. Sin and suffering are indissolubly bound together in the constitution of nature—it cannot be otherwise, nor ought it to be. It is right that evil should be punished. Those who were punished in Jerusalem could not turn upon the executioners and say, “We do not deserve this doom”—every cruel wound of the Chaldean sword and every fierce crash of the Babylonian battle-axe fell on men who in their consciences knew that they were only reaping what they themselves had sown! Brothers and sisters, what wonders of grace shall we be if, from a judgment which we have so richly deserved, we shall be rescued at the last!

Let us notice very carefully that this slaughter was *preceded by separation* which removed from among the people those who were distinct in character. Before the slaughter men proceeded to their stern task, a man appeared among them clothed in linen with a writer's inkhorn by his side, who marked all those who in their hearts were grieved at the evil done in the city. Until these were marked, the destroyers did not commence their work. Whenever the Lord lays bare His arm for war, He first gathers His saints into a place of safety! He did not destroy the world by the flood till Noah and his family were safe in the ark. He would not suffer a single fire drop to fall on Sodom till Lot had escaped to Zoar. He carefully preserves His own—flood, nor flame, nor pestilence, nor famine shall do them harm! We read in the Revelation that the angel said, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." Vengeance must sheath her sword till divine love has housed its darlings. When Christ comes to destroy the earth, He will first take away His people. Before the elements shall melt with fervent heat and the pillars of the universe shall rock and reel beneath the weight of wrathful deity, He will have caught up His elect into the air, so that they shall be forever with Him! When He comes He shall divide the nations as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats—no sheep of His shall be destroyed! He shall without fail take the tares from among the wheat, but not one single ear of wheat shall be in danger. O that we may be among the selected ones and prove His power to keep us in the day of wrath! May each one of us say, amid the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds, "And I was left." Dear friend, do you think you are marked on the forehead? If at this moment my voice were drowned by the trumpet of resurrection, would you be among those who would awake to safety and glory? Would you be able to say, "The multitude perished around me, but I was left"? It will be so if you hate the sins by which you are surrounded and if you have received the mark of the blood of Jesus upon your soul! If not, you will not escape, for there is no other door of salvation but His saving name! God grant us grace to belong to that chosen number who wear the covenant seal, the mark of Him who counts the people!

Next, this judgment was placed *in the Mediator's hands*. I want you to notice this. Observe that according to the chapter, there was no slaughter done except where the man with the writer's inkhorn led the way. So, again, we read in the 10th chapter that, "One cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims into the fire that was between the cherubims and took, thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen; who took it and went out," and cast it over the city. See this! God's glory of old shone forth between the cherubim! That is to say, over the place of propitiation and atonement, and as long as that glow of light remained, no judgment fell on Jerusalem, for God in Christ condemns not! But by and by "the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house," and then judgment was near to come! When God

no longer deals with men in Christ, His wrath burns like fire and He commissions the ambassador of mercy to be the messenger of wrath! The very man who marked with his pen the saved ones, threw burning coals upon the city and led the way for the destruction of the sinful. What does this teach but this—"The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son"? I know of no truth of God more dreadful to meditate upon! Think of it, you careless ones—the very Christ who died on Calvary is He by whom you will be sentenced! God will judge the world by this man, Christ Jesus! He it is who will come in the clouds of heaven and before Him shall be gathered all nations! And when those who have despised Him shall look upon His face, they will be terrified beyond conception! Not the lightning, not the thunder, not the dreadful sound of the last tremendous trumpet shall so alarm them as that face of injured love! Then will they cry to the mountains and hills to hide them from the face of Him that sits upon the throne! Why, it is the face of Him that wept for sinners, the face which scoffers stained with bloody drops extracted by the thorny crown, the face of the incarnate God who, in infinite mercy, came to save mankind! But because they have despised Him. Because they would not be saved. Because they preferred their own lusts to infinite love and persisted in rejecting God's best proof of kindness, therefore will they say, "Hide us from the face," for the sight of that face shall be to them more accusing and more condemning than all else besides! How dreadful is this truth of God! The more you consider it, the more will it fill your soul with terror! Would to God it might drive you to fly to Jesus, for then you will behold Him with joy in that day!

This destruction, we are told, *began at the sanctuary*. Suppose the Lord were to visit London in His anger—where would He begin to smite? "Oh," somebody says, "of course, the destroying angel would go down to the low music halls and dancing rooms! Or He would sweep out the back slums and the drink palaces, the jails and places where women of ill-repute congregate!" Turn to the Scripture which surrounds our text. The Lord says, "Begin at My sanctuary." Begin at the churches! Begin at the chapels! Begin with the church members! Begin with the ministers, the bishops! Begin with those who are teachers of the gospel! Begin with the chief and front of the religious world—begin with the high professors who are looked up to as examples! What does Peter say? "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?"

The first thing the slaughter men did was to slaughter the ancient men which were before the temple, even the 70 elders of the people, for they were secret idolaters! You may be sure that the sword which did not spare the chief men and fathers made but short work with the baser sort! Elders of our churches, ministers of Christ—judgment will begin with us! We must not expect to find more lenient treatment than others at the last great assize! No, rather, if there shall be a specially careful testing of sincerity, it will be for us who have taken upon ourselves to lead others

to the Savior! For this cause let us see well to it that we are not deceived or deceivers, for we shall surely be detected in that day! To play the hypocrite is to play the fool! Will a man deceive his Maker, or delude the Most High? It cannot be! You church members, all of you, should look well to it, for judgment will begin with you! God's fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem! In the olden times, the people fled to churches and holy places for sanctuary—but how vain will this be when the Lord's avengers shall come forth, since there the havoc will begin! How fiercely shall the sword sweep through the hosts of carnal professors—the men who called themselves servants of God while they were slaves of the devil—who drank of the cup of the Lord, but were drunk with the wine of their own lusts—who could lie, cheat, commit fornication and yet dared to approach the sacred table of the Lord? What cutting and hewing will there be among the base-born professors of our churches! It were better for such men that they had never been born, or being born, that their lot had fallen amid heathen ignorance, so that they might have been unable to add sin to sin by lying unto the living God! “Begin at My sanctuary.” The word is terrible to all those who have a name to live and are dead! God grant that in such testing times, when many fail, we may survive every ordeal, and through grace, exclaim in the end, “And I was left.”

After the executioners had begun at the sanctuary, it is to be observed that they *did not spare any except those upon whom was the mark*. Old and young, men and women, priests and people, all were slain who had not the sacred sign! And so in the last tremendous day all sinners who have not fled to Christ will perish! Our dear babies that died in infancy, we believe to be all washed in the blood of Jesus, and all saved—but for the rest of mankind who have lived to years of responsibility, there will be only one of two things—they must either be saved because they had faith in Christ, or else the full weight of divine wrath must fall upon them. Either the mark of Christ's pen, or of Christ's sword, must be upon everyone! There will be no sparing of one man because he was rich, nor of another because he was learned, nor of a third because he was eloquent, nor of a fourth because he was held in high esteem. Those who are marked with the blood of Christ are safe! Without that mark all are lost! This is the one separating sign—do you wear it? Or will you die in your sins? Bow down at once before the feet of Jesus and beseech Him to mark you as His own so that you may be one of those who will joyfully cry, “And I was left.” Now, secondly, I have to call your very particular attention to—

II. THE PERSONS WHO ESCAPED, who could each say, “And I was left.” We are told that those were marked for mercy who did “sigh and cry for the abominations that were done in the midst thereof.” Now, we must be very particular about this. It is no word of mine, remember—it is God's word, and therefore, I beg you to hear and weigh it for yourselves. We do not read that the devouring sword passed by those quiet people who never did anybody any harm—no mention is made of such an exemption! Neither does the record say that the Lord saved those

professors who were judicious and maintained a fair name and reputation until death. No, the only people who were saved were those who were exercised in heart—and that heart-work was of a painful kind—they sighed and cried because of abounding sin. They saw it, protested against it, avoided it, and last of all, wept over it continually. Where testimony failed, it remained for them to mourn. Retiring from public labors, they sat down and sighed their hearts away because of the evils which they could not cure. And when they felt that sighing alone would do no good, they took to crying in prayer to God that He would come and put an end to the dreadful ills which brooded over the land! I would not say a hard thing, but I wonder, if I were able to read the secret lives of professors of religion, whether I should find that they all sigh and cry over the sins of others? Are the tenth of them thus engaged? I am afraid that it does not cause some people much anxiety when they see sin rampant around them. They say that they are sorry, but it never frets them much, or causes them as much trouble as would come of a lost sixpence or a cut finger! Did you ever feel as if your heart would break over an ungodly son? I do not believe that you are a Christian if you have such a son and have not felt an agony on his behalf. Did you ever feel as if you could lay down your life to save that daughter of yours? I cannot believe that you are a Christian if you have not sometimes come to that! When you have gone through the street and heard an oath, has not your blood chilled in you? Has not horror taken hold upon you because of the wicked? There cannot be much grace in you if that has not been the case. If you can go up and down in the world fully at ease because you are prospering in business and things go smoothly with you, if you forget the woe of this city's sin and poverty and the yet greater woe which comes upon it, how dwells the love of God in you? The saving mark is only set on those who sigh and cry—if you are heartless and indifferent, there is no such mark on you!

“Are we to be always miserable?” asks one. Far from it! There are many other things to make us rejoice, but if the sad state of our fellow men does not cause us to sigh and cry, then we have not the grace of God in us! “Well,” says one, “but every man must look to himself.” That is the language of Cain—“Am I my brother's keeper?” That kind of talk is in keeping with the spirit of the wicked one and his seed—the heir of heaven abhors such language! The genuine Christian loves his race, and therefore, he longs to see it made holy and happy. He cannot bear to see men sinning and so dishonoring God and ruining themselves. If we really love the Lord, we shall sometimes lie awake at night sighing to think how His name is blasphemed and how little progress His gospel makes! We shall groan to think that men should despise the glorious God who made them and who daily loads them with benefits! It sometimes lies upon my heart like a huge mountain which rushes my spirit, to think that Jesus should be rejected and that in this land of Bibles, where Latimer lit a candle which shall never be put out, the old madness is returning and many are again bowing before the images of jealousy which the priests have set up! Yes, we have priests among us again! You can see them in

their long and ugly garments in every street! And women have begun to confess to them! Shame! Shame! I marvel that the crimson blush does not mantle the cheek of everyone who dares to ask or answer the questions appointed for the confessional! And yet the questions are asked, modesty is outraged and the multitudes tamely look on!

My countrymen are going back to Rome! Their fathers' noble blood was shed for God and none was left for the veins of their sons. In vain the conflicts of the years gone by! In vain a Cromwell's mighty arm and the purging of the land! In vain the Puritans driven from their pulpits and witnessing in poverty and persecution! Must England go back, again, to wear the fetters forged by papal Rome? My God, prevent it! Prevent it if it costs the lives of thousands of us, for we would be glad to die to save our country from so dire a curse! If you never sigh and cry because of the spread of Ritualism, I do not understand you! What stuff are you made of? "Oh, but my business goes on exceedingly well." Yes, and so does mine when souls are saved, but when they are led away into error, my business cannot prosper and I have loss upon loss! I am happy enough when I think Christ's kingdom comes, but nothing beneath the sky can give me solid satisfaction if my Lord's work is at a standstill! I would to God we were all so taken up with the glory of God that the wickedness of mankind would grieve us to the heart!

But it was not their mourning which saved those who escaped—it was the mark which they all received which preserved them from destruction! We must all bear the mark of Jesus Christ. What is that? It is the mark of faith in the atoning blood. That sets apart the chosen of the Lord and that alone! If you have that mark—and you have it not unless you sigh and cry over the sins of others—then in the last day no sword of justice can come near you! Did you read that word, "But come not near any man upon whom is the mark." Come not even *near* the marked ones lest they be afraid. The grace-marked man is safe even from the near approach of harm! Christ bled for him, and therefore, he cannot, must not die! Leave him alone, you bearers of the destroying weapons! Just as the angel of death, when he flew through the land of Egypt, was forbidden to touch a house where the blood of the lamb was on the lintel and the two side posts, so is it sure that avenging justice cannot touch the man who is in Christ Jesus. Who is he that condemns since Christ has died? Have you, then, the blood mark? Yes, or no? Do not refuse to question yourself upon this point. Do not take it for granted, lest you are deceived. Believe me, your all hangs upon it. If you are not registered by the man clothed in linen, you will not be able to say, "And I was left."

This brings me to this last point of which I desire to speak. What were—

III. THE PROPHET'S EMOTIONS WHEN HE SAID, "AND I WAS LEFT"?

He saw men falling right and left and he, himself, stood like a lone rock amidst a sea of blood! And he cried in wonder, "And I was left."

"Let us hear what he further says—"I fell on my face." He lay *prostrate with humility*. Have you a hope that you are saved? Fall on your face,

then! See the hell from which you are delivered and bow before the Lord! Why are you to be saved more than anyone else? Certainly not because of any merit in you. It is due to the sovereign grace of God alone! Fall on your face and acknowledge your indebtedness—

***“Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there’s room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”***

“And I was left.”

If a man has been a drunkard and has at length been led to flee to Christ, when he says, “And I was left,” he will feel the hot tears rising in his eyes, for many other drinkers have died in delirium. One who has been a public sinner, when she is saved, will not be able to think of it without astonishment. Indeed, each saved man is a marvel to himself. Nobody here wonders more at divine grace in his salvation than I do! Why was I chosen, and called, and saved? I cannot make it out, and I never shall—but I will always praise, and bless, and magnify my Lord for casting an eye of love upon me! Will you not do the same, Beloved, if you feel that you, by grace, are left? Will you not fall on your face and bless the mercy which makes you to differ?

What did the prophet do next? Finding that he was left, he *began to pray for others*. “Ah, Lord,” he said, “will You destroy all the residue of Israel?” Intercession is an instinct of the renewed heart. When the believer finds that he is safe, he must pray for his fellow men. Though the prophet’s prayer was too late, yet, blessed be God, ours will not be! We shall be heard. Pray, then, for perishing men! Ask God, who has spared you, to spare those who are like you. Somebody has said there will be three great wonders in heaven—first, to see so many there whom we never expected to meet in glory. Secondly, to miss so many of whom we felt sure that they must be safe. And thirdly, the greatest wonder of all will be to find ourselves there! I am sure that everyone who has a hope of being in glory feels it to be a marvel and he or she resolves, “If I am saved, I will sing the loudest of them all, for I shall owe most to the abounding mercy of God!”

Let me ask a few questions and I have done. The first—and let each man ask it of himself—shall I be left when the ungodly are slain? Answer it now to yourselves. Men, women, children—will you be spared in that last great day? Are you in Christ? Have you a good hope in Him? Do not lie to yourselves. You will be weighed in the balances—will you be found wanting or not? “Shall I be left?” Let that question burn into your souls.

Next, will my relatives be saved? My wife, my husband, my children, my brother, my sister, my father, my mother—will these all be saved? Happy are we who can say, “Yes, we believe they will,” as some of us can joyfully hope. But if you have to say, “No, I fear that my boy is unconverted, or that my father is unsaved,” then do not rest till you have wrestled with God for their salvation. Good woman, if you are obliged to say, “I fear my husband is unconverted,” join me in prayer. Bow your heads at once and cry unto your God, “Lord, save our children! Lord, save our parents! Lord, save our husbands and wives, our brothers and

sisters and let the whole of our families meet in Heaven, unbroken circles, for Your name's sake!"

May God hear that prayer if it has come from the lips of sincerity! I could not endure the thought of missing one of my boys in heaven—I hope I shall see them both there, and therefore, I am in deep sympathy with any of you who have not seen your households brought to Christ. O for grace to pray earnestly and labor zealously for the salvation of your whole households!

The next earnest inquiry is, if you and your relatives are saved, how about your neighbors, your fellow workmen, your companions in business? "Oh," you say, "many of them are scoffers! A good many of them are still in the gall of bitterness." A sorrowful fact, but have you spoken to them? It is amazing what a kind word will do. Have you tried it? Did you ever try to speak to that person who meets you every morning as you go to work? Suppose he should be lost? Oh, it will be a bitter feeling for you to think that he went down to the pit without your making an effort to bring him to God! Do not let it be so. "But we must not be too pushy," says one. I do not know about that. If you saw poor people in a burning house, nobody would blame you for being too forward if you helped to save them. When a man is sinking in the river, if you jump in and pull him out, nobody will say, "You were rude and intrusive, for you were never introduced to him!" This world has been lost and it must be saved—and we must not mind our manners in saving it. We must get a grip of sinking sinners somehow, even if it is by the hair of their heads, before they sink, for if they sink, they are lost forever! They will forgive us very soon for any roughness that we use, but we shall not forgive ourselves if, for lack of a little energy, we permit them to die without a knowledge of the truth of God!

Oh, beloved friends, if you are left while others perish, I beseech you, by the mercies of God, by the heart of compassion which is in Christ Jesus, by the bleeding wounds of the dying Son of God—love your fellow men and sigh and cry about them if you cannot bring them to Christ! If you cannot save them, you can weep over them. If you cannot give them a drop of cold water in hell, you can give them your heart's tears while they are yet in this body!

But are you in very deed reconciled to God yourselves? Reader, are you cured of the awful disease of sin? Are you marked with the blood-red sign of trust in the atoning blood? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, the Lord have mercy upon you! May you have sense enough to have mercy upon yourself! May the Spirit of God instruct you to that end. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8:14-30.**

Verse 14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* Not those who say they are "the sons of God," but those who

undoubtedly prove that they are by being led, influenced, gently guided by the Spirit of God!

15. *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear: but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* We did receive the spirit of bondage once. We felt that we were under the law and that the law cursed us. We felt its rigorous taxation and that we could not meet it. Now that spirit has gone and we have the spirit of freedom, the spirit of children, the Spirit of adoption. I suppose that the apostle, when he thus spoke and said, “you,” felt so much of the Spirit of adoption in his own bosom that he could not talk of it as belonging to others alone. He was obliged to include it thus, and so he puts it, “You have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” He wanted to intimate that he, himself, was also a partaker of this blessed Spirit. And woe to the preacher who can preach an adoption which he never enjoyed! Woe to any of us if we can teach others concerning the spirit of sonship, but never feel it crying in our own souls, “Abba, Father.”

16. *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* It corroborates the testimony of conscience. We feel that we are the children of God and the Spirit of God comes forward as a second, but still greater and higher witness, to confirm the testimony that we are the children of God!

17. *And if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.* It is to be all with Him! With Him in the suffering. With Him in the glory. With Him in the reproach of men. With Him in the honor at the right hand of the Father. But if we shun the path of humiliation with Him, we may expect that He will deny us in the day of His glory.

18. *For I reckon.* Judge, count it up, and calculate.

18. *That the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* These sufferings, however, sharp, are short compared with eternal glory—infinitesimal, not worthy to be taken account of—like one drop falling into a river and lost in it.

19-21. *For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* There is a future even for materialism. That poor, dusky clod in which we dwell is yet to be illuminated with the light of God—and these poor bodies which are akin to the dust of the earth, and still remain as if they were not delivered, being subjected to pain, and weakness, and death—even they are yet to be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God!

22-23. *For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves, also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* The soul has obtained

its redemption. Therefore, our heart is glad and our glory rejoicing. But our body has not yet obtained its redemption. That is to come at the resurrection. Then will be the adoption. "Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Oh, blessed fact! Though now, in common with the whole creation, the body is subjected to bondages, yet it shall be delivered and we—the whole man, body as well as soul and spirit—shall be brought into the liberty of the children of God!

24-25. *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for it? But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.* Ah, brothers and sisters, if we could be all we should like to be, there would then be no room for the exercise of hope! If we had all that we are to have, then hope, which is one of the sweetest of the divine graces, would have no room in which to exercise herself. It is a blessed thing to have hope. Though I have heard that faith and hope are not to be found in heaven, I very much question it. I do not think they will ever die. "Now abide these three—faith, hope, and love"—for in heaven there will be room, surely, for trust in the ever blessed God that He will never cast us out from our blessedness—room for the expectation of the second advent—room for the expectation of the conquest of the world—room for the fulfilled promise of bringing all the elect to glory! Still something to be hoped for! Still something to be believed! Yet here is the main sphere of hope, and therefore, let us give it full scope. And when other graces seem to be at a non-plus, let us still hope. I believe the New Zealand word for hope is "swimming thought," because that will swim when everything else is drowned. Oh, happy is that man who has a hope that swims on the crest of the stormiest billow!

26. *Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities.* And especially our infirmities in prayer, for there is where infirmities are mostly seen.

26. *For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered.* I should have thought that it would have read, "But the Spirit Himself teaches us what we should pray for." But it does more than that. He goes beyond teaching us what we should pray for—He "makes intercession for us, with groans which cannot be uttered." Do you know what those groans are? I am afraid that those who never had groans which cannot be uttered will never know anything of that glory which cannot be expressed, for that is the way to it. The groans that cannot be uttered lead on to unutterable joy!

27. *And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* That is the philosophy of prayer. Whatever God's will is, the Spirit of God writes it on the hearts of praying saints, and they pray for the very thing which God intends to give. As the barometer often foretells the weather that is coming, so the spirit of prayer in the Christian is the barometer which indicates when showers of blessing are coming. It is well with us when we can pray. If we cannot do anything else, if we feel that we can pray, times are not so bad with us as we might think.

28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. We know it! We are assured of it!*

29-30. *For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. No breaking of these links! Where God gives one of these blessings, He gives the rest. There is no intimation of a failure somewhere in between. The predestinated are called, and the called are justified and the justified are glorified!*

31-33. *What shall we say, then, to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who shall? Who may? Who dares?*

33-35. *It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? All these have done their worst.*

36. *As it is written, For Your sake we are killed all the daylong; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But have they divided the saints from the love of Christ? Have they made the saints leave off excellence Christ, or Christ cease from excellence His people?*

37-39. *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. For which blessed be the name of the adorable Trinity, world without end!*

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GOD'S PRISON, WARDEN AND PRISONER

NO. 3378

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Keep yourselves in the love of God.”
Jude: 21st verse.

THIS exhortation is not addressed to all who are here present. It is only addressed to those who “are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” It is, in fact, addressed only to the true Christian who has passed from death unto life—who is a new creature in Christ Jesus—and in whom dwells the Holy Spirit. To such persons the Apostle Jude says in the text, “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” To other persons we have this to say—You cannot keep yourselves in the love of God, for you never knew what it was to be in it. You have lived—with shame and sorrow be it spoken—you have lived all this while in a world that is full of God and yet you have never perceived Him! You have been a pensioner upon His bounty, clothed by His charity, protected by His providence and yet you have been altogether forgetful of the God whom you ought to have loved with all your heart, soul and strength! Ah, little do you know what you have lost by living without the love of God! The love of God is that which fills our mortal existence with the brightness of heaven and makes us feast on immortal joys, even in this vale of tears! If some men were born and bred in mines, where they saw not the light of day, I can suppose that they would think themselves possibly better off than those who had lived above and who had walked abroad in the light. I can suppose them to be even conceited because they found themselves better able to find their way about in the gloomy caverns below than those would be whose eyes had been used to the light—more at home there in the gloomy bowels of the earth than the sons of light who had lived above. I can imagine their getting much conceit to themselves because of their enjoying the darkness which is beneath. But still, what a miserable life would it always be to live in that gloom—and what a change to be taken suddenly and for the first time from the dark pit out into the light—to look upon the green fields, the god of day, the flashing waves of the sea and the glories of the starry night! So I can conceive many of my hearers having lived so long in the dark world where there is no light, that they have acquired the art of living in this gloom until they are “wiser in their generation than the children of light.” They can do a thousand things better than God’s people can do and they, therefore, perhaps despise the Christian. But oh, my friends, if you could but be brought out into the world of love, the

world of light, where God, the blessed Sun of Love who floods the earth with peace and blessedness could shine upon those darkened eyeballs of yours—if you could but “know the love of Christ which passes knowledge”—you would think that you had never lived before and would pity yourselves to think you could have spent so many years without knowing what true life means! May that come to pass with some tonight! Pray, Christian, pray for those who know not God that He may be found of them. Ask for them that mighty grace may come and meet with them and that they may also begin to understand what “the love of God” means!

But the text is spoken to Christians and we must keep it to them and come at once to apply it to the believer.

The word, “keep,” which is used here, has in it, in the Greek, the idea of keeping under a guard, or of keeping a prisoner in custody. There is the thought of watchfully regarding one who is likely to escape—and so we are told to keep ourselves in the love of God as the warden keeps his prisoner in his cell. I do not like to use such a metaphor in connection with so sweet a text, and yet I must, and so we will have three thoughts. First, *we will speak a little about this prison*—oh, that we may be always shut up in it!—“the love of God”; secondly, about *the earnest warden who is told to keep the prisoner*; and then, thirdly, about the free prisoners, “*keep yourselves in the love of God.*” Keep yourselves in heavenly custody, being never so free and never so happy, as when shut up in this divine enclosure!

I really do not like to use the text with such a meaning, but I cannot very well bring out the meaning of it in any better way. Let us speak, then, first of—

I. THE HEAVENLY PRISON OF “THE LOVE OF GOD.”

There is no restraint about this prison. He who gets into it finds, for the first time, true liberty! Then his mind is free from all its bondage. Then his faculties find themselves in a sea where they may swim. Then are his purest longings gratified. Then are his passions allowed to take wing and mount as they will. Then the soul has space to float onwards and when it comes fully to the love of God, the new-born soul is in its element!

But what is the meaning of this “love of God,” in which we are to keep ourselves? It means, first, believer, that you are to *keep your mind in the remembrance of the love of God to you*. We, alas, forget too often what a friend we have above. Keep up, Christian, the recollection of what the Father did for you when He chose you before all worlds! Be continually mindful of what the Son did for you when He poured out His precious blood upon the cross and gave His life a ransom for many. Never be unmindful of what the Holy Spirit did for you when He called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. About the neck of memory let the glittering pearls of God's mercy always hang! Take care, whatever else you may forget, that you forget not the love of God to you! As the Krishna said—

***“Let every idol be forgotten,
But oh, my soul, forget Him not.”***

Let your ear be bored to this doorpost of God's love to you! Set this as a seal upon your arm and as a ring upon your finger. Brand it into your inmost heart and let your soul's core always wear in it the thought of God's love to you. Queen Mary said that when she died they would find the word, “*Calais*,” written upon her heart, for the loss of that town had grieved her so. But while the Christian lives—for he shall not die—there shall always be engraved upon his heart the name of Christ, for the love of Christ shall abide there! Yes, we will remember You—“we will remember Your love, for Your love is better than wine!”

The apostle means, too—Keep yourselves *in the assurance of the divine love*. Brothers and sisters, you have known that Christ loves you. You have had it proven to you as clearly as a mathematical demonstration, that God loves you. You have even been able to speak in the singular, and say, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” There have been blessed moments when no ripple of doubt disturbed the glossy surface of your calm and peaceful soul. Oh, keep that assurance! Pray that no evil doubt may come in to make you think that God does not love you. Ask that you may be always able to say, “This is my Beloved: my Beloved is mine, and I am His.” Do not sometimes climb the mountain and then slip down into the treacherous mists of the valley, but ask that you may always bathe your forehead in the sunlight of the divine assurance of the love of God to you! And so keep yourselves in the love of God.

It means next, keep yourselves *in the enjoyment of the love of God*. No one knows what the enjoyment of the divine love is but the man who has experienced it. Oh, the calm which a sense of that divine love will bring to the heart! Our Lord said to the noisy billows of the lake, “Be still,” and they quickly hushed their raging and there was a great calm! But the love of Christ is more than peaceful—it is joyful, it is inspiring! The man who has it has a cup filled to the brim and running over! And he who drinks of that holy chalice can say, “There is none like it.” Like the water of the well of Bethlehem by the gate, if any of God's people should not be able to get at it, they will sigh for it and say, “Oh, that one would give me a drink of that water again!” Some of us know what mirth means—we are of a genial nature and can enter into the common joys of men. We can sit around the social hearth and feel the joys of childhood's prattle and the glee of the little ones. We thank God we are not stoics—we can share the joys that are common to mankind, but oh, we do proclaim and bear our witness that all the joys of earth heaped together are as nothing compared with the bliss of having the love of God shed abroad in the heart! The others are but common joys, but the love of God is heaven's own joy! They are but husks, which are well enough in their way, but the kernel of joy lies in a full understanding of the love of God in the soul. Oh, that we could always live upon it! That this manna dropped from heaven every morning, that we gathered our omer of it as soon as the

sun dawned and fed on it till the sun went down! Happy Christians, seek to keep yourselves thus in the love of God!

But, brothers and sisters, this is not all. The apostle also means, "Keep yourselves in the *power of the love of God.*" Oh, the power of the love of God has in governing and influencing a man! Nothing can master a strong temper, a forceful will, an obstinate disposition, or a wayward heart like the love of God! Even God's law is but a frail reed compared with God's love, which is the rod of omnipotence. If the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, the idols will soon depart and the love of sin will take its flight—and the wickedness which you and I could not conquer without it will be driven out with this two-edged sword of the power of the love of God manifested in the soul! I love to feel myself bowed down under this power until I would sacrifice my own interest, relinquish all self-seeking, abandon all care of being obedient to my own will and be passive in the hand of the omnipotent ruler to mold me, rule me and govern me just as He wills! We are not like the horse and the mule that have a bit in their mouths and that require the rod, but when love impels us, our willing feet in swift obedience move and we feel it to be a blessed thing to obey His commandments, or even His gentle leadings by His gracious Spirit!

Brothers and sisters, I pray you take this exhortation in its practical, as well as its experimental form. Keep yourselves in the love of God, *in the manifestation of it.* Love the souls of your fellow men! Pity the poor and needy. Have compassion upon the ignorant and the wicked; let no strangeness nor excess of sin prevent your loving the sinner, and let no extravagance or unkindness prevent your forgiving one another even unto 70 times seven! Keep yourselves in the love of Christ under provocations as multiplied as those which fell upon your Master's shoulders and so prove that your charity suffers long and is kind, hopes all things, endures all things because it is not mere human charity, beautiful as that is, but is the love of God reigning and commanding your heart! "Keep yourselves in the love of God" in your relations one to another. May no root of bitterness spring up in this church, nor in any other. Love one another as one happy family. Love one another, for you will have to dwell together forever in heaven! Bear with each other, as you hope to be borne with by your loving Savior. Be knit together in brotherly love! Be as one man—be forceful like a phalanx of soldiers marching on to victory. Let the love of God reign in your hearts! Let it gleam from your eyes! Let it flash radiantly from your countenance! Let it bedew your lips and let its savor sweeten your words! Let it give a holy blessedness to your deeds and your thoughts!

Keep yourselves, in all these senses, in the love of God. It is a wondrous prison for a man to be in a blessed paradise for him to walk in. Paradise had a gate and once Adam never wanted to get out of it—just in that sense keep yourselves in this blessed paradise of the love of God and wander not from it. And now, secondly and briefly, let us say two or three words about—

II. THE EARNEST WARDEN WHO IS TO KEEP HIMSELF IN THE LOVE OF GOD.

This warden is not the minister. The minister has to preach and assist me, but the minister is not to take care of my soul as though I had nothing to do with it. I do not believe in any such nonsense as that you can be responsible for other people's souls, so that others may assist you with their vigilance. Never, I beseech you, Englishmen and Englishwomen, never be such fools as to put yourselves at the feet of a priest! Believe that you have as much prevalence with God as these pretenders have and that if you go to God, and take your burden of sin, you will get it taken off—but if you go roundabout to seek relief and pardon through them—you will never get it, for you insult God in the way by which you go to work! Oh, may God grant that we may never live to see our countrymen so befooled as to put their necks under the Romish yoke once again! May England never be beneath a Pope's feet, but may we always have too much manliness ever to fall to the snare of this cunning fowler! May we always be kept from it and so may always keep ourselves in the love of God.

And now, Mr. Warden, we are to say a word or two to you. See, then, your prisoner. He is one, alas, who is very apt at escaping from the gracious prison. So infatuated does he become with worldly joys that he will oftentimes let his God, his Savior, go. And besides this, there are many who are prison breakers and who will break his prison bars for him. Shall I tell you their names? There is one fellow called *sin*. Sin will soon prevent your enjoying the love of God. Let the Christian hesitate to walk disorderly and he will soon begin to talk lightly of his wickedness, and this, again, will soon stop his communion with God. Though the Christian shall not perish, yet many of his joys shall—though God will keep him so that he shall not be utterly destroyed—yet the gladsome sense of the love of God will soon depart when sin comes in to lead astray!

And so it shall be when another breaks the prison, namely, those under the command of *idolatry*. Let your hearts begin to idolize an earth-born creature and very soon you will not be able to keep yourselves in the love of God. Father, that dear child of yours may become as much an idol to you as even the golden calf was to the Israelites! Husband, wife, friends, acquaintances, brothers, sisters, our goods, our persons, our fame, our reputation—any one of these may become our idol—and when this is the case, there is no keeping the heart in the love of God, for the prison doors are opened and the prisoner, unhappily, comes out.

Warden, if you would keep your prisoner, remember he cannot well come out except through the doors, and, therefore, watch well the door by which he has *communications with the outward world*. If you would keep yourself in the love of God, Christian, watch yourself well when you are in business! Watch yourself when you are in the family. Watch the door in private. Watch the communications which you have with the

ungodly—and as it is here that you would be apt to fritter away your joys and lose the richness of your communion—be the more watchful here. And, warden, watch in the night, when it is dark in your soul, for many a prisoner has made his escape at nightfall. Watch well when trouble comes, lest doubts and fears should come in. And if you would lock your prisoner securely in and keep him from escaping from the all-surrounding love of God, watch yourself carefully at all times, lest by any means you slip from this good way!

And, warden, I would recommend you to take care that every bolt in the prison door is securely fastened. God has given you certain gospel ordinances and if you would keep yourself in the love of God, read His word, for it will stir you up to bind yourself to Him! Be much in private prayer, for this has a force like a bolt to keep out the world and keep you in.

Come to the communion table, for at the time when Christ is known in the breaking of bread, another bolt is put between you and the world! In other words, whatever He says unto you, do it, for in keeping of His commandments there is great reward.

And, warden, since you have a prisoner to keep who needs much watching, *load him well with chains*. Do you think this is a hard suggestion? The chains are such that the more of them the prisoner wears, the freer, light, and happy he will be! Shall I tell you how to forge them? Forge them on the anvil of meditation! Think of what God did before the earth was. Think of eternal love before the day star had begun to shine. Think of what Jesus did for you in the covenant and in the suretyship engagements of eternity! Bind about your soul the chain of the Savior's pangs and griefs. If you would keep your heart a blessed prisoner in the love of God, nail it with nails which pierced the hands of Christ and bind it to the pillar where the Lord was scourged! Make every drop of blood which Jesus sweat in the garden and shed upon the cross, to be a course of mighty network bound about your heart to hold it a fast prisoner forever!

Oh brothers and sisters, we have indeed enough to bind us to Christ if we were not the most willfully forgetful men and women in the world! Oh, what has Jesus done for me? Rather, what has He *not* done for me? He is all in all and being to me more than all, let me bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar! Let the hands of a man and the cords of love be cast about this prisoner so that he may never get out of the divine enclosure of the love of God!

I cannot set before you as I would, nor with all the earnestness I want to command, the necessity of thus binding your heart to the love of Christ, but I will add this. Warden, *take care to call in help* and remember there is one who can help you very efficiently. It is the Holy Spirit. You keep yourself in the love of God? Indeed, you *cannot* do it unless you call in divine power. If ever you get the love of God in your heart, go down on your knees and ask the Holy Spirit to always keep it there! You shall never catch this bird and shall never be able to keep it unless the Holy

Spirit helps you. Oh, to be crucified with Christ! We may well desire it—to be fastened to His cross so that we shall never again desire to wander, but feel ourselves the happy bond-slaves, the free servants of our Lord Jesus Christ! And now, time flies and we have, thirdly, to say a word or two about—

III. THE FREE, THE HAPPY AND THE BLESSED PRISONER who is thus exhorted to keep himself in the love of God.

My dear brothers and sisters, if by the help of God we shall be able to do this, *how happy we shall be*. I would make no stipulation of any kind if God would grant me one request, namely, that He would keep me in His love. If I might but have this request granted, I am sure it would be equal to me whether He may have appointed me life or death, or whether He may have appointed me weal or woe! It would make no difference where one lived, if one lived in the love of God!

It would make no difference, either, whether one were in wealth or poverty, if the love of Christ had consumed all care about self. When once the love of God, like a devouring flame, has consumed and destroyed all care about self, then we are perfectly happy. It is impossible to then be miserable—all that the heart wants is to be kept in the love of God—for then it would always be in a state of true blessedness! Dear brothers and sisters, how important it is that we should be happy! Moses, without the brightness of his face, would be little more than other men. And a Christian without holy joy—what is he? I am certain that nothing has done more mischief to Christianity than the loss of joy of some professors. Why, there are some of you that only dishonor your religion by your constant moans and groans! If we are not happy, who ought to be? Children of God, heirs of heaven, accepted in the Beloved, all our sins forgiven and we ourselves on the way to heaven—if we do not sing, who can sing? If there is no holy mirth in our hearts, no joyous songs set to glorious tunes in our souls as we go along our pilgrimage to heaven, then it must be a miserable world indeed! But a happy Christian entices others to Christ. His very face and bearing are a gospel ministry of invitation to others. And those others say, “We will go with you, for we perceive that the Lord is with you.”

And there is another thing. If you are kept in the love of God, besides being happy, you *will be so useful*. If we do not enjoy the love of God, ourselves, we cannot do much good to others. You will be blessed to your families. You will be blessed to the ungodly and you will be blessed wherever you are *if you are kept in the love of God*. I can conceive that a man with the love of God in his heart, if he saw a stranger here, would be pretty sure to have a word with him and, perhaps, the stranger would be very glad. I am sure there are here every Sunday a great many people who would be quite willing to have a little talk about divine things and to whom a little private conversation might be far more useful than any sermon that I could deliver. You who have the love of God in you will look after such—you cannot help it. You love, and God loves. God is blessing

you and you want to bless men—and you will pine and pant to bring others to the Savior! I need you, the members of this church, particularly to have the love of God in your hearts just now, so that these daily prayer meetings of ours may be seasons of great and miraculous power! When a cold heart comes into the prayer meeting, if it does not hinder, at any rate it brings no help—but every warm and loving heart that comes increases the general fire. You each bring your bundle of wood, as it were, and put it on the hearth, and so it makes one great blaze! Oh, when a thousand hearts full of love come together, then prayer is sure to speed!

If your heart is full of the love of God, it will keep on going up to heaven in prayer, even when you are at your business or your work, as well as when you are in the house of God. Brothers and sisters, we shall yet have great times! God is going to bless us and we shall see greater things than the world has ever beheld since the day of Pentecost! I trust we are seeking for it and expecting it—and if so, we shall get it! Let us seek to have the blessing in ourselves and ask to be kept in the love of God!

It would not do for the farmer to have his men ill in harvest time—they must be strong and hearty and robust when they have to reap. Oh, that you and I may be made strong to reap here! At such times they bring out the big bottle and though some of us do not think that that is the best thing that could be done for the workman, yet I would like, tonight, to bring out among you the big bottles of the promises of God of which you may drink without any fear of getting intoxicated! Oh, that you could drink of such a promise as this, “I will be with you,” and then, full of strength, go out into the fields and work for Christ without weariness! When heaven begins to open its golden gates and throw open its windows, and cast out its blessings, then, at all events, let us open the doors of our hearts, throw them wide open in expectancy and open the doors of our mouths wide that God may fill them! Let us come up to this house and go to our own houses, too, with the love of God plenteously shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and let this be always our prayer—

***“Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers.
Come, shed abroad a Savior’s love,
And that shall kindle ours.”***

Now, to many here I am afraid I have been saying some things which are no more understood by them than Latin or Greek would be! You could not understand it, but there is one thing I want you to understand before you go tonight, and that is 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,” and whoever here believes in Him—that is, trusts Christ to save him—shall not perish, but have everlasting life! Whatever his past life may have been, however black his character may be, if he will but come to the heavenly Father, through Christ, trusting in

Christ who bore the punishment for sin, such a man or woman or child shall be forgiven! They shall be saved, shall be made a new creature, and shall go on their way rejoicing! And they will be filled with the love of God and, with all the blood-washed, shall pass through the pearly gates—and in heaven shall join with them in singing of the love of God, world without end! May you and I have a portion there, for Christ's sake.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 14.**

Verse 1. *Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.* You will be troubled—that cannot be helped. But let not your heart be troubled. You are like a ship and all the water in the sea cannot hurt a ship if it is kept outside of her. Let not your heart be troubled. How are you to prevent it? Faith is the remedy. You already believe—believe more. “You believe in God, believe also in Me.” “You have a trust in the infinite power of God—believe in Me as the incarnation of His infinite love.”

2. *In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* There is no room for you on earth—there will be in heaven. If troubles should so multiply that it seems impossible to live in them, you shall be carried away where you shall live above them. “In My Father's house are many mansions.” You may depend upon the love of Christ, beloved, for if there were anything dark, mysterious, or distressing which would lead you to despair, He would not have kept it back. He treats you frankly. “If it were not so, I would have told you. I go and you are sorry that I go. It is one source of your sorrow. But I go to prepare place for you.”

3. *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.* Oh, this is ground for sweet comfort, and it ought to yield it to us tonight! He has gone, but He will come again. He has not left us forever. Space divides us for a while, but, skipping over the mountains like a roe and a young hart, He will come again, even to this poor world and to us, His waiting church, He will come again. Therefore, have patience. Let not your heart be troubled. Jesus Christ will come very soon.

4. *And where I go, you know, and the way you know.* You know where Christ is gone. You know how to get at Him. The throne on which He sits is the throne of grace. He is gone to the Father, and your prayers will find the Father. You know the way. Then frequent it and though as yet in your bodies you cannot reach Him, yet in spirit you can. “Where I go you know, and the way you know.”

5. *Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not where You go; and how can we know the way?* Which was a contradiction of His Master which Thomas ought not to have uttered! He should have put it much rather in the form of a question for explanation, than of such a flat denial. His Master said, “Where I go you know.” Thomas said, “We know not where

You go.” We must take care that we do not contradict Christ! Our unbelief would be shamed out of us if we were to look at it and examine it. I am persuaded that your faith will be justified the more you examine it, till you will discover that faith in God is nothing, after all, but sanctified commonsense! So unbelief will appear to be more shameful the more you examine it, till you discover at length that it is nothing but garish folly. An outrage upon the first principles of wisdom is distrust of God!

6, 7. *Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also: and from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.* This, then, is the main point of knowledge with us—to know Christ. All the studies in the world are vain compared with the study of Christ crucified! This is the most excellent of all the sciences. He that knows Christ, knows the way, the truth, the life, yes, and God Himself!

8, 9. *Philip said to Him, Lord show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us. Jesus said to him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father; and why do you say, then, Show us the Father?* The best view of God we can ever have is Christ! In the person of His Son there is more seen of God than in all nature—yes and in all history added to nature! God has given us a full-length portrait of Himself in Jesus, while in all His works, we have no more than a mere miniature of Him. Oh, that we knew Christ more! Then should we know the Father.

10-12. *Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go to My Father.* Oh, what strength there is in faith! These are the same people who are not to be troubled. They are to rise so much above trouble of heart that they are to become performers of works like Christ's! Yes, and since Christ has gone and He has endowed us with the Holy Spirit, we are to do yet greater works than He did! Oh, to know the possibilities of our nature—to know what God can do by us! What appears to us as we are, as unable to be done, we may be enabled to do through the spirit of God which is in Christ Jesus.

13, 14. *And whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.* It does not mean that every prayer will be answered. The power to ask a thing in Christ's name is not given to everybody. It is not merely to say at the end of your prayer, “for Christ's sake.” It is another thing—it is to be able to feel that as Christ stood in your place, so you dare stand in Christ's place—and what you have asked, you have asked in His name, feeling that what you have asked is such that Christ would have asked it. Now, when you can feel that, and can feel that Christ puts His

seal on what you have asked, then you ask in His name! A person cannot always speak in the name of another—cannot do it at all unless he has received an authorization to do so. Then he stands as that person's deputy—stands in his place—speaks in his name. I am sure that nine out of ten of the prayers of Christians are not offered in the name of Christ and could not be! It would be a sin against Christ for such prayers to be supposed to be the prayers of Christ! But when we talk of the Spirit of God, and we dare ask in the name and use the seal of Christ—to set His signature at the bottom of our petition, then, brothers and sisters depend upon it—Christ will do it!

15. *If you love Me, keep My commandments.* Oh, some of us would have liked Him to have said, “If you love Me, give all your money! Go into a convent! If you love Me, perform some wonderful action. Go into the streets and preach where you will be hooted. Go to some foreign country and get yourself made a martyr.” No, no! “If you love Me, keep My commandments. Stay at home near your father and mother. If you love Me, love My disciples. Let love rule you. And in that place in life in which I have set you, try to honor My name by exhibiting My character. If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

16-19. *And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever. Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him: for He dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me: because I live, you shall live also. “Yet a little while and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me.”* Now, when the world does not see Him, we still see Him. He is present to our faith, though passing from our sight. “Because I live, you shall live also.” Is He a dead Christ? Then He has a dead people for His church. He is a living Savior! He has a living people and they shall no more die than He shall die, “for He, being raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him.” “Because I live, you shall live also.”

20. *At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in You.* What a wonderful union this is—Christ in the Father, the saints in Christ and Christ in the saints! These are riddles which are not meant for the children of this world—but they who are the children of God shall understand them, shall live upon them!

21. *He that has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me.* Not He that preaches about them, talks much about them, boasts about a higher life and all sorts of things, but, “He that has My commandments and keeps them, He it is that loves Me: and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.”

21, 22. *And He that loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not*

unto the world? If you do manifest Yourself to us, who are only a few poor fishermen, You do not extend Your Kingdom much. But if You would manifest Yourself to the world in all Your glory, surely they would be surprised and overwhelmed, and Your kingdom would thus come.” But that is not Christ’s way. His manifestations are for His own: not for glitter, but for edification. He comes to bless them—not that He may be ostentatious among men.

23. *Jesus answered and said to him, If a man loves Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* Oh, what an honored man that—for the Father and the Son to be his guests—to make an abode in his heart!

24-28. *He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s which sent Me. These things have I spoken unto you being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I.* Christ had stooped to take a lower place for our sakes.

29-31. *And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it is come to pass, you might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go from here.*

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

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ROUGH, BUT FRIENDLY

NO. 3379

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1913,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man’s money into his sack, and to give them provisions for the way: and thus did he unto them.”
Genesis 42:25.***

AN immense number of persons came down into Egypt from all parts of the world to buy corn. Many of these Joseph never saw. Many others came into his presence. I do not find that of all who came, he treated any of them roughly, except his own brothers. “Strange!” you will say, and if you did not know the sequel of the story, it would not only seem strange, but cruel. You would not know how to account for such a thing.

Very like this is the manner of God’s providence. There are thousands of people living in this world, with all of whom God deals according to wisdom. We all bear trouble in a measure, for, “man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards.” Some have more troubles than others and these often happen to be those who are dearest to the Lord. If any man escapes the rod, the true-born children of the royal family of heaven never can! Some may sin and prosper, but the righteous, if they sin, suffer. The ungodly are permitted to fatten like sheep for the slaughter, to have no bands even in their death. Their strength is firm, they are not in trouble, as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. But as for God’s people, the waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. Through much tribulation they inherit the kingdom. To them is a special promise which is sure to be fulfilled—“In the world you shall have tribulation.” Now, if we did not know the end of the Lord and His great design in thus dealing with His people, it would seem to be a strange, inexplicable mystery that the best beloved should be the most afflicted and that the brothers and sisters of the reigning Savior should be those whom He treats most roughly. Others take their sacks of corn and go—these, ‘tis true, shall have their sacks filled and more—but they shall not go until first there have been some rough passages of arms between them and the brother, who, though he loves them so well, speaks so shortly to them!

Laying it down, then, as a rule, that God’s servants will be dealt roughly with by their Master, that the brothers and sisters of Christ must accept it, I shall now proceed to offer a few thoughts, which, perhaps, may be comfortable to those of God’s people who are in trouble. From the text and its surroundings, I gather this truth of God—

I. WHEN THE LORD IS ABOUT TO GIVE GREAT FAVORS, HE OFTEN DEALS ROUGHLY WITH THOSE WHO ARE TO RECEIVE THEM.

Joseph intends to bless his brothers. He has the most liberal of the royal designs towards them, but he first deals roughly with them. Before the Lord Jesus Christ shall come to give His church her last and most transcendent blessing in His millennial reign of splendor, there are vials that are to be poured out. There will be wars and rumors of wars. There will be the shaking of heaven and earth—great distress, famine, pestilences and earthquakes. The greater the blessing, the greater the trial that shall precede it! So, too, with our own souls. When the Lord Jesus Christ intended to save us and to give us a sense of pardon of our sins, He began by convincing us of our iniquity. He dealt heavy blows at our self-righteousness. He laid us in the dust and seemed to roll us in the mire. It seemed as though He delighted to tread upon us and to crush our every hope and destroy every fond expectation! It was all to wean us from self-righteousness, to pull us up by the roots, to prevent our growing and taking fast hold on the earth, to compel us to rest in His blood and righteousness and to seek our soul's life entirely from Him! That great blessing of salvation was, with the most of us, at any rate, preceded by thick clouds and tempests! We were convinced of sin, of self-righteousness, of judgment to come, and our heart trembled! And afterwards, when He had dealt roughly with us, He said, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you: go in peace." It seems, then, our experience is general and common, that the love letters of our Lord Christ have come to us in black envelopes and there has generally been a thunderstorm preceding a shower of special mercy! The clear shinings have been after the rain. The flood tide has come in most gloriously, but there has first been an ebb. It has always been so with us till now. I think experienced Christians begin to dread their joy and to expect blessings from their sorrows. When things apparently go bad, they know they really go well, and when things apparently go well, we are very apt to fear and tremble for all the good which God makes to pass before us and fear, lest in the dead calm, there may lurk some mischief to our souls.

Why does the Lord deal roughly with His servants when He means to bless them? Is it not to *keep them sober*? High spiritual joys have about them an intoxicating element to our poor nature. "Lest I should be exalted above measure," said the apostle, "there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me." Sometimes the trial comes before the mercy, sometimes with the mercy, sometimes after the mercy—but a trial and a high degree of spiritual joy are usually wedded together so that when you get the one—you may look out of the window for the other. 'Tis to keep us sober. Here is a brisk gale of spiritual influence upon our fluttering sail. What then? And why? Our poor boat would soon be upset, but God ballasts us with a weight of affliction, so that the vessel may keep steady amidst the waves. Master Brookes gives us a simile in which he shows us the danger there is even in the best and most spiritual enjoyments—he says, "Suppose a man loved his wife so very dearly and gave her so many rings, jewels and earrings, that she prized these and wore them till she began, by-and-by,

to dote upon her ornaments and to forget her husband? You could not blame him if he took these away because he wants her love for himself, not for his gifts." Now, instead of taking away these things, which it would be necessary for Him to do in order to keep us from spiritual ruin, the Lord is pleased to checker our lives. There are the bright stripes, or evidences of grace, and then there are the black squares of our troubles and afflictions. In that way an equilibrium is kept up—we are balanced—we do not grow top-heavy. And we are enabled to walk safely in the ways of the Lord. That is one reason He speaks roughly and deals graciously, to keep us sober.

Is it not likewise, *to keep us humble?* When a child of God gets one inch above the ground in his own esteem, he gets an inch too high! Whenever the man of God says, "I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing," he is very close to spiritual bankruptcy! None are so rich in grace as those who pine for more. None are so near to fullness as those who mourn their emptiness—the men who find their fullness not in themselves, but in Christ Jesus the Lord! Brothers and sisters, those 10 sons of Jacob must have felt their importance evaporate when Joseph put them in prison. Here they were "true men," as they said, "the sons of one man," but no respect is paid to the patriarch or to their patriarchal descent. They are put in prison as if they were common spies whose fate is generally the most ignoble. Now they begin to think of themselves in a very different light from that in which they did when they set out with their money in their hands to pay for their corn and have their money's worth. They were gentlemen, merchant traders when they entered Egypt, but after a while they seemed like beggars in their own esteem and better still, they begin to remember their faults! They call to remembrance that they were verily guilty concerning their brother. And the Lord never intends us to ride the high horse in thinking large things of ourselves. One thing I have always noticed as an observer, that whenever any man of God begins to get great, God always makes him smart. I think I have never seen a brother prospering in the ministry, or anywhere else, who began to be too large for association with his brethren, too good and too holy, perhaps, even to meet with common Christians—such a man has never kept up long—that balloon has come down—that bubble has, before long, gone to pieces. The profession of very extreme holiness has generally ended in the most dolorous iniquity and the professed exaltation of the heart on account of talent and success has generally led to degradation and shame! Hence the Lord, who would not have us exalted above measure, speaks roughly to us to keep us humble, as well as to keep us sober.

Why does He deal roughly with us? Is it not *to give us another reason for coming to Him?* Jacob's sons might not have come down to Egypt again. They might have said, "We would rather starve than go to be bull-baited by the lord of the land." But when Simeon is in prison they must go down. They have a reason for going and a reason which overcomes them, let them strive against it as they may! And, child of God, when the Lord favors you with His smile and with the light of His countenance, He

takes care at the same time to give you a trouble that shall compel you to come to the mercy seat. Oh, but I think it is a blessed thing to go to the throne of grace on an errand! Many pray out of custom, perhaps that is well, but I believe there is no praying like the praying of a man who has got an errand—he who goes to God because he *needs*, must go because he has something to ask for—and these rough dealings of God keep us well stocked with motives for being much on our knees, for much pleading with the Father of mercies that He would deliver us out of affliction and out of temptation—and is not this kindness on our Father's part thus to deal roughly with us that He may compel us to the sweet duty of prayer?

Moreover, brothers and sisters, does it not strike you that the Lord's rough dealings with His children, when He intends to bless them, *have the effect of making them see how utterly dependent they are for that blessing from Him?* Why, Jacob's sons could now see that Joseph could lock them up for life, or take away their lives, or could send them back, if he pleased, with empty sacks to starve! They were entirely in his hands. They had no more power to escape than the dove has from the talons of the hawk. So God would have us know that we are entirely and absolutely in His hands, as the clay in the hand of the potter. If He pleases to withhold His hand, all the world and all heaven cannot help us! If the Lord did not help you, how shall I help you out of the barn floor, or out of the winepress? That well stopped, all the world is walled up—there are no other bottles that can water you. Child of God, you are as dependent today upon the bounty of heaven as at your conversion! A babe in grace is not more dependent upon God than the mature and venerable Christian! Our life is in the hands of Christ. Our breath is in His nostrils. Let the foundations of our lives, either natural or spiritual, be taken away by a cessation of divine power and we crumble into spiritual and into physical death! We shall hold on our way, glory be to God, but not from any power that is in us, nor through our own innate strength! These shall melt away and droop and die under the exigencies of our spiritual pilgrimage. It is from the overflowing fountains of inexhaustible strength we must derive our supplies and so hold on to the end. Thus, treating us roughly makes us like bottles in the smoke—we become dry, shriveled up and empty—but still, it leads us to see how much the Lord can do for us. Being brought into need, it shows that all that is done, is done of His mercy and His sovereignty—not of our merit, nor through any concurrent help from us—but altogether, utterly and alone of Him!

Now, child of God, let me put this point to you very plainly. Without saying anything further, are you in very deep trouble tonight? Do all God's waves and billows go over you? Does deep call unto deep at the noise of His waterspouts? Then expect that now some great blessing will come of it! That stone on the lapidary's wheel has been cut, and cut, and cut again. That other stone in the corner of the shop is but a common pebble and he never vexes it upon the wheel, for it is worthless. But the more precious the stone is in His esteem, the more diligently does He cut

its facets. You are dear to God. Therefore is it that He tries you again and again, but good shall come of it and you shall blaze and sparkle, and glitter with divine grace which would have been otherwise unknown to you! Your tribulation shall work patience in you, and patience shall work experience, and experience hope, and hope shall make you not to be ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in you. You are trading in a profitable market! There is no usury so heavy as the interest of affliction. The black ships of trouble come home laden with pearls of grace. Therefore, be of good cheer. Take the rough usage from your brother Joseph—you must and will prevail! But I must change the tune. Our next observation upon the text is that while the Lord deals roughly with His servants—

II. HE USUALLY GIVES THEM AT THE SAME TIME PROVISION BY THE WAY so that they may be enabled to bear His roughness and to endure all the difficulties through which they are called to pass.

You observe Joseph had put Simeon in prison and had treated his other brothers very roughly, yet he gave them their sacks full of corn and put money into the mouths of their sacks. And then, as a third blessing, he gave them provisions for the way. Never does a child of God pass through trial without some special provision being made for him during his time of need.

But what provision is this? Why, dear brothers and sisters, there are different provisions according to different needs! Sometimes the child of God under trial has a *wonderful sense of divine love*. “Oh, how He loves me,” he says. There comes stroke after stroke—husband dies, child is buried, the property is wasted—yet the dear child says, “I cannot weep or repine, for I feel God loves me. I know not how it is, but I feel it so fresh and strong upon my soul and I have such a wonderful impression of that dear love of His, that it quite overcomes my sorrows and takes the edge off my grief.” And, let me say, there is nothing that under trial can support a soul so well as the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us! To know that my Father sees it all and orders all in love—in special love to me—oh, this makes the back strong enough to bear a very world of trouble and yet not to be wearied!

At other times God’s servants have been fed on a *joyous view of the covenant of grace*. I have known some who in their trouble have come to understand the deep doctrines of the Word of God as they never understood them before and could then say with David, “Although my house is not so with God, yet has He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” And as they look to the provisions of that covenant, to the sureness of the covenant, to the blessings of the covenant, to the everlasting nature of the covenant, their souls have been so ravished and transported with joy that they could beat poverty, or pain, or whatever form of roughness their heavenly Joseph might choose to put upon them!

Others of the Lord’s people have been sustained in their trouble by a *delightful outlook to the end of their sorrows and the better land on the other side of Jordan*. Oh, there have been saints upon sick beds who have

scarcely felt the torture of their pain or their disease, through the excess of bliss they have enjoyed in foretastes of the better land! Martyrs have been heard to call the fiery branches a bed of roses! And sometimes it has been almost questionable whether they suffered or not! The bodily pain must have been there, but the wonderful excitement of sacred joy in the thought that they were so soon to be with Christ and that their burning pile was but a chariot of fire to bear them to their Beloved has lifted them up above the tormenting sensation! They have been treated roughly, but they have had such provision by the way that they forgot the roughness as they rejoiced with unspeakable joy and full of glory! Well may the traveler trip over a rough road when his home is so near before him—the glittering spires of the new Jerusalem, the everlasting rest, the sweet fields arrayed in living green, the rivers of delight—

***“Oh, could we stand where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o’er—
Not Jordan’s stream nor death’s cold flood
Should fright us from the shore.”***

Roughly treat us as You will, good Lord, if we have this money in our sack’s mouth and this provision by the way, we will be well content!

The Lord sometimes sustains His people under His own roughness by the *recollection of their past experiences*. “My God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember You from Hermon and from the hill Mizar.” The faithfulness of God in the past has been so vividly remembered that the child of God could not dare to doubt! The evidence of God’s love was so strong, vehement and fresh in his soul that he cried, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him; let Him do what He will to me, yet do I know that in very faithfulness He has afflicted me.” He could hear these silver bells, thousands of them, all around, above, below, beneath—ringing out this tune—

***“For His mercy shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.”***

Oh, let the hell drum be beaten as loudly as the devil can beat it and let affliction come from heaven, earth and hell all at once—as long as we know that God’s mercy endures forever, our mouth shall be filled with laughter and we shall boast in the name of the Lord!

The saints of God have also had this provision by the way. In their sufferings *they have enjoyed a sight of the greater sufferings of Christ—*

***“Why should I complain of want or distress,
Temptation or pain? He told me no less.
The heirs of salvation, I know from His word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord.
How bitter that cup, no heart can conceive,
Which He drank quite up that sinners might live!
His way was much rougher and darker than mine—
Did Christ my Lord suffer, and shall I repine?”***

A sight of the steps of the Crucified One has often checked the tears which have been flowing, while the enraptured child of God would stand and sing in holy wonder—

***“Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than He went through before—
He that into this kingdom comes***

Must enter by this door.”

Thus I might continue to show what kind of provision it is that the Lord gives by the way, but the time fails me. Indeed, for me to tell you of it has nothing to do with receiving it. Oh, child of God, let me rather put it close to you and may the Holy Spirit comfort you with it! You shall never be sent on a journey without provisions and you shall never have to go to battle at your own charges. If the Lord tries you, it shall never be above what you are able to bear, for He will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. He may treat you roughly, but He will fill your sack. He may speak sharp words, but He will put your money into your sack's mouth. He may take your Simeon and bind him before your eyes, but He will give you provision by the way till you get to the goodly land where you shall need no more provision and the Lamb shall be forever with you—and you with Him! The third lesson which we draw from this is that though sometimes the Lord treats His people roughly, more roughly than He does any other people, yet—

III. HE GIVES THEM THE BEST OF THE BARGAIN IN THE LONG RUN.

These, his brothers, were the only ones Joseph spoke roughly to, but they were the only ones upon whose necks he afterwards fell and wept. They were the only ones that made the tears come into his eyes. They were the only ones of whom he said, “I will preserve you alive.” They were the only ones for whom he sent the wagons to bring them down, saying, “Regard not your stuff, for the whole land of Egypt is yours.” They were the only ones whom he brought in before Pharaoh and said, “Behold my father and my brothers.” They were highly favored and they dwelt in the land of Goshen and they had rest. Child of God, you will have the best of it soon! Even now you are the only ones that Christ deigns to call His brothers and sisters. You are the only people of whom it is written that you are a people dear to Him. You are the only people for whom Christ prayed, for He said, “I pray not for the world, but for those whom You have given Me out of the world, that they may be one.” You are the people for whom all things work together for good. As many of you as have believed in the Lord Jesus and are resting upon Him for salvation, though your path may be rough and thorny, you are the only people who have God, Himself, to be your captain, who have His fiery cloudy pillar to be your direction and who shall have the everlasting rest, the eternal portion! Be of good courage. Your riches in reversion are such that you can smile at poverty. Your rest which is yet to come is such that you may well despise the labor which makes you eat your bread in the sweat of your face. Your glory which is to come so excels that you may forget your poverty and your reproach. Your being with Christ will be so superlatively, divinely blessed, that you may well, for a while, bear to have a rough word or two from Him—

“Forever with the Lord!

Amen, so let it be!”

When it shall be so, when you are forever with the Lord, if you could be ashamed, you would be ashamed and confounded to think that you ever

murmured, or ever entertained a thought of complaint against the kind and gracious God who ordered all things for the best for you to promote your profit and His glory! May that thought cheer you, you who are depressed and cast down—and may you go on your way rejoicing!

As for such as have never trusted Christ, it often makes my heart bleed when I talk of these things, to think that I cannot speak to them, that I cannot tell them that these comfortable things are theirs. Oh, unbeliever, you are an alien and a stranger to the privileges of heavenly citizenship! For you there is no blessedness, either now or hereafter! Why will you remain an unbeliever? Why will you continue to be careless and godless, Christless? I trust the Lord has designs of love to you. Leave your sins, for you must either leave them or be lost! Trust the Savior. Rely wholly upon His blood and righteousness, for there is no other righteousness that can ever help you. But if you cast your soul upon Him, it shall be well with you forever! God grant that we may all be found in the day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, as brothers and sisters who are in allegiance to Him. So may it be with you all. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATHEW 7:13-29; 15:1-12.**

Verse 13. *Enter you in at the strait gate.* It is very unpopular. The great ones will recommend to you great liberality and breadth. But enter yet in at the strait gate.

13. *For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in there.* That is a rule that is very unfashionable in these times, but depend upon it, the Lord who gave it to us, meant it for all times. That which seems narrow, which costs you self-denial—that which is contrary to the will of the flesh—that which does not seem to charm the eye and fascinate the senses—go after that! “Enter you in at the strait gate.” You will not be likely to err much, or too much on that side. Let this be a gauge to you. That kind of preaching which allows you to indulge in sin—that sort of teaching which lowers the standard of God’s word for you and makes you think more of your own judgment than of the teachings of Christ—away with it! Let others have it if they like. “Enter you in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in there.”

14. *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.* It is still so. Indeed, none find it unless grace finds them! He who made that gate must go after the wandering sheep and bring them through that gate. They will never choose it of themselves.

15. *Beware of false prophets.* Some honor and esteem all prophets. “Is not it a very high office? Is not a prophet a man sent from God?” Yes, and no! For the very reason there are counterfeits whom God has never sent. Beware of false prophets.

15. *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.* They look just like sheep. They look just like shepherds, but it is only their clothing. The mere hypocrite is the goat in sheep's clothing. But a false prophet is a wolf in sheep's clothing because he can do so much more harm—and will do so much more damage to the church of God!

16. *You shall know them by their fruits.* They are sure to come out in their actions. If you have not got the knowledge of theology and the like, to be able to judge their teaching, yet the simplest persons can judge their *actions!* “You shall know them by their fruits,” which are sure to come out sooner or later.

16. *Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?* Did you ever find a cluster of grapes growing upon a thorn bush? Grapes and figs are pleasant fruit, and holy living, true devotion, communion with God—these are the things that are sweet to God and to good men. But they come not of false doctrine. They are not seen in false prophets. Such prophets despise such things as these. They are for worldly ways and places of worldly gaiety they can frequent. Not so the servants of God!

17-19. *Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.* That is what comes of it in the end. It may spread itself abroad and may gather much admiration to itself for its verdure, but there is an axe being sharpened and a fire being kindled!

20. *Therefore by their fruits you shall know them.* You cannot judge them by their bark or by the spread of their branches, or by the verdure of their leaves, or even by the beauty of their blossoms in springtime. “By their fruits you shall know them.” The Savior here gives us a very earnest and very necessary warning, lest we should be deceived, for there are such who are not only deceived by their own sins, but deceived by false prophets who are among Satan's best agents!

21. *Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* They were very sound in doctrine. They called Jesus, “Lord.” They believed in His deity. Apparently they were very devout. They said, “Lord.” They worshiped Him. They were very importunate and earnest. They said, “Lord, Lord,” crying to Him again and again. But “not everyone that says unto Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” External utterances, however orthodox—professions, however sound, are not enough!

21. *But he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven.* Oh, dear friends, there must be holiness in us, for without holiness no man can see the Lord! It is not knowing the will of the heavenly Father, but *doing* it which is the mark of divine election. If God's grace has really entered into us, we, like the prophets, shall be known by our fruits! But if we are not doing the will of our Father who is in heaven, we shall not come to the heaven where He is!

22. *Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name?* Yes, so did Balaam. Was not King Saul also among the prophets, and yet neither Balaam nor Saul was accepted of God, but they were castaways! “Have we not prophesied in Your name?” A man may be a preacher and an eloquent preacher, and he may even have some blessing upon his preaching—and yet be cast away forever!

22. *And in Your name have cast out devils?* Yes, and there was one that cast out devils and he was a devil, himself, namely, Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. He went out and worked miracles in the name of Christ—and then sold Christ for 30 pieces of silver!

22. *And in Your name done many wonderful works?* Yes, and we may do many wonderful works and yet be wonderfully deceived! It is not wonderful works—it is *holy* works! Not works that amaze men, but works that please God, which are the proof of grace in the soul. Well, there will be some who will be able to say that they prophesied—that they cast out devils—that they did wonders.

23. *And then, will I say unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity.* “I was never acquainted with you. I never had anything to do with you. I was never on speaking terms with you. You never had any fellowship with Me. I never had any fellowship with you. Your motives and designs were very different from Mine. I never knew you.” If Christ once knows a man, He will never forget him. But He says, “I never knew you. Depart from Me, you that work iniquity. Get you gone—you are none of Mine.” Oh, that we might never hear that dreadful sentence pronounced upon us in the day when Christ shall come! And yet we may be preachers! We may be wonderworkers! We may be famous in the visible church of Christ and yet, He may say, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you that work iniquity.” These are solemn thoughts. Let them sink into your hearts.

24. *Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock.* It was the *doing* of those sayings that was the building on the rock. You may hear and only increase your condemnation—but to *do* what you hear is to have a good foundation! This man built his house upon a rock. He was not, therefore, free from troubles. Oh, no!

25. *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house.* Wherever you build, troubles will reach you—and if you are a child of God you are sure to have troubles! “A Christian is seldom long at ease.” The road to heaven is usually a rough one and there are thieves, lions, giants, and all sorts of enemies on that road. It was a house built on a rock. But the rain descended, the floods came and the wind blew and beat upon that house.

25. *And it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.* Is not that glorious? “And it fell not.” Then the more rain, the more flood and the more wind, the more was the house praised for its good foundation and for its stability. “It fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.” Oh, if God has made us holy in life so that we are doing what Christ preaches, especially this Sermon on the Mount, of which this is the close, then we need not

fear all the troubles of life or death, for it shall be said, "It falls not, for it was founded upon a rock!"

26-27. *And everyone that hears these sayings of Mine and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew.* For fools get into trouble, too! However big a fool you may be, you will have big troubles all the same for that. "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked." Houses built on sand must still be tried. "And the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew."

27. *And beat upon that house and it fell: and great was the fall of it.* For it could never be set up again! It was down once and for all. A man may fail in life and yet commence again and succeed. But once a bankrupt with your soul and you are broken forever! "It fell and great was the fall of it." Do not believe those who tell you that to lose your soul is a small affair which will be made right, by-and-by, by either annihilation or restoration. It is all a ruinous lie! This is the truth of God concerning it—"It fell, and great was the fall of it."

28, 29. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine. For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.* He did not quote this learned Rabbi and that—or propose this theory to their thoughtful consideration—He spoke the truth of God and left the truth to work its way upon the minds of men, knowing that many would reject it, for it would be a savor of death unto death to them—but knowing, also, that some would receive it, whom He had ordained unto eternal life, to whom it would be a savor of life unto life. Let us copy our divine Master's example and speak boldly as we ought to speak.

MATTHEW 15:1-12.

Verses 1, 2. *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.* A very amazing omission, certainly! But it seems to have struck them as a very great crime. "They wash not their hands when they eat bread"—as if the commands of God were not enough—men must overload us with their own commands, and sometimes the very people who would see us break God's commands without being at all distressed are dreadfully shocked if we do not keep theirs, showing clearly that they have a higher estimate of themselves than they have of God!

3-6. *But He answered and said unto them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and mother and, He that curses father or mother, let him die the death. But you say, Whoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatever you might be profited by me, and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have you made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.* The hypocrite said, "I cannot give you any help. I have vowed to give it as a subscription to the synagogue, or to the temple, therefore I cannot give it to you," and if he

could plead that he had given it as a gift in the form of a religious offering, he was exempted from assisting his own parents. “Well,” said Christ, “you do by this make the commandment of God of no effect.” “You hypocrites”—our Savior is the most gentle of men, but how plainly does He talk—and how honestly does He denounce everything like hypocrisy!

7-9. *You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draws near unto Me with their mouth and honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Now, may God save us from these two faults! The first is that of being content with the outside worship of God. Unless our very hearts worship, there is nothing whatever in the outward performance of religious rites or religious worship! Indeed, it is hypocrisy to draw near to God with the lips and knees when the heart is not there. The next evil to be dreaded is teaching for doctrines the *commandments of men*. Whatever is not plainly taught in Scripture is of no binding force upon any conscience! And it is evil to invent rites and ceremonies which are not taught in Holy Scripture. We must mind what we are doing! If we have not the plain warrant of Christ’s command for our teachings and our doings, we shall rather vex the Spirit of God than honor Him. Whatever our intention may be, we have not any right to worship God otherwise than according to His own mind. If we do, it will not be worship and not acceptable with Him.

10, 11. *And He called the multitude and said unto them, Hear, and understand. Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.* “And He called the multitude and said unto them—“Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man”—not that which he eats and drinks, “but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.” That is—what he says—that is the point.

12. *Then came His disciples, and said unto Him, Know You that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?* Some very kind friends are very jealous of the preacher lest he should offend anybody—and they will come in all tenderness of spirit and say, “Know you that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?”

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*“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor; that you, through His poverty, might be rich.”
2 Corinthians 8:9.*

THE apostle was anxious to stir up the Corinthian church to generosity. They were a church of very great talents. They were an unusually gifted church, so that they were able to maintain in their midst a form of worship which is not often maintained and could not conveniently become the general form in the Christian church, namely, that a large proportion of the members spoke to edification, whereas in most other churches there was no such abundance of spiritual gifts. They were in the midst of a city of polished inhabitants and it had pleased God to call in that city some of the ablest men. But they seem to have been far from taking the front rank in some respects. They needed to be exhorted to purge themselves from a sin which no church had ever tolerated that had a ministry, and which only that church would allow, because it was nobody's business to look after it—and so it was not looked after. This sin *was a great lack of generosity in giving*. Now, in order to excite the church at Corinth, the apostle uses as an argument, first of all, the great generosity of the far poorer church in Macedonia. He says that in the midst of their poverty, they gave, not only up to their power, but generously beyond it. It is right for us to stimulate the zeal of one Christian by the example of another Christian—and it is the bounden duty of all believers so to walk that they may be worthy to be examples to the rest of the flock.

But even this argument is a poor one compared with that which the apostle was more constantly using, namely, the example of Christ, the church's great head and exemplar. He deals, indeed, an efficient blow at all selfishness when, leaving the churches of Macedonia out of the question, he says, “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Oh, that blessed Master of ours! Surely He is useful to us in ten thousand ways! There is not a single part of Him—there is no position He takes, no action He performs, no word that drops from His lips, no thought of His

heart, no aspect of His matchless character that is not serviceable to us, His people! Even in His poverty He becomes our instructor, just as in His death He becomes our Savior. Without staying longer in the text, we shall, first of all, ask you to consider *the example presented to us*, contemplating it in its various phases. And then, secondly, let me, in few but earnest words, *urge you to follow His example* in acts of gratitude.

I. THE EXAMPLE PRESENTED TO US.

It is that of our Lord, of whom Paul said, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." It seems, then, that Christ's coming from heaven to earth to suffer for us is here called, "grace." It was an act of grace on His part—an act purely gratuitous! He was not bound to have done it. We did not deserve it at His hands. It was no foreseen merit of ours, or of any other kind which could have been potent to attract Him from the skies and drag Him to the manger and the tomb! But He came as an act of free mercy to undeserving sinners. It was grace which was the source and fountain of His coming. That eternal love of God, by which we were first chosen, was the same love which sent the Savior to redeem the chosen. It was that grace from which all covenant mercies spring—the ancient wellhead of distinguishing grace—which brought the Savior here! It was because He, being God, was love. Because He, being God, was full of grace and truth, that He, therefore, left the realms above that He might lift us up to them by His coming down from them into the depths of our misery! "You know *the grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ." We ought to perpetually gaze upon the cross, I think, in the light of its being altogether an act of grace on Christ's part—and the result of grace towards us on the part of the divine Father. Oh, you see nothing there, sinners, towards you but grace—

***"Tis mercy fills the throne.
While wrath stands silent by."***

The wrath falls upon the Savior, but all that you have to see in Christ, today, is grace, pure grace—grace to take away the sin which made Him bleed—grace to accept the sinner who was guilty of His death. The cross reveals to us grace on the throne of God, grace at its culminating point, grace triumphant and resplendent in the uttermost degree! Who would see grace, let him behold a bleeding Savior bearing the griefs of men upon Himself and suffering in their place. "You know the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ," the kindness, the bounty, the benevolence, the generosity, the compassion, the condescension, the tenderness, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And when Paul had thus named the deed which the Savior did and labeled it with the title of, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," he follows it up by mentioning the heights from which the Savior descended—"*who though He was rich.*" It has been well observed that this little sentence is a clear proof that our Savior had an existence *before* He was born into

this world—that, in fact, He was divine—for it is said that, “He was rich, and that He became poor.” Now, He never was rich *in this life*—never!

If it should be said that He was rich at one time with the Holy Spirit, as Unitarians have said in order to get rid of the force of this verse, then He never did become poor in that sense. There was no period of the Savior's life on earth in which it could be said that He was rich, but He became poor. It must, therefore, have been in a previous state of being that our Lord was rich—and I shall now ask your thoughts to go back to the time when Jesus Christ *was* rich. Poor are our words! They are but an accommodation of mortal speech to an immortal theme! “*He* was rich.” When we read the word, “rich,” it seems, somehow or other, to pall the description of what Jesus Christ was, for He was so infinitely more rich than anything the world knows by that description! His riches were vastly more wealthy than any of the gaudy wealth which the world can bring—which is but transient and corruptible wealth! He was rich. Yes, but He was something more than that. However, we will make such use of the term as we can.

Jesus was rich *in possession*. As God over all, having made all things, all things were His. He could have said, “The cattle on a thousand hills are Mine; mine, the mines of gold, and the secret treasuries of silver; mine, the places where the diamonds sparkle and where the pearl emits its gentle ray. All things are Mine! A thousand stars glisten as My lamps and all the width of space, so full of the wonders of creation—all this is Mine!” He was rich *in service*. A thousand angels waited at His gates. He had but to will it and the strong-winged messengers flew upon His errands! They adored Him ceaselessly. Day without night they circled His throne, rejoicing. Even when on earth, He said He could pray to His Father and He would send Him twelve legions of angels. How much more was this the case when He sat in the state of heaven—and all these were the courtiers that waited before His throne? He was rich *in honor*. No pompous courts of Solomon could ever compare with the courts of the Son of God! All glory centered in Him; He was “God over all, blessed forever,” co-equal and co-eternal with the Father; to Him the perpetual song; to Him the never ceasing incense. To Him the golden harps, to Him the swell of heaven's highest symphonies, for He was adored of all and exalted high above principalities and powers, and every name that is named! And He was rich *in love*, which is the best of all wealth! His Father loved Him. “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Eternally was that a truth of God and, besides that, there were pure spirits of His own creating who loved Him with all the force of their being. He needed not our love to make Him rich! There was love enough in God for Him and if He had willed it, He could have made a thousand races of

nobler creatures than ourselves, all of whom would have loved Him with the deepest love!

He was rich, too, *in happiness*. We cannot conceive of the Savior knowing any sorrow, or grief, or need in heaven. He had all that even He could wish for, if such language can be used towards the infinite God. He was essentially and ineffably happiness, itself! Just as we believe, concerning the Most High God, that He is unruffled by a care and His soul undisturbed by a pang, so was it with the glorious one who afterwards condescended to be crowned with thorns—and to be pierced with the spear for our sakes. “He was rich!” Oh, the word, as I have said before, is a poor miserable word! It is the best that Paul could find, but there is such a grandeur about Christ that if we say He was rich in all respects, rich in all conception and rich beyond imagination's utmost stretch, rich beyond everything you and I will ever be able to conceive of—even when we got into the celestial state—so rich, so infinite, so glorious, so divine—this is what He was! “He was rich.”

And yet He considered us! And yet He stooped to us! Oh, my brothers and sisters, what an example for us to get the same grace and generosity, so that if in any respect we, too, are made rich here, we, too, may be as willing to stoop as He was. But, alas, while our stoop is all so little, His stoop is all so great!

Then the apostle goes on to say, “Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.” Not that He was *made poor*. It was not an act of providence that made Him so. He did not become bankrupt. He was not a king expelled from His dominions. He was not a fallen sovereign to whom we give shelter and pity, but He “became poor.” That is, it was His own voluntary act! It was His own cheerful will to become poor! And now I cannot help saying that that word, “*poor*,” does not seem to me to be strong enough. It is the best, I suppose, our language can afford, but still, there never was poverty like His poverty! It is a word which does but skim the surface of the Savior's condescension. He was poor. Well, He was poor *in the ordinary sense*. He was born of humble parents; He was not the son of a prince or a mighty one. He was reputed to be the carpenter's son. When His mother swaddled Him, she laid Him in the manger. He was not like those who are born in marble halls and are wrapped in scarlet—He was a plebeian and He took a lowly place even in His birth. He is sent to Egypt—He becomes an early exile. Scarcely any poverty in the world is like the poverty of the poor emigrant who leaves his country either from lack of bread or from fear of life—and Jesus Christ and His mother going down to Egypt are the very picture of poverty! We are thankful if we have only a little cottage in our own land where we may dwell, but in Egypt the Son of God must tabernacle for a while. And when He came back, He sought not His acquaintance among

even the tradesmen or the middle classes, much less among the lofty and the proud in spirit—He put upon Himself the smock frock of the country—“a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout”—and His intimate acquaintances were the fishermen of Galilee!

Was it not said of Him by David, “He has exalted one chosen out of the people”? And Christ was emphatically chosen out of the people. He was with them in all their toils and all their woes—so with them that none of them were poorer than He. “Foxes have holes,” He said, “and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head.” He was so poor that I never read He left a will about His worldly goods and chattels. All that He had of personal estate was just the garments He wore and those the soldiers parted among them—and there He was, naked, dead and indebted to charity! For a tomb, He had not even a sepulcher of His own—not a sorry six feet of earth in which His sleeping body might have rested in its own freehold—it was a borrowed tomb that gave the Savior a refuge. He thus became poor outwardly, but what was His poverty inwardly? He was poor *as to His friends*. Judas betrayed Him. Peter denied Him. All the disciples forsook Him and fled! He was poor *in servants*, for although He washed His disciples' feet, yet they washed not His! And when He came to the hour when human sympathy might have somewhat comforted Him, He had to say with melancholy pathos, “What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?” Oh, so poor has He become that there is not an eye to watch with Him in His lonely grief! So poor was He that the comforts which are left to the most abject were taken away from Him! No promise beamed to shed its light upon His soul. At one time, at any rate, no presence of God made Him glad. He was forsaken of His Father and His God! “Eloi, Eloi lama sabachthani,” indicated a poverty of soul quite as deep as that naked and mangled body indicated outward poverty.

He had lost all, or rather had given up all, laid aside everything—His crown of glory exchanged for the thorns of shame. The imperial mantle of dominion cast aside that He might wear His own blood! No more adored, but spit upon! No longer revered, but despised and made the offscouring of men! No throne, but a cross! No golden cup, but a draught of wormwood and of gall! No light and brightness of excessive glory, but the blackness of mid-day—midnight! No life and immortality, but, “It is finished,” and the giving up of the ghost! “Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.”

I wish it were in my power to go farther into this depth tonight, but neither my ability nor my time will serve me just now. Let your own meditations assist you to peer into the poverty of the Savior—such poverty, indeed, as you and I can never know, but, prompted by His example, let us not be ashamed to be poor! No, let us not, at the thought

of being poor, feel any kind of fear about it! Let us rather rejoice that in this we shall have fellowship with our Lord and if we serve Him we must be poor. If we are obedient to His will, we must make a sacrifice of worldly goods and prosperity. Let us take joyfully the spoiling of our goods. Let us, like the Master, count it all joy when we are thus stripped, for so shall we have fellowship with Him “who, though He was rich, yet for your sakes became poor.”

The apostle next calls our attention to the *objectives* of this wonderful condescending stoop of our Lord, namely, *ourselves*. “*For your sakes* He became poor.” For the sake of the Corinthians; for the sake of us.

And oh, where could there be found more unworthy beneficiaries of this amazing love than we have been? In contemplating the love which I personally received from my Savior, although I wonder at it in itself, I have often thought that I could far better understand it if it had been given to someone else than when it is shed abroad in my own soul. I do not know how it is, but somehow the salvation of the vilest sinner that lives does not one half as much surprise me as my own—and I find it far more easy to believe in the genuine salvation of any man than at times to believe in my own. Why should He love us? Oh, there is an amount of unworthiness about each one of us which we cannot see in our fellows that makes it amazing that we should have been chosen! Well, said the apostle, “His great love wherewith He loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins!” It is by His great love He loves us now we are alive, but it is still more wondrous love that He should spend His life-blood to buy our humanity when it was in its former state! None shall praise God more for His grace than I will if I get the privilege to see Him face to face, for none will be more indebted to His distinguishing mercy! I suppose you will feel the same and will, each one, resolve in the contest of humility that none of you will yield to his fellow, but will each one lie the lowest and sing the loudest to the praise of the matchless lover, this heavenly bridegroom of our souls! “*For your sakes* became poor.” Not a thorn in that crown for Himself, but for your sakes! No spit on those cheeks, no hair plucked from them, for Himself—but all for you! For you, the cruel lash, as it pitilessly furrowed those holy shoulders! For you, those drops of crimson sweat as they stained the cold earth! For you, each of those cruel nails! For you, for you, the spear that pierced His side! Oh, let each Christian here really seek to lay a claim to have a personal interest in the griefs and groans of Jesus! Sweet possessions! Oh, to treasure them! Richer than all jewels! Those drops of blood—far more priceless than rubies! Those falling tears more sparkling than diamonds! Treasure up the love of Jesus! Put it into your souls. Make a heart in your heart in which to treasure it! Count it to be the richest and most precious thing you can have, or can desire to have—the love of

Jesus with all its sweetness and everlasting delight! "For your sakes He became poor."

Well, now, if He did all this for the sake of us who are so unworthy, what ought you and I to do for His sake, who is so worthy? And if He emptied His great self for us, who are as nothing, shall not we be ready to empty our little selves for Him, who is so great?

If He gave all to us, what less than all can we give to Him? And even when we have given all, we shall think it all too little for such a Lord and such a friend! Does Jesus give Jesus, and shall not we give all of ourselves?

The apostle tells us, however—to conclude the exposition of the verse and our contemplation of this great example—that *Christ had an objective in doing this*, and the objective was this—"That you, through His poverty, might be made rich." I like the very phraseology, here, and think we should read it again..."That you, through His poverty, might be made rich." A person joined this church not long ago who had been a member of quite another denomination, in which the doctrine of the second advent, which we also hold, takes an infinitely more prominent place than we are ever likely to give to it, for it is the gospel of their salvation. This woman, however, professed herself to have been converted to God, here, and she said, "I was always taught to trust in Christ glorified, but now I come to see that my confidence must be in Christ crucified." This was what Paul preached and it is what we preach! I believe it is an error which is growing, that we are to be made rich through Christ glorified. I grant you that we shall be, for we are made rich by Christ in *any* capacity, but the text says it is through His *poverty* that we shall be made rich. The brightest treasure that can come to the Christian comes to Him through Christ crucified—we must take care in all our ideas of the second advent that we do not imagine the coming of a *temporal* kingdom and a *temporal* glory and go back to the beggarly elements of the old covenant—for if we do so we shall miss the true jewel, the *spiritual* treasure—the love of which is half dying out in the Christian church! Christ in His poverty should be most commonly the object of our contemplation, for it is through that poverty that we shall be made rich.

Now, I want to ask you whether you are rich tonight? If Jesus Christ died for you, I am sure He has not missed His intention in so dying and, therefore, you are rich! But you say you are poor and you were grumbling only an hour ago to think that you were so poor. Come, now! Come now! Jesus Christ, though He was rich, became poor—shall He miss the design of that great renunciation? Shall His plan fail? It is not for a moment to be supposed! Well, then, He has made you rich. You cannot count your treasures, Christian! A catalog of them would be too long for you ever to get through it! You have no estate. You have no barn

in which to store away your harvest. Perhaps there may be some of you with little more belonging to you than the garments in which you have come into this sanctuary. But yet—you are rich! Think about this—

***“All things are yours, the gift of God,
The purchase of a Savior's blood!
This world is yours, and worlds to come!
Earth is your lodge and heaven your home!”***

You have angels to be your protectors. You have Christ to be your intercessor and your friend! You have the Holy Spirit, Himself, to be your comforter! The everlasting arms are underneath you. The divine wings are above you. The divine glory is within you! Oh, what more could you desire? You shall have all the provisions that you need, for you shall dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed. Yes, Christ has made us rich in the highest possible sense of richness. He does not please to make many of His people rich in the common sense. As Luther says, He gives the husks to the hogs—the proper place for them—they can relish them and can make the best use of them. I doubt not that he was also right in what he said of the whole Turkish Empire, which God had given to the grand Turk who was the leading monarch of his day. He said, “It is only a bone for a dog.” So it is. All the kingdoms of this world are but so many bones which the householder throws out to the dogs and lets them devour them as they may. Perhaps all the time the child is kept waiting—and he may be kept waiting a little while for his food because the hour is not yet come—the dog can eat when it wills, but the child must eat at the set time which the Father has appointed. Let us be thankful if God does not give us our portion *here*. It is one of the things to be dreaded—the having your portion in this life! It is said of some that they have their portion in this life—and our Lord said of the Pharisees—“Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.” Oh, let us pray God not to give us our reward here! If we have helped the poor and have only received ingratitude, let us be very thankful that it proves that our reward is not here! If we labor for Christ and are misrepresented, let us be thankful, for again it proves that our reward is not of men and in time, but is of God and for all eternity! To have our reward, here, and our portion from men is a thing to be deprecated with tears, cries and groans! God grant us to know our riches to be of a better sort than that which the worldling covets!

Well, if it is so, that Christ has made us rich, I hope it is not fiction or fancy to any of you. You are rich in your soul—you know you are! You are wealthy and the argument from this is that you should be devoted to your Master. If He has made you rich, serve Him! If He has enabled you to be contented, at ease and happy—if you have blessed enjoyment in your soul, if you are at peace with God through Jesus Christ—who should serve God as *you* should? Highly favored as you are, the very

stones would cry out against you if you were not generous in your Master's service and praise!

And this brings me to the last matter, which is, in a few words—

II. TO EXHORT YOU TO PRACTICALLY CARRY OUT THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

There have been some advanced Christians—I say not this of all—but there have been some advanced Christians who literally have been made able to carry out the example of the Savior. How should we honor the memory of such men as John Wesley, for instance? He might have been a fellow—as he was, indeed, of the University—and have had excellent compensation. “The church,” so called, was open to him and, no doubt, a bishopric would soon have rewarded his exertions and his eloquence. But he lived through life purely to serve his Master according to his knowledge and conviction. And when an inventory was to be made of his plate, he had but two spoons, one at Bristol and one in London. And when he died, what had he to leave? His treasure had all gone before him into heaven and he died in poverty, having served his God with all he had, and making that the aim of his life—to live with all he had wholly to his Master's service! And such have been the lives of some of our missionaries. They have cut themselves away from all the claims of kindred and have given themselves, like the old Roman heroes in battle, who stood upon the sword and consecrated themselves to God. They have given themselves up to live and to die with never a thought of gain in this world, no, never dreaming of possessing anything as long as they lived! Such was apostolic life and such, I believe, would be more common in the Christian church if a high degree of divine grace were granted. I do not think it is the duty of most of you, nor that it will ever fall to the lot of 99 out of a hundred of you, but there are some of you—and there ought to be more—who, being called of God to some special work, should feel that if you are rich, if you possess rank, if you possess standing in society, you will give up the most brilliant, earthly prospect for that yet more brilliant prospect of bearing the cross and inheriting the crown!

I look forward, if God should ever send a revival of religion in England, not only to the time when the poor and the middle-classes shall find in their midst consecrated ministers, but when, from the very highest spheres of society, there will come to us men who might have worn the coronet, but who would rather proclaim the gospel! Men who might have piled up their wealth until it became like Babel's tower, but who would rather become poor, that in their poverty they may make many rich! It is not given unto all thus to do, but this is the dictate of Christianity—and where it can be done absolutely and be carried out to the fullest extent, it brings much glory to God!

Well, but the principle seems to me to be binding upon us all. I will venture to say—and I should not wonder that some of you will not like it to be said, that *I believe it is anti-Christian and unholy for any Christian to live with the objective of accumulating wealth.* You will say, “Are we not to strive all we can and to get all the money we can?” You may do so. You should do so. I cannot doubt but what, in so doing, you may do good service to the cause of God. But what I said was this, that to live *with the objective of accumulating wealth* is anti-Christian. There are thousands of men and women with whom that is the only thing they are living for—to save, save, save—and make a fortune! And when they die, what then? Well, then it will be in the newspapers that so-and-so died worth so much, and some will say, “Guess what worth he died with? It will be talked of all over the city, “Why, they paid probate duty on so much!” Yes! Well, now, if you had a steward—I will ask you a question—if you had a steward and that steward were to die—and you should hear that he died worth £100,000, what would you say? You would say, “Ah, I know whose money that was! He was only a steward and yet he died worth £100,000? I know where that money came from.” You would not want to ask the question, but you would say, “Ah, he was a thief, an old rogue!” I am not certain whether every man is not who does that; at least, unless he happens to occupy a very high and prominent position. A man says he is a steward. That is what he says, himself. We do not tell him so, but he says he is. He stands up and thanks God that he is a steward, but the old fellow has got some uncommonly heavy bags about him—more than a steward would have if he had handled his master's money properly!

To say that the most of you ought to spend all you earn would be simply ridiculous. To come into the pulpit and say to those of you who are in business and so on, that you ought to give all that you have to the cause of God every year would be, I think, most intolerable stupidity on my part! I do not say that at all! Let your children, by all manner of means, have that which they can lawfully claim of you. Make a fair provision if you are able to make it. Let your children be liberally educated. Let there be no stint in the house so that there should be complaints of need there. God has put you into a position and you may spend according to your station. What I mean to say is this—if you make it your objective in this world to live simply to get together a certain amount of money, and die and leave it—you are living with an anti-Christian objective and your spirit is apart from the spirit of your Lord Jesus Christ!

My Master did not make a fortune. There is none of you who will leave less than He left! We read some time ago of a bishop whose will was sworn to be under £150,000, and someone said, “He was a true

successor of the apostles, for he would be bound to say that if the Apostle Paul's will could have been sworn to, it, too, would have been under £150,000." And I think it is very likely that it would!

Ah, but such an occurrence as that always provokes a sneer in the world. They say, "Oh, yes, yes, yes—this is a picture of making the best of both worlds!" But it is not the picture of the Savior, living wholly for the cause of God and the cause of truth, but quite the reverse! I would like to see you, my dear friends who are poor, feeling that out of your poverty it is your privilege to give continually to Him who loved you and gave Himself for you, not casting the burden of God's work upon the few rich that may be among us, but every man honestly taking his share in the church's burden, which, indeed, is not her burden, but her privilege and her delight! I would like to see you bring in your gifts to God's treasury, not because you are asked to do so, or prompted, or driven to it, but because you love to do it out of love to Him. Well, then, those of you who are prospered in business—and may there be more of you!—will always find that it will sweeten what is left to yourselves if the full and fair proportion is given to your Master. I am afraid you will not be likely to imperil yourselves, or bring yourselves to poverty by what you do for the cause of Christ. Sorry would I be if, by any extravagance or imprudence of that kind, such a thing would occur—but on the whole it is not a very likely thing—so that I need not guard you particularly much against it. But if you give to God, you shall find that if you give by shovelfuls, God will give it back to you in cartloads! And if you give cartloads, His wagons shall be driven to your door and He will bless you in proportion as you give to Him!

I have thus applied the principle to wealth, but it should also be applied to everything the Christian has. I hope some of you have a good reputation. There was a time when I had one, but preaching the gospel very frequently brings upon you all sorts of misrepresentations. I remember pretty well the first stinging article I read in a newspaper concerning myself—as full of lies as an egg is full of meat—and I could not help wincing somewhat under it! But I soon learned the lesson that I could not afford to keep a reputation if I were a Christian minister—that I must be prepared to serve God with all my heart, soul and strength—and let man or devils say whatever they liked. I take no notice whatever of them, but go on serving God! And I count it a sweet thing to sing—

***"If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame
If You will remember me."***

Now, there is a young man over yonder who thinks he is a Christian, but he has been laughed at by the other young fellows in the shop and

he has half a mind to give up. What? What? When Jesus Christ, who was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, are you ashamed to be laughed at by a few simpletons? And there is a young woman here who was placed, just now, in a family where they are very godless. She hardly likes to show her colors for Christ. Oh, my sister, think of the Master and of the shame and the spitting that He endured for you—and let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. Stoop, stoop, my brother! Stoop, my sister! The way to heaven is downhill in a certain sense. The way to rise is to fall in your own esteem—and when you shall think yourself to be less than nothing, and your own reputation, and your own wealth, and everything you have to be all Christ's property—and you freely give it up to Him, then will you realize what it really is to be a Christian—but not till then!

Would to God some here were wholly devoted to the Master! I have been looking to see whether God would raise up among us some unusual spirits, some fiery souls, some consecrated men and women who have got the old heroic blood of ancient Christendom within their veins! May such yet arise and may each seek to follow where the Master leads the way to the praise and glory of His grace!

Now, there are some of you who have heard all this, but I have not addressed myself to you—and yet I meant you all the while—I mean even you who are unconverted. Think of the love of Jesus in coming in the flesh and may that sweet love be a sort of latchkey to your hearts with which Christ shall open them and let Himself in! If He has knocked and you have not opened, I trust He will open the door, Himself, by His own love—and may you be His tonight! If you so become His, be really His! You have served the devil—now serve Him! If you must serve Christ, do not serve Him with half your hearts—serve Him and no mistake. Give Him your whole soul. If He is worth having, He is worth having altogether and worth giving your whole soul. So may you do—and the Master shall have the praise evermore! Amen.

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered its surface, and the stone wall was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked on it and received instruction.”
Proverbs 24:30-32.

THIS lazy man did no hurt to his fellow men—he was not a thief, nor a ruffian, nor a meddler in anybody else’s business. He did not trouble himself about other men’s concerns, for he did not even attend to his own—it required too much exertion. He was not grossly vicious. He had not energy enough to care for that. He was one who liked to take things easily. He always let well enough alone and, for that matter, he let ill alone, too, as the nettles and the thistles in his garden plainly proved! What was the use of disturbing himself? It would be all the same a hundred years hence and so he took things just as they came. He was not a bad man, so some said of him, and yet, perhaps it will be found at last that there is no worse man in the world than the man who is not good, for in some respects he is not good enough to be bad! He has not enough force of character about him to serve either God or Baal. He simply serves himself, worshiping his own ease and adoring his own comfort. Yet he always meant to be right. Dear me, he was not going to sleep much longer, he would only have forty winks more and then he would be at his work—and show you what he could do! One of these days he meant to be thoroughly in earnest and make up for lost time. The time never actually came for him to begin, but it was always coming. He always meant to repent, but he went on in his sin. He meant to believe, but he died an unbeliever. He meant to be a Christian, but he lived without Christ. He halted between two opinions because he could not trouble himself to make up his mind! And so he perished of delay.

This picture of the slothful man and his garden and field overgrown with nettles and weeds represents many a man who has professed to be a Christian, but who has become slothful in the things of God. Spiritual life has withered in him. He has backslidden. He has come down from the condition of healthy spiritual energy into one of listlessness and indifference to the things of God. And while things have gone wrong within his heart and all sorts of mischiefs have come into him and grown up and seeded themselves in him, mischief is also taking place externally in his daily conduct. The stone wall which guarded his character is

broken down and he lies open to all evil. Upon this point we will now meditate. "The stone wall was broken down."

Come, then, let us take a walk with Solomon and stand with him and consider and learn instruction while we *look at this broken-down fence*. When we have examined it, let us *consider the consequences of broken-down walls*. And then, in the last place, let us try to *wake up this sluggard that his wall may yet be repaired*. If this slothful person should be one of ourselves, may God's infinite mercy awaken us before this ruined wall has let in a herd of prowling vices! First, let us take—

I. A LOOK AT THIS BROKEN FENCE.

You will see that in the beginning it was a very good fence, for it was a stone wall. Fields are often surrounded with wooden fences which soon decay, or with hedges which may very easily have gaps made in them. But this was a stone wall. Such walls are very usual in the East and are also common in some of our own counties where stone is plentiful. It was a substantial protection to begin with and well shut in the pretty little estate which had fallen into such bad hands. The man had a field for agricultural purposes and another strip of land for a vineyard or a garden. It was fertile soil, for it produced thorns and nettles in abundance—and where these flourish, better things can be produced—yet the idler took no care of his property, but allowed the wall to get into bad repair and in many places to be quite broken down.

Let me mention some of the stone walls that men permit to be broken down when they backslide.

In many cases *sound principles were instilled in youth*, but these are forgotten. What a blessing is Christian education! Our parents, both by persuasion and example, taught many of us the things that are pure and honest and of good repute. We saw in their lives how to live. They also opened the Word of God before us and they taught us the ways of right both toward God and toward men. They prayed for us and they prayed with us till the things of God were placed round about us, and shut us in as with a stone wall! We have never been able to get rid of our early impressions. Even in times of wandering, before we savingly knew the Lord, these things had a healthy power over us—we were checked when we would have done evil—we were assisted when we were struggling towards Christ. It is very sad when people permit these first principles to be shaken and to be removed like stones which fall from a boundary wall! Young persons begin at first to talk lightly of the old-fashioned ways of their parents. By-and-by it is not merely the old-fashionableness of the ways, but the ways, themselves, that they despise! They seek other company and from that other company they learn nothing but evil. They seek pleasure in places which it horrifies their parents to think of. This leads to worse—and if they do not bring their fathers' gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, it is no virtue of theirs. I have known young men who really were Christians, sadly backslide through being induced to modify, conceal, or alter those holy principles in which they were trained from their mother's knee. It is a great calamity when professedly

converted men become unfixed, unstable and carried about with every wind of doctrine. It shows great faultiness of mind and unsoundness of heart when we can trifle with those grave and solemn truths of God which have been sanctified by a mother's tears and by a father's earnest life! "I am Your servant," said David, "and the son of Your handmaid." He felt it to be a high honor and, at the same time, a sacred bond which bound him to God, that he was the son of one who could be called God's handmaid. Take care, you who have had Christian training that you do not trifle with it! "My son, keep your father's commandments and forsake not the law of your mother: bind them continually upon your heart and tie them about your neck."

Protection to character is also found in the fact that *solid doctrines have been learned*. This is a fine stone wall. Many among us have been taught the gospel of the grace of God and have learned it well, so that we are able to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Happy are they who have a religion that is grounded upon a clear knowledge of eternal truths of God! A religion which is all excitement and has little instruction in it, may serve for transient use, but for permanent life purposes there must be knowledge of those great doctrines which are fundamental to the gospel system. I tremble when I hear of a man's giving up, one by one, the vital principles of the gospel and boasting of his liberality! I hear him say, "These are my views, but others have a right to their views also." That is a very proper expression in reference to mere, "views," but we may not thus speak of truth, itself, as revealed by God that is one and unalterable, and all are bound to receive it! It is not your view of the truth, for that is a dim thing, but the very truth of God, itself, which will save you if your faith embraces it. I will readily yield my way of stating a doctrine, but not the doctrine, itself! One man may put it in this way, and another man, another way, but the truth, itself, must never be given up. The spirit of the broad school robs us of everything like certainty. I should like to ask some great men of that order whether they believe that *anything* is taught in the Scriptures which it would be worthwhile for a person to die for—and whether the martyrs were not great fools for laying down their lives for mere opinions which might be right or might be wrong? This broad Churchism is a breaking down of stone walls and it will let in the devil and all his crew and do infinite harm to the church of God if it is not stopped! A loose state of belief does great damage to any man's mind.

We are not bigots, but we should be none the worse if we so lived that men called us so. I met a man the other day who was accused of bigotry and I said, "Give me your hand, old fellow. I like to meet with bigots now and then, for the fine old creatures are getting scarce! And the stuff they are made of is so good that if there were more of it, we might see a few men among us again and fewer mollusks." Lately we have seen few men with backbones—the most have been of the jelly-fish order. I have lived in times in which I should have said, "Be liberal and shake off all

narrowness,” but now I am obliged to alter my tone and cry, “Be steadfast in the truth of God!” The faith once delivered to the saints is now all the more attractive to me because it is called narrow, for I am weary of that breadth which comes of broken hedges! There are fixed points of the truth of God, and definite certainties of creed—and woe to you if you allow these stone walls to crumble down! I fear that the slothful are a numerous band, and that ages to come may have to deplore the laxity which has been applauded by this negligent generation!

Another fence which is too often neglected is that of *godly habits* which had been formed. The sluggard allows this wall to be broken down. I will mention some valuable guards of life and character. One is the habit of *secret prayer*. Private prayer should be regularly offered, at least in the morning and in the evening. We cannot do without set seasons for drawing near to God. To look into the face of man without having first seen the face of God is very dangerous—to go out into the world without locking up the heart and giving God the key is to leave it open to all sorts of spiritual vagrants! At night, again, to go to your rest as the swine roll into their sty, without thanking God for the mercies of the day, is shameful! The evening sacrifice should be devoutly offered as surely as we have enjoyed the evening fireside. We should thus put ourselves under the wings of the preserver of men. It may be said, “We can pray at all times.” I know we can, but I fear that those who do not pray at stated hours seldom pray at all! Those who pray in season are the most likely persons to pray at all seasons. Spiritual life does not care for a cast-iron regulation, but since life casts itself into some mold or other, I would have you careful of its external habit, as well as its internal power. Never allow great gaps in the wall of your habitual private prayer!

I go a step farther. I believe that there is a great guardian power *about family prayer* and I feel greatly distressed because I know that very many Christian families neglect it. Romanism, at one time, could do nothing in England because it could offer nothing but the shadow of what Christians had already in substance. “Do you hear that bell tinkling in the morning? What is that for? To go to church to pray!” “Indeed,” said the Puritan, “I have no need to go there to pray. I have had my children together and we have read a passage of Scripture, prayed, sang the praises of God—we have a church in our house.” Ah, there goes that bell again in the evening. What is that for? Why, it is the vesper bell! The good man answered that he had no need to trudge a mile or two for that, for his holy vespers had been said and sung around his own table, of which the big Bible was the chief ornament! They told him that there could be no service without a priest, but he replied that every godly man should be a priest in his own house. Thus have the saints defied the overtures of priestcraft and kept the faith from generation to generation! Household devotion and the pulpit are, under God, the stone walls of Protestantism! And my prayer is that these may not be broken down!

Another fence to protect piety is found in *weeknight services*. I notice that when people forsake weeknight meetings the power of their religion evaporates. I do not speak of those lawfully detained to watch the sick and attend to farm-work and other business, or as domestic servants and the like—there are exceptions to all rules—but I mean those who could attend if they had a mind to do so. When people say, “It is quite enough for me to be wearied with the sermons of the Sunday. I do not want to go out to prayer meetings, lectures and so forth”—then it is clear that they have no appetite for the Word of God—and surely this is a bad sign. If you have a bit of wall built to protect the Sunday, and then six times the distance left without a fence, I believe that Satan’s cattle will get in and do no end of mischief!

Take care, also, of the stone wall of *Bible reading*, and of speaking often, one to another, concerning the things of God. Associate with the godly and commune with God and you will thus, by the blessing of God’s Spirit, keep up a good fence against temptations, which otherwise will get into the fields of your soul and devour all goodly fruits!

Many have found much protection for the field of daily life in the stone wall of *a public profession of faith*. I am speaking to you who are real believers and I know that you have often found it a great safeguard to be known and recognized as a follower of Jesus! I have never regretted—and I never shall regret—the day on which I walked to the little river Lark, in Cambridgeshire, and was there buried with Christ in baptism! In this I acted contrary to the opinions of all my friends whom I respected and esteemed—but as I had read the Greek Testament for myself, I felt bound to be immersed upon the profession of my faith, and so I was. By that act I said to the world, “I am dead to you, and buried to you in Christ, and I hope henceforth to live in newness of life.” That day, by God’s grace, I imitated the tactics of the general who meant to fight the enemy till he conquered and, therefore, he burned his boats that there might be no way of retreat! I believe that a solemn confession of Christ before men is as a thorn hedge to keep one within bounds and to keep off those who hope to draw you aside. Of course, it is nothing but a hedge—and it is of no use to fence in a field of weeds—but when wheat is growing, a hedge is of great consequence. You who imagine that you can be the Lord’s and yet lie open like a common, are under a great error! You ought to be distinguished from the world and obey the voice which says, “Come you out from among them, be you separate.” The promise of salvation is to the man who with his heart believes and with his mouth confesses. Say right boldly, “Let others do as they will! As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” By this act you come out into the king’s highway and put yourself under the protection of the Lord of pilgrims—and He will take care of you. Oftentimes, when otherwise you might have hesitated, you will say, “The vows of the Lord are upon me—how can I draw back?” I pray you, then, set up the stone wall and keep it up! And if it has at any corner been tumbled over, set it up again and let it be seen by your

conduct and conversation that you are a follower of Jesus Christ—and are not ashamed to have it known!

Keep to your religious principles like men and do not turn aside for the sake of gain or respectability! Do not let wealth break down your wall, for I have known some make a great gap to let their carriage go through and to let in wealthy worldlings for the sake of their society. Those who forsake their principles to please men will in the end be lightly esteemed, but he who is faithful shall have the honor which comes from God. Look well to this hedge of steadfast adherence to the faith and you shall find a great blessing in it.

There is yet another stone wall which I will mention, namely, *firmness of character*. Our holy faith teaches a man to be decided in the cause of Christ and to be resolute in getting rid of evil habits. “If your eye offends you”—wear a shade? No—“pluck it out.” “If your arm offends you”—hang it in a sling? No—cut it off and cast it from you.” True religion is very thorough in what it recommends. It says to us, “touch not the unclean thing.” But many persons are so idle in the ways of God that they have no mind of their own—evil companions tempt them, and they cannot say, “No.” They need a stone wall made up of noes! Here are the stones, “no, no, No.” Dare to be different! Resolve to keep close to Christ! Make a stern determination to permit nothing in your life, however gainful or pleasurable, if it would dishonor the name of Jesus! Be dogmatically true, obstinately holy, immovably honest, desperately kind, fixedly upright! If God’s grace sets up this hedge around you, even Satan will feel that he cannot get in and will complain to God, “have You not set a hedge about him?” I have kept you long enough looking over the wall! Let me invite you in and, for a few minutes, let us—

II. CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF A BROKEN-DOWN FENCE.

To make short work of it, first, *the boundary is gone*. Those lines of separation which were kept up by the good principles which were instilled in him by religious habits, by a bold profession and by a firm resolve, have vanished. And now the question is, “Is he a Christian, or is he not?” The fence is so far gone that he does not know which is his Lord’s property, and which remains an open common. In fact, he does not know whether he is still included in the Royal domain, or left to be mere waste of the world’s manor! This is for lack of keeping up the fences. If that man had lived near to God, if he had walked in his integrity, if the Spirit of God had richly rested on him in all holy living and waiting upon God, he would have known where the boundary was and he would have seen whether his land lay in the parish of All-Saints, or in the region called no-man’s-land, or in the district where Satan is the lord of the manor! I heard of a dear old saint the other day who, when she was near to death, was attacked by Satan and, waving her finger at the enemy in her gentle way, she routed him by saying, “Chosen! Chosen! Chosen!” She knew that she was chosen and she remembered the text, “The Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you.” When the wall stands in its integrity all around the field, we can resist

the devil by bidding him leave the Lord's property alone! "Begone! Look somewhere else. I belong to Christ, not to you." To do this you must mend the hedges well, so that there shall be a clear boundary line—and then you can say, "Trespassers, beware!" Do not yield an inch to the enemy, but make the wall all the higher, the more he seeks to enter. O that this adversary may never find a gap to enter by!

Next, when the wall has fallen, *the protection is gone*. When a man's heart has its wall broken, all his thoughts will go astray and wander upon the mountains of vanity. Like sheep, thoughts need careful folding, or they will be off in no time. "I hate vain thoughts," said David, but slothful men are sure to have plenty of them, for there is no keeping your thoughts out of vanity unless you stop every gap and shut every gate. Holy thoughts, comfortable meditations, devout longings and gracious communing will be off and gone if we sluggishly allow the stone wall to get out of repair.

Nor is this all, for as good things go out, so bad things come in. When the wall is gone, every passer-by sees, as it were, an invitation to enter! You have set before him an open door and in he comes. Are there fruits? He plucks them, of course. He walks about as if it were a public place and he pries everywhere. Is there any secret corner of your heart which you would keep for Jesus? Satan or the world will walk in—and do you wonder? Every passing goat, or roaming ox, or stray ass visits the growing crops and spoils more than he eats! And who can blame the creature when the gaps are so wide? All manner of evil lusts, desires, and imaginations prey upon an unfenced soul. It is of no use for you to say, "Lead us not into temptation." God will hear your prayer and He will not lead you there, but you are leading yourself into it, you are tempting the devil to tempt you! If you leave yourself open to evil influences, the Spirit of God will be grieved and He may leave you to reap the result of your folly. What do you think, friend? Had you not better attend to your fences at once?

And then there is another evil, for *the land itself will go away*. "No," you say, "how can that be?" If a stone wall is broken down around a farm in England, a man does not thereby lose his land, but in many parts of Palestine the land is all ups and downs on the sides of the hills—and every bit of ground is terraced and kept up by walls. When the walls fall, the soil slips over, terrace upon terrace, and the vines and trees go down with it! Then the rain comes and washes the soil away and nothing is left but barren crags which would starve a lark! In the same manner, a man may so neglect himself, so neglect the things of God and become so careless and indifferent about doctrine, and about holy living, that his power to do good ceases and his mind, his heart, and his energy seem to be gone. The prophet said, "Ephraim is a silly dove, without heart." There are flocks of such silly doves. The man who trifles with religion, sports with his own soul and will soon degenerate into so much of a trifler that he will be averse to solemn thought and incapable of real usefulness! I

charge you, dear friends, to be sternly true to yourselves and to your God! Stand to your principles in this evil and wicked day! Now, when everything seems to be turned into marsh, mire and mud—and religious thought appears to be silently sliding and slipping along, descending like a stream of slime into the Dead Sea of unbelief—get solid walls built around your life, around your faith and around your character! Stand fast and having done all, still stand! May God the Holy Spirit cause you to be rooted and grounded, built up and established, fixed and confirmed, never “casting away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward.” Lastly, I want, if I can, to—

III. WAKE UP THE SLUGGARD.

I would like to throw a handful of gravel up to his window. It is time to get up, for the sun has drunk up all the dew. He craves “a little more sleep.” My dear fellow, if you take a little more sleep, you will never wake at all till you lift up your eyes in another world! Wake at once! Leap from your bed before you are smothered in it. Wake up! Do you not see where you are? You have let things alone till your heart is covered with sins like weeds. You have neglected God and Christ till you have grown worldly, sinful, careless, indifferent, ungodly! I mean some of you who were once named with the sacred name! You have become like worldlings and are almost as far from being what you ought to be, as others who make no profession at all! Look at yourselves and see what has come of your neglected walls. Then look at some of your fellow Christians and mark how diligent they are. Look at many among them who are poor and illiterate—and yet they are doing far more than you for the Lord Jesus! In spite of your talents and opportunities, you are an unprofitable servant, letting all things run to waste! Is it not time that you bestirred yourself? Look again at others who, like yourself, went to sleep, meaning to wake in a little while. What has become of them? Alas, for there are those who have fallen into gross sin, dishonored their character and who have been put away from the church of God—yet they only went a little further than you have done! Your state of heart is much the same as theirs and if you should be tempted, as they have been, you will probably make shipwreck as they have done! Oh, see to it, you that slumber, for an idle professor is ready for anything. A slothful professor’s heart is tinder for the devil’s tinderbox! Does your heart thus invite the sparks of temptation?

Remember, lastly, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Shall He come and find you sleeping? Remember the judgment. What will you say to excuse yourself for opportunities lost, time wasted and talents wrapped up in a napkin when the Lord shall come?

As for you, my unconverted friend, if you go dreaming through this world without any sort of trouble, and never look to the state of your heart at all, you will be a lost man beyond all question! The slothful can have no hope, for “if the righteous scarcely are saved,” who strive to serve their Lord—where will those appear who sleep on in defiance of the calls of God? Salvation is wholly and alone of Grace, as you well know—but Grace never works in men’s minds towards slumbering and

indifference—it tends towards energy, activity, fervor, importunity, self-sacrifice! God grant us the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, that all things may be set in order, sins cut up by the roots within the heart and the whole man protected by sanctifying Grace from the wasters which lurk around, hoping to enter where the wall is low. O Lord, remember us in mercy, fence us about by Your power, and keep us from the sloth which would expose us to evil, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:1-20.**

It is not easy to see the special subjects that are spoken of by David in each of the short portions of eight verses, yet I do not doubt that if each portion were carefully examined, we would see that there is some thread running through. We have not here simply a number of pious sentences about the excellence of God's word, but we have choice gems, each of them set in a golden ring of spiritual intent and purpose. I think the first eight verses, all of which begin with that letter Aleph, or A, set forth the excellence of abiding in holiness and walking continually in the way of the Lord. Not so much the restoring and comforting power of the word, as the blessedness of that word in leading us to conduct ourselves in consistency of character at all times.

Verse 1. *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.* There is another blessing which comes before this. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered." And we can never know the blessing of this 119th Psalm unless we have felt in our own souls that first blessing—the blessedness of forgiven sin! But when, through the forgiveness of sin, we are put upon gospel ground and are saved—then, not according to the law, but according to the gospel—does this blessing come upon us. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way." The men who have kept their garments unspotted from the world—who from the time of their conversion even until now have been under the influence of the divine Spirit, and so have been enabled to walk in holiness without once defiling their garments with any great and public sin—who walk in the law of the Lord, not occasionally, but always—whose daily walk is in conformity with the divine mind—these are truly blessed!

2. *Blessed are they that keep His testimonies and that seek Him with the whole heart.* For he that has most of God, yet needs to seek more. We keep the testimonies—those we know, for we are taught of the Lord according to the promise, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." Yet we still seek more. With our whole heart we are pressing on still to something higher and better! Even the undefiled in the way are so, comparatively—they are not absolutely undefiled, so as to be absolutely perfect in the sight of God—hence they feel their imperfection and they press after something better. They seek Him with the whole heart.

3, 4. *They also do no iniquity, they walk in His ways. You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently.* So that if we do, we are unprofitable servants; we have done no more than was our duty to do! When His divine grace has renewed us and has enabled us to walk in all sobriety, truthfulness and holiness, even then we have nothing to boast of! “You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently.”

5. *O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!* “Oh, that I may never defile my garments!” And he who has not defiled his garments still prays the same prayer that he may be kept still and directed still. “Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!”

6. *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.* It gives a man boldness. Integrity of heart before God breeds sacred courage. He has nothing to be ashamed of and he is not ashamed when he has respect unto all God’s commandments.

7. *I will praise You with uprightness of heart when I shall have learned Your righteous judgments.* Not, “I will praise myself.” Not, “I will take credit, myself, for my clean walking,” but, “When You have taught me and I learn Your ways, then all the praise shall be rendered unto You.” This is the fruit of evangelical obedience! Legal obedience, even could it be rendered, would be sure to claim the servant’s wage and take to itself the praise—but the obedience of a child of God leads to the laying of honor at Jehovah’s feet.

8. *I will keep Your statutes: O forsake me not utterly!* Strong resolution, but a deep consciousness of weakness and unworthiness—

***“I will, but oh’...how can I do it?
Oh, for this, no strength have I—
My strength is at Your feet to lie.
Oh, forsake me not utterly.”***

Now, in the next eight verses it seems to me that the subject is somewhat different. We have seen the excellence of an undefiled way. Now we have before us one who wants to prove the power of the word to keep him in that undefiled way, and so he begins with this question.

9. *How shall a young man cleanse his way?* His passions are strong, his experience little. His tempers are many—his friends cannot always be at his side. “How shall he cleanse his way?” It is very apt to become miry. The answer is—

9. *By taking heed thereto according to Your word.* The Word of God will keep him in the clean path—will warn him of all the mire into which he would have fallen—and if he takes heed to his steps, he shall not trip.

10. *With my whole heart have I sought You: O let me not wander from Your commandments.* There is the young man’s fear and it may be the old man’s fear, too. “I have sought You sincerely and earnestly, but do not permit my weaker passions to get the mastery over me—do not suffer me in some unguarded hour to be carried captive by my lusts. Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments. It were better to die than to wander from Your way.” The true convert dreads sin! He loathes the very thought

of the most pleasurable folly. “Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments.”

11. *Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.* There is the dread, you see—the dread of sinning—the dread of defiling his way. So he says that he has adopted this divine remedy. A good division of this text, if anyone would preach from it, is the best thing, “Your word,” in the best place—“have I hid in my heart,” for the best of purposes—“that I might not sin against You.”

12. *Blessed are You, O LORD: teach me Your statutes.* As if he said, “Teach me your statutes that I may be blessed, too. You are a happy God. Teach me Your way that I may be happy, too. Blessed are the undefiled. Teach me to be so, that as You are blessed, so I may be.”

13, 14. *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.* A man’s walking will be right when his delight is of this kind, for where the heart goes, the life will go. To some people religion is a task. It will never have much power over them. But when it becomes a delight, then will their walk be affected by it. A well-known and renowned infidel of the last generation, traveling in Wales, said to a little girl whom he saw reading her Bible, “Well, my dear,” he said, “I see you are getting through your task.” “Task, sir?” she said, “What do you mean? I am reading the Bible.” He said, “I thought your mother had set you a chapter to read.” “Oh no, sir. If my mother wanted to punish me, she would not make me read the Bible. It is the most delightful book in the entire world and it is a great joy to me when I can get a little time alone to read my Bible.” It touched his heart. As he confessed afterwards, he was delighted to find something like genuine religion. And where you find delight in religion, there it is genuine! True, genuine religion is like some of the German waters. They come up all fresh and sparkling. I like to see the sparkling in it—a little sparking religion—a little flash of joy and of delight. But very much that we get now-a-days is flat, stale, dull, unprofitable. They keep it corked, but badly corked, usually, and when we see it, there is nothing in it that we should desire it! It is a poor article. God give us delight in Himself, for that is true religion!—

***“I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies
As much as in all riches.”***

15. *I will meditate in Your precepts, and have respect unto Your ways.* An excellent way of keeping the life clean is to keep the thoughts clean. Our boys are brought to prison by reading the abominable trash that is poured forth for juveniles—and many and many a crime has been the result of the fiction of the present day! It is often not only light reading, but filthy reading, too. If we would read God’s word more, and meditate in it better, our hearts would be kept sweet and so would our lives!

16. *I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your word.* God grant that we never may.

17. *Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live, and keep Your word.* Does it need much grace, then, to keep a child of God alive—even

to keep him alive? Yes, it does! Little grace will be of no use to us. We must have great grace, for our needs are great. Sometimes our troubles are great. At other times our temptations are great. We are always in great necessity and You, Lord, must have a large bank, and you must give it liberally to us, or else we, poor, penniless beggars, must utterly die of need. Merely to live, then, needs the bounty of God. “Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word”—for there is no living in truth, except as we keep the Word of God. Those who live in the neglect of God’s word are not living at all, but they are dead while they live! God deliver us from such life.

18. *Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law.* They are there, but I cannot see them unless You open my eyes. It is not that Your word is dark, but that my eyes are dim. Yes, by nature they are blinded altogether. Oh, You who are the great Physician of the blind, open my eyes!

19. *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Your commandments from me.* Do you see the drift of that? He says, “I am a stranger here. Then, Lord, if You do not become and continue to be my Acquaintance, I am altogether alone.” It is true of the Christian that he cannot find anything here that can satisfy his soul. He must, therefore, have the Lord, or else he is in a very sorry case. Oh, beloved, the more you find yourselves strangers in this world, the more are you becoming like your God! The Psalmist says elsewhere, “For I am a stranger *with You.*” Not, “to You,” but, “*with You, like You,*” for God is a stranger in this world. Men do not recognize Him or delight themselves in Him. “So, since, Lord, I have no other friend, and can find no other satisfying portion, hide not Your commandments from me. On the contrary, let me see more of You, because I have nothing else.”

20. *My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto Your judgments at all times.* We cannot always say that, for we sometimes wish that our hearts would break. Sometimes we sing—

***“My heart rejoice or ache—
Resolve this doubt for me;
And if it is not broken, break
And heal it if it be.”***

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OUR LORD'S TRANSCENDENT GREATNESS NO. 3382

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1913,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 2, 1866.

*"Now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth."
Micah 5:4.*

THERE can be no doubt but what the prophet here spoke of the Messiah—of our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall not need to enter into any discussion of that subject here, but shall take it at once for granted that the passage means, "Now shall the Lord Jesus be great unto the ends of the earth." This does not mean that Jesus Christ will be any greater than He always is essentially and naturally. As the Son of God, He is infinite in glory and can be no greater. As King of kings and Lord of lords, His glory fills immensity. Before Him all intelligent spirits that are obedient to God pay their constant homage. He is so great that as we look up to Him, we can both rejoice in Him as our brother and be humbled in His presence when we reflect that He is our God. Jesus Christ is not to be greater, then, essentially than He now is. He is "God over all, blessed forever." The greatness here spoken of is not one of essence, but of manifestation. Christ is to be made great in the judgment, hearts and understandings of men, as He is at all times really great in Himself. When we read in the text, "Now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth," we may remember that *He is already great in heaven*. Albeit that man rejects Him—painful as the thought is that multitudes in this world have not even heard His name and that multitudes more only know it to revile it—yet there is a place where His name is great.

In every golden street that name is celebrated. The strings of every holy harp in heaven are set to the melodies of His praise. All of "the melodious sonnets sung by angel hosts above" are to extol and magnify Him. They delight to do Him service. We may comfort ourselves with this thought when blasphemy abounds and the love of many grows cold. There is at least one shrine where He is always adored—one happier and better land where the sound of blasphemy never profanes Him—where He is loved, adored and revered by every creature!

And it is also sweet to remember that although Jesus Christ is not as yet great unto the ends of the earth, yet He is exceedingly *great in the hearts of the multitudes of His people*. When we meet here tonight, a comparatively little band, we are not the only worshipers of the crucified one. At this moment the sacred song is going up from tens of thousands of sincere hearts in this island. Across the continent there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal, but who delight to join with angels and archangels in singing the praises of Jesus. And far, far across the sea,

men of our own kith and kin love Him as we do. No, no, where is there a place where the name of Jesus is not now known? As the wide sea is everywhere whitened with the sails of our commerce, so do these swift ships bear in them the servants of God!

The desert has been heard to ring with the songs of His praises! Adventurous missionaries have forced their way to what seemed to be impenetrable swamps and deserts that never could be trodden by the foot of man—and Jesus Christ's name has been made known—at least as a witness *against* the people, even where it has not been received by the people. Little is the light of God, but we thank God we have some light! Few there are that find the narrow road, but still, there is a goodly company who, as they march along, sing of Jesus—the way, the truth and the life! “The whole world lies in the wicked one,” but, like an oasis in the midst of the desert, we can see the Christian church! Like a handful of salt scattered over a mass of putridity, like here and there a lamp hung up in the thick darkness, God has a chosen people and in their hearts Jesus Christ is great—and shall be great in time and in eternity!

But the text does mean this, that throughout the whole world—north, south, east, and west—Jesus Christ shall yet be made great! We will speak of this tonight, first, *by showing that He deserves to be great*. Then by reminding you that *God has decreed that He shall be great*. Thirdly, by asking you, my brothers and sisters, *whether you do not also agree with that decree* and now, in His strength, *that you will make Him great*. And then I shall close by asking *whether there are not some here whose hearts, as yet unbowed to His dominion, shall tonight come and acknowledge His sway, that they also may feel and proclaim His greatness unto the ends of the earth*. In the first place, what a task I have undertaken in endeavoring to show that—

I. JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE MADE GREAT!

Oh, my brothers and sisters, it needs an angel to set forth the person of the Lord Jesus, and yet an angel might fail, for an angel was never washed in the Savior's blood and never redeemed from wrath by Jesus the substitute! What are my lips but poor, cold clay, and what are my words but air, and how shall I, then, set forth the Son of God, the eternal one, “who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich”?

Does the world ring with the name of the *conqueror*? It was but a few years ago that everywhere the name of Napoleon was dreaded and men trembled at the very thought of that mighty destroyer of the human race. Ah, well, if a conqueror's name always seems to have a spell about it which fascinates men with its glitter and its glare, I will say that Jesus is a greater conqueror than all the Napoleons, or Alexanders, or Caesars who ever devastated the world, for He has overcome that which overcame them!

Kings as they were, they were often the victims of great sin. Alexander drowned himself in the bowl long before he died, for he was the slave of drunkenness. But Christ has fought with sin and overcome it, leading it

captive at His chariot wheels. Behold the conqueror, smitten in the breast by the skeleton hand, lies as motionless as the slave he slew! Death is the conqueror of conquerors, and casts noble dust upon the same grave as the poorest and most ignoble! But my Lord and Master has conquered death—

***“He, hell in hell laid low,
Made sin, He sin overthrew,
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death, by dying, slew.”***

My Master met Satan face to face and put His foot upon his neck. He met sin and trod it as men tread grapes in the winepress! He met death, itself, the master of all, and rent the grave, rolled away the stone and proclaimed a resurrection to the buried sons of men! This conqueror is, and well does He deserve to be made great!

Some men who will not applaud a conqueror will sometimes speak well of a deliverer. I saw on the triumphal arch at Milan, at the far end of the Corso, a well-deserved eulogy on the man who, whether with or without his own will, helped at first to snap the chains of Italy. There was a grateful recognition on the part of Italy of the deeds of Victor Emmanuel and of Louis Napoleon—and the horses of triumph on the top of the Arch of Victory seemed well placed as a tribute to one who had helped to set a nation free, which long had felt the tyrant's chain. It is said that when Macedonia was first set free, the Greeks were assembled at their games and they gave to him who freed Greece the name of “Sotea” or “Savior,” and the shouting was such that they said the birds fell dead, astonished! 'Twas an exaggeration, but I can understand the joy of a nation when a savior comes to deliver them from bondage! But what shouts shall be equal to the praises of the Son of God! The fetters He has broken are the fetters of your souls! The dungeons from which He delivers are the dungeons of eternal fire! The rescue that He brings you is not for this life, only, but for the life to come! As everlasting as the age of God is the deliverance which Jesus brings! Sound, sound His name abroad! Daughters of music, give Him your sweetest notes. Look, the triumphant hero comes! Now let every heart give forth its glad peal of holy joy for all that He has done! He deserves to be great, both as conqueror and as deliverer!

In these more peaceful times, too, men are inclined to make those great who are *full of learning*. When a man has penetrated through the shell of ignorance and has gotten to the central core of knowledge, men say that he is great. We speak of a great geologist, a great mathematician, or a great astronomer. Men are proud of their fellow man when he has threaded the stars, walked with his staff above and become familiar with planet and with comet, as though they were his next of kin! But what shall I say of my Lord, for in Him dwells all “the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”? To know Him is life and by His knowledge shall His righteous one justify many. If you get Christ, you get wisdom! His name is “wisdom.” Solomon, the wise one, called Him so. He is wisdom without faintest folly, knowledge without mistake. Oh, let Him, then, be made great!

Great *discoverers, too*, are highly honored and valued. It was right of Her Majesty the Queen to confer knighthood upon those who had bound two lands together, moored two distant nations side by side, so that they could speak to each other in friendly terms. 'Twas well done, good sirs, to make the depths of the sea a highway for human thought! But what has Jesus done? He has not merely linked England and America together, but heaven and earth! He has thrown a connecting cable between the sinner, far off from God, and the eternal one who, hating sin, was far off from man. Now, through Him we can speak with God and, through Him, God returns an answer to the message of our misery and the sigh of our grief! Oh, brothers and sisters, Christ has established a communication which is swifter than the telegraph! "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." He has bridged a gulf such as no human mind ever imagined could be bridged! As far as hell is from heaven was man from God—but Christ has bridged the chasm! The mountains of our sins are greater than a thousand Alps heaped on each other—and they stood between us and God—but the cross has tunneled the mountains and there is now a highway for souls to come to God! Now shall He be great, indeed, if He gets His just deserts!

Men also, now-a-days, are wise enough to think those great *who show great generosity*. She is great who goes into the hospital, devoting the prime of her days to the relieving of human misery. He is truly great who, having acquired wealth, gives it with more than a princely hand to build habitations for the poor. He is great who, having won a nation, gives it up as freely as he won it and who lives unrestrained by the smiles or frowns of kings and is the true, though uncrowned, king, the world's hero, whom we all delight to honor! But oh, my Master, my Lord Jesus as much excels all these as the sun excels the stars! He gave not corruptible things, as silver and gold, but He gave Himself, His heart, His soul, His deity! He gave such a jewel for us that if heaven and earth were sold, they could not buy another like it! He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from iniquity! Speak of entering into hospitals? He came unto this great hospital—this huge leper house, the world—and He Himself took our infirmities, bore our sicknesses and by His stripes we are healed! Speak of the disinterestedness that has made men heroes from the mere love of their fellow men? What had Christ to gain? Oh, you lamps of heaven, what had He to gain? Your splendor was enough for Him! What could He win but shame, disgrace, abuse, the spit on His face and the scourging on His shoulders?

It was for the love of His enemies, the love of those who hated and despised Him and nailed Him to the cross—it was for this transcendent, unparalleled love that Christ came to earth! He deserves to be great and I am sure that if you do not think that Jesus Christ is great, it is because you do not know Him—

***"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him too."***

There is no biography that has ever been written that is like that given us by the four evangelists. There is no story of human sacrifice that can

rival it, or that can be mentioned in the same breath! Oh, men, it was for you He lived! Oh, men, it was for you He died!

The angels love Him, though for them He laid not down His life—and shall men, alone, be dumb, or earth, alone, fast close her mouth and refuse to praise Him? The very stones, surely, would speak, if we did not say, “Now, shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.”

Thus much upon a theme that defies our power to set forth fully. And now, in the second place, the text may be viewed as—

II. A SOLEMN PURPOSE AND DECREE ON THE PART OF GOD.

Christ shall be made great to the ends of the earth. There are idol-gods that are worshiped by the largest proportion of our race, but the idols He shall utterly abolish! The false prophets have more followers on earth than Christ has. There are more Muslims than Christians of all kinds. But the crescent of Mohamed must wane. The papacy has still a firm hold upon the minds of millions, but, like a millstone which is hurled into the flood to rise no more, so must the anti-Christ of Rome be utterly cast away! Everything that stands in the place of Christ must be broken into a thousand shivers, for He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet! Brothers and sisters, the very signs of the times, as well as the Word of God, lead us to the comfortable belief that there should be a wider enlightenment of the human mind. It may be, certainly it may be, that the Lord will speedily come, but it does not seem to me at all likely that He will. We are to live anticipating His coming, as servants who know they will have to give an account when He does come. That is the practical bearing of the doctrine upon our life, but there are many prophecies yet to be fulfilled which seem to show that He is not coming just now. I believe that there will be a gradual enlightenment of the human race. I see but little of it at present, but, still, He *must* be great unto the ends of the earth! Hard hearts will melt before the preaching of His gospel. Perhaps they will melt suddenly. Perhaps a nation shall be born in a day. That preaching which now wins tens might, if God willed it, win hundreds, no, it might win thousands and hundreds of thousands! I have never seen any reason why, if God blesses half a dozen in the Tabernacle under a sermon, He should not bless the whole congregation! I do not see any reason why, if He blesses the preaching of the word here, He should not bless it everywhere! No, I see a great many reasons why He should and I hope that He will—and that Pentecost will be outdone until we shall talk of that blessed day as being but a trifling beginning of a much greater result! Pentecost was only the feast of the first-fruits. It was not the harvest. The first-fruits were just one sheaf and, surely the harvest is to be much more than that! Let us, then, expect far greater things than even Pentecost knew!

We would not be surprised if news should come, long before these heads of ours sleep among the sweet clods of the valley, that there has been an awakening through Germany and France—that the gospel has spread all down the Apennines—that the truth of God, as it is in Jesus, has shaken Italy from end to end! That Turkey has submitted to the cross! That the Euphrates has dried up its rebellion, that the multitudes

of India have cast away Vishnu and Siva and bowed before Christ! That Confucius is no longer the great philosopher of China, but that the man of Nazareth is the teacher of millions in that strange people—that from Eastern Coast to Western—the people have set their faces towards Christ and desire to learn concerning Him! We may be living upon the threshold of mighty times. “There were giants upon the earth” in days gone by. There may be giants yet again and the gospel which has crept along at a steady pace may yet take to itself its great power and, swift as the chariot of the sun, the light of truth shall fly the whole world over! This, then, is God's purpose and decree, “Now, shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.”

I want, now, in the third place, to ask Christians here—

III. WHETHER, AS THIS IS GOD'S DECREE, IT HAS NOT OFTEN ALSO BEEN THE EXPRESSION OF OUR HEARTS?

When you and I were first converted, did we not say that we would make Him great? And we did try to do it. We began to talk to our friends. We got a handful of tracts and gave them away. We tried to get into a little cottage to speak about Christ and our resolve then was that, as far as ever our power would go, we would make Christ great to the ends of the earth! Ah, we have fallen very sadly short of those first days. I am afraid we have not kept up our first love, but I wish that every Christian here would go back to that first moment when he received his pardon and say, “Yes, I have been loved much and, having had much forgiven, in God's name, I will love Him much in return. And as far as I can, I will make His name great.”

Since that period we have had some very happy seasons. I know that in this very house of prayer we have sometimes felt that we could stay here forever. It has been like heaven below to us, and then we have said, “Oh, what will I not give Him? I will consecrate my substance. I will use my tongue, my mind, my hands—I will do anything for Him—He has loved me so much that I cannot help talking about it! I will make my children and all my family know what a precious Savior He is.” Oh, I wish that we had come to this and that we not only said it, now and then, but that it was our prayer night and day and the one comfort of our hearts! Beloved, there are some of us who can say before God, the heart-searching one, that the one thing we care about is to make Jesus Christ great. I have sometimes prayed from this platform a prayer which has made some of you wonder when I have asked that, if the crushing of me might lift Christ one inch higher, it might be done at once. Well, it is my daily feeling. I thank God that if it would more honor Him to cast me where He wills, if I might but be permitted to love Him and He will but love me, the thing may be done and He shall have all the praise! While Mr. Tennant was being greatly helped of God in preaching, it came to pass on a certain Sunday that a sermon which he had very carefully prepared suddenly went from his mind and, instead of preaching, he was compelled to be silent. It was a painfully humbling thing for him, but it was the means of the conversion of one of his hearers, who said, “Then I am to understand that as Mr. Tennant preaches so mightily sometimes

to the people, but could not preach on this occasion, he must have been helped of God before—and so it has been God that has spoken to me.” This thought pricked the man to the heart. Oh, it were a good thing to be made a shame, a blessed thing to be a butt, a jest, a jeer, a byword—if Christ were but lifted up thereby!

When Sir Walter Raleigh laid down his cloak and covered the mire for Queen Elizabeth's sake, it was, I fear, but a courtier's trick. But for Christians to be willing to lose their reputations and even their very lives to make Christ glorious—this is the only truly Christian way of living! God forbid that we should ever think about sparing or pampering self. I saw a good Christian brother last Friday, whom God has greatly blessed. But, when working in a very bad part of London, he used to be constantly teased by abominable stories which were made up against him. I said to Him, “I see you have got something that no evangelist can afford to have.” “What is that?” he said. “Why,” was the reply, “you have got a good reputation and you must get rid of it for Christ's sake. That is to say, live a holy life and then let men call you ‘devil’ if they like. Let them lay every sin to your charge, but never heed them, never speak nor fight for yourself, but speak and fight for your Master! Contend for Him and think it to be your honor and your glory to become a butt, an outcast and as the offscouring of all things if Jehovah-Jesus may but wear the crown—and you can win but one single soul to Jesus Christ forever.”

I think, then, that we are all agreed upon this point. We mean, God helping us, to hold fast to this and to do what we can that Jesus Christ may be great unto the ends of the earth!

And now we can spend only two or three minutes in asking the question—

IV. ARE THERE NOT SOME HERE TONIGHT IN WHOM JESUS CHRIST MAY BE MADE GREAT?

Now, you good people who have never done anything wrong and who have got a very good righteousness of your own—I do not ask you to glorify Christ—because you cannot! If I wanted to praise up some doctor and said, “Now, here he is—he can cure all diseases! Will you come and help him to get a name?” I would know that you who were not sick could not help him, but the man who was most sick would be the very one that would get the doctor the best name if he could cure him! So when Christ's name is to be lifted up and we want to preach Him so that He may be extolled, you who feel your guilt are the very men who can help us! Supposing now, Jesus Christ should take the drunk and wash out his mouth and make a sober man of him—and a Christian—would not that make Christ to be exalted? And ah, if there should be, even here, a woman of an evil and vicious life, and Christ should change her so as to make her chaste and honorable—oh, how great it would make Him to become! And if some black villain has crept in here and one who has said of himself that there is no hope of his being converted and no mercy possible for him—supposing he should find pardon and peace by believing in Jesus? And then suppose he become a preacher of His

gospel—would that not make Christ's name to be made great? John Newton was once the vilest of the vile and oh, it made London wonder when the African blasphemer stood up in the pulpit of the church of St. Mary, Woolnooth, to preach the Christ and the cross which he had so blasphemed! And oh, may God make London wonder yet again by taking some of the worst of the worst, and saving them, and making them proclaimers of the gospel of His grace! Why should He not do it? He has often done it. Are you willing and anxious that He should do it again? Then cry to Him and He will do it!

Perhaps there is one here who has been a backslider. Ah, backslider, you can make Christ's name great if you come back to Him! Mr. Whitefield's brother had once been a very sad backslider. He had gone far, far from the way of Christ. At last his conscience was pricked and he fell into despair. Sitting at tea one day with the Countess of Huntingdon, he said to the Countess, "I know what you have said is very proper, and I believe in the infinite mercy and goodness of God, but I do not believe in its application to me, for I am a lost man." The Countess put down the tea and said, "I am glad to hear it, Mr. Whitefield! I am glad to hear it!" "Madam," he said, "I did not think you would rejoice and glory in a thing as terrible as that!" "I am glad to hear you say you are lost, Mr. Whitefield," she said, "for it is written that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost." His eyes sparkled and he said, "I thank God for that text, and for the extraordinary power with which it has now come into my heart." He died that night and God had just sent him the word of peace in time to gather him into the fold. Why should not many of you who are lost glorify the name of Christ by trusting Him, for He came to seek and to save the lost?

Andrew Fuller was once preaching in Scotland and there was a wicked, abandoned woman, whose life had been given up to all sorts of filthiness. She noticed that the church was very full and that many people were standing outside. So she asked what was doing. They told her that an Englishman was preaching. She desired to hear him—she pressed into the crowd, as some of you may have done tonight—and Mr. Fuller just then used this blessed expression, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." "Oh," said the woman, "is there an invitation to the ends of the earth? Surely I am one of the ends of the earth!" She looked, according to the gracious command, and Christ got a good name in that Scottish parish through her being so wondrously saved! Oh, I wish He could be great to some of you who are in the ends of the earth! I feel as if I could give my eyes, both of them, if Christ could but be great with some of you!

The devil has been great with you. He has had his bit in your mouth. He has ridden you, and will yet ride you down to hell! Will you never kick against him? Oh, that Christ might come and lay hold upon your bridle and say, "You shall go no further," so turning you into a new course and making you willing in the day of His power!

Last of all, there may be one here who has been an infidel. If there is, I only hope that he will yet come to make Christ's name great. I remember

hearing that Mr. John Cooke, of Maidenhead, was once blessed to the conversion of a man when he was preaching upon the unpardonable sin. In the town where he preached there was a young man who was a member of a club which was very common some 50 years ago, but now happily, I hope, extinct, called, "The Hell-Fire Club."

The object of the club was to meet once or twice a week and each member of the club was to invent some new oath or be fined. The young man went to hear Mr. Cooke only with the design of picking up some new religious phrase that he might turn into a fresh blasphemy and so delight the unhappy men with whom he was accustomed to meet at the public-house.

The subject was, as I have said, the unpardonable sin. And Mr. Cooke showed what that sin was *not*, and who had *not* committed it—and the man found, as he listened, that he was one of those who had not committed it. He went home and fell, bathed in tears, before God, to think that he had gone so far, but had not been permitted to go quite as far as the unpardonable sin! That man became a Christian and a useful servant of the Lord Jesus. I will be bound to say that "The Hell-Fire Club" began to feel that Jesus Christ's name was great! I wish that some of you who are practically Hell-Fire men and women might become heaven's men and women and become so tonight! Oh, it would be a fine thing if you went home and your wife should find you saying—instead of cursing and swearing—"I think we must pray." How struck she would be! There is a good woman here now with her husband—I think they are both to be received into fellowship tonight—and what a happy time it was for her—though even she then knew little or nothing about Christ—when one night, as they were going to bed, her husband knelt down and prayed! She had never heard such a thing before, but after a little while she thought she had better pray, too. You cannot do better, good woman, when the Lord blesses your husband, than to try to get a blessing, too. They could not long pray in quiet—and soon she asked how it had all come about—and so she learned that it came to pass that God had met with the husband. Oh, I wish He would meet with some of you! He has, in His love, turned many a lion into a lamb, and many a raven into a dove.

Let us all pray this short prayer—

*"Oh, sovereign grace, my heart subdued,
I would be led in triumph, too!
A willing captive to my Lord,
To sing the triumph of His word."*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: REVELATION 12.

Verse 1. *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. This is that woman of whom the promise runs, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." John saw this in a vision in the heavenly places. He saw the church of God, enthroned, made glorious, clothed with the sun, having the brightness of divine light*

about her, with all that is variable, changeable as the moon under her feet, and upon her head the crown “that her Lord had given her”—twelve patriarchs, twelve prophets, twelve apostles, a complete number of glorious lights kindled from heaven!

2. *And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.* That child that is born of her, that seed of the woman that shall bruise the serpent's head is first, Christ, and then all the first-born, of whom He is the great representative.

3, 4. *And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.* The spirit of evil in the heavenlies fighting with the power of light and goodness and grace, a mysterious being with great power, high intelligence, seven heads, ten horns, and having mighty influence over multitudes of men, so that there were seven crowns upon his seven heads. “And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.” The crocodile, which, I suppose, was the earthly figure from which John's dream sprang, has great force in its tail and Satan, doubtless of old, drew from heaven a number of its stars—other angels fell with him. And there are times in the heavens of the church when the ministers fall—they seem to go in companies. Those who should be lights for God are into darkness and become teachers of heresy. “He did cast them down to the earth.” They lost their brightness, they betrayed their earthly origin. “And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.” Remember how he sought to slay Jesus and the like is the case of all the man-children born unto God, who will be of service in the kingdom of God. The main attack of the dragon was against the child—the main attack of the power of evil is against Christ and everything Christly. If he could destroy the gospel, he would not care about the church one whit—the woman might go if the man-child could be destroyed.

5. *And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne.* That is the brief history of the birth of Christ and of His going from us. He “was caught up unto God, and to His throne.” God will take care of the great principle of truth. If it cannot have a refuge on earth, He will find it a refuge in heaven.

6. *And the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared of God that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.* The church of God was long in obscurity. You can hardly find it among the Albigenses and Waldenses. It was hidden away among the mountains. The Wycliffites, the Lollards and others held fast the truth of God, but history scarcely records their names. The woman was in the wilderness, hidden away for many a day. “And there was war in heaven.” You are not to think of “heaven” as a place, but among the

heavenlies. John, in a vision, saw the great contending powers of evil. He was like the prophet when he saw a mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire.

7, 8. *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. And prevailed not: neither was their place found any more in heaven.* You remember how our Lord, who is the true Michael, the only great archangel, said at the beginning of the preaching of the gospel, "I beheld Satan as lightning falling from heaven." His power among the heavenlies is gone! He was cast out of the place called heaven. So is he now, by the preaching of the gospel, and by the death of Christ, cast down from among the heavenly influences.

9. *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.* This was done in the olden time as a matter of fact. It is done continually, spiritually, as Christ is lifted up and His gospel gets the victory.

10. *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.* Always at it; this prince of evil pretending to goodness, and daring to bring accusations against the Holy One of God. But he is not permitted, now, to stand in the court—he is hurled from his high place. He used his place with a desperate pertinacity of malice, accusing the brethren day and night.

11, 12. *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time.* "Therefore rejoice you heavens, and you that dwell in them." Let great joy be in the hearts of all spiritual beings, whether angels or men, for Satan is cast down from among them! But the battle is not over—the scene of it is only transferred from the heavenlies to the earthly. "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you having great wrath because he knows that he has but a short time." We may expect him to rage more and more as the time of his destruction comes nearer and nearer. He is like a bad tenant—he will damage the house out of which he is to be ejected. But he is to be ejected! And let God be glorified for it!

13. *And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child.* He had changed his place, but he did not change his nature—and so he still perseveres in his attack upon God.

14, 15. *And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman that he*

might cause her to be carried away by the flood. Read history and see what fierce and brutal persecutions were used like floods against the gospel of Christ!

16. *And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.* It is poor help that the earth can give, and yet God has overruled to make it useful. The kings and the powers of this world have for their own reasons sometimes protected the church. It was so in Luther's day; the jealousy that was felt of the influence of the court of Rome politically tended to the preservation of Luther and those around about him, so that the gospel was not destroyed. "The earth helped the woman," and we may expect that even those political disasters, which we often dread, will all tend that way. How often has priestly arrogance been put to the blush even for political reasons! We have nothing to do with that, but still we can see how God can overrule. It is always amiss when a woman begins to help the earth—she has nothing to do with that—let the church leave the state alone. But sometimes it happens that in the political providence of God the earth helps the woman.

17. *And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have testimony of Jesus Christ.* "And the dragon was angry with the woman." If ever you meet with a church of God which the devil likes, it is good for nothing! But if it is a true church of God—if it holds the truths of God and if it walks in holiness, it will always be true! "And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed." He had destroyed many already with that flood of persecution and he kept on a battle with the remnant of her seed, "which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Into the deep mysteries of this passage I have not attempted to go, but have simply skimmed the surface. God bless the reading to us.

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THE PLOWMAN

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*“Does the plowman plow all day to sow?”
Isaiah 28:24.*

UNLESS they are cultivated, fields yield us nothing but briars and thistles. In this we may see ourselves. Unless the great husbandman shall till us by His grace, we shall produce nothing that is good, but everything that is evil. If one of these days I shall hear that a country has been discovered where wheat grows without the work of the farmer, I may then, perhaps, hope to find one of our race who will bring forth holiness without the grace of God. Up to this day, all land on which the foot of man has trodden has needed labor and care. And even so among men, the need of gracious tillage is universal! Jesus says to all of us, “You must be born-again.” Unless God the Holy Spirit breaks up the heart with the plow of the law and sows it with the seed of the gospel, not a single ear of holiness will any of us produce, even though we may be children of godly parents and may be regarded as excellent moral people by those with whom we live!

Yes, and the plow is needed not only to produce that which is good, but to destroy that which is evil! There are diseases which, in the course of ages, wear themselves out and do not appear again among men. And there may be forms of vice which, under changed circumstances, do not so much abound as they used to do—but human nature will always remain the same and, therefore, there will always be plentiful crops of the weeds of sin in man’s fields—and nothing can keep these under but spiritual husbandry carried on by the Spirit of God. You cannot destroy weeds by exhortations, nor can you tear out the roots of sin from the soul by moral persuasion. Something sharper and more effectual must be brought to bear upon them. God must put His own right hand to the plow, or the hemlock of sin will never give place to the corn of holiness! Good is never spontaneous in unrenewed humanity! And evil is never cut up till the plow of almighty grace is driven through it.

The text leads our thoughts in this direction and gives us practical guidance through asking the simple question, “Does the plowman plow all day to sow?” *This question may be answered in the affirmative, “Yes, in the proper season he does plow all day to sow.”* And, secondly, *this text may more properly be answered in the negative, “No, the plowman does not plow every day to sow—he has other work to do according to the season.”* Our text may be—

I. ANSWERED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE—“Yes, the plowman does plow all day to sow.” When it is plowing time, he keeps at it till his work is done. If it requires one day, or two days, or 20 days to finish his fields, he continues at his task while the weather permits. The perseverance of the plowman is instructive and it teaches us a double lesson. When the Lord comes to plow the heart of man, He plows all day—herein is His patience. And, secondly, so ought the Lord’s servants to labor all day with men’s hearts—herein is our perseverance.

“Does the plowman plow all day?” *So does God plow the heart of man, and herein is His patience.* The team was in the field, in the case of some of us, very early in the morning, for our first recollections have to do with conscience and the furrows of pain which it made in our youthful mind. When we were little children, we woke in the night under a sense of sin. Our father’s teaching and our mother’s prayers made deep and painful impressions upon us—and though we did not then yield our hearts to God, we were greatly stirred and all indifference to religion was made impossible. When we were boys at school, the reading of a chapter in the Word of God, or the death of a playmate, or an address at a Bible class, or a solemn sermon so affected us that we were uneasy for weeks! The strivings of the Spirit of God within urged us to think of higher and better things. Though we quenched the Spirit. Though we stifled conviction, yet we bore the marks of the plowshare—furrows were made in the soul and certain foul weeds of evil were cut up by the roots, although no seed of grace was as yet sown in our hearts. Some have continued in this state for many years—plowed, but not sown. But, blessed be God, it was not so with others of us, for we had not left boyhood before the good seed of the gospel fell upon our heart! Alas, there are many who do not thus yield to grace, and with them the plowman plows all day to sow. I have seen the young man coming to London in his youth, yielding to its temptations, drinking in its poisoned sweets, violating his conscience and yet continuing unhappy in it all—fearful, unrestful, stirred about even as the soil is agitated by the plow! In how many cases has this kind of work gone on for years and all to no avail? Ah, and I have known the man come to middle life and still he has not received the good seed, neither has the ground of his hard heart been thoroughly broken up! He has gone on in business without God—day after day he has risen and gone to bed again with no more religion than his horses—and yet all this while there have been ringing in his ears warnings of judgment to come and chidings of conscience so that he has not been at peace. After a powerful sermon he has not enjoyed his meals, or been able to sleep, for he has asked himself, “What shall I do in the end thereof?” The plowman has plowed all day, till the evening shadows have lengthened and the day has faded to a close. What a mercy it is when the furrows are at last made ready and the good seed is cast in—to be received, nurtured and multiplied a hundredfold!

It is mournful to remember that we have seen this plowing continue till the sun has touched the horizon and the night dews have begun to fall. Even then the long-suffering God has followed up His work—plowing, plowing, plowing, plowing till darkness ended all! Do I address any aged ones whose lease must soon run out? I would affectionately beseech them to consider their position. What? Three score years old and yet unsaved? Forty years did God allow the manners of Israel in the wilderness, but He has borne with you for 60 years! Seventy years old and yet unregenerated? Ah, my friend, you will have but little time in which to serve your Savior before you go to heaven. But will you go there at all? Is it not growing dreadfully likely that you will die in your sins and perish forever? How happy are those who are brought to Christ in early life! But still remember—

***“While the lamp continues to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.”***

It is late, it is very late, but it is not too late. The plowman plows all day and the Lord waits that He may be gracious to you. I have seen many aged persons converted and, therefore, I would encourage other old folks to believe in Jesus. I once read a sermon in which a minister asserted that he had seldom known any converted who were over 40 years of age if they had been hearers of the gospel all their lives. There is certainly much need to caution those who are guilty of delay, but there must be no manufacturing of facts! Whatever that minister might think, or even observe, my own observation leads me to believe that about as many people are converted to God at one age as at another, taking into consideration the fact that the young are much more numerous than the old. It is a dreadful thing to have remained an unbeliever all these years, but yet the grace of God does not stop short at a certain age—those who enter the vineyard at the 11th hour shall have their penny and grace shall be glorified in the old as well as in the young! Come along, old friend, Jesus Christ invites you to come to Him even now, though you have stayed away so long! You have been a sadly tough piece of ground—and the plowman has plowed all day—but if at last the sods are turned and the heart is lying in ridges, there is hope for you yet!

“Does the plowman plow all day?” I answer—Yes, however long the day may be, God, in mercy still plows! He is long-suffering, full of tenderness, mercy and grace. Do not spurn such patience, but yield to the Lord who has acted towards you with so much gentle love!

The text, however, not only sets forth patience on God’s part, but it teaches *perseverance on our part*. “Does the plowman plow all day?” Yes, He does. Then if I am seeking Christ, ought I to be discouraged because I do not immediately find Him? The promise is, “He that asks, receives, and he that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks, it shall be opened.” There may be reasons why the door is not opened at our first knock. What then? “Does the plowman plow all day?” Then I will knock all day! It may be at the first seeking I may not find—what then? “Does the

plowman plow all day?" Then I will seek all day. It may happen that at my first asking I shall not receive—what then? "Does the plowman plow all day?" Then will I ask all day. Friends, if you have begun to seek the Lord, the short way is, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Do that at once! In the name of God, do it at once and you are saved at once! May the Spirit of God bring you to faith in Jesus—and you are at once in the kingdom of Christ! But if, perhaps, in seeking the Lord, you are ignorant of this, or do not see your way, never give up seeking! Get to the foot of the cross, lay hold of it and cry, "If I perish, I will perish here! Lord, I come to You in Jesus Christ for mercy, but if You are not pleased to look at me immediately and forgive my sins, I will cry to You till You do." When God's Holy Spirit brings a man to downright earnest prayer, which will not take a denial, he is not far from peace! Careless indifference and shilly-shallying with God hold men in bondage. They find peace when their hearts are awakened to strong resolve to seek until they find! I like to see men search the Scriptures till they learn the way of salvation and hear the gospel till their souls live by it! If they are resolved to drive the plow through doubts, fears and difficulties, till they come to salvation, they shall soon come to it by the grace of God!

The same is true in seeking the salvation of others. "Does the plowman plow all day?" Yes, when it is plowing time. Then, so will I work on, and on, and on. I will pray and preach, or pray and teach, however long the day may be that God shall appoint me, for—

***"Tis all my business here below
The precious gospel seed to sow."***

Brother worker, are you getting a little weary? Never mind, wake yourself and plow on for the love of Jesus and dying men! Our day of work has in it only the appointed hours—and while they last, let us fulfill our task. Plowing is hard work, but as there will be no harvest without it, let us put forth all our strength and never flag till we have performed our Lord's will and His Holy Spirit has worked conviction in men's souls! Some soils are very stiff and cling together and the labor is heartbreaking. Others are like the unclaimed waste, full of roots and tangled bramble—they need a steam plow and we must pray the Lord to make us such, for we cannot leave them untilled and, therefore, we must put forth more strength than the labor may be done.

I heard some time ago of a minister who called to see a poor man who was dying, but he was not able to gain admittance. He called the next morning and some idle excuse was made so that he could not see him. He called again the next morning, but he was still refused. He went on till he called 20 times in vain, but on the 21st occasion he was permitted to see the sufferer and, by God's grace, he saved a soul from death! "Why do you tell your child a thing 20 times?" asked someone of a mother. "Because," she said, "I find 19 times is not enough." Now, when a soul is to be plowed, it may so happen that hundreds of furrows will not do it. What then? Why, plow all day till the work is done! Whether you are

ministers, missionaries, teachers, or private soul-winners, never grow weary, for your work is noble and the reward of it is infinite! The grace of God is seen in our being permitted to engage in such holy service—it is greatly magnified in sustaining us in it and it will be pre-eminently conspicuous in enabling us to hold out till we can say, “I have finished the work which You gave me to do.”

We prize that which costs us labor and service—and we shall set all the higher value upon the saved ones when the Lord grants them to our efforts! It is good for us to learn the value of our sheaves by going forth weeping to the sowing. When you think of the plowman’s plowing all day, be moved to plod on in earnest efforts to win souls. Seek—

***“With cries, entreaties, tears to save
And snatch them from the fiery wave.”***

Does the plowman plow all day for a little bit of oats or barley, and will not you plow all day for souls that shall live forever, if saved, to adore the grace of God, or shall live forever, if unsaved, in outer darkness and woe? Oh, by the terrors of the wrath to come and the glory that is to be revealed, gird up your loins and plow all day!

I would beg all the members of our churches to keep their hands on the gospel plow and their eyes straight before them. “Does the plowman plow all day?” Let Christians do the same! Start close to the hedge and go right down to the bottom of the field. Plow as close to the ditch as you can and leave small headlands. What though there are fallen women, thieves and drunks in the slums around you, do not neglect any of them! For if you leave a stretch of land to the weeds, they will soon spread among the wheat. When you have gone right to the end of the field once, what shall you do next? Why, just turn around and make for the place you started from! And when you have thus been up and down, what next? Why, up and down again! And what next? Why, up and down again! You have visited that district with tracts—do it again—fifty-two times in the year multiply your furrows! We must learn how to continue in well-doing. Your eternal destiny is to go on doing good forever and ever—and it is well to go through a rehearsal here. So just plow on, plow on and look for results as the reward of continued perseverance! Plowing is not done with a skip and a jump—the plowman plows all day. Dash and flash are all very fine in some things, but not in plowing! There the work must be steady, persistent, regular. Certain persons soon give it up—it wears out their gloves, blisters their soft hands, tires their bones and makes them eat their bread rather more in the sweat of their face than they care for! Those whom the Lord fills with His grace will keep to their plowing year after year, and verily I say unto you, they shall have their reward. “Does the plowman plow all day?” Then let us do the same, being assured that one day every hill and valley shall be tilled and sown—and every desert and wilderness shall yield a harvest for our Lord—and the angel reapers shall descend and the shouts of the harvest home shall fill both earth and Heaven! But, now, somewhat briefly—

II. THE TEXT MAY BE ANSWERED IN THE NEGATIVE. “Does the plowman plow all day to sow?” No, he does not always plow. After he has plowed, he breaks the clods, sows, reaps and threshes. In the chapter before us you will see that other works of husbandry are mentioned. The plowman has many other things to do beside plowing. There is an advance in what he does—this teaches us that there is the same on God’s part and should be the same on ours.

First, *on God’s part there is an advance in what He does.* “Does the plowman plow all day?” No, he goes forward to other matters. It may be that in the case of some of you, the Lord has been using certain painful agencies to plow you. You are feeling the terrors of the law, the bitterness of sin, the holiness of God, the weakness of the flesh and the shadow of the wrath to come. Is this going to last forever? Will it continue till the spirit fails and the soul expires? Listen—“Does the plowman plow all day?” No, he is preparing for something else—he plows to sow. Thus does the Lord deal with you! Therefore be of good courage, there is an end to the wounding and slaying—and better things are in store for you. You are poor and needy and you seek water, but there is none and your tongue fails for thirst. But the Lord will hear you and deliver you! He will not contend forever, neither will He always be angry. He will turn again and He will have compassion upon us. He will not always make furrows by His chiding. He will come and cast in the precious corn of consolation and water it with the dews of heaven and smile upon it with the sunlight of His grace—and there shall soon be in you, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear—and in due season you shall joy as with the joy of harvest! O you who are sorely wounded in the place of dragons, I hear you cry! Does God always send terror and conviction of sin? Listen to this—“If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.” And what is the call of God to the willing and obedient but this, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”? You shall be saved now, find peace now if you will have done with yourself and all looking to your own good works to save you—and will turn to Him who paid the ransom for you upon the cross! The Lord is gentle and tender, and full of compassion. He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever.

Many of your doubts and fears come from unbelief, or of Satan, or of the flesh—and are not of God at all! Blame Him not for what He does not send and does not wish you to suffer! His mind is for your peace, not for your distress, for thus He speaks, “comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.” “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.” He has smitten, but He will smile! He has wounded, but He will heal! He has slain, but He will make alive! Therefore turn unto Him at once and receive comfort at His hands. The plowman does not plow forever, else would he reap no

harvest. And God is not always breaking hearts— He also draws near on heart-healing errands!

You see, then, that the great husbandman advances from painful agencies, and I want you to mark that He goes on to *productive work* in the hearts of His people. He will take away the furrows, you shall not see them, for the corn will cover them with beauty. As she that was in travail remembers no more her sorrow for joy that a man is born into the world, so shall you, who are under the legal rod, remember no more the misery of conviction, for God will sow you with grace, and make your soul, even your poor, barren soul, to bring forth fruit unto His praise and glory! “Oh,” says one, “I wish that would come true to me.” It will. “Does the plowman plow all day to sow?” You expect, by-and-by, to see plowed fields clothed with springing corn—and you may look to see repentant hearts gladdened with forgiveness! Therefore, be of good courage.

You shall advance, also, to a *joyful experience*. See that plowman? He whistles as he plows. He does not own much of this world’s goods, but yet he is merry! He looks forward to the day when he will be on the top of the big wagon, joining in the shout of the harvest home—and so he plows in hope, expecting a crop. And, dear soul, God will yet joy and rejoice over you when you believe in Jesus Christ and you, too, shall be full of joy! Be of good cheer, the better portion is yet to come! Press forward to it. gospel sorrowing leads on to gospel hoping, believing, rejoicing—and the rejoicing knows no end! God will not chasten all day, but He will lead you on from strength to strength, from glory unto glory, till you shall be like He! This, then, is the advance that there is in God’s work among men, from painful agencies to productive work and joyful experience!

But what if the plowing should never lead to sowing? What if you should be disturbed in conscience and should go on to resist it all? Then God will make another advance, but it will be to put up the plow and to command the clouds that they rain no rain upon the land—and then its end is to be burned. Oh, man, there is nothing more awful than for your soul to be left to go out of cultivation—God Himself giving you up! Surely that is hell. He that is unholy will be unholy still. The law of fixed character will operate eternally and no hand of the merciful one shall come near to till the soul again! What worse than this can happen?

We conclude by saying that *this advance is a lesson to us*, for we, too, are to go forward. “Does the plowman plow all day?” No, he plows to sow, and in due time he sows. Some churches seem to think that all they have to do is to plow—at least all they attempt is a kind of scratching of the soil and talking of what they are going to do. It is fine talk, certainly, but does the plowman plow all day? You may draw up a large program and promise great things, but pray do not stop there! Don’t be making furrows all day—get to your sowing! I fancy that those who promise most, perform the least. Men who do much in the world have no program at first—their course works itself out by its own inner force by the grace of God—they do not propose, but perform! They do not plow all day to sow,

but they are like our Lord's servant in the parable, of whom He says, "The sower went forth to sow."

Let the ministers of Christ also follow the rule of advance. *Let us go from preaching the law to preaching the gospel.* "Does the plowman plow all day?" He does plow—he would not sow in hope if he had not first prepared the ground. Robbie Flockart, who preached for years in the Edinboro streets, says, "It is in vain to sew with the silk thread of the gospel unless you use the sharp needle of the law." Some of my brothers do not care to preach eternal wrath and its terrors. This is a cruel mercy, for they ruin souls by hiding from them their ruin! If they need try to sew without a needle, I cannot help it, but I do not mean to be so foolish myself! My needle may be old-fashioned, but it is sharp and when it carries with it the silken thread of the gospel, I am sure good work is done by it! You cannot get a harvest if you are afraid of disturbing the soil, nor can you save souls if you never warn them of hell fire. We must tell the sinner what God has revealed about sin, righteousness and judgment to come. Still, brothers, we must not plow all day. No, no! The preaching of the law is only preparatory to the preaching of the gospel! The stress of our business lies in proclaiming glad tidings. We are not followers of John the Baptist, but of Jesus Christ! We are not rugged prophets of woe, but joyful heralds of grace. Be not satisfied with revival services and stirring appeals, but preach the doctrines of grace so as to bring out the full compass of covenant truth. Plowing has had its turn, now for planting and watering! Reproof may now give place to consolation. We are first to make disciples of men and then to teach them to observe all things whatever Jesus has commanded us. We must pass on from the rudiments to the higher truths of God, from laying foundations to further building!

And now, another lesson to those of you who are as yet hearers and nothing more. I want you to go from plowing to something better, namely, *from hearing and fearing to believing.* How many years some of you have been hearing the gospel! Do you mean to continue in that state forever? Will you never believe in Him of whom you hear so much? You have been stirred up a good deal—the other night you went home almost brokenhearted! I should think you are plowed enough by this time, and yet you have not received the seed of eternal life, for you have not believed in the Lord Jesus! It is dreadful to be always on the brink of everlasting life and yet never to be alive. It will be an awful thing to be almost in heaven and yet forever shut out! It is a wretched thing to rush into a railway station just in time to see the train steaming out—I had much rather be half an hour behind time! To lose a train by half a second is most annoying. Alas, if you go on as you have done for years, you will have your hand on the latch of heaven and yet be shut out! You will be within a hair's breadth of glory and yet be covered with eternal shame! Oh, beware of being so near to the kingdom of God and yet lost—almost, but not altogether saved! God grant that you may not be among

those who are plowed and plowed, and plowed, and yet never sown! It will be of no avail at the last to cry, "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in Your presence and You have taught in our streets. We had a seat at the chapel. We attended the services on weeknights as well as on Sundays! We went to prayer meetings, we joined a Bible class, we distributed tracts, we subscribed our guinea to the funds! We gave up every open sin, we used a form of prayer and read a chapter of the Bible every day." All these things may be done and yet there may be no saving faith in the Lord Jesus! Take heed lest your Lord should answer, "With all this, your heart never came to Me. Therefore, depart from Me! I never knew you." If Jesus once knows a man, He always knows him. He can never say to me, "I never knew you," for He has known me as His poor dependent, a beggar for years at His door! Some of you have been all that is good, except that you never came into contact with Christ, never trusted Him, never knew Him. Ah, me, how sad your state! Will it always be so?

Lastly, I would say to you who are being plowed and are agitated about your souls, go at once to the next stage of believing. Oh, if people did but know how simple a thing believing is, surely they would believe! Alas, they do not know it, and it becomes all the more difficult to them because in itself it is so easy! The difficulty of believing lies in there being no difficulty in it! "If the prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it?" Oh, yes, you would have done it and you would have thought it easy, too! But when he simply says, "Wash, and be clean," there is a difficulty with pride and self. If you can truly say that you are willing to abase your pride and do anything which the Lord bids you, then I pray you understand that there is no further preparation required—believe in Jesus at once! May the Holy Spirit make you sick of self and ready to accept the gospel! The word is near you, let it be believed! It is in your mouth, let it be swallowed! It is in your heart, let it be trusted! With your heart believe in Jesus and with your mouth make confession of Him and you shall be saved! A main part of faith lies in the giving up of all other confidences. Oh, give up at once every false hope! I tried once to show what faith was by quoting Dr. Watts' lines—

***"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall.
Be You my strength, and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."***

I tried to represent faith as falling into Christ's arms and I thought I made it so plain that the wayfaring man could not err therein. When I had finished preaching, a young man came to me and said, "But, sir, I cannot fall upon Christ's arms." I replied at once, "Tumble into them anyway you can! Faint away into Christ's arms, or die in Christ's arms, so long as you get there." Many talk of what they can do and what they cannot do, and I fear they miss the vital point. Faith is leaving off "can-ing" and "cannot-ing," and leaving it all to Christ, for He can do all things, though you can do nothing! "Does the plowman plow all day to

sow?” No, he makes progress and goes from plowing to sowing. Go, and do you likewise—sow unto the Spirit the precious seed of faith in Christ—and the Lord will give you a joyous harvest!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 10:16-33.**

Verses 16-25. *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speaks, but the Spirit of Your Father which speaks in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And you shall be hated of all men for My name's sake; but he that endures to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another: for verily I say unto you, you shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man is come. The disciple is not above his master, nor his servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he is as his master, and the servant as his lord. It is more than enough, for the disciple might expect to fare worse than his master, and the servant to have less comfort than the lord. So it is in worldly things—that our Lord and Master has such fellowship with His people that He does not put it so, but He says, “It is enough for the disciple that he is as his master, and the servant as his Lord.”*

25. *If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?* But they cannot call them anymore or any worse. They have given our Master the blackest of all the epithet and any hard and opprobrious titles that can ever be applied to us must fall short of these which were applied to Him. Surely we ought not to wince—not for a single moment!

26. *Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.* They may cover your name and character with temporary dishonor, but the covering will soon break off. Like fire hidden under autumn leaves, it will burn up, by-and-by, and there will be a resurrection of reputations, as well as of persons! And what a wondrous resurrection that will be for those who are cast out as the offscouring of all things, when they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father!

27. *What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.* There is a secret learning, but there must be a public teaching. Christ takes us aside to reveal Himself, that afterwards we may boldly go forth to others and tell them what we have learned in private. Oh, child of God, if you have a

sweet morsel in the chamber by yourself, do not be so selfish as to keep it to yourself! Go and tell your brothers and sisters, and your house, and of the same place, the things which you have learned. If any of you have had a very choice experience, and a more than usual manifestation of divine love, be sure to let others be enriched with your riches. Have you found honey? Eat it not all yourself, but, like Samson, when he found it in the carcass of the lion, go to father and mother, and friends with your hands full of the secret, and let them eat it also.

28. *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.* Oh, fearful destruction! This is what we may well fear—both body and soul to undergo everlasting ruin, broken in pieces and destroyed as to all excellency, happiness and peace. This we may fear.

29. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.* He rules over all things, the least as well as the greatest! We see His hand in the tempest and we look at the black wing of the storm and see that God rides it. But the wing of the tiny sparrows, so insignificant in value, is equally directed by His power and wisdom!

30. *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* Minute is the providence of God, taking care of you, even as to that part of your person which is not vital and without which you could still live on. “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” The tiniest and most insignificant benefits are all ordered by His eternal purpose.

31-33. *Fear you not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. Whoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men—*And you see from the connection, that here the denying means not confessing. “Whoever shall deny Me before men.”

33. *Him will I also deny before My Father who is in heaven.* The attempt, therefore, to avoid all publicity in religion—to endeavor to slink into Heaven by the back gate—to somehow or other find an underground road to salvation, is a futile attempt! Christ requires that we should acknowledge Him, seeing that He so graciously acknowledges us. He puts it as a solemn command—and I would press it upon the conscience of any Believer here who has never confessed his faith. You miss, at any rate, the promise here—but you miss some others besides. You are walking in the path of disobedience. You are, to some extent, guilty of putting Christ to shame, for if others see that you are ashamed of Him, they conclude that there is something to be ashamed of in Him. Your practice dishonors Him. Why should you hold back? Are you not going to take your place among His people? You tell me that they have many faults. Have they more than you? If you never join a church till you find a perfect one, you will never join one this side of Heaven! And if the church were perfect when you joined it, it would certainly cease to be so then—for you would bring your shortcomings and imperfections into it! I have

lived among the people of God now these many years and I, as pastor of this church, have had to mourn over many and many for its faults, but still, there is no people like God's people, and of His house I will say—

***“Here my best friends—my kindred—dwell.
Here God my Savior reigns!”***

Some of the best and noblest spirits that ever lived have not been ashamed to associate with their fellow Christians, though they perceived their errors. They have rather cast in their lot with them, poor and despised as they were, and have accounted it even their honor if they might but be numbered with the redeemed among men.

34. *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.* The ultimate result of Christ's mission will be peace. Swords shall be broken into plowshares, and the spears into pruning hooks, but on the way to peace there will be war. On the way to universal peace there will be a general confusion. When true religion comes into a man's heart, it at once makes him a warrior. He begins to contend against evil—to contend against contention. He fights for peace, though it may seem strange that it should be so.

35, 36. *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.* They will drive us back when they perceive that our face is set towards heaven. When you see a fish swimming with the stream, it is an almost always a dead one. The living fish goes *against* the stream—and the true child of God has to go against the current of mankind, and oftentimes the hardest push in life is to go against father, mother, brother, sister, for Christ's sake and the gospel.

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GROWTH IN FAITH

NO. 3384

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1913.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 12, 1867.**

***“The apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.”
Luke 17:5.***

THE *apostles* said this. I have sometimes thought that Paul's speech at Lystra, when he forbade the multitude to worship him and told the people that he was a man of like passions with themselves, has need to be repeated in the ears of many modern Christians, for there is a tendency in the Christian church to set up the apostles and other eminent saints upon a platform high above the level of ordinary humanity! I do not say to worship them, but rather to hold them in extraordinary esteem than to regard them as models for imitation. Brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ would have us to know that we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. He would have us be certain that He, Himself, was tempted in all points like as we are. With equal certainty would He have us to know that the chosen twelve, the leaders of His host, who went forth from Him, were men of like passions with ourselves. We are not to look upon them as though they were unapproachable heroes, a sort of divine character, or as though they were free from our infirmities and our troubles. They were as we are—and if they excelled us it was by divine strength, alone, by strength which we also may receive—by grace which is as free to us as it was to them. If they were here, they would still have to struggle with unbelief and, conscious of their unbelief, would say again, “Lord, increase our faith.”

The apostles said it and the apostles *said it to Jesus*. They went to the Strong for strength! It is idle to go elsewhere. In vain would they have said it to one another; in vain would they have searched the whole world to find some eminent saint to whom to address the petition! They would have been like those foolish virgins who said to the wise, “Give us of your oil,” and they would have had the same answer, “Not so, lest there be not enough for you and for us.” The virgins went to those that sold and bought for themselves. The apostles went to Christ, the lawgiver, the author and finisher of their faith and, lifting up their hearts to Him in the prayer, “Lord, increase our faith,” they, before long, gained a comfortable answer and became strong in faith, giving glory to God!

Now, I shall need your attention at this time to five or six observations about *faith as a growing thing*. The first observation is this—

I. THE TEXT THROWS A LITTLE LIGHT UPON WHAT FAITH IS.

This is not altogether a dark subject, but still it is one upon which there has been a great deal of controversy. You are aware, perhaps, that in the first flush of the Reformation it was asserted by most divines that saving faith was full assurance, or, at the least, that full assurance of salvation and of a personal interest in Christ entered into the essence of saving faith—and this has been maintained by a very large number of divines and is *still maintained* by many Christians that to *personally* believe that Christ died for *me* is saving faith.

Now, we believe this to be an error. We prize full assurance beyond all price. We count it to be a gem beyond all earthly values, but we think it is a distressing doctrine to some of the weak ones of the flock to say that full assurance is necessary to salvation! We believe it to be necessary to deep joy, necessary to edification, necessary to usefulness—but necessary to salvation we do not believe it to be! We believe there are thousands on the Rock of Ages who sometimes fear they are not there—and tens of thousands who will enter heaven whose faith never reached beyond the *simple reliance upon Christ*—which we hold to be the essence of saving faith.

The persuasion that Christ died for *me* comes after the exercise of faith and is an outgrowth of that faith. It is faith in full bloom, but it is not necessarily the essence of faith in Christ. Some of those who teach that to believe that Christ died for me is faith, also teach at the same time that Christ died for everyone! Now, it will strike your mind at once that this kind of faith which they teach is nothing but the belief of a very simple truism, for if He died for everyone, then He must have died for me—and my believing that he died for me may, as far as I can see, be a simple intellectual operation—having nothing to do with the heart—and certainly not requiring the assistance of the Holy Spirit, for anyone can believe that since as long as Christ died for everyone, he died for me! Faith of that sort is a very simple thing and although every Christian is also to perceive that Christ died for him, finally, yet if you *begin* with that, you begin at the wrong end and you may be guilty of presumption instead of exercising the faith of God's elect!

What, then, is the essence of saving faith? It is *this—trust in Christ*—dependence, reliance upon Him. It is a belief that Jesus Christ is the appointed Savior of the world. That He is also the Atonement for sin. But it is more than that—it is a trusting in the work of Christ to save you. As to whether Christ has died for you in particular or not, that you shall find out, by-and-by, but faith is coming empty-handed and accepting Christ's fullness; to come naked and take His righteousness to be your glorious dress. To go, vile, to the fountain which He has filled with blood, to be

washed therein—in fact, to have done with all self-confidence and to put your whole reliance in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever has this is saved—whatever else he has not, he is saved! And neither death nor Hell shall ever destroy a man who in simple, honest confidence depends on what Christ has done for the salvation of sinners. If you lay hold upon Christ to be all in all to you and if you say, “Nothing but Jesus do I know—what He has done is all my rest and all my rejoicing,” then you have God’s promise for it, “He that believes on Him has everlasting life.” And you have it and you, therefore, shall never perish!

This, then, is saving faith, and this is the very soul, and essence, and substance of it! It is not, in itself, full assurance, but full assurance grows out of it. In the Helvetic Confession, faith is said to be “a most firm confidence in Christ”—another little mistake! A most firm confidence in Christ is faith, and is strong faith—but there may be faith where there is no “most firm confidence,” though this may be a very valuable evidence. Faith, however, may sometimes be mixed with unbelief. But where any amount of reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ exists, there is the evidence of *true faith*, although that reliance may not amount to a happy, comfortable, delightful persuasion of one’s own personal salvation. Yet it is faith, saving faith, and will save the soul of him who has it! Let that stand as the first observation.

II. Secondly, FAITH, WHEREVER IT IS, IS CAPABLE OF GROWTH.

The apostles said, “Lord, increase our faith.” Faith is the gift of God and it is given us by degrees. Faith is not always the same in degree, even at the time of the new birth. All children are not alike strong when they are born into the world. All faith is not alike strong at first. Sometimes those who are first at the beginning get last afterwards—and sometimes those who are last at the beginning outstrip the others! God does not give us all the same endowment of faith when we commence. Some of us are very tender, much troubled and find it very difficult to lay hold even upon the least of God’s promises. But the faith is all of the same nature—though it is not all of the same quantity and degree—it is all the same quality. A diamond is a diamond, though it is no bigger than a pea or the point of a pin—it is precisely of the same character as the Koh-I-Noor, though it is not so large. Also with faith. Faith as little as a grain of mustard seed is just as much the faith of God’s elect as if it were as large as a mountain! It is still living faith. It is the same, though smaller in amount. It is not always the same in quantity when we receive it, but after we have received it, it grows.

This is proved *by the later lives of the apostles themselves*. Take Simon Peter as an instance. At one time poor Simon, indeed—how he was to be pitied! He sat down to warm his hands at a fire in the High Priest’s palace and, as he was sitting there, a pert servant girl said to him, “You, al-

so, were with Him.” And so weak was Peter’s faith that he actually denied his Master! But not many weeks after that, the Holy Spirit descended on Simon Peter and now the same man who blushed with fear before the flippant maid is standing up before thousands in the streets of Jerusalem and delivering himself with the greatest bravery on behalf of the gospel of the crucified Christ! There is now no fear, or trembling, or unbelief in Simon Peter, for Pentecost has come and he is made strong and bold by the Holy Spirit! How wonderfully has he changed! You might almost have thought that there were two Simon Peters, rather than one, so marvelously has he grown in faith and courage!

Further, that faith grows is very clear from the fact that there have been and are *thousands of other persons* who have evidently had more faith than you or I ever had, and yet *who have found that their faith was not always strong*. Look at the martyrs—how they went to their deaths singing hymns on the road. How many of them triumphed in the amphitheater when wild beasts tore them to pieces! How they were thrown into damp, reeking dungeons, where they laid until the mildew grew upon them and there they were left to starve—and yet how there they died with joy in their hearts and songs on their lips! Those were men and women of faith whose shoelaces you and I are not worthy to unloose—they were far, far greater than we! And yet if you had spoken to any of them, they would have said that they were no better than we are when they began, but that God had, by His grace, nurtured and tended their faith until it had become what it was. Do you know what this growth in faith is? We never become nursing fathers and mothers to any of our brothers and sisters or our hearers until we have this growth in faith. I bless God that I have seen many of you grow in faith—and my earnest prayer is that every one of you may grow to the full assurance of hope unto the end, so that I may have to say of you all, “Your faith grows exceedingly, and your love unto all the saints.” Yes, brothers and sisters, we do see faith grow in others quite as plainly as we have ever seen the shrubs and the plants growing in the field!

Moreover, *I think you and I are conscious that our own faith has grown*. I know mine has. I know it is weaker, sometimes, for we may grow backwards. Yet I am conscious, taking the run of the years, that my faith is stronger than it was.

I will tell you how faith grows. Sometimes it grows *in intensity*. You believe the same things, but you believe them more firmly. A child has a pearl in its hand. Yes, but now the child has grown up into a man and he has the same pearl, but how differently he holds it! When, as a little child, he held the pearl, then you might, perhaps, have taken it away from him. But now that he is a man, see how he doubles his fists and grasps the treasure! So it is with the man who grows in faith. He gets such a grip upon eternal truths of God that you cannot take them from

him! He has learned to stand firmly. He is not carried about by every wind of doctrine. He keeps the helm of his soul fixed right to the port where he is bound—let the wind blow and the storm howl and moan as it may!

Faith also grows not only in intensity but *in extent*, so that you believe more than you once did. At first we believe a few great truths and then knowledge comes to our assistance and instead of only three or four great majestic truths of God, we learn ten—and as we advance further we learn a hundred! Sometimes, however, we grieve to confess that as our faith grows in extent, it diminishes in intensity, which is a very poor gain. But if we believe more and believe all with the same intensity as we did at first, then is our faith growing, indeed, and we are advancing after a most healthy and happy fashion!

Faith *does* grow—we know it does—in these two respects, for we have, some of us, been conscious of the growth in ourselves. Beloved, *it would be a very strange thing if faith did not grow*. It was a great miracle when Joshua made the sun stand still because that day the sun was the only thing in the entire world that did stand still! Everything else was moving. It is part of God's law that every star shall revolve—that there shall be nothing inert. Even the great sun, itself, rolls round and is constantly going on its mighty way. The sun was the only thing that day that stood still and, therefore, it was, indeed, a miracle! Now, if faith did not grow, it would be the only thing in the Christian that stood still and did not grow—for everything else in the whole man certainly grows.

Does not Christ teach us this, again, by His talking of, first, the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear? At another time we are told that we are children and that we think as children, and speak as children—but that when we shall become men, we shall put away childish things. In other places something is said about little children, then about children, and then about young men and then about the fathers. I will not quote all the instances—they are too numerous—in which both by metaphor and by plain speech, we are taught in God's word that the whole Christian grows and, therefore his faith, which is as his right arm, must surely grow, too!

Faith, then, is a matter of growth. And now thirdly—

III. GROWTH OF FAITH IS VERY DESIRABLE. I said at the first that the very least faith is saving, but then it is not desirable that we should only have the very least faith. It is exceedingly desirable that we should get the greatest possible faith!

Growth in faith is desirable and it is so, first of all, *because unbelief is a very great sin* and where there is little faith there is evidently lurking unbelief and, consequently, sin—and no true Christian would like to be easy while he is daily committing sin. It is not possible for us to be weak

in faith without transgressing. Weak faith may bring us a blessing, but weakness in faith is an evil—and to indulge weakness in faith and not to struggle out of it would only be a willful increase of guilt!

Brothers and sisters, I do not think that we ever estimate aright what a bitter and an evil thing our unbelief is. It is a question, really, whether there is any other sin which makes so direct a stab at the truth of God as this does! It is a question whether there is any sin more defiling to us, or more dishonoring to God. Brothers and sisters, we ought to daily aspire to the highest faith in order that we may expel unbelief—and so be delivered from constant sin!

Growth in faith also *is necessary for our sanctification*. It is by faith that sin is kept down and that all our divine graces grow. Unless faith is vigorous, we cannot expect to be making progress towards perfection. Sanctification is a daily and unceasing thing. It is carried on in our thoughts and hearts by the Holy Spirit, but faith in the precious blood is the great means He uses for that sanctifying.

We overcome sin through the blood of the Lamb applied to us day by day by the hyssop of faith. Brothers and sisters, if you neglect your faith, you will soon find that, struggle as you will, to advance in other graces, your struggles will be all in vain. Faith, faith, faith—this is the reservoir and if this is not well filled, the pipes will soon run dry!

Again, growth in faith *is necessary to our comfort*. Little-Faith goes to heaven, but his feet are sore on the road. He gets into the kingdom, but it is like a leaky vessel that has cast its precious cargo overboard and only just manages to get into port—it almost founders at the harbor's mouth. Little-Faith stumbles at a straw, but *Great-Faith* is very full of comfort. His mind is stored with grateful recollections of past mercies and his eyes beam with the fond anticipations of mercies yet to come—and so Great-Faith makes a heaven for itself here below—and goes towards the songs of glory rehearsing some of them on the road! Give me strong faith in God and I need ask for nothing else, for strong faith will turn poverty into wealth, weakness into strength, deep sorrows into lasting joys and monster difficulties into marvelous triumphs! More faith and you shall have plenteous comfort. It is always feast days and feast nights—it is a merry Christmas all the year round to a soul that has an unstaggering faith in the promises of the blessed God!

Strong faith is also *very necessary to our usefulness*. If we go to our work timidly, scarcely knowing our own interest in Christ, we may have a blessing, but it is not likely to be a great one. But when we know whom we have believed and have tasted and handled that the good Word of God is assuredly ours, then what we speak will come with grace and power—and under the varying unction of the Holy Spirit there are more probabilities of our success when we work with faith than when we work with doubting! Indeed, it is to faith that the blessing comes! I question wheth-

er our preaching in unbelief is of much service, but if we preach believing that souls will be saved, they *will be* saved! If we preach relying on God's promise that His word shall not return unto Him void, it *will not* return void, but there shall be fruit for the sower according to the assurance of our faithful God!

Brothers and sisters, I cannot now speak to you at length upon a topic so important, but I leave it with you, being assured that you cannot think too much of it. To have your faith growing exceedingly is desirable above all things. Seek for it, I pray you, and may the Lord grant it to you according to His fullness of mercy. But now let us ponder the joyous truth, that—

IV. GROWTH IN FAITH IS OBTAINABLE.

The apostles would not have asked for it, would not have been allowed to ask for it, if it had not been possible to receive it! They did ask for it, they did receive it and, therefore, you and I may ask for it and receive it. They exhort us to obtain it—at least they practically do so by their example—therefore we may obtain it. It is always a sad thing and greatly depressing to Christian growth when you picture in your mind's eye great and eminent saints as being far above anything that you can ever be. Brothers and sisters, let me beseech you, when you read the life of such a man as Dr. Payson, do not say, "He is such a spiritually-minded man! I shall never be like he!" You *shall* be like he by God's grace! When you turn to the life of Whitefield, young man who is about to enter the Christian ministry, let not the Evil Spirit say, "You cannot be so devoted and so seraphic in earnestness as he was." Why not? Where Whitefield fell short of being perfect, you fall short with him and you will be short, indeed—but why not be as he? The same Master who made him has also put you upon the wheel. The same Spirit who kept him fervent and faithful has promised to dwell in you! Why should not the same results be produced? I know that you sometimes look up to those who are more advanced in the divine Life than you are. You who have lately been united to the Christian church envy them—you do not think that you can ever reach their standard. Ah, beloved, be it your prayer to reach the best in the church, that if it is the Lord's will, you may feel yourselves to be less than they are and yet to be in reality far fuller of God's grace and love, and every good thing than any of them! *Aspire*, my brothers and sisters—do not despair, but *aspire* for God's glory, to prove to this wicked world that Christianity has not lost its vigor—that it is still possible for us to be as simple-minded and as heroic as the apostles were. *Aspire* to what they obtained! Ask for an increase of faith, as they asked for it—and when you have it, be not content even with that, nor think that you cannot by any possibility be as full of faith as they were!

I know that the enemy will tell you that you are placed in a position where you cannot possibly be so full of divine grace. Tell the enemy that he is a liar from the beginning! You may be in a position where you cannot be extensively useful. You may be where you are neither called upon nor expected to do many of the works which others perform. But circles are admired and praised not because of their largeness, but their roundness! So you will have honor from God, not according to the size of your sphere, but according to the completeness with which you fill it, doing as unto the Lord who requires of you according to His will and through His grace. A nursery maid having the care of two or three children, teaching them the sweet story of the love of Christ and seeking to bring their hearts to Jesus may be more faithful than I am with a large congregation continually listening to me. She may do all her work—it will be hard for me to do all mine. You with a little shop and much labor to make both ends meet—and with a large family to bring up in the fear of God—may have more honor from the Master, at last, than many a man whose name is blazoned before the world!

It is not where you are, but *what* you are. And it is not how you are seen, but how you live in the sight of God. That is the thing that matters! Ah, dear friends, it is possible that in the sphere where you are, to excel as much in faith as Paul did when preaching at Athens! Or Peter, standing in the midst of Jerusalem before the Parthians, Medes and Elamites! Let nothing deter you. Believe that you would not be taught to pray, “Lord, increase our faith,” if God would not answer the prayer—and that He will answer it and give you the highest faith that ever man had—even you, so that on the sickbed, or in the midst of poverty you may be as illustrious an example of faith as the best known believer who has ever adorned the annals of the church. But to proceed—as this growth in faith is obtainable, so, in the next place—

V. THERE IS A PROPER MEANS FOR OBTAINING IT.

If I might advise you, the first means I would lay down for making faith grow would be that which the apostles adopted, namely, *prayer*. They said, “Lord, increase our faith.” Pray much that your faith may grow. Oh, I am afraid in this naughty age in which we are so busy with a thousand cares that we are only too deficient at the mercy seat and this accounts for the fact that there is so much superficial religion among us. If you would learn to believe God’s promises, go with the promises to God and see them in the light of His countenance! Plead them with solemn earnestness, not wavering before the mercy seat till you have a comfortable assurance that God will be to you what He has said. Let us have more prayer and there will be more faith!

Next to that, *search the Word of God more*. The more we are familiar with God’s inspired book, the more likely shall we be to believe it. If I want to believe a story which is current, I shall best strengthen my cre-

dence of its truthfulness by hearing it constantly repeated. When I begin to examine a doctrine and I see that the doctrine is clear, then I cannot help believing it. Now come to the Word of God, pure and unadulterated, and, as you read it, it will be its own witness. The glory which “gilds each sacred page, majestic like the sun,” will flash before your eyes and you will then marvel that you ever could have doubted it. And let me tell you—many a promise which you have passed over before, or thought it to be scarcely worth attention, will shine out in splendor and delight your eyes and enrapture your spirit! Oh, how dead is the Word of God at one time, to what it is at another! You shall read it in the dark without the help of the Holy Spirit and it shall be to you like Christ in the eyes of the unregenerate world—“without form and comeliness.” But at another time, when God shines upon it, you shall find it to be marrow and fatness to your soul and you will wonder that you have ever risen from perusing it, so delightful shall it be to your soul!

Search the word much! Seek to inquire into the facts and doctrines of the gospel. There are very few theological treatises issued now-a-days. You do not read theology. You do not care about it! I know what you read—three-volume novels and especially religious tales in magazines! I wish that we were rid of these religious tales. I like irreligious tales much better, for when they are downright irreligious, people will not read the trash—but when these tales are flavored with a little of the spice of godliness, they go down with them and their heads get stuffed up with the silly nonsense they read! And instead of being the better by what they read, they are rather the worse. I wish you would sit down and study some of the good old stuff which your grandmothers used to read. Some of those old men and women used to sit down and when they had put on their spectacles, would read through some treatise on the doctrines of the gospel. Those were the grand old women who, when the minister was unsound, soon let him know that they would hear no such old wives’ fables, but would only have good gospel truth! And their husbands were of the same sort—they read and searched for themselves. Now-a-days I believe that if a man has only a glib tongue, he may preach very much what he likes. There are hundreds of our hearers who today would go after a Calvinist or even a hyper-Calvinist and tomorrow would go and hear an Arminian—and it would all be good because of the garnishing and because of the little sprigs and flowers all over the dish! God deliver us from such religion as this and give us to know the truth of God by searching it out! Do, dear friends, search out the truth in God’s word. Seek to get a firm grip and deep knowledge of it. It would be well for half the Christians in England if they would learn the Assembly’s Catechism. They would get a world of knowledge even by that compendium, but getting the truth by the word is an even more profitable means of increasing our faith!

Let me say again that faith is very frequently helped to grow *by communion with the saints*. Those of you who are younger will often be helped by talking with the more mature and advanced in the Christian life. Yes, the sickbeds of those who are tried and afflicted are often a school in which young disciples may learn lessons in faith! Here you may be enriched with pearls and gems which can be bought in no other market. And suffering saints—men and women who have been in the furnace and have the smell of the fire upon them, who have become like silver purified seven times, who can bear their witness to help given in days of poverty and of deep sustaining grace in seasons of sore bodily and mental anguish—these can greatly enrich and, through what they shall give, your faith shall grow!

And your faith will also grow, no doubt, *when God treats you as He has treated them*, for, after all, other people's experience is not of half the value to us as is our own. It is when we feel ourselves in the pinch, when we begin to pass through the fire that we fly to the Eternal God and rejoice that "underneath are the everlasting arms." Ask for the sanctified use of affliction! Pray for the sanctified use of prosperity, too, and so by all providential means your faith will grow.

Remember, however, that the only real mode of growth in faith *is by the power of the Holy Spirit*. As I said at the commencement of this discourse, Peter's growth in faith came upon him at Pentecost. And it was the same with the others of the twelve—they became new men because the Spirit's power rested upon them. Beloved, if we have more of the power of the Spirit of God, more exercise of His power within us, our faith will increase!

Faith, then, is a growing thing. We ought to desire to have it grow. It can grow and I have told you some of the means by which it may grow. And now two or three minutes upon—

VI. THE WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN HINDER ITS GROWTH.

I say only two or three minutes, though it is a very large subject. You can very easily hinder your growth in faith. You can do it by neglecting faith, by letting your Bible grow dusty, by leaving a ministry which is edifying, by despising the Holy Spirit. You can do it by not exercising what you already have. You cannot lose your faith if it is true faith, but you can lose much of its comparative power by worldly-mindedness, by giving yourselves up to covetousness, by forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as is the manner of some—by falling into sin, by tampering with the flesh, by indulging in vanity—by anything which will grieve the Holy Spirit! You may also weaken your faith by dwelling far from the sun. Dwellers in lands of snow and ice soon grow cold, and so may it be with us by living far from God and the Sun of Righteousness. As by refraining from meat a man may soon grow weak, so by abstaining from spiritual food and soul nourishing, our faith will soon decay. As a long drought

quickly makes the flowers of the garden to droop their heads, so if there is a drought of divine influence upon you, very soon your faith will begin to wither. By living, however, close to God and simply looking up to Him for everything, your faith may continue to grow until it gets to be the full assurance of faith and, like Abraham, you are “strong in faith, giving glory to God.” And here I shall close by saying, let it be one of the resolute pursuits of our life, that being saved we may—

VII. SEEK AFTER THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF GRACE THAT IS OBTAINABLE.

I have heard of a good woman—a widow—who was once in great trouble when visited by her pastor, but on a second visit she was found to be very happy. “What has happened?” inquired her pastor. “What has made you so cheerful?” She said, “I have been reading that precious word, ‘Your Maker is your husband.’” “How has that comforted you?” he said. “Why,” she answered, “when my husband was alive, I always lived up to his income. But now that my Maker is my husband, I will try to live up to His income and oh, what a task I have got before me if I am to live up to the income of God that has no bounds and no limits, and knows of no such thing as exhaustion! If I may draw upon Him to the utmost extent of His income, how richly I may live!”

Well, now, let us adopt the good woman’s policy and try to live according to the income of our blessed husband, the Lord Jesus Christ! Then shall our faith grow exceedingly, and our love, and all our divine graces!

Now I am afraid there are some here who have no faith, who have never trusted Christ. Then, dear friends, it is our solemn duty to remind you, before we sit down, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*. You have come here, tonight, and I am glad you have—and some of you come often—and I am rejoiced. You are honest, sober, moral, amiable. This is all well, but you would like to please God, would you not? Well, but without faith it is impossible for you to please Him! You may do what you may, but without faith it is impossible to please God! God will never accept anything from any of us unless He sees the blood of His Son with it. If you do not go to Christ, it is no use going to the Father, for “no man comes to the Father,” says Christ, “but by Me.”

What? You have forgotten to trust in Jesus? You have thought that something else would do? You have been trying your fancied good works, prayers, and your feelings? Now, dear friends, remember what the apostle Paul did. He went round about for many years to establish his own righteousness, but as soon as he trusted in Christ, he said, “Those things which were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ: yes, doubtless, and I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.” Now, I will tell you. You may, perhaps, be a Churchman and you feel very pleased to think that you have been so regular in your

life. Or you may be a Dissenter and feel proud to think you are such a consistent Nonconformist. Now, if ever you are converted, these things which are gain to you *now*, you will count to be less than nothing! You, too, will count them to be loss as compared with Christ. Yes, and your prayers, your repentance, what you have given to charity and what you have done—this, and that, and the other—you will look upon them all as being less than nothing and take Christ to be everything to you! “What are you doing, now?” said a good old divine to a brother who was dying. He said, “I am doing, now, what I have done many times before in health—I am taking all my good works and all my bad works—indeed, they are so much alike that I can scarcely tell which is which—and I am tying them all in one bundle and throwing them overboard as fast as I can! And I am just clinging to Christ with all my heart and all my soul.” This is the only way of safety. None but Jesus! Nothing of yours—not one brass farthing—but Christ, Christ, Christ—Christ at the top and the bottom, at the beginning and the end, first, last and throughout! You must have nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ! And if you do this night depend upon Him, why, my dear friend, your sins are all forgiven! Just what Christ said to the poor grateful leper, I say to you in Christ’s name—if you really do depend upon Him—“Your faith has saved you. Go in peace!” Though your past life may have been ever so vile and you have come in here without God and without hope, yet if you now believe in Jesus Christ and rely alone upon Him, none of your sins shall be mentioned against you any more forever. “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud and, like a thick cloud, your transgressions.”

May you have faith given you tonight and then another day, after you have faith, may you pray, “Lord, increase my faith.” That is not your prayer tonight—be thankful if you have any faith at all! But you who have faith tonight, pray tonight, and pray always, “Lord increase our faith.”

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THE SAVIOR'S THIRST

NO. 3385

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1913.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst.”
John 19:28.*

THE early Christians were known to think and talk far more of our Savior than we do. Some of them were, perhaps, not quite so clear upon justification by faith as they ought to have been, but they were very clear about the merits of the precious blood. And if they did not always speak very clearly about the doctrines of grace, they spoke with wonderful power and savor about the “five” wounds—about the nail marks and the spear wound. I could wish that our religion would go back somewhat more to that personal apprehension of Christ than it does. By all means let us have dogmatic teaching, setting forth those most precious truths of God that are our consolation, but better than all is the person of Christ Himself—the way, the truth, and the life. We should do well if we more often stood in meditation at the foot of the cross and viewed His wounds, counted the precious drops as they fall and sought fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Some of those early saints wrote long treatises on the solitary wounds of Jesus—many of them passed whole days in contemplation of some minute part of His passion. We cannot imitate them in this respect—we have not the leisure. I am afraid we have not the mental application they possessed. Nevertheless, let us explore the sacred mystery as best we can. At this time would we get away to Calvary and there stand and hear our Redeemer crying, “I thirst,” as He bears for us the guilt of sin.

Very briefly we shall regard the text, first, as *our Savior’s cry, and as only such*. Secondly, we shall consider *its relationship to ourselves*. And thirdly, and sorrowfully, *its relation to ungodly man*. First, then, we will—

I. CONSIDER THIS CRY OF OUR SAVIOR—“I thirst.”

Is it not clear proof that He was certainly a man? Certain heretics sprang up in the early church who asserted that the body of our Lord was only a phantom—that as God, He was here, but as man He only exhibited Himself to the outward sense and did not actually exist in flesh and blood. But He thirsted. Now, a spirit has not thirst! A spirit neither eats nor drinks—it is immaterial and knows not the needs that belong to this poor flesh and blood! We may, therefore, rest quite sure that, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.”

No better proof could we have of the substantiality of His manhood than the cry, "I thirst." Herein, at all events, we can sympathize with Him. From the moment when He rose from the communion supper, saying, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom"—from that moment He had had no further refreshment, either of meat or of drink. Yet well He needed drink, for all through that long night in Gethsemane He sweated—we know what kind of sweat—as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground! Such toil as His might well have needed refreshment. Then He was hurried away to Caiaphas and afterwards to Pilate. He had to encounter the accusations of His enemies and a strong bridle He had to put upon Himself, that, like a sheep before her shearers, He might be dumb. There was a strain upon His system such as none of us ever have had to endure, or ever shall have—a strain such as we can never imagine—and yet not one morsel of bread, nor one drop of water crossed those blessed and parched lips! Well might He cry, "I thirst," when, after so many hours of wrestling with the powers of darkness, He was now about to die!

You remember, also, the peculiar way in which our Lord was put to death. The piercing of the hands and the feet was sure to bring on fever. Those members, though far remote from the vital parts, are yet full of the most delicate and tender nerves—and pain soon travels along them till the whole frame becomes hot with burning fever! Our Lord's own words in the 22nd Psalm will occur to you—"My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue cleaves to My jaws; and You have brought Me into the dust of death." Those of you who have been afflicted with fever far less serious than this, will recollect how it parched you like a potsherd and dried up all the juices of your system and all the moisture of your body like the parched fields of summer! You had, then, a thirst, indeed! But your Savior had a double cause for thirst—long fasting without food or drink and then the bitter pangs of death! Sympathize with Him then, beloved, and remember that all this was for you—and for you as His enemies—for you as if there were no others in the world! Though He suffered for all His elect, yet especially for each one of His people were the nails driven, for each one did He thirst and for each one did He take a draught of the vinegar and the gall. Come, then, and kiss those blessed lips and bow before your Savior in reverent praise!

Further, my brothers and sisters, we are quite certain that our Lord, in saying, "I thirst," must *have felt the extreme bitterness of thirst*. He was no complainer. You never heard a word come from His lips when it might have been withheld. He must have been driven to dire extremity, indeed, when He thus proclaimed to friends and foes that He was thirsting for a drop of water. Some have said that this cry, "I thirst," coming, as it does, after the far more bitter and awful cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" was an evidence of a turn in the Savior's conflict—that during all the first part of our Savior's suffering He was taken up with such anxious thought and with such internal anguish that He could not

think of the thirst, which, grievous as it was, was but a minor pain in comparison with what He felt when His Father in justice turned away His face from Him—and that now He begins to collect His thoughts for a while and is able to fight with His own personal bodily pains. It may be so. Possibly that cry was an indication that the battle had turned and that victory was coming to the suffering hero. But, ah, brothers and sisters, however there may have come a gleam of sunshine in this cry compared to the blacker darkness, you can never dream what a thirst that was that parched the Savior's mouth and lips! You will never feel such a thirst as He felt to its direst extent. Cold, hunger, nakedness and thirst may fall to your lot, but there was more of grief in His thirst than you can ever know! There was a bitterness here which my language cannot possibly bring out!

Another thought rises up to my mind—I will not mislead you here. I feel thankful to our Lord for saying, "I thirst!" Ah, brothers and sisters, sometimes when we are sorely afflicted, or have some little infirmity, perhaps not anything vital or mortal, though it pains us much, we complain, or at least we say, "I thirst." Now, are we wrong in so doing? Ought we to play the stoic? Ought we to be like the Indian at the stake who sings while he is roasting? Ought we to be like St. Lawrence on the gridiron? Is stoicism a part of Christianity? Oh, no! Jesus said, "I thirst," and herein He gave permission to all of you who are bowed down with your griefs and your sorrows to whisper them into the ears of those who watch by the bed, and to say, "I thirst." I daresay you have often felt ashamed of yourselves for this. You have said, "Now, if I had some huge trouble, or if the pangs I suffered were absolutely mortal, I could lean upon the Beloved's arm. But as for this ache, or this pain, it darts through my body and causes me much anguish, though it does not kill me." Well, but just as Jesus wept that He might let you weep on account of your sorrows and your griefs, so He says, "I thirst," that you might have permission patiently, as He did, to express your little complaints—that you might not think He sneers at you, or looks down upon you as though you were an alien—that you might know He sympathizes with you in it all!

He does not use language like that of Cassius when he laughed at Caesar because he was sick and said—

***"And when the fit was on him I did mark
How he did shake—'tis true this god did shake—
His coward lips did from their color fly!
And that same eye whose head does awe the world
Did lose its luster—I did hear him groan!
Yes, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
Mark him, and write his speeches in their books,
Alas, it cried, 'Give me some drink, Titinius,
As a sick girl.'"***

And why should it not? He was but a man. He was but "as a sick girl," and what is there in a sick girl to despise, after all? Jesus Christ said, "I thirst," and in this He says to every sick girl, and every sick child, and

every sick one throughout the world, "The Master, who is now in heaven, but who once suffered on earth, despises not the tears of the sufferers, but has pity on them on their beds of sickness."

Jesus said, "I thirst." As our Lord used these words, may I ask you for a minute to *contemplate it with wonder*? Who was this that said, "I thirst"? Know you not that it was He who balanced the clouds and who filled the channels of the mighty deep? He said, "I thirst," and yet in Him was a well of water springing up unto everlasting life! Yes, He who guided every river in its course and watered all the fields with grateful showers—He it was, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, before whom hell trembles and the earth is filled with dismay! He whom heaven adores and all eternity worships—He it was who said, "I thirst!" Matchless condescension—from the infinity of God to the weakness of a thirsting, dying man! And this, again I must remind you, was for you. He that suffered for you was no common mortal, no ordinary man, such as you are, but the perfect and ever blessed God, high above all principalities and powers and every name that is named! He it was who, with this condescending lowness of estate, stooped and cried, as you have done, "I thirst!"

Once more, in this cry of our Lord, "I thirst," *I think I see a trace of the atonement which He was then offering*. The pangs of Christ upon the cross are to be regarded as a substitution for the sins and sorrows of ungodly men—

***"He bore that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire."***

Now, brothers and sisters, a part of the punishment of the wicked in hell is the deprivation of every form of comfort. Man refused to obey His creator—the time will come when the creator will refuse to succor man! Man refused to minister to God—the time will come when God's creatures will not minister to man! Remember those solemn words of the Master when He said that the rich man was without a drop of water to cool his tongue and was tormented in the flame? And yet the water was withheld from coming near the sinner who had died in willful rebellion against God! Oh, my dear friends, if we had our due, we should have none of the comforts of life! The very air would refuse to yield us breath and bread, the staff of life, to yield us nourishment! Yes, we would find the whole creation in arms against us because we are up in arms against God! The time shall come when those who stand up against the Most High shall find no comfort left them—and no hope of comfort—everything that can make existence tolerable shall be withdrawn and everything that can make it intolerable shall be poured upon them! For upon the wicked, God shall rain fire and brimstone, and a horrid tempest—this shall be the portion of their cup!

Behold, then, when Emmanuel stood for us and suffered in our place, He, too, must thirst! He must be deprived of every comfort, stripped naked to the last rag and hung up on the cross as though earth rejected Him and heaven would not receive Him! Midway between the two worlds

He dies in the most abject poverty! And because of our sin, He cries, "I thirst!" Beloved, never seek for companionship with any who would ignore the miseries of the Lord, for, depend upon it, in that proportion they lessen the glory of the atonement. If it is but a light thing for the sinner to rebel against God, it was not a light thing for Christ to redeem him! It covered Christ with the greatest luster, for, after all, it stands out as one of His most resplendent works that He has redeemed us from going down into the pit, having found a ransom for us! By so much the greater the love, by so much the greater is the salvation. Think not lightly of sin and its punishment, lest you come to think lightly of Christ and what He suffered to redeem you from your guilt! The cry, "I thirst," is part of the substitutionary work which Christ performed when He thirsted, because, otherwise, sinners would have thirsted forever and have been denied all the pleasure, joy and peace of heaven.

The meditation upon this cry as proceeding from our Lord invites one more remark. Will it be straining the text too far if we say that underlying those words, "I thirst," *there is something more than a mere thirst for drink?* Once, when He sat upon the well of Samaria, He said to the poor harlot who met Him there, "Give Me a drink," and He got a drink from her—a drink that the world knew nothing about when she gave her heart to Him, obedient to His gospel. Christ is always thirsting after the salvation of precious souls and that cry on the cross that thrilled all who listened to it was the outburst of the great heart of Jesus Christ as He saw the multitude, and He cried unto His God, "I thirst." He thirsted to redeem mankind! He thirsted to accomplish the work of our salvation! This very day He still thirsts in that respect, as He is still willing to receive those who come to Him, still resolved that such as come shall never be cast out and still desirous that they may come! Oh, poor souls, you do not thirst for Christ, but you little know how He thirsts for you! There is love in His heart towards those who have no love to Him! Christ would not have you die. Christ would not have you cast into hell! Give yourselves up, then, to the gentle sway of Him who for your souls' good, said, "I thirst." Oh, I wish that all we who love Christ knew more of this hungering and thirsting after the redemption of our fellow men. May the Lord teach us to sympathize with them! If He wept for sinners, may our cheeks never be dry! He was in anguish for their souls, and we will not restrain our anguish because they will not be saved, but ignorantly, carelessly, or resolutely despise the gospel of Christ!

Thus much upon this point, so far as it concerns our Lord, Himself. Turn not away your eyes, but look and listen as He cries, "I thirst." Very briefly, now let us notice—

II. OUR RELATIONSHIP AND OUR BEARING TOWARDS THIS CRY.

I shall address myself on this head to the people of God. And the first remark is this—brothers and sisters, because Jesus Christ said, "I thirst," *you and I are delivered from that terrible thirst which once devoured us.* We were awakened by the Holy Spirit, some of us, years

ago, to perceive our danger. We had not known before what sin was—what a destroying fever it was. We had cherished it in our bosom, but when we began to discover our desperate position, we were compelled to thirst and cry for mercy. With some of us, our thirst was very great—we could scarcely sleep—and as for our meals, we left them untouched often in the agony of our despair. I do remember how my soul chose strangling rather than life! It seemed so hard to live under the frown of God, awakened to a sense of sin, but unable to get rid of the sin! Now at this moment that thirst has gone, for we have received the adoption, the salvation, the forgiveness! You came to Jesus as you were with all your thirst and you stooped down and drank of the crystal stream. And now you rejoice with unspeakable joy because your thirst is gone! Oh, clap your hands for very joy at the remembrance of it! Be humble that you should need His thirst to save you from thirst, but oh, be glad to think that the work is done and that you shall never thirst again as you did then, for, “he that drinks,” says Christ, “of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, for it shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” Your insatiable desires are stayed! The horseleech within you that cried, “Give, give,” at last is satisfied! The cravings of conscience that had been awakened by the love of God are satisfied! Now, oh, joy, your sorrow is over! Your peace, like a river has come, and your righteousness is like the waves of the sea! Live happily, live joyously! Tell others what Christ has done for you. Eat not your morsel alone, but publish to the world that through the thirst of a dying Savior you have ceased to thirst!

And as you have done with that first thirst of bitter agony, now seek to be filled with another thirst—a *thirst after more of Christ!* Oh, that sweet wine of His love is very thirst-creating—those who have once tasted it need more of it! Thirst after a closer walk with Him! Thirst to know more of Him! Thirst to be more like He! Thirst to understand more the mystery of His sufferings and to be more full of anticipation of His blessed advent—

“Nearer, my God, to Thee; nearer to Thee.”

Be this your cry. Open your mouth wide, for He will fill it. Enlarge your desires, for He will satisfy them all. Be eager after more of Christ! Hunger and thirst after more of righteousness. All your desires shall be supplied you. Do not, therefore, stint yourself by narrowing them. Oh, that you could ask more at His hands, for—

***“All your capacious powers can ask,
In Christ do richly meet.”***

Were your imagination to stretch her wings and soar ever so far beyond the narrow bounds of space, she would weary long before she reached the fullness of God which dwells bodily in our Lord Jesus Christ!

Let me also invite you to cultivate another thirst—a thirst like that which we read our Lord thirsted with—for *the conversion of our souls.* Give us but a score of men that hunger and thirst for the conversion of others and we shall see good work done! But oh, we are so cold, callous

and sleeping, though men are perishing every day! Behold the mass of people gathered in this Tabernacle! We can never all meet again. Some of us will probably be in eternity before another Sabbath shall have dawned—and of those who shall have departed this life, some will, perhaps, have gone down to the pit. And yet we have no tears for them! Oh, God, strike our hearts with a rod more powerful than that of Moses and fill our eyes with sympathetic tears! Think what it is that your own child could be lost, that your own relative could perish! Oh, wake yourselves up to passionate prayer, to longing desire and to constant effort—and never, from this moment on, cease to thirst with a passionate desire, which, like that of your Lord, shall fill you and compel you practically to say, in the industrious application of a spiritual life, “I thirst!”

My last point is a very heavy one. I could wish it has not to be delivered. It is addressed—

III. TO UNGODLY MEN AND WOMEN.

If the Lord Jesus Christ thirsted when He only carried the sins of others, what thirst will be upon you when God shall punish you for your own sins? Either ‘Christ must thirst for you, or you must thirst forever, and ever, and ever! There is but one alternative—justice must be vindicated through a substitute, or it must be glorified in your everlasting destruction! Think what it will be to have your sweet cup and your flowing bowl all put away from you, and not a drop of water to cool your tongue—to have your dainty meat and your gay festivals forever abolished—no light for your eyes, no joy for any one of the senses of your body and your souls made to suffer unutterable woe!

I shall not stay to picture, even in Christ’s own words, the agony of lost spirits. But I bid you keep this on your minds. If Christ, who was God’s Son, suffered so bitterly for sins that were not His own, how bitterly must you, who are not God’s sons, but God’s enemies, suffer for sins that *are* your own? And you must so suffer unless Christ, the substitute, stands for you! He was no substitute for all, but only for His own people. You say to me, “Did He stand for me?” I can tell you if you can answer this question, “Do you trust Jesus Christ? Will you now trust Him?” If so, a simple child-like faith in Jesus will bring you salvation! Now, remember, if you believe, all your sins are laid upon Christ and, therefore, they can never be laid upon you! If you believe, Christ was punished in your place and you can never be punished, because he was punished for you! Substitution—this is the groundwork of our confidence! Because He was accursed, we cannot be accursed, for, if we believe in Him, all that He suffered was for us—and we stand absolved before the judgment seat of Christ. The Lord give you this simple faith in the Redeemer this very night! And then He will see in you of the travail of His soul and the thirst of His great heart will be satisfied! The Lord bless you. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 51; 32; MATTHEW 26:59-68; LUKE 23.**

Let us read two Psalms of penitence. Repentance and faith go hand in hand all the way to heaven. Repenting and believing make up a large measure of the Christian life. First, let us read the 51st Psalm, penned by David after his great sin with Bathsheba, when, by the instrumentality of Nathan, he had been led to repentance. What if we have not fallen into any gross open sin? Yet, perhaps if we could see our hearts as God sees them, we should be as much ashamed as the Psalmist was when to the music of his sighs and groans, he poured out this Psalm.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness. According unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* What delicious words those are! “Your loving-kindness.” I have sometimes felt glad to be a Saxon, that I should speak a language that had such delightful words in it. “Loving-kindness”; “tender mercy.” Now, the eye that is quickest to see the tenderness of God is the eye of repentance, for the sinner who feels condemnation in his own heart looks so keenly after everything that may make for his comfort, and his eyes light on the tender mercies and loving-kindness of God. The prayer is for pardon—no, it is for purification, as well as pardon!

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* Take out this plague spot. I cannot bear it any longer. Oh, cleanse me from every trace of it, my God, I beseech You!

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me.* I tell it to You because it haunts me. It is always present to my mind. It seems painted on my eyeballs. I cannot but see it, turn whichever way I may.

4. *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.* He had sinned against his people, setting them an evil example—sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah—but he sees the whole evil concentrating itself, as it were, upon his God. He felt that the virus of the whole thing was that he had done dishonor to the name of the Most High, whose servant he was.

5-7. *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* “Behold,” he says, as if to go to the bottom of it, and to show that sin was not an accident with him, but that he, himself, was sinful. It was a grand faith—it was an Abrahamic faith—that when a man had such a sense of sin as David had, he at the same time could believe in the cleansing power of the blood! For you who do not know what sin is, and who have never groaned beneath the burden, to talk about the pardoning blood—oh, it is easy enough and there is nothing in it! But for a soul that knows the guilt and feels it and is burdened by it, still to believe in the power of the

atonement sacrifice—this is faith indeed! David had seen the priest take the bunch of hyssop and dip it in the warm blood of the goat or the bullock, and then sprinkle it—and he says, “Lord, do the same with me—with that richer blood of divine atonement!” That blood which, in David’s day, was yet to be shed! “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

8-10. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* Lord, the mischief lies deep! Strike at the root of it; I would not have You to wash out only a spot, but go to my heart and renew that, that I may sin no more.

11-14. *Cast me not away from Your presence and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways: and sinners shall be converted unto You. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* In that verse there is one of the surest marks of David’s sincere repentance, namely, that he calls his sin by its right name—“blood-guiltiness.” I have no doubt that he had said to himself that Uriah died by accident, and pleaded very much to excuse and extenuate his guilt. But now he outs with it. That is the word—“blood-guiltiness.” It is no use trying to apologize and excuse yourselves before God. As long as that is done, no pardon will ever be applied to the conscience. But when the sin is seen in its true colors, then shall those colors be washed away and we shall be whiter than snow. “Then will I teach transgressors Your ways.” He felt that if God would pardon him, he would be the man to tell of God’s way of mercy to others. And I trust, dear friends, if we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, our witness will never be silent about the goodness and the mercy of the Lord. If you have never spoken to others, begin tonight! Teach others the ways of God to you!

15-19. *O Lord open You my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice, otherwise would I give it. You delight not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.* Sure to be good times when men are under a sense of pardoned sin. None serve Him so well as those whose sins are washed away—who feel the same within.

Now, we will read the **32nd Psalm.**

Verses 1-5. *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. When I kept silent, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I*

acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. Soon over. Once poured into Jehovah's ear out of a contrite heart, and the transgression was gone forever! May it be so with you, dear hearer. If Your sin has never been forgiven you till tonight, may you this night obtain pardon through confession of sin.

6, 7. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near him. You are my hiding place. You shall preserve me from trouble. You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.*

MATTHEW 26:59-68; LUKE 23.

Verses 59-60. *Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death; but found none. Neither for love nor money.*

60. *Yes, though many false witnesses came, yet they found none.* That is, none that agreed—the lie that one man spoke was refuted by the next!

61. *At last came two false witnesses, and said this—*They did not say any other word, as if they did not know any word in any language vile enough for Him. "This"—our translators have very properly put in the word *fellow*.

61. *Fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.* He never said anything of the kind! It was a most wicked misrepresentation of what He had said. If men wish to find an accusation against us, they can do it without any materials.

62-64. *And the high priest arose and said unto Him, Do You not answer? What is it which these witness against You? But Jesus held His peace. And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I command You by the living God, that You tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said unto him, You have said it: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* He binds them over to make their appearance before Him when He becomes the judge and they shall take the place of the criminal!

65, 66. *Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy! What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard His blasphemy, What do you think?* He looks round upon the seventy elders of the people who were sitting there in the great council and "They answered and said, He is guilty of death." Probably Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were not there—they were the only two friends the Lord had in the Sanhedrin.

66, 67, 68. *They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, Saying, prophesy unto us, You Christ, Who is he that smote You?* This ended the regular ecclesiastical trial of Christ. A little time was spent before Pilate, the judicial ruler, was ready to see Christ,

but as soon as the dawn was come, they dragged Him before another tribunal. We shall now turn to **Luke 23**.

Verse 1, 2, *And the whole multitude of them arose and led Him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, We found this—Put in what word you like—villain—scoundrel—our translators could not find a better word than that inexpressive-expressive word, “fellow.” “We found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He, Himself is Christ, a King.” They shift the charge, you see, now! Before, it was blasphemy, now it is sedition.*

2, 3. *Fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar saying that He, Himself, is Christ a King. And Pilate asked Him, saying, Are You the King of the Jews? And He answered him and said, You said it.* Another of the evangelists tells us that He first asked Pilate what he meant by the question, explaining that He only claimed the kingdom in a spiritual sense.

4, 5. *Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the fiercer, saying, He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.* When Pilate heard them say Galilee, he caught at that—he did not wish to displease the multitude.

6, 7. *When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.* So away the Master goes—He must be dragged through the streets again to a third tribunal! Oh, You blessed Lamb of God! Never were sheep driven to the shambles as You were driven to death!

8. *And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad, for he was desirous to see Him for a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him.* But the Lord never worked miracles to gratify idle curiosity! He who would have worked a miracle to heal the poorest beggar in the street would not work a wonder to please the king in whose power He was!

9. *Then he questioned Him in many words: but He answered him nothing.* “No,” says good Christopher Ness—“John Baptist was Christ's voice and Herod had killed him—there Christ would not speak—as if He would say, ‘No, no,’ you did cut off John Baptist's head, who was My messenger, and since you have ill-treated My ambassador, I, the King of kings, will have nothing to say to you.”

10. *And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.* The original word is “made nothing of Him”—made Him as nothing.

11, 12. *And Herod with his men of war set Him at nothing, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves.* Two dogs could well agree to hunt the same prey! And sinners who quarrel on other things will often be quite agreed to persecute the gospel.

13-16. *And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, You have brought this man unto me, as one that perverts the people, and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof you accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him. Ah, that word, "chastise," slips so glibly over the tongue! But you know what it meant, when the Roman Lictors laid bare the back and used the terrific scourge! "I will scourge Him," said Pilate. Perhaps he thought that if he scourged Him, His suffering would induce the Jews to spare His life.*

17-20. *(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast). And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us, Barabbas! (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison). Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spoke again to them. He seems to have gone backward and forward many times, desiring to save the life of Christ, but not having the moral courage to do it.*

21-26. *But they cried, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him! And he said unto them the third time, Why? What evil has He done? I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired. But he delivered Jesus to their will. And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus*

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CHRIST OUR PEACE

NO. 3386

A SERMON
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*“He is our peace.”
Ephesians 2:14.*

THE true minister of Christ is not satisfied to be long away from his main theme. There are many things which it is very proper for him to speak upon in your hearing. We dare not forget the doctrines of the Word of God, or the precepts, or the experiences of God's people. But recognizing the claims of all these, God forbid that we should glorify save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is the preaching of Christ which is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Therefore, wherever we may wander around the circumference, we always feel a drawing in of our soul toward the center, which is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

And if the preacher feels that he cannot go on long in the pulpit without preaching up his Lord and Master, I am quite sure that all the saints of God feel that they cannot be long content without this theme. They must constantly have Christ. As often as the table is spread in our homes, we need bread. We do not care to have the same meats and drinks in the morning, at mid-day and at the evening meal. We like to have a frequent change of food, but we always want the bread—and the table is badly furnished, let it have what it may upon it, if there is not there the bread which is the staff of life! So the believer delights in the variety of God's word and there is no truth which is not precious to him. He counts the very shavings of truth to be like the dust of diamonds. Let every particle of it be gathered up and treasured, yes, so treasured that men may be ready to die for the slightest fragment of a truth of God! But still, the purest diamond, the Koh-i-noor of the whole, is the doctrine of the Savior suffering for our sins—and if we do not hear much concerning the Lamb of God, if this is not the big bell that is rung most often, we feel that none of the others can make up for the lack! If this silver trumpet of jubilee is not blown, the year is dull and dreary, and the service of God's sanctuary becomes an empty thing. Christ, Christ, Christ! Oh, that we may always make Him the sum and substance of our ministry and that you may always desire Christ as the water of life to your souls—your all-in-all, without whom you cannot be at rest! We come then, at this time, to our dear theme, praying God the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them to us. It is His office—may He tenderly consider us and fulfill that office in our souls—here and now!

There are only four words in the text and, therefore, four things may suffice us for tonight. The first great word, or, at any rate, the second greatest, is the word, "peace," and we shall think for a little while upon that, considering—

I. IN WHAT SENSE WE ARE TO REGARD THE EXPRESSION, "HE IS OUR PEACE."

The text compels us to begin with the thought, *the Lord Jesus Christ is peace between the Jew and the Gentile*. There was an old enmity between these two, an enmity on both sides. The Jew looked down upon the Gentile. He said, "I am of the seed of Abraham, the friend of God—ours are the oracles, ours the true God and the covenant—as for you Gentiles, you are an idolatrous seed whom God has left, as He did your father, to carry out the devices of your own hearts and to perish in your uncircumcision." The Jew called the Gentile a dog, thought him unclean, would have no friendly dealings with him, considered that uncircumcised men were little better than beasts and scarcely to be written down in the same list as the seed of Israel. And the Gentiles, with equal earnestness and intensity, returned the enmity, for if the Jew taunted the Gentile with uncircumcision, much more did the Gentile ridicule the Jew because of his circumcision! The most severe edicts, especially under the Roman Empire, were passed against the Jews. Some of the Emperors expressed themselves as believing them to be the most detestable of all races! One of them said that he had seen the heathens of Sarmatia and had beheld the barbarous tribes of the North, but he had seen all vices and all wickedness outdone among the Jews! It was not true—it was a gross lie—but it shows what was the enmity of the Gentile mind generally against the Jew, for the fact was that in those days the Jew was looked upon as unsocial. He never mingled with other nations. He could by no possibility be absorbed into other tribes, but held firmly to his nationality and would not be reckoned among the people. Hence there was a perpetual conflict. But my brothers and sisters, no sooner did the Lord Jesus Christ display the fullness of the gospel in the Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Spirit resting upon the Jew, than the Jew began to preach to the Gentile! There was a little tug in Peter's heart at first. He hardly liked it, but still, God gave him a vision and immediately he went to preach the gospel among those whom he had counted to be common and unclean! As for Paul, though a Pharisee of the Pharisees, though one of the strictest of Jews, yet he seems to have taken naturally to preaching among the Gentiles as soon as he was converted. He immediately went to these despised people and began to declare unto them the unsearchable riches of Christ! Now, in Christ Jesus, what fraternity there is, my brothers and sisters, between the seed of Israel and the Gentile stock! How we all feel that we are one! How many of the Jewish people has the Lord called! I hear it sometimes said that He called a larger proportion of the Jews than He has of the Gentiles, for, remember, the seed of Israel is but small, while the Gentiles at the present time number, I suppose, a

thousand millions at least, so that a small number of Christian Jews make a large proportion to the bulk! But wherever you meet with a converted Jew, a true believer, there is no more hearty lover of the Gentiles, no one more desirous to see the Gentiles saved!

And when you meet with a genuine, converted, instructed Gentile, how his heart goes out toward the seed of Israel and how rejoiced he is when he hears that some of the Lord's brothers and sisters, according to the flesh, are converted to the faith in the crucified Jesus! Yes, there is now no longer enmity. It is all over. Nothing can be more un-Christian than for a Christian to despise a Jew! Nothing is more unlike the spirit of our Master than when you laugh at the Jew and speak of him with contempt. Remember that the King of kings was a Jew! The Lord Jesus Christ, Himself—whom we adore as true Deity—came in our humanity as of the stock of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, an Hebrew of the Hebrews. Let there always be love and concord between us—and when the Lord shall be pleased to take the veil from Israel's eyes—then shall be our happy time as well as theirs. The Lord send it soon that He may be glorified. Enough, however, upon that.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our peace in a second sense, namely, *in making peace between nations*. That there are wars in the world at the present time is not the consequence of anything that Christ has said, but of the lusts of our flesh. As I understand the Word of God, I always rejoice to find a soldier a Christian, but I always mourn to find a Christian a soldier, for it seems to me that when I take up Christ Jesus, I hear one of His laws, "I say unto you, resist not evil. Put up your sword into its sheath; he that takes the sword shall perish by the sword." The followers of Christ in these days seem to me to have forgotten a great part of Christianity. How many of you would go tomorrow into a court of law and, if you were called upon to do it, would take an oath, whereas if there is anything taught in Scripture, it is expressly taught that you are not to swear at all, neither by heaven, nor by earth, nor by any other oath! If Christ ever delivered a plain precept, it is this—and yet all denominations of Christians seem to have cast it to the winds, with the exception of the Society of Friends. And so with regard to this matter of war, our apostle does not mince matters when he says, "Whence come wars? Whence come fights? Come they not from your own lusts?" That is the top and bottom of it, but, wherever true Christianity prevails, war becomes less frequent. It is owing to Christianity that war is far less common—though still too frequent—than it used to be. The length of human life has been much increased by the prevalence of peace—and wars, devastating wars, though, alas, they still break out—are not so constant as once they were and we are confidently looking forward to the time when the Messiah shall wield His blessed scepter and wars shall cease to the ends of the earth! Then shall men—

***"Hang the useless helmet high,
And study war no more."***

Then shall the shrill clarion of the battlefield yield to the pipe of shepherd's plaintive melody; then shall the weaned child play upon the hole of the asp, and the lion shall eat straw like an ox. Oh, that the Prince of Peace would come and establish His empire upon a firm foundation! Then could we, indeed say, "He is our peace!"

But, brothers and sisters, there is another meaning in the text. *The Lord Jesus is the great cause of peace between man and man.* As soon as you become a Christian, you cannot hate anybody. To be angry without a cause is a sin to you as soon as you are a believer in Christ! Unless you are a fearful hypocrite, you then forgive every man his offenses and you continue to forgive your brethren even unto 70 times seven, once you become the sincere disciple of Jesus. It is utterly inconsistent with grace in the heart to harbor malice against your fellow man. Through our infirmity we may be, and sometimes are, quick of temper and sharp—and this we ought to regret and mourn over—but to carry in our soul any enmity against any man is contrary to the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ! Give me your hand, my brother, my sister, for the sake of Him who died for us! We cannot quarrel at the foot of the cross! We cannot look up and see the streaming wounds and then break the King's peace! I mean the peace that the bleeding, thorn-crowned King has made! Especially among Christians, there must not be anything like a shadow of division or discord. And I do pray you, as I have often done, if you would be followers of Christ, be you as little children and lay aside everything like enmity, hatred, variance, strife and jealousies! You will have to live in heaven together, I hope. Oh, live like heavenly ones together here! You profess to have one Lord, one faith, one baptism. You say that you are filled with the Holy Spirit—then let no root of bitterness springing up trouble you, lest thereby many are defiled! May that sweet and holy dove, the Spirit of Christ, rest upon all mankind, so that each man may see in his fellow man a brother or a sister. May divisions between sects and parties—and especially between nations and men of different colors—be laid aside and may we all rejoice in one universal confraternity. May the day soon break when there shall be true liberty the world over and fraternity established everywhere after Christ's own model!

Still, brothers and sisters, these are only secondary applications of the text. *The great peace which Christ has made is between God and man.* There was war between man and his God. Man offended and loved to offend. God would have him return and be obedient, but man would not, for his heart was set on mischief. Man had so offended the divine law that punishment was inevitable! Jesus Christ came in and bore "the chastisement of our peace," suffering an equivalent for what His redeemed would have suffered!

Now, God can with strictest justice pardon human transgressions. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other at the cross of Christ. God was merciful and yet was just in our forgiveness—and now, between Him and those who are in Christ Jesus—there is no difference, no

division, no strife, no war! Therefore, being reconciled by His blood, “we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” We are brought near by the blood of the atonement. The chasm is bridged, the mountain is removed! Do you enjoy this peace, my dear hearer? Can you look up to God, the great God, and feel that there is no alienation between you—that what He loves, you love? That the object of His heart is the supreme object of yours? That if there has been any idol set up, contrary to Him, in your heart, you desire to have it thrown out? Oh, if it is so, then bless God that He has given you Christ to be your peace!

And then, brothers and sisters, there follows from this peace between man and God *peace between man and himself*, for man is as much at war with himself as he is with God, and until Christ comes in, he enjoys no rest. “There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.” Some of you know experimentally what it is to have a strife and a warfare going on within—and you will never get a deep and settled calm until Christ comes into the vessel of your soul and says to the winds of your fear, and to the waves of your sins, “Peace, be still.”

He that has Christ has a peace that passes all understanding! He that has Christ has great peace and nothing shall offend him. But he that has no Christ has no solid peace. He may say, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace, and daub his wall with untempered mortar, but the hail shall sweep away all his refuges of lies! And after his false peace there shall come a terrible alarm. Oh, my hearer, have you had peace made between God and you by the precious blood? If so, then you are now at rest! But if you are tossed to and fro between one thought and another, you have nothing to rest upon! I pray you listen carefully to what I have to say concerning the Lord Jesus, and may the Holy Spirit bless it to you! Thus much upon that priceless gem, that blessed word, “peace.”

The next great word in the text worthy of our adoring thought is that little one of two letters only, the pronoun “*He*.” “He is our peace.”

II. WHO IS SAID TO BE “OUR PEACE”?

What are we to understand by the Lord Jesus Christ being our peace? I want you carefully to notice that it does not say that His work on our behalf is the *source* of our peace. That, of course, is true, but here it says, “He is our peace.” He, personally—HE—Christ Himself, is the peace of His people! It does not say that He *makes* our peace, or that He *brings* us peace. That is very true, most true, but it is a greater truth that He, Himself, is our peace!

Now, I beseech you, believer, to look at this truth of God very carefully, and you, unbeliever, too! The unbeliever thinks that in order to get peace, he must perform good works. But see, man, your good works are not your peace! If they had been, God would have said so plainly, “Your good works shall be your peace.” But not so, “He is our peace.” It is not that you are to be a peace unto yourself, nor does it say that your repentance, or tears, or prayers can give you peace. These are good and

they are to be used, but the ground of your peace must never be, “I have prayed. I have repented”—but He—He is our peace! There are many things that you may do and that you *shall* do by the power of the Holy Spirit, but I tell you that none of these things are to be the basis of your comfort! Your soul’s fountain of crystal comfort is to be Christ and Christ alone! He, He, He—HE is our peace! Nothing in you, nothing you can do, nothing you can feel, but Christ, to whom you must look or perish. He must be your peace!

Now, believer, look this in the face. Christ is to be your peace—not your communion with God, nor your high and holy experiences. All these are very precious and I wish we could always be on Tabor’s brow. It were well for us if, like, Enoch, we always walked with God, but still, our communion must never be looked upon as the ground of our peace with God. It is Christ and Christ, alone, that is our peace! Though you could mount as high as Gabriel and soar aloft through heaven, as on a wing of fire—like the swift archangel, your rapid flight must not be your comfort, nor all the glorious service which you could render to your God, but Christ, Christ, Christ and Christ, alone, must be your peace. Beloved, it is all in vain for any of us to look back and try to find peace in what we have done!

It is a very great comfort to us, in some respects, to have been called by grace in early youth—to have been enabled to preach the gospel year after year with success—and I know what it is to think of all the souls who have been converted under my ministry. I know what it is to remember how many times I have addressed immense crowds of people. But I also know what it is to think, “Well, I may do all this and only be more condemned for it! I may do all this and yet be found out to be a miserable hypocrite, after all.” Therefore, there is no abiding comfort to be found in this. It is not our *doing* for Christ, but Christ, Himself, that is our peace! Now, some of you have been in the Sunday school, today, and you do not feel that you have got on well with the children. Well, I am glad if you have a passionate yearning for the salvation of the children’s souls, but do not begin to lose your hope and confidence in Christ because you do not succeed! If you had succeeded, you would have been very mistaken had you taken it as an evidence of your redemption! And if you fear you have not succeeded, have spoken in vain and spent your strength for nothing, do not be greatly cast down by it, for your peace does not lie either in your service, or in your success—it lies entirely in Christ!

I like the remark that was once made by a poor bricklayer who tumbled from the top of a house. A clergyman went to see him and, as he thought the man was dying, he said to him, “My dear fellow, you must try to make your peace with God.” “Ah, sir,” said the man, “you do not understand it, I can see. Make my peace with God? Why that was made for me in the eternal covenant before the world began! That was made for

me on Calvary's tree of shame, when Christ laid down His life. If Christ had not made my peace with God, I know I could not make it!"

So put all the things you have done and can do, into the scale, believer, and when they are all there—kick them all out again—for they are not worth a single ounce of weight in your soul's salvation! Christ must be there! And Christ alone!

One of the occupations of the dying saint must be the tying up of his bad works and of his good works in one bundle—for they are wonderfully much alike—and throwing them all overboard, every one of them, and floating to glory on the plank of free grace in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is our peace! HE is our peace! If believers would always remember this, they would not be so often depressed and distressed. Ah, I have often heard this cry, as I told you this morning, "I do not grow in grace as I could wish. I do not serve my Lord as I should. I live at a great distance from Him. I am afraid I dishonor His holy name." I like to hear that! That is all good, *very good*, but then they go on with this—"I am afraid that I shall perish, after all"—and that is all wrong, very wrong, for if the question is put, "Do you trust in Christ?" and if the answer is that you do, well then, if God is true, you *cannot* perish! If all your help comes from Him who made heaven and earth, and who died upon the bloody tree for your sins, then heaven and earth may pass away and shall, but His promise cannot! He has given you two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, that you may have strong consolation if you have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus! Do you believe in Jesus? Do you hang upon Christ wholly and entirely? Then are you saved and God's word is pledged to bring you safely home at the last! Sanctification must never be put in the place of justification—when we do so, we shall miss sanctification, as well as justification. When believers say, "I cannot grow in grace as I would, and therefore I doubt," do you see what they do? It is as though they said, "Here is a plant that will not grow and therefore it shall not have any water." It is impossible for any one of us—for you—to get sanctification through doubts! Your doubting takes away the water which alone can nourish the roots of your sanctity. If, in the teeth of all your sins, you still believe in Christ—believe over the head of all your shortcomings and your negligence—then your belief will breed love and admiration! And then your love of Christ and your admiration of Him will breed imitation—and so there will come holy living to the glory of God! Love is the forceful mainspring of a gracious life, but doubt makes it grow limp and feeble. Doubt snaps the string of your bow, takes off the edge of your sword, makes you languid and powerless and causes all your divine graces to flag. Therefore, keep to it, Christian, keep to it and let not the devil, himself, drag you from it! "He is our peace"—my peace—not myself, nor anything that is in me, but Christ Jesus alone!

I have thus put the negative of it, but now let us take the positive. "He is our peace." By this is meant, first, that *the person of Christ* is our

peace. He is God. I rest on Him. I *have perfect peace*, then, for He is almighty, He cannot fail me. He is inimitable—He will not leave me. He is truth itself—He will not belie His word.

Jesus Christ is also man, and if man, then He sympathizes with me, being touched with a fellow feeling for me in my infirmities. Then with such a heart of tenderness, He will not throw up the work of grace, but He will bear with my ill manners and be my “brother born for adversity,” even to the end. So, then, the complex person of Christ, as God, as well as man, is the peace of the believer when he trusts Him.

In the next place, *the perfect righteousness of Christ* is another part of our peace. In a delightful little book upon the person of Christ by good Mr. Bonar, he speaks about our sins as though they were so many mud creeks—our sins of unbelief, neglect, lack of love and so on. Well, but wherein we have failed, Christ has not failed—every duty in which we have come short, He has fulfilled! For every sin that we commit, you will always find an opposite virtue in Christ. Well says Mr. Bonar, “Then Christ is the flood tide which comes up and fills all these creeks and covers all the mire—and there is not a little creek nor a great bay but what this tide of Christ’s glorious merits fills all!” Perhaps this thought may give you the meaning of the text, “Your peace shall be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea”—the many waves which come up and cover all the sands and the mire of our iniquities till God sees no sin in us, because He sees the righteousness of Christ standing for us—and looks upon us, not as we are separately, but as we stand in Him—and so He makes us to be “accepted in the Beloved.” Oh, believer, if you can wrap the righteousness of Christ around you, you can feel, then, the sweetness of the truth of our text, “He is our peace.”

Yet once more. After His person and His righteousness, there *comes His precious blood*. Oh, beloved, there is no balm for the soul like the cross! Sometimes I like to sing to myself, when I get a little fluttered in my soul, that precious hymn—

***“Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend!
Life and health, and peace possessing,
From the sinner’s dying friend!
Here it is I find my heaven,
While upon the cross I gaze.
Love I much? I’m more forgiven—
I’m a miracle of grace.”***

I have sometimes used this simile and will use it again. If you ride through London, mile after mile, mile after mile, and see the great swarms of people, you say to yourself, “I cannot make out how all these people are fed. I cannot see how there is always a meal for these four millions and more.” But go off tomorrow morning and make a round of the great markets—the cattle market, the meat markets, the fruit markets and I know not what besides—and now you say, “I cannot make

out where the people can be found to eat all this! How does such a tremendous mass of provisions of all kinds ever get consumed?"

You change your note directly. When you only looked at the people's needs, you thought, "How can they all be supplied?" but when you look at the supply, you say, "How can there be needs great enough for all this?" So you look at your sins and you say, "How can there be merit enough to put all these sins away?" But if you will but look at the Son of God dying on the cross for sinners, you will change your note and you will say, "Where could there be sinners great enough to demand such an immense sacrifice as the giving up of the life of the Son of God to redeem men from their iniquities?" You must go to the cross if you want to have peace concerning your sins, for "He is our peace."

Further, beloved, *the ever-living Christ is always our peace*. The thought that there beats a heart in heaven that is always loving us; that there moves a tongue in heaven that always pleads for us; that there is an arm in heaven that always fights for us; and that there is a foot in heaven that will be swift to run for our defense—oh, this is a precious consolation! If faith can but perceive that Jesus Christ is within the veil at the Father's throne, with His heart full of love towards those who trust in Him, then will He be to us our peace!

I shall not, however, enlarge farther upon that point, though it is a very fruitful subject. But I must say that the *more you know of Christ's character and work, the deeper will be your peace*. Ignorant professors who do not know that Jesus Christ "is the same yesterday, today, and forever," are sometimes afraid that the promises will not be fulfilled. But they must be fulfilled, for He is not only full of grace, but of truth! Know Christ and trust Him—and you need not be afraid. Poverty shall not make you poor, sickness shall not make you diseased, and death shall not make you die! You shall triumph over all these in your inmost soul and come off more than conqueror through Him who has loved you and is your peace!

We have only as yet handled two words, but they are two big, colossal words. "*He is our peace.*"

But we must now speak briefly upon those two diamond rivets which fasten Christ and peace together. So we look now at—

III. WHOSE PEACE IS HE?

Notice that word, "our." "He is *our* peace." To whom, then, is this splendid peace given? Every man that has Christ as his Savior! I have half a mind to ask those who have trusted Christ to be their peace, to say aloud, here and now, "He is our peace." There is a gray-headed man here, and if he were to rise and lean on his staff, he could say, "Yes, blessed be God, without doubt I can say that He is my peace." There is a valiant soldier of Christ yonder, and he would declare boldly, "He is my peace." But I daresay there is some timid Hannah here who would wipe the tears from her face and quietly say, "Yes, He is my peace." And there

are some youngsters here, whom the Lord has but lately brought in, and they can say, tremblingly, but yet meaning it from their inmost souls, "He is my peace." It is all the same, whether we are old or young, whether we are advanced in the divine life, or are only just in the beginning of it—we have no other peace except the Lord Jesus Christ!

But who are these people who have Christ to be their peace? Well, they are *those who could not get peace anywhere else*, for we never come to Christ until we are driven to Him by stormy weather. He is such a blessed port that we might all wish to cast anchor in Him, but yet we are such fools that we keep out at sea as long as we can—and only when we feel our sins to be like hurricanes howling in our ears, do we fly to Christ! Well, if you have nowhere else to go and you come to Him with all your hunger and nakedness—and trust in Him—whether you sink or swim, then shall He be your peace!

I cannot delay upon that, however, for our time is gone and, therefore, I must take that other word—"is."

IV. WHEN IS HE OUR PEACE?

I know the world says, "I hope He will be my peace." Dear hearer, do not be satisfied with that! Never be content with "may be," but seek after a present salvation! I was soundly enough asleep the other morning when, about half-past three my bell rang very sharply, and then rang again. And when I put my head out of the window to see who was there, I heard someone say, "Oh, if you please, sir, there is a poor man dying, and he wants to see you badly! Do come." "Oh, yes, where does he live? I will be there as quickly as I can." And away I went.

The dying man said to me, "I beg your pardon, sir, for sending for you at this time of night, but it is very hard for a man to go out of this world and not know where he is going. Do tell me the way I may be saved." I was glad enough to tell him about Him who is our peace, but how I wished and wished again that he had not needed to be told about it then! As I said to those who were round about him, "Now see, he has enough to think of with his dying pains, without having to think of finding a Savior now! Oh, the rest of you seek Him while you have health and strength!" And I now say that to you! You will find other work when you come to die without having to search for a Savior! Besides that, what a joy it is to get Christ now—to say, "He is my peace." Why, there are some of us who are as happy now in Christ as we could well wish to be! We find that our religion is no misery to us. It is not a chain, but like the wings of a bird and it helps us to mount! We feel at perfect peace with God right now, and if death were to come tonight, or tomorrow, or while we are sitting here, I trust we should not think of him as an adversary, but our Father's servant, sent to take us into our Father's presence! Oh, my dear hearers, some of you, when you come to dying, will, perhaps, have to think, "I used to attend a Sunday school. I used to go to a place of worship, but I gave it all up when I came to London. When I got into business and had a family, I thought I needed Sunday for recreation, and

so I neglected my soul, and now where am I? Far off from God!" Oh, I hope I shall not have to come and tell you in your extremity about a Savior, but may you now receive Him! All that He asks of you is to trust Him—and that He gives you! My poor friend said the other night, "I cannot think, sir. I cannot settle my thoughts." Yes, but you can think now and, therefore, now, before the evil days come and the dark night draws on, turn, turn! May God turn you! May effectual grace lead you to see my bleeding Master with His five streaming wounds, with the crown of thorns about His brow, mocked and despised, and spit upon for us, that we might escape the thorn and not have to be wounded with the arrows of death, but might live through Him! May the Lord Jesus Christ be to every one of you your peace tonight, that you may take the text and say, "He is now, even tonight, our peace."

God grant it for His name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 11:27-46.**

Our Lord's greatest miracles were always the reward of faith.

Verse 27. *She said unto Him, Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come unto the world.* By which she as good as said, "I believe that and I believe everything else. I have an implicit faith in You. Whatever You say, whatever You have said or shall say, I am prepared to believe it all, for I believe in You. I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

28. *And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary, her sister, secretly.* Because she knew that the Jews hated the Savior. She could not tell what would come of it if they knew of His coming, so she whispers to her—

28-30. *Saying, The Master is come, and calls for you. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was at that place where Martha met Him.* Their cemeteries were outside the town and probably the Savior was near the very grave where Lazarus slept.

31-32. *The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goes unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died.* Her thought was the same as the thought of Martha, but she did not say as much as Martha. She never did. Martha had a dialogue with the Savior, but Mary bowed at His feet.

33-37. *When Jesus, therefore, saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have you laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and*

see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him! And some of them said, Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus, therefore, again groaning in Himself, came to the grave. Many have asked why Christ groaned. Why, brothers and sisters, it is the way in which He gives life—by His own death! We sometimes say of one who does a great action, “It took so much out of him.” So it did out of the Savior. He must groan that Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus may rejoice. It is not without the stirring of His very life that He gives life to the dead!

38-39. *It was a cave and the stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take you away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, said unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinks: for he has been dead four days. “It were a pity to roll away the stone.”*

40-41. *Jesus said unto her, Said I not unto you, that if you would believe, you should see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. That is grand praying, is it not? Sometimes we ought to say, “Just so.” “Father, I thank You that You have heard me.”*

42-44. *And I knew that You hear Me always, but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me. And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth! And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. He probably slipped himself off from the ledge in the tomb upon which he been laid and there he appeared before them bound so that he could not move farther.*

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

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